In Search of a Teaching Praxis that Transforms

by

David Harris Kenneth Berezan

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Department of Secondary Education

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Abstract

Transformative learning experiences are what many of my students and the participants in this research study have told me are their most meaningful educational experiences. Their transformations were life-altering and have continued to affect them long into their adult lives. I have drawn and interconnected fundamental concepts from two methodological approaches, Narrative Inquiry and Transformative Learning Theory, into a hybrid methodology designed to study what fosters the transformative self- and life-altering experiences within the fusion and synergy of teacher, students and subject matter in teaching and learning. The participants were English Language Arts Majors completing their final year of four-year teacher education or a two-year after degree program. Though in a similar pre-service training program, the participants were diverse in background, life experiences, age, and country of origin. The data collection sessions spanned ninth months and over 600 pages of transcript were collected. Through the data analysis, the consequent findings call for humanizing school experiences through teaching praxes that are foundationally focused on the deeply personal and transformative teaching and learning relationships of teachers and students.

Key Words: transformative teaching praxis, transformative teaching and learning, meaningful learning experiences, transformative experiences, life-altering educational experiences, transformation without contrivance, self-reflection; social context of education; teacher education, class warfare, values-based teaching and learning

Preface

I have worked many years in the field as an educator and instructor with multifaceted, multi-talented, and multicultural students from six to seventy-five from whom I have received much of my pedagogical, philosophical, and scholarly inspiration and vitality. My students with their stories of transformation, told sometimes long after the fact, were the impetus for this inquiry into transformative teaching and learning. Students often identify the most meaningful and most significant aspects of their entire educational history as these life-altering transformative experiences in school, placing all other educational experiences as lesser in importance or insignificant in their lives.

The concept of transformation has many connotations, meanings, and impacts when entwined within educational discourse and the literature is somewhat sparse regarding specific explanations of what constitutes transformation or transformative experience. That significant change is central to transformation is clear, but the kinds of changes suggested when any conceptualization of transformation enters educational discourse or academic study, often fall short of what this study presents as the experience of transformation. A change in classroom management or configuration or a change in curricula or in a number of teaching practices may transform the work of the classroom, but not necessarily the people.

Kegan (1994) comes closest to the effect and concept of transformative experiences presented in this study. "Transformation comes about when someone changes 'not just the way he behaves, not just the way he feels, but the way he knows—not just what he knows but the *way* he knows'" (p. 17). How a person knows himself or herself needs to be added to Kegan's description to complete the explanation of transformation as exemplified in this inquiry. How a student feels and thinks about himself or herself is foundational to his or her senses of self-worth,

self-belief, and self-confidence. When participants in this study were able to experience these sensibilities within their psyches, they were transformed in life-altering ways. They felt better about themselves and proceeded with their learning and lives with confidence and self-assurance in ways they could not before the transformative experiences. Transformation in this study refers to experiences of self-realization that foster self-confidence and self-belief.

The meaning of praxis in a *teaching praxis that transforms* is derived from Paulo Freire's definition of the term. Freire (2000) believed that praxis was based on a dialogic communicative and honest exchange of words truthful in their intent; "To speak the true word is to transform the world" (p. 87). Each true word requires the "work" of "reflection and action" (Freire, 2000, p. 87). A teaching praxis that transforms requires the reflective action that would foster the transformative experiences participants in this study have revealed to be so important in their lives. An ongoing, impartial, and reflective dialogue with students about who they are and about how they need to learn and proceed with their lives is essential to an active teaching praxis. In other words, students make a significant contribution to any praxis or reflective action that transforms. Praxis is also more than practice. Practice tends to refer to *what* teachers and students do; and this study is more focused on *how* and *why* we teach and learn.

The participants, and the students who have been the impetus of my interest in transformative educational experiences, often pinpoint the reason transformations occur at all as the existence of a teacher in the experience without recognizing themselves as part of the effect. However, the most meaningful experiences of school have come within an unpredictable eddying at a synergic confluence of teacher, student, course, and context (usually contexts) often unbeknownst or unexpected at the time. The following dissertation presents an inquiry that studies

this synergy of student(s), teacher, subject, and context(s) that have resulted in the transformational experiences narrated by the participants within the study.

Throughout the dissertation, the words of the participants are paramount and prominent. Wherever possible, I have made their words the focus of my presentation to let the participants speak to readers directly about their transformative experiences and what meaning they derive from these transformations. The words of the participants appear in script format for ease and flow of reading. The narratives of the participants in this study fundamentally respond to the inquiry research question:

> *Within teaching and learning praxis, what fosters the transformative and self- or life-altering experiences that students recount long into their lives?*

Their words within the theoretical, pedagogical, and philosophical framework in which I have placed my research reinforce and foster *another way*, or more correctly, other ways to teach and learn more in line with the humane values of the participants of this inquiry and of the thoughts and principles of the scholars, philosophers, teachers and other influential people I have called forth in support of the findings. This inquiry has been conducted *in search of a teaching praxis that transforms*.

Dedication

My dissertation is the culmination of a life's work, but without my many *inspirators*—family, colleagues, and students—I would not have attained this level of study or this time in my life. I can name but a few here. I dedicate this scholarly work to Sue, the one who saved my life; Dellice, my daughter, still the lifeblood in my veins; my two Mothers, Verna and Jean, who believed so strongly in me; My Father, Glenn, the rock upon which I have based my life; Victor, Tom, and Dawson, my brothers, who helped me live a purposeful life; Sherri, my sister, who keeps our family whole; a number of transformative teachers who saw in me what I did not see in myself; the strong women in my life, some of whom I include here, who faced adversity with common sense and resolve; and Dr. Ingrid Johnson, a mentor whose support I could not have done without.

Acknowledgement

I would especially like to thank the participants of this inquiry for their dedicated commitment in time, trust, candor, and thoughtfulness to the scholarly, pedagogical, and epistemological pursuit presented in this dissertation. In addition, I acknowledge Dr. Marg Iveson, my long suffering Supervisor, who has been steadfast in her resolve to help me through this very personal and professional endeavour.

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"I believe that education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience" (Dewey, 1897, p. 83).

"Being a teachers is a little bit like planting seeds without knowing exactly what those seeds are and you water and tend the garden and hope that something beautiful grows" (Zentner, November 27, 2013)

"Transformation comes about when someone changes 'not just the way he behaves, not just the way he feels, but the way he knows—not just what he knows but the *way* he knows'" (Kegan, 1994, p. 17).

Embedded in the phenomenological/ontological nature of narrative inquiry is "Dewey's notion of continuity in experience—that is, that every experience both takes up something from the present moment and carries it into future experience" (Clandinin/Rosiek, 2007, p. 69).

A teacher's essential responsibility is to "protect the conditions under which students in their own way can find their way" (David G. Smith, 1996 , p. 467).

Chapter 1

Another Way

> There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio/than are dreamt of in your philosophy (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act 1, Scene 5).

Though somewhat introspective and intentionally conversational at times as would be expected in a narrative-related inquiry, Chapter 1 contains a representative amalgamation of scholarly thought and inspirational influences that have helped shape the philosophical underpinnings of my work as an educator, researcher, and scholar. This chapter is not the usual literature review as might be expected. Dissertations written from a Narrative Inquiry methodological perspective are often written as narrative with embedded literature references and no typical literature review at all. Other dissertations are written as novels or plays, which I could have done. I have chosen a different approach and I trust the reader will cope with this less usual, but purposeful presentation including literature and other references that have influenced the personal, historical, theoretical, and philosophical framework within which I have placed my inquiry.

Collaborative teaching and learning with students and my development as a better teacher tomorrow than I was yesterday has been my life's work and this inquiry; its research, and dissertation represent another milestone in that pedagogical, professional, and personal journey. However, the philosophy that underpins this research inquiry into the transformative educational experiences has roots in my childhood and its foundations were formed long before I came to university for the first time. If not for the strength of character I developed through influences in my childhood, I wouldn't have written the dissertation that follows nor would I have entered university in the first place. Scholarship is not entirely the purview of universities.

These early origins, I believe, are key to understanding the genesis of this research inquiry and of the researcher who will disseminate its findings post-graduation. My intent in this chapter is to bring together a manageable mass of thought, ideas, and experiences that I believe provided a framework for the inquiry's findings as derived from the participant narratives and to present support for a call to teachers to understand teaching and learning differently than currently and generally conducted in our schools. Not all will be justified or explained through the academic words of other researchers and scholars. My Mother was not a scholar, yet she was and is my greatest influence. There is much "in heaven and earth" after all "than are dreamt of" in anyone's "philosophy" (Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act 1, Scene 5).

I have always seen the world and its experiences differently than most others and I have always believed there are many other more effective ways to teach and learn than currently practiced in our schools; but I have not always known how schools might be transformed or why my pedagogical, epistemological, professional, and personal journey has come to graduate studies and this dissertation. However, self-serving my motivations may seem, my intent in further education has always been to learn all I can and to be a better, more capable teacher; a commitment I made in my first undergraduate year. The participants in this study have shown a like commitment to quality teaching and learning, which they have illustrated profoundly in their narratives. Their narratives also speak loudly to just how hurtful current teaching practice can be. The *inspirators* I have included in this chapter not only place in perspective the philosophical framework within which I have conducted my research, but they also help to explain another way, or more correctly, other ways to teach and learn more in line with the humane values of the participants of this inquiry; the thoughts and principles of the scholars, philosophers, teachers and

other influential people I have called forth in support of the findings; and of a teaching praxis that transforms.

I did not contrive a philosophy or gather a collection of thinkers to fit this dissertation (I have a long standing aversion to any sort of contrivance, which you will read more about later). As I said, my life's philosophy was already developing deep in my youth and other people and things that inspired me have come along the way; but I wrote Chapter 1 after the data collection and analysis phase of the research (long after as it turns out) and that fact, in itself as any narrative inquirer knows, is an influence. I have, definitely and unequivocally, written this dissertation with the participant's narratives and the findings they have provided in mind throughout. This chapter is an introduction to this dissertation with elements chosen to be appropriate in that undertaking. It is divided into parts that start with a short study in etymology associated with understandings related to the research, followed by a narrative of early influences, and then, a journey through some of the scholarly and artistic influences that have helped shape the pedagogical, epistemological, academic, theoretical, and philosophical framework of this inquiry.

This study, as will be stated and reinforced a number of times throughout the dissertation, started with experiential narratives of transformative educational experiences and ends with a call for humanizing school experiences through teaching praxes that are foundationally focused on the deeply personal and transformative teaching and learning relationships of teachers and students. And so, the illustrative, pedagogical narrative-like amalgam of influential voices and presences that elucidates the framework within which the research is placed follows.

The Arts of Teaching and Learning

> Putting children first—especially the youngest among them—is not only the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do. If there is one subject around which 'expert'

> opinion agrees, it is that prevention and early intervention when children are at risk is the most effective strategy available to us (Barlow/Robertson, 1994, p. 250)

The arts of teaching and learning are a particularly human characteristic, but the origins[1] of the words *education*, *learn*, and *scholarship* are somewhat less intuitive:

> Etymologically, the word "education" is derived from the Latin *ēducātiō* for "A breeding, a bringing up, a rearing" and from *ēdūcō* for "I educate, I train," which is related to the homonym *ēdūcō* for "I lead forth, I take out; I raise up, I erect", and *dūcō* for "I lead, I conduct" (Etymonline.com. Wikipedia, 2013).

With roots in such a one-sided, overbearing process, there is little wonder that *education*, as we know it, has taken on the mantle of power with an underpinning in prescriptive curricula, "by which students are induced to comply with the dominant ideologies and social practices related to authority, behavior and morality" (McLaren, 1989, p. 184). Perhaps, pedagogy *is* the better word to describe the arts of teaching and learning. "The word comes from the Greek *paidagōgeō* in which *paidos* means "child" and *ágō* means "lead"; literally translated 'to lead a child" (Wikipedia, 2013). Though the etymology of *education* has leadership in common with the word *pedagogy*, "to lead a child" is far different from telling a child what to do and directing his or her every action in school. There is an ancient Greek word for instructors or teachers, *didaskalos*, meaning "acknowledged for their mastery in their field of learning" (http://biblehub.com/greek/1320.htm), but the word *learn* did not enter the English language until somewhere between the 12th and 15th centuries with *leornian*, which was Old English for "to get knowledge, be cultivated, study, read, think about" (etymonline.com, 2013). I'm sure other words sufficed to communicate the concepts of teaching and learning, but even at this stage in history, the top-down "be cultivated" approach

[1] In the egalitarian and *equalitarian* spirit of this study, I have not referred to the Oxford English Dictionary for this section. Intelligence, knowledge, and research is not the purview of one single source or team of researchers nor should anyone accept a single authority over all others. With all due respect to the publishers of the Oxford English Dictionary, I have used several other online and hardcopy dictionaries, thesauruses, and word sources in the composition of this dissertation.

to learning was evident in the lexicon and character of language. The quite natural and necessary passage of knowledge, understanding, values, survival techniques, and identity from one generation to the next has seldom considered the voice and interest of those being taught; and this inequitable, often regimented, and disciplinary form of education was formalized with the first public schools after the Industrial Revolution in the 1700s. However, throughout time from the Greeks to now, many innovative thinkers and teachers have advocated for something more than a teacher-dominated learning environment. If we truly are to "lead a child," where the child wants to go must be of paramount importance.

The etymological origins of the word *scholarship* are even more intriguing and certainly cast light onto why what is considered scholarly has become so distorted. As a firefighter, I would much rather have a brother or sister firefighter with me when we go into a burning building than any of my graduate colleagues, though I have equal respect for the later. Another firefighter would have the knowledge, for which he or she has studied, trained, and practiced a great deal, that would complement my knowledge and experience to keep us both safe as we *went in* to save life and property. In these matters of life and death, who are more scholarly, more knowledgeable, my brother and sister firefighters or my graduate colleagues? The word, *scholarship* has lexical origins in times and meanings long before there were schools and universities as we know them today and some root words suggest an entirely unflattering meaning of the word.

"The Indo-European root of the academic *school* is said to be *seigh* [meaning] to hold" (www.edenics.net). The Greeks used the word "*schole*, [meaning] loitering as a withholding of oneself from work or leisure; a *school* as vacation from physical employment" (www.myetymology.com). The "late Latin word became "*schola*" as in "school" or "followers of a system" (www.myetymology.com). Historically, there seems to have been a "lexical confusion"

between "the Greek word *skhole*, for *a holding back*, and the Yiddish word "saykhel for intelligence and the word, "sekhel," which was used as a "verb in Genesis 48:14 and a noun in Proverbs 3:4," to mean "wisdom" or "understanding" (www.edenics.net). This lexical hybridization came through to the English language as *scholar*, from the Latin word, "*scholaris* meaning "*belonging to school* or *used in school* or *student* or *imperial guard*". Interesting that the Yiddish or Old Testament references to intelligence or wisdom did not travel initially with the original understanding of the English word *scholar*. Intelligent and wise describes my firefighter colleagues in a crisis and all of the people I will include in the next part of this introductory chapter, though none of them would likely be considered a scholar by any university standard. Scholarship, then, can be "academic study or achievement" or "learning a high level" (or equally, "a grant or payment made to support a student's education"); but for the purposes of this dissertation, scholarship is also understood as knowledge acquired through experience, observation, common sense, innate wisdom, trial and error, and the study of the world, its beings, and people outside of *schools*. The arts of teaching and learning are as much, if not more, dependent on this sort of scholarship for "it is not just the university that fashions the student teacher's pedagogy; the student teacher's life history, both in and out of classrooms, offers definition of what it means to learn and to teach" (Britzman, 2003, p. 62); a reality addressed most directly in Finding 2, Chapter 2.

Becoming: Philosophical Underpinnings

> I believe that education which does not occur through forms of life, forms that are worth living for their own sake, is always a poor substitute for the genuine reality and tends to cramp and to deaden (Dewey, 1897, p. 79).

Mom, Verna Frances Berezan (nee Hamel)

If not for my Mother's[2] love and intuitive understanding of my needs, I don't know that I would have made anything of my life. She insisted in her own, uncomplicated ways that I was responsible for my own decisions and that I was accountable for my own actions. A more enormously, profound value upon which to base a life I could not have asked; for and upon this value I have based my sense of self-worth, self-belief, self-confidence, and the principles by which I live my life and through which I teach and learn. My Mother could not provide much materially or financially, nor could she protect me from the prejudices of a society that looked down their noses at the troubled or the impoverished or the socially unacceptable, but she did give me what I needed to make my own way in the world and that has made all the difference. From my Mother's influence developed my steadfast beliefs in honesty, trustworthiness, helping others especially those unable to help themselves, and being consistently aware that what I do has an effect and usually interconnected and multiple effects on others for which I am responsible--themes you will read in this dissertation, not only from the my perspective, but as it turns out, from the perspectives of the inquiry's participants and from great thinkers and motivators throughout time.

I did not know I would find such resonance in the participants' narratives with my Mother's innate abilities to teach what I needed to learn until I did this research; but as you will read, what changes the participants recommend for teaching and learning are very much what my Mother understood instinctively. Likewise, teachers need to understand the interests and needs of the students from students' perspectives and then offer an education that meets those needs and interests in a meaningful, transformative way. Though I did, I tried very hard not to disappoint

[2] I intentionally capitalize Mother when referring to my Mother as I will do when using such prepositions to refer to other people I hold reverentially in high esteem.

my Mother, a personal imperative you will also read in Gregory's narrative (one of the participants in this inquiry). She was not with me in this life near long enough (my Mother passed at age thirty-seven when I was seventeen and my Brother was almost one and a half), but as Gregory knows and you will read later, a mother's love is tremendously transformative in ways that affect us both in our adult lives.

My mother also gave me music. I can still hear her singing to me the contemporary songs of her time and it was in her record collection that I first heard the poetic, lyrical, and pattern structures that are the elements of much of the music people listen to and I play today. I am still happiest when I am singing and drumming on stage, playing with a *tight* professional band, performing for an active audience, and *working the room*. As an artist, I try to use what I have learned through the performance and expression of music (drama and theatre as well) daily in all classes I teach, from kindergarten to university level. Within the work and knowledge of musical performance comes the "electricity" (Eisner, 1994, p. 328) I bring to any classroom in an effort to avoid what "the ordinary school" does when it "impresses the little one into a narrow area, into a melancholy silence, into a forced attitude of mind and body, till his curiosity is dulled into surprise at the strange things happening to him" (Dewey/Dewey, 1915 [2002], p. 20). My Mother's innate wisdom, instinctive intelligence, and "native capacity for education" (Dewey, in Archambault, 1964, p. 199) continues to transform my life in a multiplicity of interconnected, intercontextual, and interrelational ways. Though I did not know this would be the case, at the core of each participant's narrative, there are like transformational origins and this reality is reflected in the findings (Chapter 4).

Victor Michael Berezan

My brother was almost one and a half years old when our Mother died. He was not only wrenched from his Mother's love, he was immediately cast into a family of relatives he did not know and they had no understanding that he might me emotionally and psychologically affected by such a life-altering loss or harsh adjustment in circumstances. No one in the family knew that I had taken care of Victor when Mother was working and I was not in school. I did not even know the enormous strength of the bond we had established until later my life. After he went to live a long way away, we did not see each other often. We spent holidays, birthdays, and other special occasions together, but it took a while for me to start a career, achieve a livelihood, and afford the wherewithal to spend more time with my Brother. During those years, Victor was pretty much alone with his anxieties and insecurities, his low self-esteem, and lack of self-confidence. He was psychologically devastated by the loss of his Mother and the people he was with just thought he was troubled and worse, that he was "slow". The anguish of such misunderstandings and unconscionable labeling turn up in the participants narratives as well. As with the participants, the adults in Victor's life did not think they needed to consider his needs, his emotions, or his psychology before deciding how he would be treated, led, and educated. Needless to say, Victor suffered much anguish and exhibited considerable anger during his younger years toward this lack of belief in him and his abilities.

When Victor reached adulthood, he and I talked long hours about our past and we both understood more fully how we were affected by our humble origins and the loss of our Mother. Though we spent long periods apart while he was growing up, the bond uniting us so long ago was strong—as though we grew up together. And we are very close now. Victor is a scholar in the true sense of the word—he works to understand himself and his past and he is a life-long learner

as he continues to decipher life and his effect in the world. He is extremely loyal and he is principled in his beliefs. Together we reinforce each other's self-belief and I have learned so much of what I understand about human psychology and human teaching strategies through my experiences and conversations with my Brother, Victor. In my first undergraduate year in education, Victor was foremost in my thoughts as I learned the fundamental nature of human need and interest. He believes now that if his needs and interests had been at all considered during his K-12 years, his educational outcomes would have been much different and he would have spent many fewer years in his life thinking he was "stupid," a sentiment echoed by Emily in her narrative, which you will read later in this manuscript. As Victor and I have worked through our experiences together, we have learned that forgiveness is earned. How people in authority treat others is of utmost importance in teaching and learning and teachers have ethical obligations to their students as well as to their colleagues.

Victor has been a muse and often a mentor, though he is 16 years younger than I am. As I have done throughout my career, I learn from all people and all things, even if they are much younger and that has made a difference in my teaching and in my learning. What my Brother has taught me about loyalty, honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, relationships, and love has been invaluable to me as a brother and as a teacher.

Teachers

Major determinants in much of my personal, professional, and philosophical growth are the beliefs that we are all teachers and we are all learners and that there is always something more to learn. To include a *teachers* segment about only a few of the my very influential *school* teachers seems a sort of betrayal of the aforementioned beliefs and of so many teachers without degrees,

but the teachers I write about below taught in transformative ways so much in keeping with what the participants in this study find meaningful in educational experiences (see Chapter 5). The participants have actually helped me understand more fully the significance of their teaching and of my learning and that is why they are included here.

In Grade 2, Mrs. Modine created a very family oriented teaching and learning environment where I felt safe and that I belonged. At a time when I felt neither of these basic qualities of life outside the her classroom, Mrs. Modine's approach to teaching provided the kind of safe and caring classroom that Amy, a participant in this inquiry, wanted to establish for her classes. The harsh realities of my world were relieved in Mrs. Modine's room and her warmth and motherly charm I still remember fondly. It was also during Grade 2 that I was given extra time with Mrs. McGregor, the elementary music teacher in our school, to rehearse parts in school concerts. All students went to music classes and there were talented students amongst us, but I was nurtured in singing. I remember, in particular, singing my heart out as one of the Three Kings in a Christmas Pageant, and feeling an early love for drama, music, and performance.

Mrs. Thompson was another teacher who took a motherly interest in me and my education. In fact, she reminded me in many ways, of my Mother. I thrived in her class and it was in her class that my capabilities in all subjects became evident. By the end of the year with Mrs. Thompson, I was ready for the *top class* in Grade 4, an insidious ranking system very prevalent in schools at the time. I went into Mrs. Langford's class, where I did not thrive. The kind of supportive teacher/student relationship, fundamental to a teaching praxis that transforms (see Chapter 5) and that was so important to my progress in earlier grades did not seem to come to fruition in Grade 4. I am not entirely sure to what extent external, contextual experiences might have influenced the classroom context (Finding 2). There was always much uncertainty and

considerable upheaval in my life outside of school, but for whatever reason, the teacher/student relationship was just not as strong in Grade 4 with Mrs. Langford and that affected how I responded to what was being taught in that top class. Needless to say, I was not in top class in Grade 5. I include Mrs. Langford here because she was one of the first people to hire me as a musician and drummer when I reached my teens. She had a band that played gigs on weekends for weddings, community events, and fairs and she needed a drummer. I might not have responded to her teaching style in Grade 4, but she was keeping an eye on me and when the opportunity arose to help me in ways she probably could not in school, she did. I made my first money as a musician because of Mrs. Langford and because of her recommendations, I made it into the music *biz*ness jobbing-in with several other bands. I think Mrs. Langford understood school "as a form of community life" (Dewey, 1897, p. 80) that extended beyond a school day or even a school year. I was not forgotten by her as a member of that extended community for which I will be eternally grateful.

Mrs. Loree was my Grade 5 teacher and she was, of all my school teachers, the most influential in transforming my life. By the time I arrived in her class my artist abilities must have been showing because Mrs. Loree found ways to encourage my talents in drawing, painting, and music. She was a musician herself and played her guitar while she sang songs with the class. Art projects were often massive taking over the classroom with all students in the class involved. Smaller artistic endeavours were entered into contests for which I did receive awards. Mrs. Loree took us outside to draw interesting things and buildings on the school grounds and she took me on painting trips where we would set up facing some beautiful or fascinating landscape and paint their likenesses in oils. Mrs. Loree taught as she lived, as an artist, for "far from being an escape from life, art is a deep involvement in life, one that enriches the participant now and afterward"

(McCaslin, 2000, p. 258). I have followed in her footsteps and, perhaps, I have created a few of my own footprints along the way.

Mrs. Loree was also instrumental in starting my musical education. During my Grade 5 year I was introduced to Mr. Jerry Bryant, the high school music teacher. Jerry Bryant (everyone said his name this way) was larger than life and he was the best music teacher I ever had. He was from Denver, Colorado, Black, cool, and when he played his jazzy-blues style on the piano, he enlivened our souls. He asked what instrument I was interested in and for some reason or other, I said trumpet. After multiple attempts to generate a buzz with my lips into the trumpet mouthpiece, he suggested I might try some other instrument. He said, "how about drums?" and I responded with "yeah, I like drums". What made him say drums or how he knew, if he did, that drumming was in my soul I don't know; but I started on bass drum with the high school concert band when I was ten-years-old and I was in that band or involved with it and the associated music program for almost ten years after I started. I was allowed to go to rehearsals in the high school band room from my Grade 5 classes by Mrs. Loree and in the years following I learned the *musical chops* that I needed and took with me into the *Biz* when I started playing gigs in my early teens. Through the collaboration and planning of two caring, talented, and transformative teachers, I continue to enjoy a life in music and make part of my living as a professional musician.

Charming and egalitarian Mrs. Nelson made learning in junior high fun, but more importantly, she did not accept the boy/girl stereotypes prevalent in schools then and now. She expected students to treat each other as equals regardless of gender or ability or background. Mr. Trucky was one of my high school physical education teachers. He is the only Phys. Ed. teacher I have ever known who taught that fitness and health did not require skills in sports. He understood that there were many other ways to become fit including dance. If he did conduct a sporting

activity in his classes it was intended to be fun and for exercise. He never tried to embarrass anyone for his or her lack of skill in a sport. I still advocate for similar humane approaches to physical education classes in our schools. Not many of us are athletes nor do we need to be, but we all should have an opportunity to be fit and healthy. Mr. and Mrs. Trucky came to many of the dances I played with my band. I still see them gracefully swirling around the dance floor dancing and smiling up at me on the stage as I sang and drummed many a lovely night away. Mrs. Woodman was my Grade 12 English teacher. She had a voice like Johnny Reid, but in a monotone and without the Scottish accent; however, when she read *Macbeth* to the class, I was enthralled. I do not know why I understood Shakespeare's words so easily, but Mrs. Woodman's reading introduced me to one of the most significant artistic influences of my life. She could have done what many teachers do and said read the text and answer the questions, but instead, she used that unique voice and had us imagine and understand the world of *Scottish play* and the universal truths of Shakespeare.

I am sure all of my teachers were aware that three meals a day were not the norm where I lived. My Mother and I were dependent on a man who lived only for his next drink and who was hardly a human being really. The teachers I have written about here went beyond the call for me and other students, a compassionate quality especially valued by students and by the participants in this study. The synergic and transformative educational experiences initiated by these very special people continue to influence and to teach through my life to this day (See Chapter 4). When the participants in this study spoke positively of some of their teachers, they spoke of how these special people stepped up and made a difference in their lives in ways no one else did or could. In retrospect and with a researcher's reflection (Finding 3), I understand my teachers in a

very similar way. There were other influential teachers, but suffice it to say, I had some exceptionally, remarkable, and transformative teachers.

Parents and Grandparents

Obviously, my Mom was one of my parents, but life provided me with another Mother and Father, Jean and Glenn Sawyer. Tom Sawyer, their son, and I met when I was eleven-years-old. We've been best friends and close brothers since. I was pretty much at the Sawyers as much as I could be prior to my Mother's death, but after, the Sawyers took me in. They had no obligation to do so, but in their hearts and minds I was already part of the family and I was not to be left alone in the world. This generosity of spirit and love they gave freely without any thought to command or shape me to their will and without and hint they expected anything of me in return. I became their son and, they, my parents for always; and I was not expected to question my luck or fate. Life was as it was and we were family.

Needless to say, I was extremely grateful and I tried very hard not to let them down; but as it was with my Mom, Jean and Glenn Sawyer never found fault and offered advice only as I needed it. Without their love and support, my life might have gone very badly. On my own, without resource or prospects or help, I might have fallen into the darker reaches of human existence. I do know that, instead, I got on with my life, I returned for upgrading, and I entered university. It is not up to me to decide, but any good I have done comes from a strong belief that I could do no less that to pay forward as best I could and I can the unconditional love and support that Jean and Glenn Sawyer and others have given me.

Of course, along with parents, come grandparents. Grandpa Hamel, my Mom's Father, was a hardworking, jovial, Metis man with a thick French accent you could hang a hat on. He was

not a man of many means, but his cheerfulness was contagious. He would give the shirt off his back, as it were, if it were needed. His goodness came through my Mother to benefit me in ways I am still reflecting upon and understanding. Baba Berezan could speak only a few words in English and because of estrangement in that side of the family I did not see her many times in my life. However, when we were at some family gathering, she always sought me out and found some private moment to communicate in very broken English her interest in how I was doing, letting be know that I was her grandson and part of the family. Outside of the fact that she was the best cook in the world, she also helped me understand that there were people looking out for me though I often felt very alone.

Other Brothers and Sisters

As aforementioned, Tom Sawyer became my friend when he was ten and I was eleven. Tom is my best friend and has been as close a Brother to me as Victor for most of my life. We did everything together as kids and we were never bored. We played hard, worked odd jobs to earn spending money, we laughed our heads off, hunted, went on adventures, became army cadets, and imagined our futures together. In our mid-teens, Tom saved my life. I was always a weak swimmer and we decided we could swim the Pembina River cross-current. Tom could, but I could not. Half way across, I was going down and in trouble. Tom kept his distance in the water, but talked me to my senses and into shore. A very smart rescue strategy, indeed. I felt stupid for trying the crossing, but I was very much aware that without Tom, I might not have made it out of the river. Later in our lives, Tom came to be with me on the night my Mother passed to make sure I would not be alone. No one from my biological family came to see how I was and no one has been a better friend to me than Tom Sawyer. I owe him my life in so many ways. A friendship

like ours is one in a million and I would rather have one such friend than all the Facebook-type friends in the world. We are a good team, Tom and I. I have been there for him when needed and him for me, but I would not be the principled man I am without his friendship and the Brotherly love we share.

Sherri Sawyer is Tom's Sister. In a lot of ways, she is the heart of our family. She checks in with us, not to be nosy, but to make sure we are all right. Reaching out to help is in her DNA and as her parents did before her, Sherri (and her husband, Randy) has taken in people in need giving them a step up until they could move forward with their lives on their own. She was, in fact, instrumental in my arrival in the Sawyer's home after my Mother passed away. Though, I doubt Mom and Pop Sawyer needed any prompting, Sherri was the first to suggest (I found out years later) that I come to live with the Sawyers. Before I knew Sherri was thinking of me as a brother, she already had included me in the family, for which, I cannot thank her enough.

I would be remiss in writing about fraternal and sororal influences in my philosophical core if I did not write something more about my Brothers and Sisters in the fire service. I had the privilege and honour to serve in the Merritt Fire & Rescue Department (MFRD) with some of the most intelligent, trustworthy, honorable, and selfless people I have ever known. We trained hard, studied extensively, retrained, and studied some more for hazardous events inside burning buildings and through torn-up car wrecks to save lives. With our long hours of training, study and testing, calculated risk, common sense, our wits, and our mantra, *Everyone Goes Home*, we faced and overcame together adversities others dared not attempt. We always worked in teams and with an immediate partner within the team. Leadership was shared and based on trust, not assignment or privilege or authority. My Brother and Sister firefighters dedicated their time to helping others in the direst of circumstances and not once did I hear anyone one of them call for recognition for

their efforts, public or otherwise. They stepped up for the innocent, those who could not help themselves, and anyone else who needed their help on scene and in their everyday lives. They represent the highest order of human endeavor and sacrifice and I am honoured to have had the opportunity to work with them. MFRD's commitment to *integrity*, *mentoring*, *people* skills, quick *response*, *empathy*, dedication to *service*, and detailed attention to *safety* (the IMPRESS values of the Department) mirrors values and qualities the findings of this study suggest are fundamental to ethical teaching and learning and to a teaching praxis that transforms. I am still MFRD Lieutenant David Berezan, retired, a title I am both humbled and very proud to bear.

Before I ever attended a class at university I was inspired to live by and believe in principles such as accountability, honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, loyalty, selflessness, going the extra mile, the importance of hard work, empathy, safety first, paying back and paying forward, and I took these philosophical beliefs into my teaching career. With philosophical underpinnings set in my youth I dedicated myself to a career in teaching (though I was already a working musician and singer) and that rudimentary foundation still supports the pedagogical, epistemological, and theoretical framework within which this study was conducted. I believe these characteristics, though I am still learning to embody them well, brought my students back to me to tell of their transformative experiences working with me in classes, which of course, prompted my interest in the research encompassed in this dissertation (see p. 19-20). I also believe that these qualities of human personality allowed the participants in this study to reveal so personally their experiences of transformation. The trust we established was immediate and the data we generated together invaluable.

As the findings will point out, human beings are a synergy of transformative experiences within multiple interrealtional, interconnected, and intercontextual circumstances. We are all a balance of nature and nurture. I did not travel the trajectory of my life entirely on my own volition. Many others helped, some hindered, me along the way. Whatever innate capacities and potentials I possess, have been transformed through experiences with other people, a number of them teachers. As teachers, we are obligated to take seriously the trust young people should have in us to facilitate their capacities and potentials.

From Socrates to the Deweys and Beyond

> Often, the business of a teacher is to help others discover what they already know, still unarticulated, and how to use and share it (Bateson, 2000, p. 234).

The research and data collection with the participants provided the findings for this particular inquiry, but my search for a *teaching praxis that transforms* has been part of my life's work, first at a very intuitive, trial and error level and then, at a concentrated level of scholarship and research. The personal and practical led to the historical and theoretical; and this evolutionary process, within which I am very much embedded, continues to spiral forward and back again and again as I work to be a better teacher tomorrow than I was yesterday.

As an educator, I have come to believe strongly in the transformative powers of educational experience; unintentionally accomplished and usually overlooked in the present, but often life or self-altering and deeply profound in effect on the future lives of students and teachers. At holiday time before I started my doctoral work, I received an update from one of my students now at university. She remains determined, talented, articulate, and inspirational, but she was struggling with the insecurities of the move that brought her from a "big fish in a little pond" at home to being a little fish in an ocean of sea creatures at university. She was waffling a little in her original

educational plan. In her letter, amongst many thoughts, insights, and affirmations, she wrote "I was so lucky to be able to study with you and gain those values to run with in the future. I may not have a big fancy resume, as compared to most, but I have the morals and the attitude given to me to be successful, all because of you. I think what I am trying to get at here is, thank you."

I am always taken aback and humbled by such stories, but I'm even more flummoxed by this student's *out of the blue* and unsolicited outpouring of thanks because I was not ever sure she even considered me competent as a teacher, let alone, someone who helped her "gain those values to *run* with in the future!" She was a brilliant student—ever willing to learn, to try new material, to go well beyond the curriculum to be best for herself, her classmates, her school, and her community. I believed (and believe) in her strongly as a student and person, but I did not think she thought I had anything to do with any of her successes. Recurring questions came to mind. How and when did the transformation that set her post-secondary and perhaps her adult life in motion, begin, take root, and flourish; can it ever end once set in motion; and more, importantly, *why* did this extraordinary transformative experience occur at all?

Questions like these and others motivated by other students inspired this inquiry to address or, at least, approach the very heart or essence of what is meaningful to students in educational experience. People tell me, often only realizing long after the fact, that something happened for them in class that was more significant to them than all the rest of their education put together or there might have been two or three such transformations in their educational experiences. Though memory sometimes *tightens* and adjusts stories told and retold, the unwavering certainty, clarity, and longevity of such testimonials and the effects of transformative experiences cannot be denied. Here is where I wanted to focus my research, on these stories of transformation about educational experiences that continue to affect people in consequential ways long into their adult lives. Though

research by nature must always be ongoing, the stories of the participants in this study substantively respond to the inquiry research question:

> *Within teaching and learning praxis, what fosters the transformative and self- or life-altering experiences that students recount long into their lives?*

From a very young age in early grade school, I was aware of a school system that discriminated against an impoverished boy from a more than dysfunctional family living in a shack at the edges of social acceptability. Since those early hegemonic experiences, it has been my quest to subvert the hidden curriculum that dictates the suppression and, sometimes, oppression of the underdog in our Western educational institutions. As it turns out, John Dewey and later his daughter, Eleanor, were already on this mission almost a hundred years ago when they called for teachers to "ally themselves with their friends against their common foe, the privileged class, and in the alliance develop the character, skill and intelligence that are necessary to make a democratic social order a fact" (Dewey, 1897, p. 161). With my Master's and PhD work came the time, the reflection, and the in-depth study and research that allowed me to embrace, elaborate, and embody more fully the teaching praxis I had been working with, on, and in all my career.

Philosophically, theoretically, historically, pedagogically, professionally, and personally I am influenced, inspired, and shaped by numerous philosophers, educators, psychologists, practitioners, reformers, students, artists, friends, family, and many other people I have known and worked with through my life, research, and career. From Socrates to the Deweys and beyond, there have also been many educationists, thinkers, theorists, and other inspirational people who have offered numerous innovative approaches to teaching and learning more in line with what my students and the participants in this study have reinforced as meaningful in educational experience. These pedagogically perceptive people do not always use the word transformation in their

research, writing, practice, or discourse; but they do insist that teaching and learning environments be collaborative, relational, and transformative in nature. They expect that educational spaces foster and facilitate self-confidence, self-belief, and growth amongst students through teaching practices that focus on *how* we teach rather than on *what* we teach. Together, these thinkers, innovators, practitioners and reformers have been offering, over a very long period of time, various opportunities to centre our teaching upon what students think they need, rather than on what others think they need, and all of them stand in opposition to what still is very much a "*factory model* of schooling" (Jardine, 2008, p. 4)

From David Smith's (1996 [1999]) view that "the interest of the teacher is not to teach, in the usual sense of imparting well-formulated epistemologies, but to protect the conditions under which students in their own way find their way" (p. 467) and Brian Way's (1967) *way* of teaching people "through" (p. 2) subjects and resources to John Dewey's (1897) belief that "The student cannot be *taught* what he needs to know, but he can be *coached*" (p. 17), educators and scholars have long been advocating for teaching and learning environments where, "the teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teaches" (Freire, 2000, p. 80). If educators truly want to make a difference in the lives of their students and to avoid continued adhesions to education systems that pit teachers and students against each other "as two solitudes without the conceptual means for breaching the source of their mutual pain" (Smith, Preface, Jardine, 2000, p. xii), we must find another way to teaching and learning that helps students "find their" ways *through* the subjects we teach as *coaches* or facilitators in a "dialogue with students who, in turn, while being taught also" teach.

The vested interests that govern schools in the West and what is taught in them have yet to accomplish the *level playing field* or the *striving for excelle*nce or *an education system served well*

by the basics they claim to aspire to and these oft touted mantras fizzle into catch phrases thrown up as shields against change. In my long experience as an educator, I have found too many leave school (including university) thinking their educations, to say the least, have been less than useful. Sustaining the love for learning all students seem to enter school with past Grades 2 or 3 has been, overall, a highly unsuccessful enterprise throughout institutionalized education. Elliot Eisner (1994) places in perspective that child-like joy of discovery and learning teachers seem so intuitively well-suited to embrace in their classrooms:

> Playing with ideas that are transformed and guided by rules is as prevalent in the art studio as it is in the science laboratory. Although each area has its own syntax, each its own form and rules, they share the need for play as a source of invention and discovery. But for such a disposition to be cultivated, teachers themselves need to feel free to innovate, to explore, and to play. Teaching is not an act modeled after the sequence of a highly efficient assembly line (p. 161).

Teachers (and students) need to "feel free" to teach and learn as is needed with a sense of learning for learning's sake as do all of us when we make our way in the world. Entrusting educators with the facilitation of such a coveted task and allowing them to teach according to need and interest will be, in itself, educationally transformative. My experience and research tells me that within teaching and learning environments where the need-to-know and student growth trumps vested interest and imposed imperatives, the potential for meaningful, affirmative, and life-altering educational experiences is much greater.

Though the pedagogical thinkers, reformers, and teachers I include in the next sections of this chapter have diverged somewhat in method, approach, practice, and in time and place, but they are all unified in their belief that students are an essential, powerful, transformative, and educative force in learning. All people involved in education claim to be in it for the good of students but clearly, the practitioners who I have included in this chapter believe that students are

integral to determining that good. I have organized this part of chapter with visionaries highly influential to my scholarship and pedagogy in three sections: *From Socrates to the Deweys*, *Beyond the Deweys*, and A*rtistic Influences.* The thinkers I have included in each section are organized chronologically through historical time, though crossovers in time exist because some are contemporaries. I have used this chronology for ease of composition, to demarcate the historical record of so many who have practiced teaching and learning in ways more conducive to human development, and to honour those who have come before. Because I have chosen voices historically and from the distant past, women's voices do not show up until the end of the first section. Unfortunately, the silencing of women voices during most of human history resulted in a dearth of publications, particularly in academic realms. However, though women's rights and freedoms are as threatened in the world today as they have ever been, their voices are now on the record and some of those voices reinforce and reflect the data and findings of this inquiry.

The people I have included have taken a stand on principle, often in the face of adversarial norms and entrenched economic, political, educational, and institutional forces for the rights and freedoms of teachers and students. I believe that by taking ideas, insights, values, and intentions from all of the thinkers and inspirators included in this dissertation, more educational environments that offer students and teachers an appreciation for learning, self-development, and more fun could be established in our schools. I do not advocate for one philosopher or thinker over another, but rather suggest that collectively these thinkers offer better ways, other ways, to teach and learn so that students are not disavowed of their natural educational instincts. Teaching and learning in school should never inspire students to wish "for an escape from [their] little prison (Dewey/Dewey, 1915 [2002], p. 20). Each visionary is presented independently of others as they exited and worked, but l consider them a collective of innovators for education today and for the

future. I look to the past and the present in this research in the spirit of discovery and invention to piece together a collaborative, inter-relational, and collegial model of teaching and learning that is sustained through a transformative teaching praxis and that respects student need, voice, and interest.

From Socrates to John and Eleanor Dewey

Socrates (469-399 BC) was "born to a humble artisan family in fifth-century democratic Athens" and "attracted a circle of prominent disciples, with whom he pursued the question of how to live well" (Lane, 2002), p. 42). Ultimately, Socrates lived his life in opposition to the status quo, a conflict that would lead to his trial for treason and his death, but his pursuit of truth and virtue influenced those that maintained his memory after his time and continues to influence teachers in the Socratic Method to this day. He believed in the essential nature of *dia*logue where people were involved in an exchange of ideas and arguments in an effort to learn from and enrich each other. "When individuals reason dialogically, they expect to figure out what they think through dialogue. And it is precisely because of this expectation that they regard knowing is a shared or social process, rather than a personal or private endeavor" (Westerhof-Schultz & Weisner, 2004, p. 35). I wonder what Socrates would have thought of students working in silence hour after hour sitting in desks and he himself at a desk in equal silence with periodic utterings of instructions for more silent work?

I am particularly taken with his stance upon principle at his trial when he claimed that his accusers could not harm him, though clearly they could in every way except that which mattered to Socrates—he could not be corrupted by "ignorance and vice" (Brickhouse/Smith, 1989, pp. 162-163). Socrates, at least as recounted by Plato, had a distinct aversion to "letters" [the Greek

equivalent of hardcopy or books] as an invention or "elixir not of memory, but of reminding; and you offer your pupils the appearance of wisdom, not true wisdom" (Plato's *Phaedrus* 275a-275b), but his loathing for what would eventually become textbooks was replaced with his focus on truth and wisdom through reflexive, dialectic conversations with *co-thinkers* (what others called his students) in which he acted as "midwife" (Plato's *Theaetetus* 150 b-151d) or facilitator or collaborator. "It is quite clear that they never learned anything from me; the many fine discoveries to which they cling are of their own making. But to me and the gods they owe their delivery" (Socrates in *Theaetetus* 150 b-151d). Though Socrates was speaking defensively here at his trial, he was adamantly opposed to the idea that he was employed as a teacher or sophist (the 5th century B.C. Greek equivalent). "Socrates did not have students per se" (Smith, B., 2011, p. 2), but he was the consummate transformative teacher engaged with his co-learners in an enlightening process through which "they all make astonishing progress; and this in the opinion of others as well as in their own" (Socrates in *Theaetetus* 150 b-151d).

Socrates did not write himself and therefore, all that is attributed to him or written in his defence is not entirely "historically reliable" (Waterfield, 2009, p. 26). In fact, "the popular image of Socrates as a man of immense moral integrity was largely the creation of his pupil, Plato" (Waterfield, 2009, p. 24), but his influence in education, both inspirationally and legendary, is still felt over two thousand years after his time. "One so thoroughly fitted by nature, taste, tone of thought, and character, to elevate the moral tone and develop the minds of others by means of personal intercourse, could hardly feel at home in any other life" (Zeller, 1885, pp. 66-67). However he would describe himself, Socrates was an inspiration to teaching and learning and in many ways he seems to have been an *everyman*. "Day by day he was about in the market and public walks, in schools, and workshops, ever ready to have a word with friend or stranger, with

citizen or foreigner, but always prepared to give an intellectual or moral turn to the talk" (Zeller, 1885, pp. 68-69). In the midst of an Athens that was ruled by a male-dominated, propertied, and somewhat less than democratic powered-elite, Socrates believed "as citizens, students must know how to seriously examine a range of positions for themselves and to form their own view on issues of concern to them" (Westerhof-Schultz/Weisner, 2004, p. 48). Though he became embroiled in a deathly activism against the Athenian aristocracy, he imagined "himself to be less a wise man after the usual fashion than a gadfly (30e5), who stings the body-politic by rousing, inducing, and reproaching words (30e7) to refute and confuse their elders on their most vital and cherished beliefs" (Brickhouse/Smith, 1989, p. 198).

Whether one believes Socrates is the founder of Western education or the antithesis of modern learning because truth for him was not his or anyone else's truth, but "*the* truth" (Boghossian, 2006, p. 719), Socrates' offered a dialogic, dialectic, collective, and collaborative learning space where all learned whether in the pursuit of truth or anything other topic of interest. He also offered an important fundamental in learning and teaching: self-reflection. "Socrates [was] convinced that the unexamined life is not worth living" (Brickhouse/Smith, 1989, p. 269). Upon such principled offerings, schools very different from the ones I have known as a student and teacher could be founded.

I am also drawn to educational reformer Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi's assertion that, "children should not be given ready-made answers but should arrive at answers themselves . . . their self-activity encouraged" (Silber, 1965, 140). In other words more pedagogical and epistemological energy needs to be spent on encouraging self-motivated activity in learning and on promoting the self-discipline that this type of occupation demands of both teacher and student. The concept of self-activity also demands that "the pupil be brought face to face with some

problem [or exercise or text or activity or way of knowing] which will challenge his maximum ability" letting the educational process "take care of itself" (Judd, 1925, 145) through the concentration and focus engendered by the student's inherent desire and/or need to know or do. In 1807 Pestalozzi wrote in his *Letter from Stans*:

> Man readily accepts what is good, and the child readily listens to it; but it is not for you that he wants it, master and educator, but for himself. The good to which you would lead him must not depend on your capricious humour or passion; it must be a good which is good in itself and by the nature of things, and which the child can recognize as good (p. Guimps/Quick, 1890, p.153).

Pestalozzi's assertion that educators "lead" students to a "good" that a "child can recognize" offers a teaching space where students and teachers are together responsible for what is learned.

Wilhelm Dilthey, historian, psychologist, and sociologist is another of the philosophers I have found to offer a significant educational perspective. He believed that life skills cannot wholly be contained within institutionalized schools. "Dilthey's concept of life (*das Leberi*) referred to something very real and significant, life as we experience it in our daily lives" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 273), which aligns very closely to Dewey's "I believe that education, therefore, is a process of living and not a preparation for future living (Dewey, 1897, p. 79). Dilthey promoted lifelong learning and growth as a natural human experience:

> Nothing can be more erroneous than viewing maturity as the goal of the development that constitutes life and thus transforming the early years into mere means. How could those years serve as means to a goal which in each case is so uncertain? Instead, it is part of the nature of life to strive to fill each moment with a richness of value (Dilthey, 1924, 219).

Teachers who define a student's life prospects by his or her current performance in class or in school or on standardized tests or within a *system* that may or may not reflect or respond to or even be relevant in that student's life, participate in the hypocritical hidden curriculum that undermines the egalitarian tenet supposedly endorsed in grade school and perpetuate the myth that

CUM-files tell all and that free will doesn't exist. Transformative learning experiences may be triggered by such prejudices—negative reinforcement after all can be as powerfully instructive as positive enrichment—but I prefer Dilthey's emphasis on "the pedagogical relation" between students and teachers "as the only possible starting point for education" (Friesen & Saevi, 2010, p. 16).

Klaus "Mollenhauer, pedagogical theorist, believed that the "personal characteristics of a teacher or professor, and the relation between student and teacher are often paramount" (Friesen & Saevi, 2010, 1). Again, the emphasis is placed on the fundamental nature of the relationship between teacher and students as team players in the mutual endeavour of teaching and learning. Mollenhauer's educational influences are steeped in the notions "that pedagogy is fundamentally relational and that it is based on a special kind of relationship between adult and child" (Friesen & Saevi, 2010, p. 16) and that "technical excellence in teaching is not, in itself, a sufficient condition for being a good teacher" (Friesen & Saevi, 2010, p. 18). Rather, the quality and centrality of human relations in the classroom determine the value of learning. "The impetus for growth, in other words, is not something guaranteed through effective or expert technique; rather, it is something that is provided in significant part by the child, and for which the child seeks adult help" (Friesen/Saevi, 2010, p. 12). Mollenhauer even offered a change for teacher education from one focused primarily on the delivery of already known knowledge to one focused on the relational nature of "the discipline of pedagogy" that "can depart only from a description of the educator in relation to the child" (Friesen/Saevi, 2010, p. 16). No longer would a teacher simply be the authority figure in charge of imparting *curricula ad infinitum*. A teacher would become an artist in human relations.

Rabindranath Tagore, innovative educator and artist, developed a school in India where people were empowered, learned to think critically, and to expand their imaginations through the arts. "At Santiniketan [West Bengal, India], he stated his goal was to create a poem in a medium other than words. It was this poetic vision that enabled him to fashion a scheme of education which was all inclusive, and to devise a unique program for education in nature and creative self-expression in a learning climate congenial to global cultural exchange" (O'Connell, 2003, 6). Tagore calls to the artistic qualities of my character and teaching praxis as a performer and researcher. He rejected any form of schooling that impeded the natural and necessary human experience of creativity and he believed we should not have "our life weaned away from nature and our mind" (Tagore, 1916, 116) through schools.

Tagore's school, alive and active, speaks volumes through time to a Canadian school system that continues the tyrannous and dastardly commitment to the sitting paradigm of Western education. His school defied the institutional mentality that insists creative and intuitive endeavour (as in the arts of writing, acting, singing, dancing, or playing in a band) must be peripheral to the *core* subjects. Not to diminish the importance of the so called *core*, but what privileges these areas of educational experience over the arts where growth and transformation are as natural as being born? Tagore actually offered the *well-rounded* educational experience most North American institutions purport to provide, which of course, they do not in any way recognizable by anyone who understands and lives life outside the *basic* core areas of scholastic activity.

The pedagogical work of John Dewey in the development of public schools that "would produce alert, balanced, critical-minded individuals who would continue to grow in intellectual and moral stature after graduation" (Warde, 1960, p. 9) has yet to be fully realized in North

America, but he continues to inform educational practice and reminds us that education must have impact beyond high school. Dewey believed that:

> The most important attitude that can be formed is that of desire to go on learning. If impetus in this direction is weakened instead of being intensified, something much more than mere lack of preparation takes place. The pupil is actually robbed of native capacities which otherwise would enable him to cope with the circumstances that he meets in the course of his life (Dewey, 1938, p. 48).

Dewey's grand egalitarian design of schools where "teachers will inspire a desire for knowledge, and will serve as guides in the investigations undertaken, rather than as task-masters" (Warde, 1960, p. 9) and students would be "creative, well-adjusted equalitarians" (Warde, 1960, p. 5) is a very different vision of teaching and learning in the classroom than most educators, students, and I have known and experienced most often in the classrooms of our schools. For Dewey, "the child is the starting point, the centre, and the end. His or her development, his growth, is the ideal. [He or she] alone furnishes the standard" (Dewey, 1976, p. 276). The child's very nature as the "standard" upon which teaching and learning is to be based in the classrooms of our schools—how refreshing against a backdrop of *standard*ized curricula, testing, and Fraser Institute-like statistical rankings within which students have no input or much relevance.

Dewey was a man of his time, but presciently a man looking into the future and into our present:

> Instead of providing this chance for growth and discovery, the ordinary school impresses the little one into a narrow area, into a melancholy silence, into a forced attitude of mind and body, till his curiosity is dulled into surprise at the strange things happening to him. Very soon his body is tired of his task and he begins to find ways of evading his teacher, to look about him for an escape from his little prison (Dewey/Dewey, 1915 [2002], p. 20).

These attempts to escape the drudgery of schooling still proliferate in our elementary and secondary schools in which I currently substitute teach. Teachers and students can and do lament

that so little has changed. A student's "indifference or dislike is almost surely the result of feeling that his work is making no impression, that the machine for which he is working is not after all affected or dependent upon his work (Dewey/Dewey, 1915 [2002], p. 191). The interests of students, or of teachers for that matter, have seldom, if ever, been considered in the development of so called *standards* of education. "Children cannot sit still all day at their desks as they do for five hours in most schools" (Dewey, 1938, p 179). Well, they can if forced to, but how brain-numbing and painful is such an excruciating, physically abnormal restriction on human health. "In the schools where the children are getting their knowledge by doing things, it is presented to them through all their senses and carried over into acts; it needs no feat of memory to retain what they find out; the muscles, sight, hearing, touch and their own reasoning processes all combine to make the result part of the working equipment of the child" (Dewey, in Archambault, 1964, p. 298).

Dewey was not naïve or an idealist. He knew in order to establish such learning environments much work had to be done culturally, socially, economically, politically, and pedagogically. Even the young would have to make adjustments:

> I am not romantic enough about the young to suppose that every pupil will respond or that any child of normally strong impulses will respond on every occasion. There are likely to be some who, when they come to school, are already victims of injurious conditions outside of the school and who have become so passive and unduly docile that they fail to contribute. There will be others who, because of previous experience, are bumptious and unruly and perhaps downright rebellious. But it is certain that the general principle of social control cannot be predicated upon such cases. The teacher has to deal with them individually (Dewey, 1938, p. 57).

Dewey believed that a "child learns to work from love of the work itself, not for a reward or because he is afraid of punishment (Dewey/Dewey, 1915 [2002], p. 298). It is "interest, not outside pressure, [that] mobilizes the maximum effort in acquiring knowledge as well as in performing work" (Warde, 1980, p. 50) and "when a person is absorbed, the subject carries him

on" (Dewey/Dewey, 1915 [2002], p. 225). I have found that the "docile," the "bumptious," and the "downright rebellious" respond well to "love of the work," "interest," and being "absorbed" in work and play. And Dewey trusted the professionalism of teachers and the interests of their students to teach and learn what they needed. Archambault (1964) wrote:

> Dewey looks upon the reaction between teacher and pupil as reciprocal. They should plan together and learn from each other. The teacher is not an authority in dispensing ideas to be absorbed by his pupils, but a guide, stimulus, and catalyst in getting the child to make his own relations and connections, his own ideas (p. xxviii).

He also believed in truly *safe and caring schools* as communities where the elder pupils could be trusted to take care of the younger amongst them. "The older children learn responsibility and cooperation from having to look out for the little people" (Dewey/Dewey, 1915 [2002], p. 195). When teaching in England the first time I was there, these familial relationships were well established within the school and expected of students by parents, administrators, teachers, and the students themselves and the sense of caring for one another truly proved to mitigate "bullying and in arousing personal pride and a sense of responsibility in the older child" (Dewey/Dewey, 1915 [2002], p.219). In Dewey's view, a school was a "form of community life" very much involved in the community and not simply a "place where certain information is to be given, where certain lessons are to be learned, or where certain habits are to be formed" (Dewey, 1897, p, 80). Schools would not exist in isolation from the community and learning would not be limited to the "basics" or restricted to ever-changing and prescribe curricula. Educational experience would be adaptive, receptive, perceptive, and transformative on a daily basis and the child would be the curriculum.

So what happened? Why were Dewey and the *Deweyists* only able to embed the seeds of this democratic, collaborative, relational, interactive, responsive and collegial teaching and learning community within the educational psyche of North American schools? "Dewey went

wrong, not in what he proposed for the school itself, but in his lack of understanding of the forces at work in American society and of the real relations between the educational and the economic systems, under capitalist rule" (Warde, 1960, p. 54). The capitalist, plutocratic elite did not want such schools. "Businessmen wanted docile and trained personnel for their offices and factories and voting sheep for their parties. They did not need independent, critical-minded individuals but standardized units who could function as interchangeable parts in their organizations (Warde, 1960, p. P 56). As I read the Alberta Teachers' Association News today, I do not see the issues in education much differently from what Dewey and others of his ilk knew and faced early in the 20th century. The brokers in the corporate/technological/digital realm still want their cogs, widgets, bricks, and chips to build their economic enterprises and have the economic and political power to dictate what will be done in schools. Economy should not mean the privileging of a few to the disadvantage and insecurity of the many.

Dewey's pedagogy requires only that decisions about what we teach and learn in schools is based on sound student/teacher collaboration and not for political and economic imperatives. One only need think for a moment about all the SMART Boards sitting in Alberta classrooms not being used at all or simply being used as projector-units much like the perfectly good technology they replaced to see that educational reasoning did not accompany that sudden imperative. Dewey reinforced the necessary expertise of professional teachers throughout his writings, but he clearly believed any thinking that suggests teaching and learning must be or ever can be contained and isolated in the classrooms of our schools as folly and antithetical to human experience:

> We are all born to be educators, to be parents, as we are not born to be engineers, or sculptors, or musicians, or painters. Native capacity for education is therefore much more common than native capacity for any other calling. Were it not so, human society could not hold together at all (Dewey, in Archambault, 1964, p. 199).

We are all teachers and we are all learners and we are all *responsible* for the "human society" we want to live within. "Dewey aimed to integrate the school with society, and the processes of learning with the actual problems of life, by a thoroughgoing application of the principles and practices of democracy" (Warde, 1960, p. 52), but not a democracy that segregated certain *Others* out of full participation or opportunity. Unfortunately, his America and our Canada at the time were not those types of democracies. He saw a school system that "would be open to all on a completely free and equal basis without any restrictions or segregation on account of color, race, creed, national origin, sex or social status" (Warde, 1960, p. 52). A democracy to be wished for.

Beyond the Deweys

Paulo Freire (1921-1997), educator and philosopher, may be the most oft quoted author after John Dewey and William Shakespeare. I think the depth of his influence in multiple realms of human endeavour, particularly those of social justice and education, is yet to be appreciated fully, but for me his firm belief in dialogue even amongst the oppressed and the oppressors speaks volumes about the trust he had in human beings to help, to heal, to hope, and to educate each other. "Dialogue cannot exist in the absence of a profound love for the world and for the people" (Freire, 2000, p. 89). His belief in the collaborative and mutually beneficial nature of educative processes complements Socrates approach to learning and is a foundational concept in a transformative teaching praxis:

> Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teaches (Freire, 2000, p. 80).

In praxis, learning with and from the students I taught strengthened our teaching and learning experiences. In fact, it was this dialogic and collaborative approach that facilitated the stories of transformation my students eventually told me. There was no need to be the authority, but rather to be a leader students could depend on. A leader at his or her best is not authoritative, but rather, a facilitator encouraging and fostering educational endeavours with students so they might lead themselves to success, self-confidence, and self-belief. Teacher and students are

> . . . jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. In this process, arguments based on *authority* are no longer valid: in order to function, authority must be on *the side of* freedom, not against it. Here no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. People teach each other . . . . (Freire, 2000, p. 80).

Though Freire directed his pedagogical views toward adult education, I have found their import and relevance applicable in all grades and levels I have taught. His belief in freedom, particularly, freedom of the mind, is reflected in the words of other theorists I have included in this review. He believed, "education as the practice of freedom—as opposed to education as the practise of domination—denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world" (Freire, 2000, p. 80). Restrictive classrooms with regimented routines, prescribed curricula, and indoctrination by rote is for many students, sources of apathy at best and, at worst, alienation. Students must be free to think for themselves without the imposition of strict learning parameters set by the teacher:

> The teacher cannot think for their students, nor can she impose her thought on them. Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about *reality*, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication. If it is true that thought has meaning only when generated by action upon the world, the subordination of students to teachers becomes impossible" (Freire, 2000, p. 76).

What else might be learned beyond the essential concepts within a subject area when students are allowed to explore the real world where those concepts are actually applicable?

Freire also understood the ongoing nature of human development and believed that people are in a never-ending state of transition and transformation. Human beings never stop learning or teaching, though people will resist the inevitable when they forget or are unaware that change is reality. "The unfinished character of human beings and the transformational character of reality necessitate that education be an ongoing activity" (Freire, 2000, p. 81). Life-long learning, long advocated in educational discourse, truly is the natural, evolutionary pursuit of human beings. "Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferals of information" (Freire, 2000, p. 79).

In referring to current educational practice, Freire wrote, "In the last analysis, it is the people themselves who are filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system" (Freire, 2000, 72). Some do succeed in the "system" and others in spite of it; but essentially, I concur, education as currently practiced in our schools does little to develop young minds, hearts, and souls into self-reliant people and responsible citizens of the world. In an affluent society where young people go hungry and parents cannot always make a living wage, the responsibility for the quality of the world we want to live in is societal; and educators play a particularly important role in that undertaking, not as supervisors, but as caretakers of the lives we are entrusted with and facilitators of teaching and learning experiences where students, "no longer docile listeners, are now critical coinvestigators in dialogue with the teacher" (Freire, 2000, p. 80).

Deborah Britzman, innovative thinker and transformative educator, wrote extensively about teacher education and the dichotomies of social and institutional expectations that teachers face, particularly when completing their training and starting their careers:

> Without any meaningful pedagogy and without a range of discursive practices, skepticism as a stance can easily give way to cynicism. Given this dilemma, students hopeful of enacting change and of viewing their teaching as transformative practice, must, in a sense, turn to the system itself. Their newly acquired skepticism is thus turned inward. The student teacher learns that the intent to change neither brings about effective transformative practice nor allows them unilaterally to take up the existing practice. On one hand, if they take up existing practices, they are critical of this capitulation. On the other hand, if they attempt transformative practices, they may fail. What tends to happen is that students teachers are left with a vague feeling of discontent and hence their need for concrete advice (Britzman, 2003, p 213).

Britzman's work places in perspective the difficulties of sustaining a transformative praxis in that "changing education, where it is the transformation of people and changing their minds, or the introduction of new knowledge and perspectives to the curriculum, is more difficult than we imagined" (Britzman, 2003, p. 6). Institutionalized education as we know it is replete with contradictions where students hear and see egalitarian mantras of reassurance while at the same time receiving an education many of them do not value or find meaningful. Teachers (not only student-teachers) are asked to reassure students their educational activities are meaningful while knowing most activities do not engage imaginations, minds, or hearts. For teachers, particularly those new to the profession, "it is just as difficult to anticipate how one is also changed by having to be educated and then try to educate others and how knowledge is transformed by classroom life" (Britzman, 2003, p. 6).

Though education is challenging and wrought with uncertainty, Britzman encourages teachers to trust their instincts and continue their efforts in transformative praxis:

> An emphasis on personal practical knowledge values the activity of theorizing as a tenuous yet transformative activity. Teachers can experience themselves as authors

> and interpreters of their lived experiences. To see teachers as interpreters of theory dismantles the view of theory as monological (Britzman. 2003, p. 68)

Practice and theory in education cannot be monological. There is always another way, better ways to facilitate each student's learning and teachers dedicated to interpreting "their lived experiences" will find those ways for their students.

Louise Rosenblatt's concepts of *transaction* and *transactional* in teaching reading and writing closely align with this study's assertion that relationships are fundamental to all teaching and learning environments (see Chapter 5). Rosenblatt, pedagogical researcher and influential literature professor, believed that "human activities and relationships are seen as transactions in which the individual, and the social, cultural, and natural elements interfuse" (1988, p. 2). Such transactions are collaborative and dialogic and "the teacher, no longer a dispenser of ready-made ideas and formulas, becomes the facilitator of such interchange among students" (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 13). Teaching and learning are, therefore, multifaceted and interactional as well as transactional where what is learned cannot ever be in the hands of a single person no matter what authority he or she is assigned. Whether a teacher acknowledges a student's needs and interests or not, that student is influenced by relationships and contexts within and beyond the classroom that a teacher would do better to understand more fully. This change in approach requires teachers to "break with entrenched habits of thinking" (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 2) and understand students as partners in educational endeavours, not subjects or objects in classroom activities.

Maxine Greene, philosopher and social activist, "questions the depersonalization that accompanies the scientific method and the unexamined rise of technology, acknowledging in both the potential to isolate and erode community" (Thompson in Palmer, 2001, p. 116); and she believes in listening to and hearing the stories of her students and others. "The narratives I have

encountered in my journey have made it possible for me to conceive patterns of being as my life among others has expanded: to look through others' eyes more than I would have and to imagine being something more than I have come to be" (Greene, 1995, pp. 85-86). This empathetic wisdom born of humility and receptiveness to the voices, concerns, perceptions, and knowledge of others could not be more central to a transformative teaching and learning praxis.

Another advocate of educational environments responsive to the needs and interests of those within them is artist, educator, and educational researcher Elliot Eisner. Eisner, quite pragmatically, believed that "no single educational program is appropriate for all children, everywhere, forever" (Eisner/Peshkin, 1990, p. 35). Rather than a generalized or standardized education system like we have, Eisner suggested a more in-house, less universal approach to the development of schools. "Which educational values are appropriate for children and adolescents depends on the characteristics of those the program is designed to serve, the features of the context in which they live, and the values that they and the community embrace" (Eisner/Peshskin, 1990, p. 35). He was also a firm believer in the professional expertise and talents of teachers. "Theory and technique are only part of the story. The personality characteristics of the teacher are the electricity that brings the parts to life and determines the quality and ultimate effectiveness of teaching" (Eisner, 1994, p. 328). Teacher education institutions can learn a lot from Eisner in the development of teachers for our schools. The "electricity" teachers bring to the classroom is often the most talked about synergic effect presented by students in there evaluations of effective educators. For Eisner, the magnetism of teachers is reinforced, informed, and tempered by "empathy" or the "the ability to don the shoes of another human being" (Eisner, 1998, p. 37). Teachers and students are people first and cannot be simply labeled into an institutional role to be carried out regardless of character, need, or interest. The talent of a teacher or student is in the

electricity of his or her character not in any assigned institution role either may be expected to fulfil.

As with others who insist upon another way to envision teachers and learners, Jurgen Habermas (2001) presents an insight into how institutional education might be transformed:

> In place of centrally prescribed and culturally biased curricula that students simply receive, critical pedagogy regards the curriculum as a form of cultural politics in which *participants* (rather than *recipients of*) curricula question and critique the cultural and dominatory messages contained in curricula, and replace them with a 'language of possibility; and empowering, often community-related curricula (e.g. linking schools with projects in the community that support participatory democracy). In this way curricula serve the 'socially critical' rather than the culturally and ideologically reproductive school (Habermas in Palmer, 2001, pp. 219-220).

Teachers would become participants along with students in a "critical pedagogy" that not only honestly critiques teaching and learning experiences for their inherent benefits or detriments, but that also addresses the individual and social characteristics within the contexts through which students and teachers live and learn. The participants in this inquiry have pointed to a need for teachers to be more attentive to student needs and interests, which requires them to question what they're doing and what schools ask of them.

Maude Barlow and Heather-Jane Robertson have taken a remarkable stand against turning educational institutions into economic entities to be run like businesses. The corporate agenda has not been helpful in education because schools were "established to meet collective goals and to provide the basis for informed adult lives; schools have little in common with the ruthlessly individualistic premises of consumerism" (Barlow/Robertson, 1994, p. 1). I highly respect Barlow and Robertson's stance regarding the "class warfare" assaulting "Canada's schools" where successive governments have downloaded "the cost of education to the community," which has "encouraged the public to see education as a cost that must be reduced,

irrespective of need or benefit" (1994, p. 12). Their *no holds barred* approach to educational discourse is more than admirable, especially when discussing why school success is often so unattainable:

> This cozy relationship between educations critics and the governments responsible for schools is incestuous but not uncommon: governments quote the opinions of business lobby groups, business quotes government policy papers developed with the co-operation of education critics, and the media informs the public that unanimity has been achieved. Little by little, public confidence in education is shaken. The payoff off playing the politics of disinformation is new opportunities for those who promise quick fixes (Barlow/Robertson, 1994, p. 41).

Expenditures so often trump the needs of teaching and learning and "our schools are seen as chronic underachievers, squandering advantages and opportunities without reaching their potential, getting by because it is too much trouble to excel" (Barlow/Robertson, 1994, p. 1).

Consideration of the financial bottom line influences whether programs and testing for special needs students are available, fines arts courses are included in a syllabus, practical out-of-school experiences can be afforded, and whether breakfast and lunch programs will continue; and yet, the public "feels unwell about its schools; in the absence of cogent alternatives for improvement, it is willing to accept the corporate diagnosis: schools are failing because they are monopolies, exempt from competition" (Barlow/Robertson, 1994, p. 1). This misconception or misunderstanding of how teaching and learning actually works is widespread outside of schools and, in my experience, exists within schools as well. The factory school system where human product is expected at the end of a twelve-year assembly line is still evident within institutionalized education today. "The consequences of trashing schools are apparent. Governments are searching for programs to cut that will draw the least amount of resistance; it is politically advantageous to appear fiscally tough on sectors that *aren't performing*" (Barlow/Robertson, 1994, p. 41). Teachers and students are caught in a system that often judges

them unfairly against criteria that is neither educational nor meaningful and the *class warfare* elucidated by Barlow and Robertson seems unending. These exceptionally strong women do not, of course, leave us without hope:

> If this is what we are asking of schools—to nurture capacity to learn—then they must be properly resourced. The resources schools need, however, are not only financial; what schools most require is the commitment of the public to their success in the interest of all children" (Barlow/Robertson, 1994, p. 251).

Teachers and students have much to learn about meaningful, collaborative, and dialogic teaching and learning; but within a climate and context of incessant criticism they cannot but struggle to find significance in their classroom accomplishments. An unconditional, public commitment to school success would, at least, create a supportive and reliable atmosphere within which to work.

Margaret Donaldson, developmental psychologist, offers another important point of view educators have found valuable in working with students. In a school system where the emotional content of human relationships are most often hidden in counseling offices or left unexpressed, "she has argued for approaches to education which treat the development of both intellect and emotion with the highest regard" (Hughs in Palmer, 2001, p. 180). Donaldson's emphasis on the inclusion of the all attributes of personality and the entire human experience in school speaks directly to my artistic character and reinforces the need to fully humanize teaching and learning experiences. "Our educational aspirations will only be fully realized if they are based on an accurate and deeply rooted understanding of the nature of children's—and human—minds" (Hughs in Palmer, 2001, p. 180). Donaldson's educational philosophy also reverberates in Nel Noddings' belief in teaching praxes that includes "a moral attitude informed by the complex skills of interpersonal reasoning" (Flinders in Palmer, 2001, p. 214). Though teaching is already defined

as one of the *caring professions*, Nel Noddings, feminist and educationalist, formalizes caring as an essential talent in the purview of teachers and students.

Madeleine Grumet, curriculum theorist and feminist, is another who is a believer in teaching as an art form, not to be chosen lightly as a career. "To be an artist is perpetually to negotiate the boundary that separates aesthetic from mundane experience" (1988, p 78) and for the participants in this study, and students in general, there could be no more important imperative—school should not be boring or a place to become apathetic about learning. Grumet (1998) "relied upon aesthetic forms to study educational experience," (p. 78) like autobiography, theatre, and improvisation and to understand what it means "to take up teaching as an art at this place and at this time" (p. 79). The sincere consideration and commitment with which Grumet suggests people take up the art of teaching is such a breath of fresh noble air in a time when economic, personal, employment, or occupational reasons and perks tend to predominate career choices in education. Like Britzman, Grumet also reminds us to contemplate the discrepancies in purpose schools pursue and to perpetually question, examine, and reflect upon teaching and its effects, positive or negative, on learning. "The art of teaching invites this inspection of its boundaries and territory, for if teaching is an aesthetic experience, it is also a form of labor and an accommodation to bureaucracy" (Grumet, 1998, p. 78). Through the ceaseless, bureaucratic requirements and endless curricular changes, teachers can discover and develop the artistry of their craft for the benefit of their students and for their own piece of mind. As Grumet (1998) puts it, "it is the function of art to reorganize experience so it is perceived freshly" and to cleanse "a familiar scene, washing away the film of habit and dust collected over time so that it is seen anew" (pp. 94-95). Teaching and learning requires the spontaneity and creativity of artists in process working together to achieve common and individual goals set by all of the participants involved in that process.

Philosophically, David G. Smith's certainty that one of a teacher's essential responsibilities is to attend to the "unique needs and capabilities of each" student, "honouring differences, and knowing what is best for each" (Smith, 1996 [1999], p. 466); and his teachings regarding our increasing need to recognize the validity and significance of *Others* in an educational system dominated by a Western cultural, pedagogical, and epistemological grand narrative have resonated profoundly within my consciousness and pedagogy as a teacher, researcher, and scholar. His practical and balanced way of seeing, doing, and being have been particularly helpful in reinforcing a truth I came to believe early in my adult life that I was my greatest study and to know myself was most important in my ability to know anything or anyone or to be helpful in the world. "To be a teacher requires that I face my teacher, which is the world as it comes to meet me in all of its variegation, complexity, and simplicity. When I do this, I face myself, and see myself reflected in the faces of my brothers and sisters everywhere" (Smith, 1996, p.469). Facing the mirror helps teachers, and by extension, students "see their work together as a labour of mutual authentication" (Smith, 2008. p. 45), a familiar theme, I think, in his work with students.

Smith, philosopher and educator, places the student at the center of pedagogical purpose:

> In terms of pedagogy we must learn to discern those moments when children in subtle, quiet ways are 'opening' their gifts in front of us because how we receive them will determine whether or not the child will learn to find herself in the world creatively (Smith, 1989, p. 34).

How we "receive" students as guests in our lives is so much more humane than how we conduct, direct, instruct, and convoke students through their days. "Education must be oriented not by knowledge and knowledge accumulation per se, but by wisdom" (Smith, 2008, p. 46). Though we are all unsure where education is heading currently, I think David Smith really is on the cutting edge of educational discourse, reorientation, and reinvention. Smith's caution that there

is a need to rethink "the entire pedagogical relating in a way that acknowledges the mutual validity of both student and teacher as co-participants in the project of human becoming" (Smith, 2009, p. 110) is both prescient and timely. And I am particularly drawn to the fact that David Smith does not mince words:

> Children in today's classrooms have virtually no time to simply dream, wait, think ponder or learn to be still. There is so little opportunity to find one's original face, because every space is seen to require some sort of instructional intervention. Western pedagogy is too often precisely an act of de-facement, for both teachers and students, as they struggle mercilessly to fit themselves into codes and agendas that maim and scar the soul. Ironically, such maiming arises precisely out of good intention and great earnestness (Smith, 1996 [1999], p. 470).

Though Smith clearly sees an education system more destructive than helpful, he does not see a coming apocalypse. Rather he envisions an "openness" and a rebirth in education, the phoenix I wrote about earlier, that "is not a vacuous licentiousness but a risky, deliberate engagement full of the conflict and ambiguity by which new horizons of mutual understanding are achieved" (Smith, 1988), p. 27). Perhaps, this time through the ashes, wisdom will prevail and the next educational phoenix will be more in line with Smith's vision of teaching and learning where "the freedom to wonder, to explore, leads only to more wondering and exploring" (Smith, 2008 p. 40).

Artistic Influences

I could not write a literature review about my pedagogical and epistemological transformation or the foundational underpinnings of my research without including some of those influential artists who have inspired my resourcefulness as an educator and who have also breathed life into many aspects of teaching and learning. My initial training was in Drama and Theatre, and though I had dedicated my professional development to being an educator in a variety of other

subjects as well, it was in the communicative, dialogic, creative, and expressive environs of the theatre or the Drama classroom where I learned how to be a students' teacher rather than a subject teacher. I teach with students through the media of subjects, whether in Drama, Theatre, English, Art, Social Studies, History, or Career and Technology Studies, not the subjects themselves. What we learn about these subject areas and others in the classroom is secondary to what we learn about ourselves and our personalities while involved in study, thinking, and creating. I firmly believe that *who* we are is much more relevant that *what* we may become and *how* we teach is ever so much more important than *what* we teach. The following visionaries have contributed greatly to my sense of who I am as a teacher and as a personality in the world.

William Shakespeare—studious scholar, fine actor, highly successful entrepreneur, and playwright par excellence with, perhaps, an interesting perspective on long-distance martial relationships—has been, since high school, a muse for me and has had a tremendous impact on my creative, artistic, professional, and personal development. I have directed Shakespeare's plays; spoken his words many times; lived and worked near Stratford-upon-Avon in England; and participated as a *Groundling* at the Globe on several occasions. Shakespeare is only knowable through the characters of his plays, but he writes volumes that speak to me in so many ways personally, professionally, academically, and pedagogically. He reminds me to be humble because "Lord, what fools these mortals be!" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act III, Scene ii) and that I am mortal as in "life's but a poor shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more" (*Macbeth*, Act V, Scene v). Life and education shouldn't just happen to people nor should it be imposed upon them. We are in this life but once; let's do something worthwhile with the other players for "all the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players" (*As You Like It*, Act II, Scene vii). And "this above all; to thine own self

be true" (*Hamlet*, Act I, Scene iv). Shakespeare came from, what was then, the middle class and he played for the masses. He was of the people and for the people and he was one of the first to establish the Theatre *Biz*-ness and I like that a lot. He continues to teach and transform through his art and with each word and each line his wisdom is manifest and his entendre, multitudinous. The hope for public education is that "though this be madness, yet there is method in't" (*Hamlet*, Act II, Scene ii). Educators work in awesome realms because "O! this learning, what a thing it is" (*The Taming of the Shrew* Act I, Scene ii).

"If you cannot increase reflective power in people, you might as well not teach, because reflection in the only thing that in the long run changes anybody" (Wagner, 1976, 77). Well, there is no plainer statement in support of a reflective, transformative teaching praxis than this made by Dorothy Heathcote, academic and Drama educator. She stated that "Drama builds confidence" (Wagner, 1976, p. 228) and as a Drama/Theatre educator myself, I have witnessed this transformation to self-belief and self-confidence numerous times. This sort of confidence building is obviously not exclusive to the Drama/Theatre education, but what all areas of teaching and learning can realize from the Expressive Arts is the way the imagination is motivated through *as if* enactments. For example, make believe, play, and becoming the personalities or characters of human myth, legend, story, history, and everyday life can bring human endeavour to life in a way textbooks and being lashed[3] to a desk cannot. Such imaginative engagements can help students "face challenges and crises in imagination before they find themselves overwhelmed by them in the real world (Wagner, 1976, p. 228). Through imagination and enacting an English Language Arts classroom is most often *on its feet* and *off the page*, a Science class takes place in the natural

[3] Figuratively speaking, of course.

environment with student scientists outside the school, and a Social Studies class explores local history in the community as it relates to all other communities on the planet *as if* the real world was the school.

Creative Drama educator and Theatre in Education (TIE) actor-teacher, Nellie McCaslin (2000) defines the characteristics essential in good teaching:

> Without discrediting academic preparation, what seems most important are those personal attributes that make a good teacher. If a person already possess the qualities of sympathy, leadership, imagination, and respect for the idea of others, he or she has the basic requirements. Sensitivity to the individual in a class is necessary to an activity that is participant centered with the growth of each child an objective (P. 372).

McCaslin believes the "personal attributes" teachers bring to their work are "most important" in teaching and learning; qualities often learned or embedded in personalities well before they attend university. As a Drama educator and TIE actor-teacher myself, I have found improvisation and play extremely useful in all areas of education in which I have been involved; from English Language Arts to Social Studies to Science to Drama. "Play may be the language of the young, but it is not their exclusive property. Play changes as we grow older. It acquires more structure and loses some of its freedom and spontaneity as we assume serious responsibilities" (McCaslin, 2000, p. 49). My Master's Thesis was titled *A Joker in the Classroom* for good reason and a spirited, improvisational approach in cooperative classroom activities does help to make teaching and learning fun. With McCaslin's playful and collaborative approaches to educational experiences, learning is not only fun, but also socially responsible. McCaslin echoed Dewey's desire to "integrate the school with society" (Warde, 1960, p. 52) when she wrote"

> To help children live in harmony in a society of many ethnic, racial, and religious groups is the most urgent need of the times. When a group builds something together, members learn a valuable lesson in cooperation. Social differences may be forgotten in the business of sharing ideas and improvising scenes, (2000, p. 16).

Along with so many other voices, McCaslin had called for an approach in teaching and learning different than in most current practices; another way, an artist's way to involve "the participant most fully: intellectually, emotionally, physically, verbally, and socially" (2000, p. 4).

Like Grumet, Lucy McCormick Calkins, educator and member of Columbia University's Writer's Workshop, also offers a self-reflective pedagogy that honours the mutuality of learning/coaching/writing experiences for both teacher and student. "The first and most important characteristic of good teaching is that we all watch and learn from our children" (Calkins, 1991, p. 236). Though she wrote more specifically about the writing process, Calkins knew teaching is much more about how we teach than the subject we teach. She states that "in this project I learned to write, but mostly I learned to relate" (Calkins, 1991, p. 239). Student/teacher relationships matter, especially when students are ask to express themselves in words or in action. Self-belief and confidence do not originate from within. These essential qualities of life are first ascertained or damaged through experiences with other people. A teacher cannot take for granted his or her efforts will support a student's self-worth and character and so, must be ever-vigilant in understanding the effects of teaching and learning on their students. Calkins shone light in the English Language Arts classroom, but her work also pointed teachers as enlighten artists working very hard to help students develop self-confidence as they learn to express their own ideas and insights.

Stephen Nachmanovitch, musician, author, and educator, has also informed teaching and learning through his book, *Free Play*, in special ways; and his ideas about *play* reminds us of our human natures. "There is not *a* creative process. There are many creative processes, with many layers, many levels of involvement and intent" (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 183-184). In facilitating

this reality in all our classrooms at every level we allow "ourselves to be true to ourselves and our visions and true to the undiscovered wholeness that lies beyond the self" (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 177). In others words, in school, students should not only decide *what* they are, but more importantly, discover *who* they are. Nachmanovitch (1990) insisted that "education must teach, reach, and vibrate the whole person rather than merely transfer knowledge" (p. 177) much like music moves us emotionally, psychologically, and physically. He believes we need to playfully live life and learning with the improvisational artistry familiar in blues or jazz—there are patterns and structures within which we are all united, but we engage and contribute within these frameworks in our own unique ways. In an improvisational teaching and learning environment that invites and embraces their creative contributions teachers and students create together as if members of the same band or orchestra of knowledge.

Though all of the influential philosophers, educators, scholars, psychologists, practitioners, thinkers and doers written about thus far have informed and shaped my identity and praxis, Bryan Way, Drama/Theatre educator, has been one of my greatest muses and has informed my quest for a transformative teaching praxis more than most. His work in improvisational theatre and his seminal book *Development Through Drama* (1967) embodied the belief that teachers teach people *through* the medium or subject matter. In the creatively composed and spontaneous experience of teacher, students, and medium in the classroom, personality, confidence, self-belief and self-awareness *are* the learning outcomes. "It is comparatively easy to develop drama, but more difficult to develop people; it is equally simple to assess and measure some aspects of the development of drama itself, but to do so can negate the primary intention of developing people *through* drama" (Way, 1967, p. 2). In addition, Way left *how* something is to be done or learned to the learner:

> In the realm of ideas on *what* to do and, later on, *who* to be, each member of the class is fully dependent for all the beginning stages. Do this, do that, do the other thing. But never on any account, in any circumstances, is this accompanied by any indication, instruction or demonstration of *how* to do it (Way, 1967, p 26).

This trust placed in the innate abilities and knowledge of students is far from ill-founded and if there is any characteristic of my life's work that brings me to this dissertation, it is this belief in the teaching and learning capacities of students. As Way put it:

> The intention has been that of developing what already exists, at one's own level and rate of progress, with a constant emphasis on the necessity for intuitive discovery rather than technical mastery; in essence, the aim has been the growth of harmony in all facets of personality (Way, 1967, p. 156).

The techniques, knowledge, craft, or activity of any subject taught may be relevant to students beyond high school, but the real learning objectives are to develop personality, self-confidence, and self-belief so that each person can fulfill his or her "personal aspirations" (Way, 1967, p. 4). And as others have recommended, Way insisted that "part of rich and sensitive living involves arousing one's understanding, sympathy and compassion for people whose lives are entirely different, even remote, from one's own in every conceivable facet" (Way, 1967, 296). The school is a community within a context of many communities and "rich living" comes from our attentiveness to the needs of others.

Chapter 1 Summary

All of the educators, thinkers, and extraordinary people I have included in this chapter have been chosen to explicate the philosophical and theoretical framework of the study. Their voices also present a case for change in how teachers teach and students learn; and many of them have envisioned very different teaching and learning environments than the ones we have. They promoted collaborative, synergic educational spaces that foster self-confidence, self-belief, and

growth and provide greater potential for transformative, life-altering experiences. And the calls for such reform continue. Giles and Anderson (2008) write "amidst an education system with priorities and values that appear incongruent with the central concerns of education, there are educators pioneering educational contexts where students' learning is holistic and transformative" (Giles/Alderson, 2008. p. 475). Lapp, Flood, and Farnam (2010) promote "transactional approaches through which teachers and students work together to construct meaning" (p. 108).

The resistance to a real transformation in and reform of our education system may be due to the fact "that education becomes *stuck* in ways of responding to the world that were once adequate to its demands, to that extent, it gradually becomes counter-productive to the very responsiveness that is at its core" (Jardine, 2008, p. 5). Though this stagnation is addressed from time to time with changes in curricula or technology, educators, and students are seldom, if ever, consulted and often find the changes exasperating rather than helpful. Again, Dewey's assessment of educational progress seems so very familiar today:

> The tendency of educational development to proceed by reaction from one thing to another, to adopt for one year, or for a term of seven years, this or that new study or method of teaching, and then as abruptly to swing over to some new educational gospel is a result which would be impossible if teachers were adequately moved by their own independent intelligence (Dewey in Archambault, 1964, p 321).

Dewey's appeal to teachers to engage "their own independent intelligence" in an effort to engage his egalitarian vision of schools echoes through the decades to us today. We still need fewer lecturers and determinists and dictators and overseers of learning and more collaborators, facilitators, coaches, and leaders of teaching and learning. Simply adopting the next "method of teaching" or "education gospel" has not and will not accomplish educative environments or teaching praxes in which "the interactions between the teacher and students provide the context

for this transformative experience" (Giles/Alderson, 2008, p. 446). Perhaps David Jardine says it best:

> The problem is that this has the potential of simply replacing one betrayal with another. Worse yet, it sets up the conditions under which a "conservative" backlash comes roaring in, full of fundamentalist confidence and anger, touting zero-tolerance and announcing a version of "back to the basics" that keeps in place all the old logics. And this, in turn, sets up the conditions under which a "liberal" backlash comes roaring in speaking about self-esteem and ebullience. And this, in turn, turns again" (Jardine, 2000. p. 4).

This battle of extremes has gone on too long and the vested interests within this conflict continue to argue for what their students need without asking the students what they need or questioning why what is taught in schools is necessary at all. Many students still wonder and complain about curricular requirements of educational institutions that seem so worthless to them in any life they can envision—lives they are entitled to choose for themselves. Often students leave high school as *50% Grads*—they get their diplomas, but really have not aspired to higher grades or excellence in subjects they found of little use in their lives, present or future. It is a time for balance, for collaboration, and receptive dialogue; for teaching praxes that transform; for a dedicated focus on how we teach rather than what we teach; and for learning for learning's sake. The rigorous research and scholarly acumen for such an evolution in teaching and learning has been available to us for a very long time. Perhaps, with the en-masse exchange of new teachers into the profession, a changing of the guard not unlike that experienced by the *Baby Boomers*, a historical opportunity exists to bring forth a phoenix in teaching and learning more in tune with authentic human ways of knowing, thinking and being. In this study, nine narratives of transformation are presented to illuminate elements of teaching praxis that foster transformative educational experiences. If a phoenix is not about to burst onto the educational horizon, another

way, or many other ways to teach and learn have been and will be presented by the participants and other thinkers included in this inquiry.

Chapter 2

Convergence and Divergence: A Hybrid Methodology

> As far as we are concerned, research in education should ask a variety of questions, move in a variety of directions, encompass a variety of methodologies, and use a variety of tools. Different research orientations, perspectives, and goals should be not only allowed, but encouraged (Fraenkel/Wallen, 2000, p. 13).

The methodological, research design of this inquiry is embedded, epistemologically and philosophically, within a qualitative and social constructivist paradigm. "Qualitative researchers self-consciously draw upon their own experiences as a resource in their inquiries. They always think reflectively, historically, and biographically" (Denzin/Lincoln, 1998, p. xi) as I have done throughout this dissertation and as is the nature of qualitative research, I have used "multiple methods, or triangulation" in an "attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon" (Denzin/Lincoln, 1998, p. 4) of transformation. I have drawn elements from two major qualitative methodologies or research designs—Narrative Inquiry and Transformative Learning Theory—to develop a hybrid methodology for this inquiry. A hybrid is a unique entity or concept. Hybrid dogs or roses are like in some ways to their originating species, but they are divergent in character and distinctiveness. A human being is not the sum of his or her constituent parts, but rather, a unique personality. So too, then, is the methodological design of this inquiry; neither Narrative Inquiry nor Transformative Learning Theory, but rather, a hybridized methodology designed, specifically, to study what fosters the transformative self- and life-altering experiences within the fusion and synergy of teacher, students and subject matter in teaching and learning. This coalescence of methods and approaches examines the phenomenon of transformative educational experiences to discover what constitutes a transformative teaching praxis. . As adjunct research

method, I have engaged practises used in Film Documentary to aid in the data collection and analysis.

Social constructivism is concerned with "shedding light on the learner as an important agent in the learning process, rather than in wresting the power from the teacher" (Thanasoulas, 2002, p. 1). Teaching and learning becomes the egalitarian collaboration of co-learners and teacher-facilitators Freire proposed when "no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. People teach each other (Freire, 2000, p. 80). Constructivists believe that teachers who ignore the interpretive, creative, and intellectual abilities of learners ignore the ways knowledge, understanding, and human development actually exist in the world. People "construct the social and psychological world in specific linguistic, social, and historical contexts" (Schwandt, 1997, p. 19) and knowledge of any aspect of that world cannot be achieved without the constructive curiosity and interpretation of all involved within an educative process. Teaching is not the sole purview of the teacher and cannot be the simple top-down transfer of information or the collection of facts from textbooks. "Constructivists have abandoned the concept that knowledge is a kind of substance which can be transferred from the head of the teacher to the head of the learner. Learning is regarded as a creative, inventive act performed by the individual" (Constructivism in Philosophy and Teaching, p. 1). There are "as many individual and unpredictable ways of learning as there are learners" (Thissen, 1997, p. 8) and each learner constructs what he or she learns regardless of what a teacher thinks he or she is teaching or what the teacher thinks the student is learning:

> In a class, which is run according to constructivistic guidelines, the teacher does not act as a pure knowledge transmitter who only accepts *one* true answer to his/her problem but as a coach or facilitator offering thought provoking suggestions for solving the tasks given. Students are expected to use their own experiences to solve a problem as a group using different ways and methods. In constructivism, there is not a 'one and only true way' to solve a task. The solution of a problem rather depends upon individual experiences and thoughts. Most of the time students work

> together in groups, exchange their suggestions and thoughts in discussions to reach one or more solutions. The teacher judges and evaluates the skills and deficiencies of each individual student in the course of a discussion (Constructivism in Philosophy and Teaching, p. 1).

Human beings are always in a state of knowing and unknowing. What we knew forty years ago is not what we know now and "we cannot ever be certain of having found Truth. We are always *stuck* with judgments and interpretations" (Eisner, 1998, p. 109). Eisner (1998) went onto write:

> The fact that we make judgments does not mean we can have no basis for judging the soundness of the judgments we make. We must consider the evidentiary bases of our judgments; whatever they are, they will always be fallible. It is reasonable to expect that we have good grounds for the judgments we make, but not that our judgments are certain (p. 109).

Life-long learning and learning for learning's sake become fundamental concepts in teaching and learning that embraces infinite change as a natural phenomenon, truth as a socially constructed conception, and knowledge as an evolutionary activity of the human thinking, interpretation, and judgment. "A great many philosophers and educationalists have worked" with constructivist ideas, "but the first major contemporaries to develop a clear idea of what constructivism consists in were Jean Piaget and John Dewey" (Thanasoulas, 2002, p. 1), which again, brings us back to John Dewey and his influence in the development of the research design for this inquiry. Dewey (1910) believed:

> ". . . unless enlargement of mental vision, power of increased discrimination of final values, a sense for ideas—for principles—accompanies this training, forms of skill ready to be put indifferently to any end may be the result. Such modes of technical skill may display themselves, according to circumstances, as cleverness in serving self-interest, as docility in carrying out the purposes of others, or as unimaginative plodding in ruts. To nurture inspiring aim and executive means into harmony with each other is at once the difficulty and the reward of the teacher. (p. 221)

As a social constructivist, Dewey envisioned educational experiences as transformative and life-altering with values and principles as goals, not the "unimaginative plodding in ruts" students experience in classrooms requiring technical mastery and memorization. This qualitative inquiry is embedded in a pedagogy and epistemology of a similar social constructivist intentionality.

The participants in this inquiry were English Majors, from a University of Alberta, Advanced Professional Term (APT) class and the data collection sessions spanned nine months, many hours, and generated hundreds of transcript pages. A *Letter of Initial Contact* (Appendix A) was drawn up and approved through my Ethics Review (I successfully completed my Candidacy Exam on March 15th, 2012) and the APTs were approached in a brief question/answer session to determine their interest in the study. Three more hand-outs (also approved through Ethics) were given to each member of the class: the *Recruitment Form*, *Data Collection and Analysis Questions Part 1* and *Part 2* (Appendices B, C, and D) and members of the class had time to read, reflect, and answer the questions posed if they chose to do so. From this initial contact session, several participants volunteered to join the research study. Because this was an inquiry drawing data from the narratives of the participants and because "qualitative researchers usually work with *small* samples of people, nested in their context and studied in-depth" (Miles/Huberman, 1994, p. 27) the final number of participants selected was eight. A ninth participant provided a comparative point of view and story of transformation as additional data (see Chapter 3).

Before data collection sessions began, each participant was asked if he or she would be comfortable with the visual digital recording of the sessions in addition to audio recording. All agreed to camera recording in-session, but one required that the filming be done without facial recognition. Since the footage was intended as an additional data analysis method rather than any

sort of documentary film, this accommodation was in keeping with the inquiry and the Ethics Review. All sessions were recorded with audio and visual recording equipment.

Participants were also asked if they would like to participate in the initial data analysis stage, which would require them to commit additional time to the data collection sessions. Though the number of sessions and hours required to collect, explore, and analyse the data was unknown at the outset, all participants agreed to take part in this collaborative *co-mission*, one of the key elements of Narrative Inquiry embraced in this study. Sessions would end at the point at which I could take the data to the dissertation writing stage. I found the participants' involvement in the initial exploration of the data extremely helpful in deciphering meaningful insights and formulating the findings you will read later in this manuscript.

After the initial analysis phase, the many pages of data were categorized into thematic units, which lead to a number of preliminary findings. The data from all participants were then rendered into findings with working titles or wording. This created large units of narrative representing data from all participants for comparison and contrast. Further analysis allowed a data reduction while maintaining data with clearer associations and connections to particular findings. Through this process, the data was further condensed into detailed units of narrative that supported particular findings. When I found that findings were quite similar in scope and meaning, I combined the data into a single finding eliminating redundant or repetitious data. Eventually, this analytical process condensed the data into seven primary findings and three secondary findings.

Though what is finally contained within this dissertation is a team effort including my supervisor, my examination committee, and me, the participants have had an opportunity, as part of the *ongoing negotiation* embedded in Narrative Inquiry, to reconsider their comfort levels with

what has been drawn from their transcripts. "Negotiation involves a continuous dialogue, in which both participants and researchers are equally engaged" (Clandinin/Caine, 2013, p. 3) and that honours the inquiry relationship between researcher and any given participant. Participation in the inquiry was entirely voluntary, identities are completely anonymous, and each participant approved the use of any part of any transcript, but some of what is contained therein may be very, sensitively personal in nature. As "people in relation studying with people in relation" (Clandinin/Connelly, 2000, p. 189), the researcher continues "to live in relational ways with participants throughout the process of making their findings public (Clandinin/Caine, 2013, p. 13). Because this dissertation may be published in a variety of forms including manuscript, a series of journal articles, or conference papers, the participants had the opportunity to have a last look at their contributions to the manuscript before final edit as part of the ongoing collaboration.

Each member of the participant group also had a look at the *Data Collection and Analysis Questions Part 3* (Appendix E), which gave them some idea of what questions I might ask in-session. Because questions beget questions and answers also beget questions, the participants were informed that this list was neither exhaustive nor necessarily inclusive of all questions that might arise. The synergy of the moment and the need to keep a session alive and moving forward often composes the next evocative question spontaneously through the mindfulness and collaboration of both researcher and participant. In addition, each participant had a chance to read an *Introduction to my Dissertation Proposal* (Appendix F), which was drawn from the introductory section of my Candidacy proposal. Then, each participant had the opportunity to sign the *Informed Consent* and *Confidentiality Forms* (see Appendices G and H). From here we were set to hear their stories of transformational experiences.

The interconnectivity between components of Narrative Inquiry and Transformative Learning Theory, and the historical, theoretical, and philosophical framework within which I have placed this inquiry has been remarkably useful. I have not discovered another research study in which these particular methodological, pedagogical, and epistemological ways of thinking, knowing, being and doing have coalesced into an integrated hybrid methodology designed to inquire, study and analyze the nature and rudiments of transformative experience and I have found few writings and fewer dissertations that present transformation as the functional purpose of educational experience. There are, as we have seen in Chapter 1, those who refer to transformative experience implicitly, if not explicitly, but in my search for a teaching praxis that fosters transformation without contrivance or authority-lead experience, I found that an interfusion of methodological approaches was needed to explore what the participants found most meaningful or educationally profound in their lives. In studying the participants' stories of transformation methods of Narrative Inquiry converged advantageously with concepts from Transformative Learning Theory. Each is clearly a stand-alone research approach, but I differed in fundamental ways with certain aspects of each methodology or theory, which is why I chose a hybrid rather than a single approach. The divergence I have written into the title of this chapter is not so much in how each method differs, but rather in how I chose to select only certain aspects of these methodological approaches. However, each methodology, theory, technique, did offer significant and effective ways of researching and understanding transformative educational experience.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000), the first to use the expression *narrative inquiry*, point out, "we might say that if we understand the world narratively, as we do, then it makes sense to study the world narratively" (p. 17). Whenever I have asked people about an educational experience through which their way of understanding themselves, a teacher, a subject, or their world changed

dramatically, they predictably relate transformative experiences as stories in narrative form. They are drawn back in time, almost instantaneously, to the events or activities and the moments in which new perceptions or ways of being or knowing or doing dawned for them and they tell of their experiences as storytellers. Through narration or storytelling "as an aspect of inquiry we discover an important new dimension: inquiry [that] can work either to explain or to express; to analyse or to understand" (Reason/Hawkins, 1988, p. 79) transformative experience.

Narrative Inquiry honours the stories participants tell and from within those stories is drawn the findings of this inquiry. In addition:

> This approach is narrative in that it orders a sequence of events for the purpose of revealing or creating meaning; it is self-defining in that it allows certain individuating features of the person's life to matter in ways that aren't universally generalizable but remain specific to the person and so contribute to her identity (Nelson, 1995, p. 27).

The choice to study and analyze narratives or stories that reveal and create "meaning" and enrich "identity" was intuitive for an inquiry intending to discover what fosters transformational and meaningful teaching and learning experiences. Each participant and I set out together in a research endeavour to study "an experience that is storied both in the living and telling and that can be studied by listening, observing, living alongside another, and writing and interpreting texts (Clandinin/Rosiek, 2007, p. 43). In a relational, collaborative process of "living alongside" a participant experiences could be effectively explored for teaching qualities that would foster transformation. Stories told draw the researcher in experientially because "Narrative Inquiry is an experience of the experience (Clandinin/Connelly, 2000, p. 189). Through a "study of experience, and experience, as John Dewey taught, is a matter of people in relation contextually and temporally" (Clandinin/Connelly, 2000, p. 189), I gathered multifaceted pedagogical and

immediately applicable understandings I could not have gained without the personal stories or the collaboration between researcher and participants.

Narrative Inquiry also offered a way to understand the validity of stories as research data. "We are the storytelling species. Storytelling is in our blood. We think in story form, speak in story form, and bring meaning to our lives through story" (Atkinson, 2007, p. 224) and our identities rely on the believability of our stories. "Stories derive their convincing power not from verifiability but from verisimilitude; they will be true enough if they ring true" (Amsterdam/Bruner, 2000, p. 30). Readers of the findings will be "asked to make judgments on whether or not the evidence and argument convinces them at the level of plausibility, credibleness, or trustworthiness of the claim" (Polkinghorn, 1988, p. 7), but the sincerity and authenticity of the stories will be evident. Though "narrative research does not produce conclusions of certainty" (Webster/Mertova, 2007, p. 80), what is discovered in the "verisimilitudes," does "ring true".

The conversational, collaboration where researcher and participant work together "alongside" each other in a research process that involves deep listening and mutual respect, was extremely effective in collecting and analyzing meaningful data from stories of transformation. The sense of wonder embodied by narrative inquirers was particularly valuable. Starting questions with "I wonder . . ." rather than words like "what do you think . . ." or "how did this affect . . ." brought researcher and participant into a joint exploration of any given story section in focus and it was always clear to the participant that he or she was in a supportive, relational research process rather than on the spot and simply there to provide data. Within this ambiance of cooperation, we were at ease and we laughed a lot, but we also dug deep into the stories to explore and decipher the meaning of each for the participant, the researcher, and the findings of this dissertation. We didn't avoid uncomfortable emotions or memories, but when relief was necessary, a quick

anecdote or a humorous interjection from either participant or researcher was part of the interactive, reassuring, and friendly relationships we established early in the study.

The second part of the hybrid methodology included features of Transformative Learning Theory. Transformative learning theorists, practitioners and philosophers like Paulo Friere, Augusto Boal, Jack Mezirow, Robert Boyd, and Patricia Cranton set out to expand the "consciousness" of their students or audience or people "through the transformation of basic worldview and specific capacities of the self" (Elias, 1997, p. 3) like beliefs, attitudes, strongly held values or ways of being and doing. The intentionality of Transformative Learning Theory in practice includes purposefully triggering "an activating event that typically exposes a discrepancy between what a person has always assumed to be true and what has just been experienced, heard, or read" (Cranton, 2002, p. 67) and asks (specifically adult) students to critically analyze, revise and transform their assumptions which "may be painful for some and we need to acknowledge this, or it may be joyous for others" (Cranton, 2002, p. 70). In this inquiry I work from a different intentionality and for a different purpose. I am interested in those ill-defined or undefined and sometimes in-the-moment, unnoticed transformations that have already taken place and what brought them about. In other words, our purpose is to reflect upon already lived experiences in the classroom that have had their ongoing transformative effect on the participants.

This does not diminish the influence of Transformative Learning Theory in this study as described by Mezirow (2000), "In this field, we work to help students shift their 'frame of reference' or 'meaning perspective' so that they become 'more critically reflective of their assumptions and aware of their context'" (Mezirow as cited in Berger, 2004, p. 337). The difference will be when the students, now adults, become more "critically reflective" as we decipher their stories of past experiences, and with this reflexive, narrative process the purpose

will be to unravel why the transformative effects came about in the first place and how the findings may influence future teaching praxis. The narratives of the participants, therefore, divulged elemental actions or choices or attitudes or values or resources in the amalgam of teacher/student/media interactivity in English Language Arts that provided an answer to the question posed by Cranton (2002), "Can we teach as though the possibility always exists that a student will have a transformative experience?" (p. 71).

In this inquiry Transformative Learning Theory was engaged because it "denotes that we learn from subjective interpretation of experiences and focuses on how we know in contrast to traditional learning that focuses on what we know (Mizerow 1996). Mizerow's emphasis on *how* rather than *what* we know fits remarkably well with a major focus of this inquiry. However transformative the experience of telling and analyzing of such events may be in and of itself, there was no need to invite, inspire or kindle the event that sparked the transformations. The transformations have already occurred and we could now research and analyze their origins and effects. My intent was to utilize methodological and pedagogical elements of Narrative Inquiry and Transformative Learning Theory to discover the unplanned dimensions of transformative, educational experiences that occurred naturally amongst teachers and students. The inquiry resulting was "the systematic process of transferring research knowledge into practice for the purpose of understanding, validating, enhancing, or changing practice" (Stetler & Caramanica 2007, p. 189).

The Documentary Film techniques I have used were only intended as an adjunct to the effectiveness of the hybrid methodology engaged in this inquiry because there was never a documentary film envisioned as an outcome of the data collection process. The narratives were documented on digital film, but the focus was not on the creation of a doc-*commentary* so much

as on a *document*-ary that comments and reveals. In other words, the film footage does not focus on the participants, so much as on their narratives, how they're told, and what they reveal about transformative educational experiences in teaching and learning. Documentary film has a "communicative function to inform, discuss, engage, enlighten, intervene, explore, express, disturb and commit" (Juel, 2011, p.7) people in a collaborative effort to understand ways of knowing, doing, thinking, and being by illuminating and focusing the lens on those communicative nuances that are telling in revealing the triggers of transformation. Film documentary has an associative and purposeful intentionality similar to that of Narrative Inquiry and Transformative Learning Theory and as an adjunct data collection method with no performative intent, it fits nicely with these methodological and theoretical approach engaged in this inquiry.

The participants were affected initially by the presence of the camera. I have not known anyone I have filmed for a wedding, promotional, inspirational, appreciation or historical DVD to be without an initial consciousness and uneasiness with the presence of a camera. But our early relational collaborative efforts defused any nervousness with the digital camera and it soon became little more than a very inconspicuous and additional field recorder. With this technique I have been able to capture more of the candid and less of the dramaturgic. In this inquiry the candid, frank accounts of the participants' transformative experiences were essential to the authenticity of the findings. The camera captured the depth of the emotions embedded in the transformative experiences, the humour, the thought processes, the pauses, and the silences in ways I could not do in transcript form.

Though there was divergence from the methodologies and approaches in practice, there was a convergence of methods and techniques from each that coalesced into an effective hybrid

methodology. The next chapter presents the data collected through this fusion of methodological and pedagogical approaches.

Chapter 3

The Data: The Transformative Experiences of the Participants

> Transformation comes about when someone changes 'not just the way he behaves, not just the way he feels, but the way he knows—not just what he knows but the *way* he knows' (Kegan, 1994, p. 17).

Presented below is the narrative data from the eight participants in this inquiry all of whom were pre-service teachers in training at a University in Alberta. The narratives of the participants disclosed not only the turning points at which the transformative experiences became life-altering and irreversible, but also the trajectories of the transformations before and after these critical moments. More will be discussed in later chapters of the consequent findings, the multiple contexts within which the transformative experiences occurred, and the histories of affinitive life-experiences linked together to precipitate the transformations in the first place. There is a relational connection to English Language Arts in each story, but it seems that the correlation to this subject area can be direct, indirect, nebulous, an end result or a starting point. There is also one or several connections to teachers associated with each transformative experience, but their influences may be negative, positive, or obscure. Below are the transformative stories drawn from the participant narratives in their words with my own observations and transitions. For the purposes of this research study, the names of the participants are presented with pseudonyms and the story entries are represented as script for ease of reading.

Anthony

Anthony described two related transformations. One was triggered by an experience in elementary school when he was ten-years-old and the other transpired while travelling in rural

Cambodia. Both, trans*formative* experiences shaped, via a circuitous route or continuum of interconnected insights, his ultimate decision to become an English Language Arts teacher.

> Anthony: I remember one day my parents came back from parent/teacher [interviews] and they told me that my English teacher said that I would just never be a good English student. It was very frustrating to me and I tried to get better at English because of that—maybe not all because of that, but because I wanted to prove [that assumption] wrong. I liked English. . . . within the next while, I just practiced writing and I joined some online role-playing boards and just out of my own interest, I practiced writing a lot. I was writing narratives and then I started reading more and I feel I'm quite a creative person and I admire creative things. I play instruments and I really like art and I really like narratives and I like poetry. I started to really excel in English. Later teachers helped me to see that I was very good at English and I enjoyed it (Anthony, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

This part of the narrative was quickly followed by an explanation of the participant's experiences with English Language Arts in elementary school. Prior to the parent/teacher interview that delivered the message he "would just never be a good English student," the participant was unaware he had any problems in fulfilling the requirements of the Elementary Language Arts Program of Studies. I wondered how this misinterpretation or challenge of his abilities affected Anthony.

> Anthony: I remember feeling very dumb [because] I didn't know [and] to have something like that said about me and especially behind my back from a teacher, I felt like I couldn't really trust that teacher and yeah, it really affected me.
>
> I'm pretty sure that the grading system in elementary was satisfactory and excellent. You just got Es and Ss and insufficient or whatever and I think I was getting satisfactory, which is only one below the highest you can get. I never really [thought] anything was wrong and I thought I was doing well and then to hear that was a mind-altering experience in that it was one of my first times experiencing how someone else would view me in a different light than I'd view myself. It was really impactful in that way.
>
> I know that I would probably have liked English regardless of that. I think that moment really made me assert myself. As a result, I think that I worked really hard, but it was always fun work for me. I never disliked anything to do with reading and writing or anything like that. I read from

> an early age and I've always been reading (Anthony, Transcript 2, October, 2012).

In addition to the "mind-altering experience" narrated above, Anthony related a second transformative, life-altering encounter, which occurred during his travels in Cambodia.

> Anthony: I don't know if it was a specific instance that did it more so than a specific moment. I just remember I was riding a scooter with my friend in rural Cambodia and we were having such a great time and I saw a bunch of kids on the side of the road and they were on the outside of their place playing. I talked with them and they all spoke English, which was very surprising to me. We thought they were very bright and I just really enjoyed that moment when I got to speak with them. I don't know if it was anything they did to me; I just thought I'd like to be a teacher (Anthony, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

I asked Anthony whether it was Cambodia or the children or the place or something else from his past that influenced his thought processes about teaching.

> Anthony: I don't think it was being in Cambodia in particular. I think it might have been the simplicity of the life around me. This town was full of red dirt. Our clothes were all stained. So, I think of red. I think of the sun in the sky, it was a very clear day, and I think of a picture and we were all covered in red. Everything's red except our teeth. I just see these kids and it's really hot there and I remember playing with them and thinking, I want to be a teacher. I think, maybe, that's what drew me to it and the reality is they live in a lot of poverty there, but most of their spirits are up. It's not in things that they find happiness; it's in themselves they find happiness. They don't have much, but I just saw energy from them and I wanted to be around them. So, that's what it is (Anthony, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

Anthony's Cambodian experience was profoundly transformative, though I continued to wonder about its specific relationship to his final decision to become and English Language Arts teacher. In the red earth and simplicity of the Cambodian children's *joie de vivre*, there seemed ample reason for insightful and abiding transformation; but Anthony's final decision to become a teacher seemed more embedded in a history of interrelated transformative experiences than in one

or another "specific instance" or "moment". I asked Anthony how he would describe the relationship between his transformative experiences.

Anthony: I think they're different because when I was younger, I hadn't thought of teaching or being a teacher. At that point, the thing that had happened to me earlier had been settled. [English] was my best subject. It was the one I got most joy out of. It was just the type of person I was. I liked being creative and I was inspired by other people's creativity. I think one is a transformation of how I came to love language arts and the other is how I've became a teacher (Anthony, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

Though at this point in the inquiry, Anthony was quite adamant the transformations were "different," he did concede that a journey of considerable history brought him to his decision to become an English Language Arts teacher, a journey that interconnected the two transformations, which was divulged as the inquiry progressed.

Anthony: Yes, [the decision took place over] a long period of time and it definitely had its ups and downs. I had an ultimate goal, which was me trying to find out what I wanted to do. I have memories of immense frustration with not knowing what to do with my life . . . I always had teaching sort of there, but not at the forefront. I don't have a singular obsession every day. My life with English is a part of me. It's one of my main interests, but I have several. I love playing music, I love computers, I love sports to death, I love travelling to death so, I have that sort of perspective; it took me so long because I saw so many opportunities, but it was frustrating. The journey to become a teacher was a frustrating one. That's why it didn't happen at one particular moment; I couldn't say that that one moment was what made me want to be a teacher, but the moment I "realized" I wanted to be a teacher [happened in Cambodia] (Anthony, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

Though a culminating transformative experience brought the realization he wanted to be a teacher specifically in English Language Arts to fruition, the journey that primed his resolve and ended his "frustration" was long travelled. However, in that "moment" in Cambodia, Anthony's transformation "to be a teacher" became irreversible. There will be more about the nature of Anthony's transformative experiences later in this manuscript.

Thomas

Thomas' decision to become a teacher with a focus in the English Language Arts is also shaped by the inter-relational transformative experiences in his life, a large part of which manifested themselves contextually within school. However, Thomas began his narrative with the disclosure of a significant sense of insecurity and long term anxiety that later in the narrative became evidentiary and integral to the transformative experiences he related.

Thomas: I had a strong anxiety disorder, a *social anxiety disorder*, and I was terrified to go out into the community by myself. I wouldn't go to public swimming pools. I was too afraid to go to school on certain days because of the kids and one day, my Mom picked me up, I had a really rough day and I said, "I hate school," and she said, "Oh, you might say that now, but one day you'll be spending your whole life in school" and I just remembered thinking, (*with a laugh*) that'll never happen. So, that is kind of where it all began I'd say. After Grade 6, I had home-schooling. I didn't choose to go to school in Grade 8. Grade 9, I went back again. The social anxiety was still there [and I was] terrified to be in a high school (Thomas, Transcript 1, April 2012).

The reason for the anxiety disorder is not disclosed at this stage, but we did get back to it in the narrative. Throughout Thomas' story, the anxiety disorder *niggled* at the core of the transformation.

Thomas: It is a little bit ironic that now I [realize I] love[d] being in high school (*said with a comfortable laugh and a warm sense of humour*), but then I got involved in music. Music was like the first transformative aspect. I ended up joining different choirs. I'd say seven or eight different choirs at the same time—Chamber Choir, Jazz Choir, Lunchtime Choir, a choir that was actually during school hours, which I could take along with English or whatever courses it was offered with and that really reduced my stress level tremendously. I then had a focus for being at school. I loved going to school for music and I realized school's actually not that bad. My grades started improving and I started making the Honour Roll term after term (Thomas, Transcript 1, April 2012).

Somewhere deep inside Thomas was a drive and determination that seemed to be the supports to his transformative experiences. As we later learned, he was not entirely clear where

this compulsion and initiative came from, but as he left high school he was motivated to overcome his anxieties and to proceed into his life with some inner strength.

Thomas: In Grades 9 and 10, I was just on the work habit—worked hard but really, too stressed be able to focus in class to learn. So, for Grade 11 and 12, it was Honour Roll every term because that was the only difference I could see. Then, I graduated and I was still probably one of the most frightened people you'd ever know and I knew that about myself and I didn't want to be like that so, I looked for the toughest jobs I could do that would force me to grow (Thomas, Transcript 1, April, 2012)

With a willpower summoned from within, Thomas intentionally seized on challenges that placed him in positions of responsibility and work involving direct and often persuasive communication skills with people. The people were most often strangers and by placing himself well outside his comfort zone, he further fostered his own transformative experiences.

Thomas: I worked as a house painter first . . . I wasn't really growing and then, but [then] I came across this opportunity. A girl called me up . . . and told me about this opportunity to go work as a book salesman in Ontario. I had a job at McDonalds and at a bed & breakfast at time and between the two jobs, I was making decent enough money. I had saved enough, I bought my own car, and I had no debt or anything like that [so,] I gave that up [and] we went to Banff. . . . My parents thought I was crazy. We had three days of training. I was [sent to work] in Sarnia, Ontario. We found our place to live by knocking on doors. That was a huge experience. In that time, I was forced to talk to about forty strangers every single day. So, knocking on doors and after a few thousand people, it wasn't so bad talking to people anymore.

I didn't sell anything for the first few weeks. A lot of days I went home . . . [I had] worked fourteen hours without making a single thing. Towards the end of it, they gave me some pressure. "You're not selling enough units here. If you don't sell a hundred units this week, we're going to have to send you home because you're not even going to be able to afford to stay here anymore." I was like, oh know, I might actually fail at this. That week, I went out and sold a hundred and fifty units. I conquered this and after that I was fine. I had a few days when I was making five hundred dollars profit a day. I finished the summer successfully (Thomas, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

Success for Thomas was measured in dollars and sales, but also in that he "conquered this" meaning, he "talked to about forty strangers very single day," which was a "huge experience" for him in facing and overcoming his "social anxiety disorder". His transformation into the teacher

he was to become was progressing and was fuelled, in part, by his own drive to succeed. Now, he was ready for another transformative step.

Thomas: During that time as a salesman, I applied for university so, it kind of spring-boarded that on. I didn't know what I wanted to study though. I just knew education was really important. So, my first year, I took courses in everything. I took business, social work . . . I had one education course, a lot of psychology courses, First Nations courses . . . I thought I wanted to go onto social work. I took all the prerequisites for that and then, after taking a couple of social work classes, I realized, I didn't think I had it in me to remove kids from homes or to deal with all the drama and stress that comes with that job.

[I did get a job in social work] and I ended up spending a lot of time with one nineteen-year-old and the other one was eighteen. Most of the other new staff refused to go to that house because the guys were violent and they would punch and kick . . . but they didn't really do that to me that much. I went back home for that second summer to save money and while I was home, I worked again with people with special needs and that's where [another] transformative event happened that kind of got be thinking about education.

I was working with this other nineteen-year-old autistic kid and I was very fortunate. He had a very limited vocabulary and at the beginning of the summer, he would have baseball on the TV and he would call it hockey and I was firm and [said], "No, this is baseball". Every day that would happen and every day, I would say, "No, this is baseball". . . . At the end of the summer . . . they had a couple pre-season games on with the NHL and they still had baseball. It was the neatest thing. He flips to the hockey channel and he called it hockey and then, he turned the channel and went to baseball and I thought he was going to call it hockey, but he didn't. He called it baseball and I realized, like wow, like my dedication and being firm and just repeating this every day helped him understand the difference. It was just the smallest thing but it was the biggest feeling to me (Thomas, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

Looking for and accepting *social* work aimed at alleviating the hardships of those in need was yet another intentioned experiential and experimental venture into the unknown Thomas was willing to take for his own growth and sense of purpose.

Thomas: It was like, wow, I've made a difference, as small as it [was], but I managed to teach somebody something. And that was right at the end of my time with him, but it was really neat and I loved that and I could really see myself doing that as a career, working with those types of students (Thomas, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

The transformation that began with "I hate school," and followed the trajectory of his mother's prediction to "oh, you might say that now, but one day you'll be spending your whole life in school" (Transcript 1, Thomas, April 2012) was still in motion, more focused in direction and in effect—an immutable effect that evolved.

> Thomas: I looked at the wage that you get. For me it's important to have a family and to be able to afford a house for a family and I would be really struggling with that at the wage that [social workers] get. Okay, how can I use this and continue my education? And then, I thought about it. This student that I've been working with, when he leaves me, he goes to school and he has a teacher there that actually works with him every day and essentially, they do the same things that I do. Only, they're getting paid a higher wage. Okay, well, that's what I want to do. Once I knew that, my path was set [and] it was so much easier (Thomas, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

His mind made up and his path set, Thomas decided to be an English teacher; but not without building upon his experiences and training in social work.

> Thomas: I had to take a teachable subject to get into a high school. So that's when I chose English. I'd always loved English. I graduated with a bachelor's [degree] with an English Major, but no Minor. I wasn't worried about that because I always knew that I'd go to get the Minor in Special Education in the after degree program. I actually really enjoy teaching English, especially with the academic students (Thomas, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

From a boy afraid to go into the social contexts of grade school to an English Language Arts teacher ready to take on the socially constructed environs of secondary education, Thomas' transformational journey as presented narratively for this study would, in ways known and unknown as yet, affect him long into his adult life.

There is one other aspect of Thomas' transformative experiences that seem foundational to his journey to teaching accreditation that I would like to introduce as part of the data. It seems Thomas' social anxieties both held him back and spurred him forward during his lifetime. Other experiences within the contexts in which Thomas lived and learned had influence upon his transformation, which I will write more about later; but the apprehensions he felt and continues to

feel today might have had considerably more to do with his transformative drive than even he was entirely clear about. I asked Thomas where he thought his social anxiety disorder might have originated.

Thomas: I'm not sure if this is the main cause of the anxiety, but there is a good chance that a lot of it does stem from it. When I was two and a half years old, I was in a car accident with my Mom and my sister and my Dad. My Dad was fine, my sister had whiplash and they couldn't tell if I had brain damage or not. My Mom nearly died. Up until then, right until she married my Dad, she bicycled across Canada. She bicycled across New Zealand and Australia. She was very, very physically active. After the accident, she couldn't do any of that anymore. Life at home really, really changed. When I was growing up, she'd try to be active, but her back got her in a lot of pain and it caused a lot of anger and she always felt bad for it after. So, that created a lot of stress in the home and I remember being really scared of leaving my Mom. Whatever effect it had, I'm not really sure, but this anxiety was definitely there and it probably did result from the fear that I would lose my Mom. (Thomas, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

I wondered if Thomas' mother was aware of why he might feel such trepidation about her potential loss or at being away from her.

Thomas: I was two and a half; I wouldn't have started kindergarten until five so, maybe it wasn't even noticeable until I had to start going to school and wasn't with her every day. She would have been so sick for those years too that maybe I was just worried that something would happen (Thomas, Transcript 1, April, 2014).

The effect of such a devastating personal, familial, and life-altering experience due to the motor vehicle incident involving his entire family, but particularly Thomas' mother, cannot be underestimated. His anxieties likely have deep roots in the shattering experience of that crash and Thomas' responses to and interrelationships with the world, people, his family, personal development, and his career choices were forever transformed and/or in transition throughout his life. More will be entered below in subsequent chapters about Thomas.

Amy

Amy began her narrative describing that her transformation from childhood to teaching career lay along a continuum of significant experiences in her life—a continuum she believed still in motion and one that will be further discussed in the findings in Chapter 5. I wondered where she thought her continuum of transformation began.

Amy: I have always been in love with English and storytelling. My earliest memory of English Language Arts in my life would be bedtime stories, which were huge in my family, and my Dad would read every single night to me and my sisters and it got to the point where me and my sisters thought we could read before we could read because we would memorize the stories that he would tell us (Amy, Transcript 1, May, 2012).

Amy's earliest childhood memories with family seemed to be a starting point for the transformative continuum she spoke of. She quickly moved into her life setting and other moments along the trajectory of her transformative experiences.

Amy: The next one that really comes to mind—I can't remember how old I was—but my Dad . . . had the complete collected Shakespearean works and I was probably [in] early junior high and friends of the family would come over and normally we would play house or whatever else and this one time we acted out *King Lear* for our family. *King Lear* because, of course, everything is so dramatic and we all wanted to be the stepsisters who died horrible deaths and so that was another vivid memory and that was about the time I started really loving Shakespeare and seeing English as more than the young adult novels and children's novels [I had been reading] (Amy, Transcript 1, May, 2012).

Enacting *The Tragedy of King Lear* (Shakespeare, 1623, First Folio) during her junior high years was not only a "vivid memory," but also a transformative and embedded experience in her life as an English teacher today. Still in the early stages of her narrative, Amy bounced to experiences in her teaching practicum that she also included as part of the continuum in her transformation.

Amy: So those are the two [transformative experiences] that really stand out [bedtime stories with Dad and enacting *King Lear* in early junior high for her family]. I

> moved into my practicum too, watching students have similar bright moments. One of them was a kid who, I think, wanted to be a mechanic. He was really into cars, trucks, not much into English Language Arts and we read one story that was very dystopian fiction. The kids kill the parents and it was totally messed up and he came to me after class and asked, "Miss, like, did the kids really kill their parents?" I [said], "Yeah that really happened in the story." [He replied,] "That's so sick; that's awesome!" He just loved it and he finally found something that caught his attention and that he was interested in. So, that was pretty cool.
>
> The other one was in my last [teaching practicum] and this kid [who had] dropped down [a course level]. Every time I talked to him and tried to walk him through something, it was, "Ah, I'm so sorry, I'm so stupid. I just can't learn this!" [He was] just really down on himself all the time and he had an essay due. I wasn't marking the essays; the mentor teacher was marking them, but I was helping [him]. I sat him down at lunch hour one day and we walked through his entire essay. I made him read it aloud to me so that he could *hear* where his problems were and he got one hundred percent on the essay. I never saw anyone so happy. I don't think he got a hundred per cent before on anything. He was so happy so, that was really cool (Amy, Transcript 1, May, 2012).

The exhilaration in Amy's voice and eyes, as evidenced in session by the film footage and by her voice recorded during data collection, was clear evidence that she recognized in herself the transformative outcomes of her experiences with these students as a teacher in training and as an educator about to enter the profession. Her demeanour while relating her teaching experiences pointed to another phenomenon in transformative experience. She introduced her transformative moments along a continuum, but because transformation has long term and life-altering effects the end point of the continuum remains indefinable. She will continue to transform from what she has already learned and from what she is learning.

Amy continued her narrative by filling in the gaps in her transformative history.

Amy: I can remember him [Dad] telling stories to me and my middle sister. I am the oldest, she is two years younger than me and I have memories before my youngest sister was born and she is four years younger than me. I think it carried into school very much. English was always my favourite subject, even when I was younger. I never questioned that English was important or reading or writing. That was just part of my life for as long as I can remember. I remember getting *King Lear* and I remember thinking, "Oh, wow, this is awesome; this is like a soap opera. This is so cool" (Amy, Transcript 1, May, 2012).

At this point in the narrative Amy entered an interesting developmental stage of childhood that seemed to have influenced the transformative character of her adventure into Shakespeare's *King Lear*.

> Amy: [I was] snooping through my Dad's bookshelves and finding this giant volume of King Lear, [I remember] saying, "Hey, why not *King Lear*?" Wanting to feel grown up, I took the grown-up book and I can't remember how the transition came about to us acting it out, [but] I remember, first it was me, then there were two families so, there's a whole bunch of different ages of kids. Me and the other oldest girl, we just read it and looked at it and "Oh, that's pretty neat and roped our younger siblings into it (Amy, Transcript 1, May, 2012).

Wanting to "feel grown up" stimulated and/or motivated this transformative experience for junior high aged girls engaged in the expression and enactment of a sophisticated and demanding literary text. I wondered how much Amy thought she and the other girls understood of Shakespeare's words at the time.

> Amy: I think we understood the main plotline with Cordeilia and King Lear and the two sisters. I remember that I had gotten a book from the library that was kids' version of Shakespeare. We used both, depending on how hard Shakespeare's words were. I'm not sure how much of the details we actually got and I know the easy version had pictures in it. So, we probably got a lot of our emotions and acting ideas from that (Amy, Transcript 1, May, 2012).

The central transformative moments of the narrative identified, it was time to connect the dots, as it were; however, because the transformational experience is still in motion, Amy was still disentangling the transformative threads through reflection.

> Amy: I think both those stories about those two boys [in my practicum] . . . the lesson I take from it is that everyone who has had the same background as I do—I love English because I've grown up with it and it's like an old friend, but some people respond to English the way I responded to Math and they get intimidated by it. They hit that roadblock and they can't make sense of it, and so, for me, between the two of them, it's trying to make them see that there's something valuable there, that it's fun and that it's interesting and that they can actually work through the problems when they hit the roadblock.

> In junior high, when I was mad at all my friends and I didn't want to hang out with them and I was mad at all my family, I spent a lot of time by myself reading just to get away from the world. In high school, when I mellowed out a little bit more, I hung-out with my friends more and read less, but it was always something I could pick up when I wanted. Part of it was just growing up and not taking everything so personally. So, when other people react around me, I had to figure out it wasn't a personal attack on me and not react so strongly. My Dad and I had a really hard time, after the divorce. That was kind of hard (Amy, Transcript 1, May, 2012).

"Growing up" is, without a doubt, transformative; but in this inquiry I was looking beyond the fundamental nature/nurture experiences of human development to those moments of transformation in life that deliver people to ways of knowing, being and thinking that Robert Kegan wrote about (1994) where they know they were this way one moment and different the next. I wondered about the anger Amy felt in junior high "at all my friends" and "at all my family".

Amy: I think it was part adolescence and part was my parents going through a divorce. I think, it was just figuring out who I was and how I was going to fit into all that chaos (Amy, Transcript 1, May, 2012).

I wondered if the relationship with her father, so powerfully transformative in her younger years, was affected by the divorce and whether her connection to the English language arts faltered because of the changing relationship with her parents.

Amy: I don't think so. No, because by then, it wasn't so much that I was sharing his passion; it had also become my passion too (Amy, Transcript 1, May, 2012).

Her "passion" with the English language and literature intact despite the complications of separation and divorce, I asked if Amy's trajectory to English teacher underwent any other negative transformative experiences.

Amy: The only time that comes to mind is in third year university. I kind of stopped caring about being a student (*...laughs*). I guess it was a stage where I was three years into my English degree, loved English, but was feeling like I wasn't going anywhere with it and so, my attendance dropped quite a bit and my marks dropped quite a bit just because I felt like I was stagnant. Then, I decided to go into Education and I had the purpose [to] keep going (Amy, Transcript 1, May, 2012).

As Amy's narration continued, other experiences came to mind and as it turned out, within these revelations was the core of her transformation—a transformation still in progress with irreversible momentum.

Amy: In high school English, I was incredibly frustrated by my English teacher because this was the subject that I loved so much and she was this very, very nice lady, very well-meaning, but really didn't put any pizzazz into English and it was just kind of a slog. I could still ignore half of what she said and get an 80% . . . it wasn't inspirational by any means. I remember being very disappointed by that and I think that's one reason I wanted to become an English teacher. I knew that it could be done better than that and part of the reason I knew it could be done better than that is because she had a student teacher for a while and the student teacher taught us *Macbeth* . . . she had a theatre production come in and work with us and we acted out *Macbeth* in front of the elementary of our school and it was really fun. They taught us how to fight, to do the theatrical fighting with many more hands-on activities as opposed to just reading and watching the play, which was so much more fun and I remember really enjoying that (Amy, Transcript 1, May, 2012).

The enactment experience, particularly with Shakespearean Drama, continues to transform Amy's approach to teaching and learning and Amy's history and the evolving contexts through which she lived continues to transform her personally. I wondered whether Amy's decision to become a teacher was in reaction against the way English was taught, particularly to students already proficient in the subject. She responded with an explanation regarding her shyness and in-class experience.

Amy: Well, I wouldn't say that it was for English class that I was doing that. I would say it was because I wanted someone to talk to about these books. I mean, I wanted to have that discussion and that dialogue and that didn't happen within the classroom and part of that could be because I was very shy and because the rest of my class was so bored. I often became the only person talking in class and I was really shy in that role. It would just get really awkward. The teacher would ask the question and you're like okay, I really don't want to talk about this. Let's give someone else a chance and you just sit there and you wait and you know the answer, but you don't want to say it, but it's so awkward because no one else is saying the answer. So, finally I'd end up saying [the answer]. I was really uncomfortable with that so, I just didn't talk that much. There wasn't that dialogue (Amy, Transcript 1, May, 2012).

I understood that Amy was transformed in her childhood by the close familial relationships that she had, the ongoing participation in storytelling, the freedom to use her imagination to create her own stories, and particularly, by listening to bedtime stories within the nurturing environs of home. These experiences have affected her entire life, but were also the bases for further transformational events. Again the continuum she introduced to the data had an ill-defined or indefinable route.

Though there was a moment in time when Amy decided she would become an English teacher, this change had a long history of inter-relational transformative experiences. It was not a person necessarily, although her father was a very strong influence, or a single moment that triggered her transformation. Her passion for all things literary spurred her transformational development forward, but it was the synergy within the amalgam of lifelong experiences, contexts, and influential people that made her transformation possible. As she explained, Amy's was an evolutionary transformation.

Amy: I think it starts right from the bedtime stories and once I got older, I wanted to tell the bedtime stories to my sisters so that was an important development from being the audience to telling the stories. I wrote stories when I was young and would share them with my family and with my friends and there were lots and lots of readings. We talked about the *King Lear*, which would have been in junior high and then after that it became mostly a private thing. I had one friend in high school and we were like the book nerds and we would share our stories with each other, but it wasn't something that I shared with the rest of my friends and that's something that's very small town. You make friends with whomever is around you not with the people you have the most in common with so, we talked about other things, not really my love of books and then probably university is when I really got passionate about it again because I was talking to people who cared about books and who knew about books and who had new ideas for [books] I could read. So, that's when I really got excited about [English] again (Amy, Transcript 3, November, 2012).

Today, Amy sees herself as a burgeoning "transformative teacher" with a desire to make a difference as the English teacher she has become.

Amy: I think, for me the realization that I wasn't a lifelong English Major, but I still loved English, taught me that I should go back to the point in my life where I loved English the most and that was when I was younger and I wanted to share that. That's where my English came from and that's what I wanted to give people (Amy, Transcript 1, May, 2012). I'm an English teacher and that has become my entire universe so, right now, that's everything and the excitement I had then is what I'm trying to get my students to see in a more sophisticated way, but it's that same passion and life and energy that we were talking about and that's everything (Amy, Transcript 3, November, 2012).

Over the long informative sessions we spent listening and conversing about Amy's experiences, she told not only a story of transformation, but also one of transformative teaching and learning.

Emily

Emily's narrative takes us even more so into experiences that illustrate the interrelational and intercontextual nature of transformation. Though centred in school and particularly in English classes, the transformations Emily communicated were fostered and influenced markedly by experiences outside the school context. She begins with a three-part transformational experience.

Emily: I had one when I was really little when I was learning to read in Grade 1. I was a coded student. I couldn't read to save my life. Every time all the other students would do English Language Arts, I would be pulled out into the "special class" in the office and I had a remedial reading teacher, [an] English teacher, and this was all through the first, second, and third grades. . . . The teacher I had, she was nice, but not as encouraging as I think she should have been. It was very clear to me that she didn't think I would succeed, that she didn't think I would do well academically throughout school. So, I was very negative about school. I didn't really like school, I didn't want to be in school . . . I was dumb, I'm stupid, why did everybody else get this and not me and so, it stuck with me for a really long time, all through school up until about Grade 8.

[In Grade 8] I had this one fantastic English teacher. I loved reading and writing, but I always thought I was really bad at it so, I always hid it from everybody. He was very encouraging of my reading and, especially, of my writing. He used to make jokes in class when he was giving writing assignments, "Well, okay everybody, you have to write this short story. Everybody make sure it is at

> least three pages." And then, he'd say, "But you two (there was one other girl who was another big writer), make sure it's under twelve pages please". It was just really funny because it encouraged us; now they are really ridiculous stories (*with a laugh and a smile*), but back then they were pretty big accomplishments for me and he'd talk to me about [them]. Our novel study back then was *The Outsiders* and by the time the whole class was on the third chapter, I [had] read the book eight times. I still have the first paragraph of that book memorized and he and I would make jokes about it all the time and then I read all of the books by that author and he would talk to me about them outside of class and at lunch. He let me know when he heard the author was publishing another book so, I would go read it and he was very encouraging of me and that's when I realized I wanted to be an English teacher.
>
> So, that really stuck with me and that's when I started to believe in myself as a writer and as a reader and academically in general. That's when I started to pick up because my grades were always really low. I was the kid who didn't hand in homework and pay attention in class and just didn't do anything, but after he truly started to encourage me and believe in me, my grades started to pick up. By high school, I was an honours student, I was on Students' Council, and I was in Drama, which was again him. He also encouraged me to get into Drama. I really liked his classes so much and he was the Drama teacher so, I started to enjoy Drama because I enjoyed his class. Now I am a Drama minor.
>
> He really encouraged me and that made me have confidence in myself and in what I was doing. I went out of my way to read more and do more and not feel ashamed about it because I wasn't the stupid girl anymore. He believed in me (Emily, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

Emily told a relatively succinct story of transformation that seems to run from childhood disillusionment to junior high school deliverance along a chronological trajectory, but as with all transformational experiences within this study, not all is revealed at the outset of a narrative. Narrative Inquiry allows and demands considerable time for listening deeply to the participant in a *co-mission* to render what findings may be discovered within the narrative related.

As Emily and I continued through the session much more was revealed about her transformations and about transformative experiences. For example, Emily's transformation began with a very negative and life-altering experience. She was "coded," which meant to her she "was dumb". Though the experience becomes positive in Grade 8, Emily continued to live a life in reaction to that early school experience where she was "pulled out into the *special class* in the

office" and she "had a remedial reading teacher". Transformations occur from both negative and positive beginnings and often conjoin in their effect. More about this phenomenon later and in the *Findings*, but let us continue with Emily's narrative. Her transformations not only continued in effect into high school, but were further reinforced and enhanced.

> Emily: When I got into Grade 12, I had this other teacher and he was very funny and very relaxed and very sarcastic, which is my sense of humour. He made me realize how laid back English can be because English was very structured throughout school for me. He came in and would sit on the desk some days and say, "I don't really feel like teaching so, we're just going to hang-out" and somehow by the end of the year, even though we'd done that so many times, I still knew everything I was supposed to know for English and so did everyone else. He managed to teach without us realizing that he was actually teaching . . . and he made me feel that there was more to English than just what I knew and it made me want to go out of my way to learn more and become that kind of a person who could have such an effect on someone's life through language (Emily, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

Another affirmative experience with a high school teacher reinforced Emily's desire to have "an effect on someone's life through language," and the teacher within her grew with confidence. At this point in the narrative, Emily entered into the data a story about the remedial teacher she had in Grade 1.

> Emily: Oh, I have one more. That teacher, the remedial teacher, I ran into her, probably a year ago at my part-time job. She came in and I started to talk to her and she asked me what I was doing now and I told her that I was going to be an English teacher, a high school English teacher and the look on her face was shock. It was that split second where you see on [her] face the disbelief and it kind of made me feel—I know this is so—it made me feel like, (*with a fist pump*) Yeah! That's right! "In your face; you didn't believe in me!" And I know it's such a bad thing to do, but it made me feel like, more power to me for doing what I was doing because I got to somewhere someone didn't believe I could get. Not only did I succeed academically, I went to post-secondary and I'm becoming an English teacher (Emily, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

There seems little doubt that the "remedial teacher" had a profound effect on Emily's life choices, but the fist pump was visually expressed with an unequivocal sense of triumph. The hurt she felt as a labelled student of little academic competence in Grade 1 was still with her when she

met her teacher years later and as she told her story of transformation. Let it be said here that the context within which such decisions to *help* students and such labels were established when Emily was a child in Grade 1 are not known and are beyond the purview of this inquiry, but the scars inflicted are very real as will be related later in the narrative. In ways unbeknownst to Emily at the time and only discovered through reflection, the remedial grade school experience, transformational in itself, has been, historically, a driving force in Emily's transformational journey. I did wonder if there were two teachers involved in this early sense of negation—the remedial teacher and the teacher who sent Emily to her. She answered with, "No, it was the remedial teacher" (Emily, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

Other elemental contextual aspects of Emily's transformative experiences are included in more detail later in the dissertation, but because context had a direct and complex effect upon the transformations she relates, I include in part other inter-relational experiences of Emily's life here. Early childhood before school; familial influences, particularly of her mother; bullying that starts in Grade 1 and continues to extremes into junior high school; safe havens she happens into; significant people in her life; and her own inner strength all synergically coalesce along a unending continuum of powerful transformative experiences for Emily.

Before going to school Emily described herself as "tomboyish," "pushy," and "entitled". Her early childhood was in a small town.

> Emily: Everybody I was growing up with was a boy. Most of my neighbours were boys (Transcript 2, Emily, May, 2012). It never bothered me to be like one of the guys, but I also didn't know any better. I'm very comfortable if you stick me in the middle of a forest with some ATVs and a dirt bike (Emily, Transcript 3, June, 2012).

This somewhat carefree life with the "boys" in the neighbourhood is drastically transformed as she enters kindergarten. Emily's mother insisted she no longer be like one of the

boys and that she take on, for the time, what would be perceived as a very stereotypical mantel of *girlishness*.

> Emily: I was a little confused I think because for so many years, it was okay for me to run around in jeans and play around and then suddenly, I had to go and be this girl and I had no control over it. I was always in a dress. I think my entire wardrobe was dresses—the only time I had pants was for chores. I had really long curly hair and my hair was always done up and had to be very *girly* and . . . [I had to be] the whole stereotypical, be "sweet and polite and sugar and spice and everything nice," but it had been okay before for me to not be like that so, why did I have to be like that now. Mom bought my clothes and picked my clothes and washed my clothes and did my hair (Emily, Transcript 3, June, 2012).

Emily's description of her confusing transition to an unfamiliar sense of girlhood has ramifications that seem to be part and parcel of the negative beginnings of her transformation.

> Emily: I was one of the few that wore a dress everyday which is why they all thought I was of the religion where you only wear dresses and you have long hair. I did get poked fun at a little bit and I did start to resent it. I remember most of the time when a boy was picking on me [Mom said,] "Oh, he just likes you. Don't worry about it. He just likes you. Boys pick on you because they like you" and things like that. I do remember we'd go to the principal's office with issues every once in a while, but the dress issue never arose [between me and my Mom] (Emily, Transcript 3, June, 2012).

Derision and a sense of segregation assaulted her identity through kindergarten and into Grade 1 even before remediation was ordered for her struggles with reading and writing. These early experiences were transformative in that they set in motion a negative downward spiral of emotions that Emily eventually describes metaphorically as "drowning". However, while in kindergarten she meets, serendipitously and for reasons other than camaraderie, a lifelong and influential friend.

> Emily: I told you about this friend that I was friends with for twenty years, well, I met her in kindergarten. I was the kid—oh God, I don't even want to tell this story—I used to, if kids were painting and I wanted to paint, I'd punch them, I was so mean. I was the loud, obnoxious, rude child in the class and my best friend was, the quietest girl in the class. So, I think, the teacher's idea was to stick the loud girl with the really quiet girl and maybe they'd rub off on each other, but I didn't want anything

> to do with her. She's now my best friend and has been since then and it worked. I am much calmer than I used to be and she's a little more outspoken than she used to be (Emily, Transcript 2, May, 2012).

With such an unpromising beginning, I wondered why the friendship blossomed.

> Emily: I don't' know. What she thought of me mattered and I wanted other people to like me too because then, if other people liked me, she'd like me more. She was the first person outside my family [and neighbourhood friends] that accepted me. She was the first one I really remember, that really mattered to me . . . she wanted to be my friend. She's got a heart of gold and I don't say that lightly. She's honestly genuinely sweet and caring and kind and everybody matters to her and for some reason I matter a lot to her (Emily, Transcript 2, May, 2012).

In her confusion and frustration with changing expectations and school life, acceptance and caring struck a deeply emotional and long lasting chord within Emily. Wanting to "matter" to a special friend is certainly not unusual in human experience, but what was unique to Emily's development seemed to be in the timing and in the prevailing effect of her friend's presence in her life. However, even her friend was not able to reverse the transformative effects of an ongoing lack of self-esteem and bullying.

> Emily: When I was in elementary school, I was *that kid*. That annoying girl that no one wanted to be friends with and so, I was just generally picked on and then, add the fact that I needed remedial classes; I was the stupid kid too. So, I was the *bottom-of-the-barrel* kid. So, that definitely had a big effect because I didn't want to ever put myself out there. In reading and writing, I wouldn't read in class because if I stumbled on one word or I couldn't read it, everybody would laugh at me and I didn't want to be laughed at; I didn't want to be singled-out. So, even though I started to like reading and writing, it was my hidden thing; I didn't want anybody to know because they might make fun of me (Emily, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

Emily experienced a gauntlet-like walk into the office space where she received her remedial classes.

> Emily: I had to go by lots of people because [of] where the remedial teacher would have to come to get me from my class. I'd have to walk through the Grade 1 wing, through the library, down the hall towards the office and then, into the office and I'd have to pass the Music room, which was a great big classroom so, everybody in the Music room could see me (Emily, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

From her perspective, being singled-out and segregated did not enable Emily's educational development and, in effect, exacerbated her difficulties joining the school's cultural milieu in a healthy way. Being "picked on" in elementary school evolved into outright bullying as Emily progressed through the grades.

Emily: I was being bullied so badly and . . . we transferred schools because I just couldn't deal with it. The summer between Grades 5 and 6, I went to a different elementary school and that same year, one of the boys who had been the worst instigator for making fun of me also transferred to the same school and he was even in my class. He was the popular boy and I just wasn't the popular girl. So, he was friends with all the big guys and they all made fun of me and all the popular girls made fun of me too so, it just started all over again, but in Grade 9, he shoulder-checked me into a locker and it bruised my spine really badly. I couldn't really hide that. So, my parents went to the police about it and it was called a *Peace Bond*. Neither of us was allowed to talk to each other (Emily, Transcript 3, June, 2012).

To say the least, the degree of bullying that would require a *Peace Bond* between very young adolescents is remarkable and the extent to which young people were willing to express their angst toward Emily is troublesome. She was labelled and targeted in kindergarten and Grade 1 and she still feels the negative effects of those transformative years today.

Emily: I totally lost myself. I couldn't find my way out of the maze [and] I was stuck and it felt like I was drowning. No one seemed to offer me a way out. No authority figure had offered me a step up or a buoy. And though I [did have] friends, they were just kids too and we [could] only swim so hard. They could [only] bring me gasps of fresh air. . . . It shaped who I was as a person and so, you just do your best to hope and try and pretend it's not there (Emily, Transcript 3, June, 2012).

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Through this sad extended metaphor, Emily expressed her emotional, psychological, social, and cultural status in life through long years of schooling. I wondered if she felt the same when she was home.

Emily: If I had homework, yes. If I didn't, no, because I could just shut school out and I didn't have to think about it. I could just watch TV or do whatever I wanted to do (Emily, Transcript 3, June, 2012).

I also wondered what she felt when she was called to get ready for school in the morning.

Emily: Dread. I didn't like school. I didn't want to go to school. I didn't want anything to do with school (Emily, Transcript 3, June, 2012).

Though "dread" and "lost" were, for going on eight years, what Emily felt toward school, the transformative spiral of experiences took a sudden turn for the better in Grade 8 with an English teacher she believed "definitely changed my life" (Emily, Transcript 1, April, 2012). In her narrative, Emily told of her Grade 8 English teacher's presence and influence.

Emily: He had a very strong presence, both physically and emotionally. He was a very big guy for junior high kids. He was very tall, and he used to be a body-builder so, he was very big, but the sweetest guy you could ever meet. I felt safe because I was bullied physically and in his classroom I was safe because he was strong and then, he was always very nice to me and he was very encouraging of me academically. He was my saviour (Emily, Transcript 3, June, 2012).

I wondered what it felt like to enter into his English classroom and what she meant by "very encouraging of me academically".

Emily: It felt like relief. Walking into his classroom was like a safe haven. That's where I felt happy. That's where I could let it all go. It's like a magical door. You walk through the magical door and everything goes away, more so than at home. I could do English. I enjoyed myself. I enjoyed that class no matter who was in the class with me. I thrived. It was an adult that threw me into the pool in my mind and so I needed an adult to help me out (Emily, Transcript 3, June, 2012).

Clearly the narrative reveals that it was not just this English teacher who helped her out of the metaphorical "pool" she felt she was "drowning" in, but he was the first person in her life to influence significantly the transformation of her life from troubled student to English Language Arts teacher.

As her transformative journey progressed Emily explored her love of the English language by writing online stories with her friend; she had a Grade 10 teacher who made Math fun and helped her believe she could be accomplished in a subject area she had not found any success in

before; she joined the school Student Council and the Drama Club (under the direction of her Grade 8 English teacher), and she worked in successive summers at a children's camp with a camp leader who gave her an artefact she still carries today with the word *Believ*e on it. Emily describes all of these experiences with the same enthusiasm, regard, and significance in her life as she does the tripartite transformation she began her narrative with and, of course, they are all connected in an interrelational, contextual amalgam that defined, reflected, fostered, and drove her transformative story forward. More of the implications of these experiences to this inquiry will be entered later in the dissertation.

One more very informative narrative thread to Emily's development needs to be addressed here to complete the overall representation of her educational and personal transformation. Her own sense of self-determination, which she possessed in abundance prior to entering the school system, returned to her after her experience in Grade 8.

Emily: Really, it was me that was holding myself down. I was sinking, not swimming (Emily, Transcript 1, April, 2012). Junior high and elementary school were trying to make me [into] who I wasn't and the influences that I had in my life then were pulling me in all sorts of different directions (Emily, Transcript 3, June, 2012). After so many years of being told I couldn't do it and that's where all my academic troubles stem from, I suddenly had this teacher who said, "Yes, you can. Don't give up on yourself. Believe in yourself!"

Once I started to have that confidence in myself, I discovered I was able to openly do more and then, teachers were showing me more things and I was going out of my way to find out more about language and literacy and reading and writing and all the different forms of media and all really became a lot of fun for me. This has had such a big impact on my life . . . I know that my passion just for the subject itself can translate into a passion in the classroom (Emily, Transcript 1, April, 2012). I was allowing people to do things because I didn't believe in myself (Emily, Transcript 5, October, 2012b). But, once I had [the self-belief I had preschool] back, I wasn't going to let anybody take it away again (Emily, Transcript 3, June, 2012).

Emily summarized her transformative journey this way:

Emily: I haven't had another experience that has had that giant effect on my life and it could be because that transformation took from kindergarten all the way to Grade 8. Even now, I've changed with it through high school and my post-secondary and my becoming an educator and figuring out how to affect kids—it's still affecting me and so, I think, it's had the biggest impact on my life because it's been lifelong and I haven't really had another thing become so life-changing (Emily, Transcript 5, October, 2012b).

Arthur

The participant group, in general, represented a mixture of varied backgrounds: rural and urban, Canadian and American, ethnic and cultural, with secular and/or faith-based educations, and strong family ties or with more self-reliance. The narrative related by Arthur was, in a like manner, underpinned by this kind of diversity in educational, cultural, familial, and geographical influences. His story transpired in both countries of North America and his educational influences included deep roots in the Christian faith; however, he began his narrative with transformative experiences in English Language Arts and Drama.

Arthur: I was in Grade 10 [and] I was going to a Jesuit high school at the time and I enjoyed English, but it certainly wasn't my favourite; history was. I had been a reader when I was younger, but I had really gotten out of reading when I became a teenager. So, I hadn't really read a whole lot at that time and for Grade 10 I had a teacher who taught American Literature who was also my Drama, not teacher, but my Director. . . . Actually, when the class first started, I was kind of freaked out because I had heard that she was one of the toughest teachers at the school, had great expectations, tended to ask us to think really deeply on things and the first week we were talking about things like archetypes and the American Dream and really digging into philosophical questions that come out of literature and at that time, I felt overwhelmed and thought, 'Oh man, what is this, what have I got myself into?'

For much of the class I was afraid to talk, because, I think, I had a very high regard for her and I was always afraid, 'Oh man, if I answer in class and I get a question wrong, she's going to think I'm dumb'. Even when we would do Drama, sometimes if you got on her bad side, she would just shout "No, that's not right at all!" That was how things began.

We went through the first unit. We read *Great Gatsby*, which I enjoyed, but once again I often felt like, 'Oh man, where she getting all these things?' Like the *significance of colours* and *trying to repeat the past*, trying to *reclaim the past*. There's that important metaphor, of *the green light on the other side of the bay* and

> what that's all about. I was on one hand fascinated by the things we were talking about, but just felt completely incapable of talking about them or thinking about them. And yet, as the class went on, I could sense that there was a change going on inside me. It wasn't something sudden. It was a very gradual thing; it really took me almost the whole school year to realize that something big had been going on. And it was actually around the end of the first semester that I realized, wow, you know I'm interested in reading again and something about English is really fascinating to me now.
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> I think one of the major turning points was when we read *The Scarlet Letter* half way through the semester. Most of my classmates hated that book; they thought it was too complicated, too hard and it *was* hard to read . . . but I just love Nathaniel Hawthorne's language or the kind of questions he was dealing with or the way she was able to lead discussion. Hawthorne was one of her favourite writers too, so part of that may have rubbed off on me. It was around then that I was really engaged with that class, loved doing the assignments, and enjoyed coming to class even though I had times where I would still think, 'Oh, I hope she doesn't get angry because that is scary'. By second semester, I was completely hooked.
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> As the class went on, I spent a lot of time thinking about the things that came up in that class and a lot of time doing the readings and I took the readings very seriously. It was around the time that that class was coming to an end, but I had not really thought of teaching for myself. I mean, I loved school, I loved learning, but I hadn't really thought about teaching. I was pretty sure I was going to go into theatre or filmmaking, but by the time that class was over, I was starting to think this class has been great and this has been really life-changing and not only is the material great, but I've come out of this class recognizing how much a great teacher *can* change the life of a student (Arthur, Transcript 1, April, 2012a).

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The change from curious and diligent student to one thinking of becoming a teacher was fostered through an experience in English Language Arts with a teacher who was both intimidating and inspirational, but as we have learned with other participants that is not all there is to this or other "life-changing" transformations. Arthur explained that the teacher's influence was significant—positively transformative, but also negatively inhibiting.

> Arthur: Part of the reason for such a strong influence was because I had a very high opinion of her so, I think, many of the things she said I was very eager to chew on. The sort of things we would talk about would include . . . Hawthorne because [he] has this very perceptive ability to see how people tend to hide from themselves. I think that was compelling to me. I think that there [was] a fair bit of overlap between what's important to her and what was important to me, but I also had to find my own path as a reader and a lover of literature and also as a teacher of English.

> I think she was a very polarizing figure. I do remember that I had a really hard time for a long time looking at writing comments because [I] felt [any comment was] an attack on my ability as a writer—just like a nail through the heart. I didn't really start breaking away from that mindset until the end of high school coming into college. I think that's part of the reason why, even though I loved her class and I was getting a lot out of it, there was also a lot of stress. Sometimes because I was terrified of looking incompetent or having her say, "No, that's wrong" and the fact that I had such high regard for her made that even worse, which may account for why, even though I loved the class and got a lot out of it, I usually didn't speak (Arthur, Transcript 1, April, 2012a).

The evolutionary, reflective nature of transformative experience is illustrated with Arthur's final comments about his Grade 10 English teacher.

Arthur: I certainly knew people who had very high regard for her as well, but even some of my friends, would say, "I don't know why you like her so much because she's so (bleep). I hate her." There were wiser people who would say things like, "You know, she's not right about everything and you will learn more and it's a great thing that's happened to you, but this isn't the end of it and you do seem to have this tendency to refuse to see any flaws or any foibles for whatever reason." At the time, sometimes part of me would think, "Oh well, you just don't understand" or "You're just like the rest", but there was part me that was thinking maybe they're right, what if they're right?

After I left high school and had some time to be more honest about some of her foibles and to get away from her influence . . . I do think that there has been this very beneficial journey of slowly, as I said, finding my own way, learning yes she did a lot for me, but maybe she wasn't right about everything in the way she understood literature and certainly, in the way she taught sometimes. I'm grateful that I've been able to continue that journey in a way that honours what she did while being able to be more honest about some of the weaknesses that she may have had (Arthur, Transcript 1, April, 2012a).

The dynamics driving the transformation from student to a young man heading for teacher training in English Language Arts continued to be revealed.

Arthur: I had always been the kid who had done well in school. I had gotten high marks, my teachers had always spoken highly of me and so, I think . . . for a long time my sense of worth came from doing well in school and being a really strong student and being someone who was considered intelligent and who was a really good writer (Arthur, Transcript 1, April, 2012a). If someone really wants to get down to why we do what we do, there are reasons that are very painful. [If we] go to what we don't like to think about, we're confronted with our own weaknesses, our imperfections, our own baggage and it's so difficult, in fact, that I think that none

> of us can go to those places unless we have someone from outside of ourselves come in and help us go on that journey. Here, we're getting into questions of where the problem starts [and] where does the evil come from, but somehow it has been an ongoing problem for me. Even though I joke [about it], I'm a recovering perfectionist (Arthur, Transcript 1, April, 2012b).

In exploring further Arthur's "painful" drive to perfection, he said he had so much fear of failing during his schooling that he felt he would *collapse* if a teacher said he failed an assignment or paper so, he just didn't fail. That there are students who fear failure is not revelatory, but Arthur's deep-seated anxiety regarding even the word, "failure" had, as will be revealed, profound influences upon his transformative experiences.

Arthur: When you [the researcher] were just talking and you mentioned that word "failure", there was actually a tremor that went through my body so there is definitely a physical reaction to hearing that word (Arthur, Transcript 1, April, 2012b).

I wondered where he thought such a "tremor" inducing such fear might have come from.

Arthur: Here's the thing that I find fascinating. I think that a lot of times we look at perfection, and speaking as someone who struggles with perfection myself, as though it's the need to have perfect performance and things to go a certain way and I do think that's part of it, but I think that, in my case, what has often driven the perfection is the need and desire for other people's approval. It was not so much the perfect performance that would be devastating, but as a result of imperfect performance, the rejection or the sense from another person that I let [the person] down [or] failed [that person]. That's what was intolerable. If I felt like I had failed, but I had reassurance from someone who was important to me then, that made things a whole lot easier. It was, and it is still [the same] sometimes today, the terror of not only doing poorly, but getting that look and those words, you really screwed up this time. That's what's so terrifying (Arthur, Transcript 1, April, 2012b).

Arthur moved quickly in his narrative from "tremor" to "terror" when explaining his fear of failure and now the source of his fear would be divulged. He desired the "approval" from others to the extent that any "rejection" terrified him. This revelation led us to the foundational experiences of the transformation Arthur related in his narrative.

Arthur: I do remember that when Mom and Dad went away for business trips or for anniversaries, even if they went away for a week or two weeks, that was just the most terrifying thing and I had this habit when I was a little kid, if someone was getting ready to go to the airport, I would grab Mom by the leg and just wrap myself around her leg and scream, "No, no, you can't go! You can't go!" as she's trying to walk out the door. Eventually they'd pull me off because I'm a little kid, but that was terrifying.

The au pairs, the nannies, were the ones looking after my sister and me for much of our weekdays and so, I [grew up] attached both to my parents and these nannies and then, after a year the nannies [would] go back to Europe. So, I spent a whole year getting very attached to another parent figure and then, a year later that parent figure leaves. It happened again and I get attached again and the figure leaves.

One woman in particular, from Iceland, who may have been the closest one to me—there was another woman from Germany along the same level—but this woman in particular from Iceland, the day she left, I threw a tantrum at the airport. Mom and Dad brought me, I was five or six, and she's getting on the airplane and I was screaming and hollering. Security is coming over to check because they think there is a problem. Mom and Dad were terribly embarrassed and they're going, "Oh no, what are you doing to us?" and I'm screaming, "You're ruining my life!" Looking back, it looks like a comedy, but I do remember at the time, it was absolutely devastating (Arthur, Transcript 1, April, 2012b).

I wondered whether this repeated and "devastating" experience of loss could be the centre of Andrew's need to be the perfect child and student.

Arthur: Yeah, it does seem likely and I will say that if someone were to ask me, "what are you terrified of more than anything?" and in a moment of real honesty, the answer I would have to give is being torn apart from the people whom I love the most. It's bad enough to be torn apart, but the worst thing for me is if the relationship breaks down to the point that it no longer exists. Nothing is more terrifying to me than that kind of breakdown of a relationship.

Because I love learning and I was a smart worker and a lot of school subjects just came to me easily, that was an easy way to get love and respect from my parents and my teachers (Arthur, Transcript 1, April, 2012b).

The cyclical or spiral or coiled nature of transformation where the historical record of experiences touches back again and again upon itself as it progresses forward, now returned Arthur's narrative to English 10 and Nathanial Hawthorne. What he did not find in his teacher's

approach to literary exploration and teaching he found in the literature she made him aware of. I wondered if within literature he gained peace of mind.

> Arthur: Yeah, I think that that makes a lot of sense to me. I think one of the things that certainly helps about Hawthorne is if I look down the list of favourite authors—Hawthorne, Tolkien, Melville, Dostoevsky, Pasternak—across the board with all those authors, there's a very real honesty about the fragility of life and how easily things can be taken from you, how death is inescapable and loss is real. So, I think, that honesty appeals to me because I know the frustration of trying to keep things together and just being disappointed time and again. At the same time, there's not a cynicism about these authors. They are engaged with their worlds. They show a great deal of compassion for people who are suffering, for people who are hurting and, even though they're not blindly optimistic, they're engaged and they're active and they don't stop caring. I find that speaks very powerfully to me both the real honesty and caring engagement with other people. That I find really compelling (Arthur, Transcript 1, April, 2012b).

Arthur found "real honesty and caring engagement compelling," which turned out to be profound words, indeed, considering his childhood experiences with disengagement and a seeming lack of permanence or direct engagement with his parents. During one of the sessions, Arthur brought in an artefact that, for him, represented his transformation.

> Arthur: I brought in my copy of *The Scarlet Letter*, which I read when I was in Grade 10. This is the actual copy of the novel that I used for the class so, it's a bit old; it's torn in places. The pages are crumpled up and are yellowish and you can see my name written on the edge as the teacher demanded that all of us do and if you scroll through the book, you can see my notes from when I read it so, there are underlines and there are notes in the margins. The *Scarlet Letter* is a hard novel to read. The language is pretty dense, but I love Hawthorne and I love his language. When I read these sentences it's like drinking the world's best strawberry malt that never ends. I know it sounds strange, but that's how I feel about Hawthorne's language and I do think it was around the time that we were reading this book, finishing this one, that's when I really became aware that things were changing (Arthur, Transcript 2, April, 2012b).

I wondered if Arthur could describe his feelings toward Hawthorne's words in his copy of *The Scarlet Letter*.

> Arthur: The word that comes to mind is sacred and I find that ironic because [in] *The Scarlet Letter* itself, the letter is supposed to be a symbol of sin and shame and guilt and

> adultery. Here I am saying that this symbol of adultery is a sacred symbol but, as I hold this book, I do feel a sense of reverence for the novel itself, for the author, for the experience of reading it, and re-reading it as well, and even a special fondness for this particular copy of the book. When I say sacred I mean I'm really trying to get at reverence so, giving this and what it represents a place of honour. It is true, given my background and the kind of person I am, when I hear the word sacred, it's very easy for me to associate it with church [as] something that shouldn't be defiled, but with this it's much more a sense of respect and honour and reverence and appreciation. There is a deep fondness and an admiration for this book and what it represents (Arthur, Transcript 2, April, 2012b).

Because Arthur described Hawthorne's book as "sacred" and an artefact he held in high "reverence" and with "deep admiration and fondness" I wondered how he thought he might react if his copy of *The Scarlet Letter* was lost or taken or destroyed.

> Arthur: I think I would feel like something precious had been taken from me so, I would feel like someone were trying to rob me, not only of a story and a book that was important to me, but they were threatening to take something that symbolized an important experience that was life-changing (Arthur, Transcript 1, April, 2012b).

Arthur described Hawthorne's words and his book, *The Scarlet Letter*, as symbolic of his transformational experience, but he also linked this literary representation to deep emotional and psychological loss. He would "feel like something precious had been taken from" him. I wondered if there was a further link to the "devastating" sense of loss he felt when his parents left him with the "au-pairs" for weeks on end during his first ten years of life.

> Arthur: Hawthorne [has] great concerns for speaking truth to power and taking a stand for what's right when many people won't because they are afraid or because there are repercussions if you do or because you become unpopular and also, once again, a real insight into why people do what they do [and] what really drives people to do the things that just seem inexplicable with a real honesty about loss and suffering and pain and also the reality that you can't escape it. I've tried for so long to keep the people that care about me from leaving me. No matter how hard I try, no matter how perfect I seem to be, I couldn't stop them from walking out because they choose to or because they're not interested or because they die or the reality is that you can't stop loss from happening, you can't stop death from happening. You're just a man, but if that's true how do you keep from falling into despair and becoming bitter and just closing yourself off from other people and that's an important question.

> Maybe here's a nice way to think of it. People who could give voice, who could give words to things I was thinking about and feeling, but I hadn't found a way to express them. So when I read, for instance, Hawthorne or Thoreau, the ideas they were presenting were not something I disagree with and it is not as though they are making me believe in things I didn't believe in before. I already believe, but I haven't been able to put it in words (Arthur, Transcript 2, April, 2012b).

Arthur described trying to "keep the people that care about me from leaving" as an attempt to fill a *gap* in his soul. At the heart of the transformative experience Arthur related in his narrative was the imperative to give voice to "things [he] was thinking about and feeling". The synergy of teacher, subject, literature, context, student experience, psychological well-being, and personal history that came together for Arthur in Grade 10 seemed threaded back to his need for voice and his fear of loss.

There were other cross-hatch threads that also reinforced and/or fostered Arthur's transformation from childhood longing to brilliant student to self-aware young man to English Language Arts teacher. For example, that Arthur was transformed through a connection in Grade 10 with a very influential English teacher who was also his Drama director seemed more than just a serendipitous happenstance. In his narrative, Arthur described his lifelong penchant for English Language Arts, literature, and theatre and this interconnectivity found expression during this time in his another high school experience.

Arthur: Drama is one of those things that I have loved since the very beginning. When I was a very little kid, the very first job I wanted to have was to be a puppeteer. I loved *Peter and the Wolf* so I made my parents watch that show over and over again. "Okay, here's wolf and he's going to eat the dog and then Peter's going to come here and he's going to capture the wolf and oh, isn't this great?" All through elementary/junior high, if there was a Drama class I was always involved. When we got to do skits or we got to do plays, I was really excited and I [did] theatre camps through half of elementary and junior high.

I had this perception that Drama's interesting, but words are boring because Drama had action and it had people moving around; whereas, books were just words on a page, but Drama is also speech (Arthur, Transcript 1, April, 2012a). For a long time, I associated Drama with action. I knew people talked, but I didn't

> really appreciate the power of words to take a stand and say something that could change the world so, I would usually think in terms of action. The stories I liked were action stories, heroes, sword fights, adventures, but there was a movement toward recognizing words on a page or a story that may not be action-packed, but have a lot of drama and are told in a very powerful way (Arthur, Transcript 3, May, 2012).
>
> . What happened in Grade 10 was I realized English can be exciting like Drama and along with that, it's not just words but writers [as well who] are engaging with issues and questions that are important. I still love reading for the ideas in stories, but now I read a lot for how the story is told and how do the words tell the story and how do they describe things and I've really come to believe that the thing that makes literature, like all art forms so powerful, it's not just what's said, but how things are said (Arthur, Transcript 1, April, 2012a).

As will be further developed in another chapter, cultural, social, personal, even psychological contexts within which a person lives and goes to school are particularly prominent in transformative experiences. The influence of Arthur's relationship with his parents is particularly influential and as found with all other transformations studied, very much part of the amalgam and continuum of experience that supported the transformations Arthur spoke of in his narrative. Because the relationship with his parents and their early absences in his life is foundational to his eventual transformation I have entered parts of Arthur's narrative about his parents here.

Arthur: You were talking about my relationship with my parents and how I was always saying they were there, but always qualifying it, how they were there, but someone else was usually looking after me and I can't help wondering if that's because when I hear stories about people whose parents were absent, they just seem a lot more dramatic than mine. . . . I've been told by so many people that "your parents are just the best; they're just so good." So, how could I think my parents were absent when I was very young? I find that an interesting train of thought that just came to mind as you were talking so, I don't know if I'm ready to come out and say, yeah, my parents were more absent than I dared to believe, but as you were talking I'm thinking, humph, where does this hesitancy to use the "a" [as in *absent* parents] word come from? (*both participant and researcher share a laugh*). I feel like there is a whole side to myself that is really hard to show to my parents. . . . I'm trying to reach and I feel like we're touching fingers and we're not really grasping hands, if that makes sense? It's not as though [my parents are] trying to avoid me, but there is just something missing here (Arthur, Transcript 3, May, 2012).

Here the term "gap," as referenced earlier, entered the narrative. Essential elements of Arthur's transformative experience like his intense need for approval, his almost debilitating sense of loss, his absolute determination to be the "perfect child," and his desire to believe in someone and something all seemed centred in a concerted effort throughout his life to fill this gap.

> Arthur: There's a gap of some sort. I wasn't even one year old at the time they made the decision. I think if I were to ask them, the answer would be your father and I were both working and that was the decision we came to and I never really asked them for anything beyond that. I think it was more of a given. I was raised by au pairs for the first ten years of my life. The parents were there, but it was the au pair that did the raising. It feels much more natural to say I was raised by au pair for ten years than I was raised by my parents for ten years (Arthur, Transcript 3, May, 2012).

I wondered if Arthur ever felt abandoned.

> Arthur: When I hear the word abandonment, it's a word that catches my attention. It's one of those words that makes me turn [to] the U2 song, *Sometimes You Can't Make it on Your Own*"? There's that moment towards the end of the song when Bono just sings at the top of his lungs and he just cries out, "*Don't leave me here alone*" and every time I hear that line it hits something deep down in my core. There is something about that cry "*Don't leave me here alone*" that really resonates. Sometimes when I hear that song and that line really gets to me and I start to tear up (Arthur, Transcript 3, May, 2012).

Arthur said he didn't want to "get bogged down in this" (Transcript 3, Arthur, May, 2012), meaning in an analysis that would shed too negative a light upon his parents, but he went on.

> Arthur: I wonder if another major reason why it is hard for me to describe them [his parents] as absent [is] it hasn't happened with Mom as much, but certainly with Dad. There have been a few times, several times in fact, I tried to talk to him about what it was like in high school and how I really felt his absence and how I really wanted him to be around more and I felt like he wasn't and almost every time that comes up, here's the way the conversation goes.
>
> "Well, you know, I worked all those hours for you and I did it so you could have opportunities that I never had and so that you could go to the best schools and you could have the best education and you could have the life you did."
>
> And a lot of people like friends of Mom and Dad when this comes up will take a similar line. "You know, he did it because he was looking after you, he did it for you" and this sort of thing and even though usually I don't protest that

> explanation, there is always a part of me that would say, I don't buy that. Not that I don't buy that at all, but part of me just wants to say, I didn't want your money. I didn't want schools, I wanted you! If you were really doing it for me, I wanted you. I would have done fine no matter what. I just feel like it's not fair to brush over the fact that what I wanted most was you to be present and you weren't, but I got you really nice stuff and really good education in place of it. That's not good enough.
>
> That's not something that I am trying to hold over his head like, "oh look at what you did to me. I'm a broken child because of you." It's not like that. I'm just saying, Dad, just come clean and acknowledge that this is how I really feel. What I wanted most is the one thing that you didn't give me at the time. It doesn't mean that our relationship is ruined and I'm going to be estranged from you, but whenever I bring this up, please don't tell me implicitly, you don't have the right to feel that way because look how much I did for you (Arthur, Transcript 1, April, 2012a).

Arthur spoke numerous times of his parents with fondness as well as scrutiny. After one of the sessions, Arthur had a conversation with his mother about his early years.

> Arthur: Mom and I go walking almost every night together, and we talked about a whole range of things, and this topic came up. I said Mom, do you know what it is like when these au pairs were coming and going all the time and her whole body language said, I never really thought about it that way, but it seemed like a lot of things were making sense to her (Arthur, Transcript 3, May, 2012).

What else may be communicated between Arthur and his mother is intriguing and one of the side effects of conducting research, but for now, beyond the scope of this study. Before moving to the next participant, there is one other significant thread laced into Arthur's transformation.

> Arthur: I would say now, I am anchored in my faith more than anything. It's a whole other dimension that's outside the English Language Arts context, but people are important to me, authors are important to me, art is important to me, but I don't think any of those things are the centre right now (Arthur, Transcript 3, May, 2012).

The transformation continues and the strengths Arthur gained through his Grade 10 English class carry on and evolve in his current lived world.

Geoffrey

Geoffrey related transformative experiences in university within English Language Arts; but as with all other narratives, his transformation has deep roots in historical, experiential

contexts, which reinforced and supported what happened for him during his first year of post-secondary school. His too was a journey from childhood to becoming an English teacher, but he began narrative where his transformation came to fruition.

> Geoffrey: My transformative English experience took place in first-year-university [when] we were assigned a research essay. We could do it on a number of topics and in passing, my professor mentioned, that somebody in the past had written on *Paradise Lost* and how this person had argued, Satan is the hero, the protagonist of *Paradise Lost*, and something about that stuck with me. I hadn't even read *Paradise Lost* at that point. . . . Satan [as] a protagonist in *Paradise Lost* wasn't something I necessarily believed in, but it was fun and interesting to write in a way that was different from the way that I was used to. I got a ninety on the paper. Doing well on that essay—something, for the first time I really put an interest [in] and researched—reinforced the effort and it reinforced how English could be dangerous, in a sense.
>
> So, that was my experience and what I take from that is I was more willing to critically analyze any piece of writing that comes my way. [I am] able to look at it from different points of view. It was a really interesting experience, something that has definitely affected how I approach any piece of literature (Geoffrey, Transcript 1, April, 2012a).

Not quite understanding the depth of the transformation at this early stage, I wondered whether it was the literature (i.e. *Paradise Lost*) or the professor at the centre of his experience.

> Geoffrey: The professor wasn't all that engaging and I don't remember her as being a very effective professor in terms of lecturing and teaching. I think she mentioned [*Paradise Lost*] in passing. [The assignment] wasn't necessarily supposed to invite us to write about *Paradise Lost* or about that topic. So, I wouldn't credit her with my engagement with the literature, but I have to credit her with the idea. Something she mentioned in passing, I [found] so interesting—how that idea affected me in that way that I took it upon myself to take it a few steps further (Geoffrey, Transcript 1, April, 2012a).

Still, the strength of the transformation remained somewhat elusive. I wondered what he meant by his comment, "English could be dangerous".

> Geoffrey: Well, to argue that Satan could be a protagonist in any sense is not, generally, well received. It's not the norm in our society and so, it was the first time that I could argue something that not everyone agreed with. It was the first time I ever took that type of position. In general, I am a pretty safe person, reserved even. [With this topic,] I felt that I could push my own boundaries [and] I felt like I was also

> questioning the norm. I was going to a place that normally I wouldn't go to and the piece of literature allowed me to do that.
>
> I'm a safe person generally and so, it was almost like taking on an alter ego. I could take on, in a safe way, where I could weigh out an argument and plan ahead and say it eloquently. I don't think it was something I could do just standing up in front of a crowd, but putting it in writing was something that I was excited to do. I could revise it and edit it and fine tune it. I play it safe in life, but it was safe to be dangerous in writing because you're not going to get in trouble for your opinion necessarily as long as you're able to argue it and back it up with evidence (Geoffrey, Transcript 1, April, 2012a).

This explained the challenge potential the literature and the assignment offered, but not why this approach was perceived as "dangerous" or why the experience captured so much of his attention. I asked Geoffrey if he could find another word or words to express what he meant by being "safe to be dangerous".

Geoffrey: The first word that comes to mind is scared, scared of repercussions, of what it could mean by saying something that might get me in trouble. So, I think, in putting it in writing, I could revise it and go over it and kind of visualize in my mind just how dangerous I'm being with this argument and see how far out it is from my boundaries or from what people expect. Basically, it's about not getting into trouble, which stems from childhood (Geoffrey, Transcript 1, April, 2012b).

The story of transformation has now been given an interconnectivity with the past and a history in the narrative. As Geoffrey continued his story, the transformative experience he started as a university experience with John Milton's *Paradise Lost* was fleshed out into a series of transformative contexts and experiences still at play in his life. Geoffrey comfortably brought his parents into the narrative.

Geoffrey: My Mom's always been supportive. My Mom's great. She is blind now and she started going blind [when I was a] child. So, she saw for her first forty years roughly, but slowly her sight started to degenerate. My Dad is tougher than my Mom—they're divorced now. My Mom [would] be supportive of whatever I do. If I wanted to be a bum on the street, she would be supportive of that. It's what's best for me and as long as I'm happy and as for my Dad, it was, you can do whatever you want to do as long as you get an education. I'm more like my Mom. As I'm growing older, I see more elements of my Dad come through and that's always surprising when that happens, but I know I am more like my Mom in terms of personality (Geoffrey, Transcript 1, April, 2012b).

I wondered how the fact that his mother was going blind affected Geoffrey.

Geoffrey: Growing up I was resentful of it. I understood why it was more of a big deal for her than it was for me, but I still couldn't help feeling like I was being cheated. I don't feel that way anymore, but growing up, it was always frustrating that she couldn't drive and so, I couldn't get places.

She was able to read throughout her twenties and thirties and then it came to the point where she had to use electronic magnification and now, she is completely blind. . . . Usually, it was my Dad who would read to me, but I remember mostly reading by myself. Occasionally they would read to me when I was four or five, but after that, I started reading really early so they left me to my own (Geoffrey, Transcript 1, April, 2012a).

There was still no explanation yet of why he had been "scared of repercussions" or where the dread of "getting into trouble" or the "fear of punishment" came from. Geoffrey believed he was just born with this cautious personality, but thorough reflection revealed other possibilities for these deep-seated fears.

Geoffrey: I think it's a fear of punishment. I don't know what form that punishment would take, whether a confrontation in a public setting or getting laughed at, embarrassed, humiliated or maybe some kind of divine intervention. I don't know what it would be, but if I'm being very boisterous and extroverted then that's not me, it's somebody different. I have a tendency to think of the negative ways I could be affected by changing who I am, as opposed to the positive things that it could bring into my life. And that punishment always seems milder when it comes to literature especially when you are writing an essay for a professor. The worst thing that can happen is that the professor disagrees with you, and maybe that will be reflected in your mark and maybe it won't. But, you're not going to have a confrontation; you're not going to be embarrassed. You're not going to change your future any.

I can't remember when there was a time when I wasn't afraid of getting in trouble with my parents, or the teacher, [though] I was never a troublemaker for anyone. It's an easy explanation to say I'm just wired that way, but I can't think of anything else (Geoffrey, Transcript 1, April, 2012b).

In his narrative, it was clear that Geoffrey felt great affection and love for his mother and I wondered if his mother's blindness and his early childhood experiences with her might be, in part, an explanation for this fear of "punishment". It sounded like it would have been hard for Geoffrey to disappoint his mother; nonetheless, he possessed a strong desire to not let her down.

He said "it's so hard to disappoint her, it would be devastating" (, Geoffrey, Transcript 2, April, 2012b).

A deeper story was revealed by Geoffrey as the narrative continued of difficult experiences that seemed to underlie his lifelong fears and the transformational experience in his first university year.

> Geoffrey: When my parents got divorced, I was twelve and I lived with my Mom for two years and then, I move in with my Dad. I've become closer with my Mom since I moved out. I wasn't very close with her—well, I mean they're parents—but when I moved in with her for those two years, it was a difficult time for everyone, divorce will do that. I had a lot of anger, not toward [them], but just at the situation we were in and so, after I moved in with my Dad, I became a lot closer with my Mom, ironically. We talk a lot more and she's become a friend, in a way. Whether parents should be friends or whatever, but it's a safe place I can go to (Geoffrey, Transcript 1, April, 2012a).

There is the reference to "safe" again and in reference to spending time with his mother. He goes on to describe his mother's attitude to her own blindness.

> Geoffrey: She almost enjoys it in the sense that it makes her different. She's a very spiritual person and so, this [happened] for a reason and she's thankful for the things that [her blindness has] given her in that she doesn't judge others because she can't see. She doesn't know who she's talking to, she doesn't know what they look like, but if they're an interesting person, who cares what they look like and that's something that we can all take in our own lives. . . . She takes lessons from everybody [and] it's given me a lot of good things and I didn't appreciate that as much, but she also wasn't completely blind back when I was younger and now she is (Geoffrey, Transcript 1, April, 2012a).

Geoffrey narrative also took us deeper into his school history.

> Geoffrey: I've always battled with low self-esteem and most of that stems from, probably, Grade 3 through Grade 7. I really didn't have any confidence in myself. I could get good grades, but who cares in Grade 4. You have to be part of the in-group and I wasn't. I was made fun of, just being a *geek*. I put too much emphasis on school in their perspective. I still had friends, but not the friends I wanted. There were friends that you wanted to be friends with because they were popular and the girls knew them, but they never wanted me to hang-out with them. Kids are cruel. I harbour no ill-will; it's just the way it was. I can laugh about now, but it certainly affected how I was (Geoffrey, Transcript 2, April, 2012b).

I asked Geoffrey if the friends he did have contributed to his self-esteem at all.

> Geoffrey: Not to the extent that it would have if they had been in the popular crowd. That would have been the ultimate [to be in the popular crowd] and that rejection lead to a sense of insecurity. What is it about me that isn't good enough for them? (Geoffrey, Transcript 2, April, 2012b).

The lack of popularity Geoffrey experienced in a social context that suggested to him the importance of being in the "in-group" resulted in converse feelings of rejection and insecurity to add to his other anxieties, but things did change somewhat through high school.

> Geoffrey: I had a growth spurt going into junior high and I also went to a different junior high. I got rid of my glasses and I got contacts, which when your young, makes a big difference in terms of confidence and self-esteem. It was a fresh start with a new look. Everything was different and suddenly, I felt confident in myself. I felt confident in how I looked and so, I felt confident in social situations, but I don't remember wanting to be part of the cool crowd after that. I was still a strong student in junior high and so, I carried that with me from elementary into junior high (Geoffrey, Transcript 3, May, 2012).

Though he still described himself as one who "battles with low self-esteem", Geoffrey did develop some "confidence" during his school days, at least, in a social context. He went on to tell of high school experiences and connected transformative experiences in English with another influential teacher.

> Geoffrey: I had him for Grade 11 and Grade 12 English, a great teacher. He was older. He was a very cynical person, but very charming and witty and you knew that his cynicism was put on a little bit as a show. Every day we would do the same thing and it would just be a class discussion. I went to a school where we were well-behaved enough and academically inclined enough to be able to just sit there for an hour every day and discuss a piece of literature. So, you could really get into it and he could, essentially, mentor us. He seemed more like a guide than a teacher. It seemed more like we were getting into it ourselves and he was just there to monitor us. More responsibility was placed on the student than what I think is typical of a high school student. He gave us the opportunity to see that English could be fun and it was engaging as opposed to Math, which seemed very individualistic and not fun, frankly (Geoffrey, Transcript 3, May, 2012).

Here Geoffrey has added new elemental and contextual pieces of the transformative experiences he had lived. The "well-behaved and academically inclined" school context allowed for lessons with engaging discussion and student self-determination and he discovered that "English could be fun". In this class he further developed his love for the study of literature and English Language Arts. He hasn't arrived at becoming an English teacher yet, but he has a definite inclination toward English as a focus of study.

Coming out of high school, Geoffrey was an interesting mix of hidden anxieties and outward determination. He sought approval, but not just from anyone.

> Geoffrey: I think I do [get that sense of approval] now, but not back in Grade 3 or early elementary, but let's say it was a [university level] peer who brought up the essay topic, I still wouldn't have been comfortable going on without consulting with the professor about pursuing it or writing about it because I would have no confidence that it could be correct or right to write about and I could get a very poor mark, which would have had a negative impact on my self-esteem (Geoffrey, Transcript 3, May, 2012).

Geoffrey's need to have the sanction of his professor in order to proceed with an assignment about Satan as portrayed in *Paradise Lost* brings us again full circle. He describes what "professors" have others do not and then connects their approval to his decision to become a teacher.

> Geoffrey: They have the credentials. I think I was looking for something to confirm that I made the right choice in going into Education. It wasn't a conscious decision that I'm going to get a really good grade by doing something dangerous and then, this will reinforce what I want to do, but it happened subconsciously. I was looking for something to say, this is where I am supposed to be and so, that presented itself as an opportunity that I happened to jump on.
>
> I remember that I wasn't completely confident I was going to be an English teacher at that point. It was first-year-university and teaching was always something that was Plan B. Plan A growing up, you're little, you'll be a firefighter and then, you'll become a police officer, but then you get to high school and you think more practically and I always thought I would go into business. I remember sitting at my computer one day and I had to register for first-year university courses. I had to choose business or English courses and I looked at all the Math I'd have to

> do and I realized I didn't like Math all that much and I went into English. Teaching was always something my Mom wanted me to do. She always thought I would make a great teacher and so, it was always Plan B. Plan A was always changing.
>
> I figured Plan B has always been the one constant so why not just go for it. English, I always enjoyed growing up, in spite of the teachers I had. Junior high, I had two teachers who were not very effective and then in high school, in Grade 12, I had a great English teacher. . . . I would always enjoy English and so, I decided to go and register in English courses in university and go for education like my Mom wanted me to and I'll see where this takes me (Geoffrey, Transcript 1, April, 2012a).

His mother's influence loomed large in Geoffrey's decision to become a teacher and his love of reading and literature does go back to his childhood, but his narrative continued to explore authority and why "credentials" meant so much to Geoffrey.

> Geoffrey: If you have a doctorate it's assumed that you have a little more authority on any subject than somebody else and of being able to express that knowledge and understand everything about that work so that you can discuss it. Certainly, I'm sure, there are lots of people around the world who don't have a doctorate in English, but would be able to discuss *Paradise Lost* to the equivalent of a university professor. But for some reason we don't give them the same quality, the same respect. I think credentials play a big part into how I see somebody. If I have a university professor who has a doctorate in English, I'm going to pay a lot more attention to them than somebody who does not, and simply just has experience in the field.
>
> When she [the English professor] marked the paper and I got a high mark on it I believed that was an appropriate mark because I knew that she knew what was talking about. When she lectured she wasn't very engaging. She wasn't a very good professor in that sense, but when it came to marking she was, and so knowing that she knows her stuff, I knew she wasn't just going through it and saying whatever. I believed her. I believed those comments and I believed that that was the right mark (Geoffrey, Transcript 2, April, 2012b).

Receiving the "right mark" from a person with "credentials" was important to Geoffrey's story, but I wondered if there was anything in the literature itself that was transformational.

> Geoffrey: In high school, that particular teacher taught us how to have fun in the English classroom and then, what I took from the university class was how do we take it a step further [and] make it more than fun. I'd always known that reading was enjoyable. I remember it was probably four months before the *Paradise Lost* experience took place and I had enjoyed reading every piece up to that point, but that was the first time where I thought, okay, it's fun, but it can be more than that.

> I sensed the power of the piece of literature for the first time and I sensed the power to take it further.
>
> I had that background. I had the ability. I just needed somebody to flick that switch and say, you have the ability, but do something with it. I didn't have the ability in other courses and in that sense, I was kind of lost. You know, I was trying to find something to do with my life. I played top-level hockey, but I wasn't going to go anywhere with it. It wasn't going to be a lifestyle nor did I want it to be. So, English was really the only avenue that I had.
>
> I love this book. When I read *Paradise Lost* (*his copy is in his hand*), it brings me back to a time when English was fun, and it still is, but it was almost an ecstatic time when English was first fun. Everything you flipped through was just a new world. It was just a mind opening experience. I still get that every time. I don't read through it a lot, but every time I do, I still get that feeling (Geoffrey, Transcript 2, April, 2012b).

Though John Milton's *Paradise Lost* was central in the transformation, it was the "dangerous" topic and its links to his own personal uncertainties that attracted Geoffrey most.

Geoffrey: I didn't believe that he [Satan] could be a protagonist with the qualities that we ascribe to him. He's always evil. So how can a character that's usually the antagonist become a protagonist? And that was something that was never explored in high school. It just flipped literature on its head. . . . To me that was a rule, that the protagonist was always good. You're sympathetic—maybe he has some bad qualities, but you're sympathetic with him. . . . To me there always had to be strict rules and all those were severed.

I didn't believe Satan was the protagonist, but I knew that it could be seen as a valid argument and the proof [would be] in the pudding. I had it right there in front of me that some people have argued that before and she's told me that. So I know that's a valid argument. For the first time in my life, I took an essay seriously and I actually wanted to say something with it. It was an important thesis and I had never done that before (Geoffrey, Transcript 2, April, 2012b)

The experience of taking himself beyond his comfort zone was transformative and invigorating, but there was still a space in the transformative record. Why the high anxiety levels, the fear of letting down, and the intense need to play it safe? As the data collection sessions progressed, Geoffrey revealed a transformative and devastating experience that occurred early in his childhood. It was his mother who refreshed a latent memory that did present, in large part, an explanation of his lifelong fears.

Geoffrey: I was talking to my Mom and one thing we were talking about is how much the man is a direct result of childhood and how much childhood influences who you become and what you are. And one thing that was brought up and something I had completely forgotten about, but I was abused as a child by a babysitter. I was about four or five and I don't remember what went on—it's kind of a black hole—but I do know that it deeply affected me.

I remember her husband was a police officer and their son was about somewhere from eight to ten and I would have been four or five, but I remember that he threatened me. If I didn't behave, he would shoot me with his dad's gun and me being four or five and knowing that his dad was a police officer, I believed him. I remember going to that daycare every single day being afraid to do something wrong, to step out-of-bounds. I went to counselling for it actually and I was diagnosed with depression at five! So, it obviously affected me, greatly. It's something that I have blocked out.

I told [my mother] that things were getting worse and worse at the day home and eventually I broke down one day and revealed everything. I [had been] scared to say that something was wrong for fear of the consequences and as soon as she found out, she took me out, but we never found out all that went on there. The psychologist was never really able to get that much out of me.

It was like a long lost memory I'd never thought about for the last decade. I had completely forgotten about it until my Mom brought it up, but my reaction to it made me know that it was true. I suddenly became antsy, fidgety, and at the point of tears. It was like the feelings of being a child again all of a sudden.

As the mother, she should have known that something was wrong and that she should have found out sooner and so, she's admitted that she feels a lot of guilt about it.

So, that was the gap that we were looking for and I didn't even think about it. So, it's not always on my mind, but it's there. It's there (Geoffrey, Transcript 4, June, 2012b).

I wondered if he could put his need to "play it safe" in perspective with his story of child abuse. Were the fears Geoffrey continued to feel rooted in this devastating childhood experience?

Geoffrey: At that time, [the fear was] of losing my life, [but] I didn't want to endure the wrath of anyone. . . . Fear of, not of the criminality of it, but of the bad reputation of it, of the stigma. Even at age four, you already understood in your young mind what it meant to be abused and how our society looks at the abused as weak (Geoffrey, Transcript 4, June, 2012b).

In concluding his narrative, Geoffrey explained that his transformative experience had its roots in childhood and had evolved over his life time. He also described the effect of his transformation upon his identity and his personality.

Geoffrey: I do harbour a lot of guilt over very minor things and I have lots of trouble, when I do something wrong, forgiving myself (Geoffrey, Transcript 4, June, 2012b). The first step is always recognizing there is a problem and now I do; whereas, before growing up I didn't and it's only recently that I have recognized that about myself (Geoffrey, Transcript 5, October, 2012).

> [Transformative experiences] occur at a young age and younger than junior high/senior high school [and] university certainly made me a better person. As long as you approach with openmindedness, you're going to open up something new to you and you can take that attitude with you everywhere you go. (Geoffrey, Transcript 5, October, 2012).

> I think, it's more identity. I would equate it to discovering music for the first time where you're finally at the age where you're starting to listen to all different kinds of music and you're starting to discover what you like and your tastes and you're starting to know more about yourself. I was doing the same thing with literature. It was amazing that I could still find something new about myself at an older age or you feel like you're more established in your ways. So, *Paradise Lost* was like discovering the *Beatles*. It was a new world and it spoke to me. It was powerful. It changed the way [I thought] and in that sense, it's important to [my] identity. I think it definitely affects how I act and who I am (Geoffrey, Transcript 4, June, 2012b).

Geoffrey's narrative of transformation and his search for identity and certainty in his life was bound in and together with experiences from childhood through to his current life as an English teacher.

Maria

Maria started her narrative with an overview of personal and historical events or experiences in her life that lead from childhood to adulthood to the transformative moment at which she decided to become a teacher. Hers is a story of low self-esteem and racism coupled with inspiration and self-discovery. Throughout, there is a connection to story, books, Drama, and English Language Arts.

Maria: When I was a kid, I felt like I was dissected. I had this really weird voice or unusual voice that was very, very low. So, I stood out. People couldn't understand me. They thought I had a speech defect and I remember taking all these tests and feeling like a guinea pig. I was going through tests because I was very quiet and they

thought there was something wrong with me intellectually. I remember them saying they thought I was mentally retarded.

These tests showed that I was at the top in terms of English and that I was several grade levels ahead. I remember being momentarily proud of that, but my pride didn't stay because nothing was done with that [knowledge] and I knew that it had no value to the people who believed what they believed. But then, I had a teacher in Grade 5 and I remember him telling me that I had a way with words and that I was really good with stories and that did something for me. I have always valued stories and so that's how I think I have been lucky. That was some of the positive, but I think I took more negative with me throughout my schooling. In Grade 6, they decided that I had *central auditory processing disorder*. It's the way that you process sound [in] that you don't hear it quite the way it sounds. So, I went to little rooms for a little while.

In Grade 8, we moved to the suburbs—again, the only Black family. When I was elementary, you were part of the community. That's just the way it was. For a day, you may seem weird to them, but once you were there, you were [included], but it was different when I went to [junior high school]. I didn't talk at all and I remember my Math teacher said that I was "disruptive". I remember he said this to my Mom. He said I was disruptive. I said maybe three words throughout the whole class. . . . There was nothing that really compelled me to want to stay so, I left at the end of Grade 11 and I do feel that was the best decision. I felt like it saved my life to leave.

I went back to university as a mature student when I was twenty-five-years-old and I had to take the writing competency exam. I remember being shocked that I passed it. I think because of my lack of belief in myself, I didn't do well at all. So, I was at university for about a year and a half and I left, moved, came back, tried to get back into [university] and they said [I could not] come back to university because my grades had been low. I went through this whole process, but I didn't even know how the system worked to make it work for myself to get back in.

I had been a Drama Major and loved film from the time I was little and I started working in film in a local co-op and found that I was good at public relations, made some of my own films, and worked on some of my friends' films. I came back to university three years ago and I took a writing class [in] creative non-fiction. It was the best class that I could have taken to start back and I did really well in that class and it did something to my confidence. I started to understand that I could do it or think that I could do it. I had a friend that said you really need to go back to university and he talked to me about this for about six years before I finally came back and took the one class.

Then, I enrolled as an English major for the next year and creative writing minor and I loved that program. After that, I decided to go into Education. The reason that I decided to go into Education was because of my struggles, because of what I had seen, and I knew that I was smart and there was a lot of other kids like me who were smart who just got lost somehow in the system—lost because they were different in some way—and I thought I could make a difference. I have

> always believed in education, even when I wasn't in school (Maria, Transcript 1, July, 2014).

I wondered where Maria would pinpoint the turning points in her story of transformation.

> Maria: The first one was the testing that they did and I did really well [in English] yet, it made no difference. I believe that if it had made a difference and people would have acknowledged that I was smart, based on how well I had done, that it would have made a big difference in my life. And the second transformational story was when I came back to university and I took the creative non-fiction class. Through that I found my way back to education (Maria, Transcript 1, July, 2014).

I asked Maria what she meant by leaving school in Grade 11 "saved her life". She described this choice as taking her life in her hands and becoming self-aware for the first time.

> Maria: I feel that I have always had purpose, but people haven't necessarily seen that. I look back and I think that I was this amazing kid (Maria, Transcript 1, July, 2014). When I left Grade 11, I really do believe that it did save my life. I never did fit in. I just saw the world differently and sometimes I stopped and gazed at the world longer than other people. Sometimes I say that I was a kind of a freak, but I don't mean that in a bad way. I mean that with affection. I was different, but I was different in the way that a lot of kids are different (Maria, Transcript 2, August, 2012).

Maria went on to tell about some of her family's early influences in her life.

> Maria: My big sister [was an influence], but she didn't live here. She lived in the States and she was seventeen years older. My parents loved me, but the way my mother was raised and probably my father, my mother didn't believe in giving praise because, if you got a mark, you should always get a higher mark. My father really educated himself and so, my father always pushed real hard with himself. So, I don't believe it was something that they knew how to do in terms of encouraging self-belief. My parents expected me to exceed expectations [and] they never thought that I wouldn't meet them.
>
> My mom was of a generation where you don't disagree with the teacher and you don't have an argument with another authority figure. That was not my mother's way, [but my parents] did have trouble with some teachers. I remember my father coming to school and defending me and being upset about certain things in high school. Teachers said that I had been away more that I had and I said, no. He said, "Are you lying?" and I said, "No". I can't remember what he said, but my father became angry and defended me about that.
>
> When my father came and defended me I was really happy, but when the teacher [said I missed a lot of school], I was shocked and disappointed because it was so far away from who I was. I was in Grade 11 then, and that was a little part

> of the hourglass with the sand going out A little part of the sand going out of *me* knowing that I couldn't be a part of that system [anymore] (Maria, Transcript 1, July, 2014).
>
> I really do believe that [my parents] were fighting their own battles—they were both extremes of each other. My mother was the one who [believed] in the system trying to make it work. My father was a bit of a maverick, but he wanted to be accepted by other people. I had those two different extremes (Maria, Transcript 2, August, 2012).

Until Grade 11, Maria had taken her mother's approach to "being in the system" rather than buy into her father's nonconformist streak. She described her father's approach to life as looking "at the big picture [to] see the way the picture looks best for you—to see which way you need to turn it, how you need to orient the picture, how do you need to orient yourself to the picture" (Maria, Transcript 2, August, 2012). I wondered if Maria had learned through her experiences in school to "orient the picture" for herself.

Maria: No, I learned to become silent. I was only able to do it when I came to university the second time. [Before, I felt] I needed to stay out of the way. I learned when this person might have an ego this way I have to give in this way. When you're younger . . . some of it is survival and some of it's getting what you need and some of it is loss. Some of it's that you lose the gifts that you had. I could see what was happening and I could turn the picture, but I still couldn't make it work for me. There was no way that I could make myself fit. I tried different ways to make it, but it just didn't work (Maria, Transcript 2, August, 2012).

Other experiences Maria told about also suggested particularly difficult struggles in her school life.

Maria: [In elementary school] there was one teacher [who] invited all the girls over to her place and she didn't invite me. I remember being so hurt. [And in junior high] I did have one incident where these boys were kind of rough with me and my father went to school, talked to the principal, and I got an apology. But when I came to [high school] that's when everything changed. It was actually the first time that I was called the "n" word. In [high school] the only other Black people were my sister and then there was a guy and one other girl (Maria, Transcript 1, July, 2014).

Maria told of the multilingual and multiracial neighbourhood during her preschool and early school years, which she described as a happy place to feel at home in. I wondered if she could put into words why she felt the community spirit came apart into such hurtful experiences.

Maria: I was thinking about this last week because I came to this understanding finally that I have my Grandmother's voice and that it *is* a rich, Black women's voice. It was just something that people weren't used to. There's this poem that I love and I can't remember who wrote it, but it's called *Bashert*, a Yiddish word [meaning destiny]. I'm not going to say it exactly right, but it said [on one side], "He was saved because he walked on the right side of the street" and the other side it said, "He wasn't saved because he walked on the right side of the street". [Sometimes] things are really hard to understand and don't make sense. It was just the timing. It was just fluky (Maria, Transcript 2, August, 2012).

Certainly, a very philosophical, if not spiritual, take on what was for Maria a school life that lead her to leave school before high school graduation. Maria's narrative explored her experience being stigmatize with a misunderstood "disorder".

Maria: I think that I did have a learning disability, but I think it became the thing more than anything else and so, my strengths weren't seen and there were a lot of strengths. There are other things that I do. I leave tenses off of words. I have to go over something that I have written over and over because I mean to write one thing, but my eyes miss it and I write another. I feel like they dissected me so much, but they didn't dissect me in the right way. They really didn't look at, "There are some difficulties she seems to be having. What are they, and what can we do about them?" I feel like they looked at superficial ones or superficial differences (Maria, Transcript 2, August, 2012)

Maria mentioned her gifts as she told her story and I wondered if she could elaborate on what she felt her strengths were.

Maria: My gifts are I like people a lot, I'm good with people, and that I am such an outsider. I don't have my father's gift with story, but as I get older, I understand that I do have a gift with story in a different kind of way. That's probably my greatest gift, is a thing with story and the way it makes me understand people. I didn't understand until I got older that the way I grew up was unique because my father was a minister. I heard certain things when I was young. I heard this dialogue, this preaching, and I remember being a kid imitating him. So, that is how I would play. I remember thinking that was so much fun. That's what I would do when I was four-years-old (Maria, Transcript 2, August, 2012).

Maria's narrative has cyclically tagged up to its beginnings and the story now brought us to the source of her artistic and educational endeavours in English and Drama.

Maria: I came back to the creative non-fiction class and I loved that class because I could find my way to the story or what I needed to learn. I needed to explore longer, but I feel that the way that they [the school system] want you to learn is without an exploration period. I found a way to explore and maybe make it work for myself.

I remember stories my mom would tell me about certain things I would do when I was little. I was this creative little kid. I believed that I was magic? I believed that I could make certain things happen and I don't mean in a weird kind of way. I just mean that I believed that I could do certain things. I think that before I went to school, I knew that I was different (Maria, Transcript 2, August, 2012).

The book that I keep coming back to is, *Beloved*, by Toni Morrison. People think it is a grim book and in some ways it is, but it's really honest. It's a story of a woman who is a slave and in order to save her daughter from slavery, it seems like she killed her daughter, but her daughter's spirit comes back. The part that really resonates with me is the granddaughter. Her grandmother, Baby Suggs, says to her, "you mean I never told you how your mother got the tree on her back" and the tree was [whipping] scars. Her grandmother says, "Know it and go out anyway". And I just like that part about knowing and not denying and going to do what you need to do anyway.

I feel like my view is often different or my view is not usually the same and so, I find that I have to search further. [At] times when I feel I've been taught a certain perspective, but maybe I've not been put in that picture, I go further and [I put] myself in the picture.

I just find that books are more honest. I really like Thomas King, *The Truth about Stories*, and Toni Morrison I really like her because I really feel that she is honest. I always loved reading and always loved books (Maria, Transcript 3, September, 2012).

Her love of "books," the childhood play imitating her father, and her sense of feeling and being different all significantly contribute to her desire to make a difference for others and to her transformation from troubled student to teacher. To complete the transformative "picture" she was finally able to put herself in, she tells of race and her origins in the Black Baptist Church in the southern United States.

Maria: I was raised Baptist, but I didn't just follow that path. I'm a Black woman, but I always grew up in mixed neighbourhoods. People didn't know where to place me. They thought that I was African and they found out that I wasn't African, but I

> wasn't like the Americans they thought I should be. I wasn't really Canadian like they thought I should be. I wasn't any of those things and then there was some cruelty that I was experiencing, but I couldn't really talk about it—cruelty of not being seen as capable.
>
> I don't remember my parents ever reading to me, but I would listen to my father preach and those were stories to me. I would imitate him when I was really young. When I was a bit older, seven, eight, or nine, we went to visit my relatives for Christmas and I heard them tell stories. They would all tell the same story, but they would either add to it or make it slightly different and I was just so intrigued and I remember there were fifteen or twenty people in the room telling stories and laughing and talking. It reminded me of Thomas King and *The Truth About Stories* and he talks about starting a story, but in a different way and it's helped me survive because if you can always see a different story, if you can always see a different possibility and you hold to the honesty [of the original story, you can] create new stories.
>
> One of the things about being a minister's daughter is that you see a lot from a really young age. You see a lot of despair, you see some joy, not a lot, and you see coldness and what people do in the name of religion. I got to see how people reacted, I got to see a lot about power, and I got to see a lot about people handing power to people and I got to see a lot about who people left out. Even within the church, I saw people being left out and I remember there was this man who came into the church and he was an alcoholic from outside and he had never been there before. There were people looking at him and I remember during the service he laughed and all of a sudden, one of the guys from the church grabbed him and said that's it, out of here. I remember at home talking to my mom saying, if you can't laugh in church, where can you laugh? Why did they make him leave? And I knew partly that they thought he wasn't good enough and that they made those judgments, that he wasn't one of them.
>
> Transformation—sometimes it can make you tired and I didn't acknowledge in the past the need to rest. Do you know what I mean, because transformation is growth and from that you need to rest and I didn't acknowledge that some things are vexations on the spirit. So, I would say that I learned about honesty and it took me almost to collapsing and being exhausted to figure that out and I realize that it's really, really painful.
>
> It goes back to that Toni Morrison book I really like when she says to her granddaughter, "Know these things and go outside anyway". (Maria, Transcript 3, September, 2012).

Maria did go "outside anyway" and overcame the ways in which she was perceived by others to "orient the picture" with herself "in the picture" to transform herself despite her detractors and acute exhaustion into the English Language Arts/Special Needs/Drama teacher she became.

Patrick

Patrick's narrative began with a transformative experience in elementary school; but as would be expected, his earlier life is eventually connected to a later transformation in Patrick's life.

Patrick: The first experience that came to mind, a few came to mind, but the one that still holds a lot of sway for me today happened in elementary. I was in Grade 5 when it happened. All through my life, early childhood, even well before that, before I went to grade school, my family focused a lot on reading, literacy, imagination, and creativity. For a half hour every night, we would get together in the living room or somewhere and we would read. My parents would read to us and as we were able to, we would read to the family and take turns and this would be every night, no matter what other commitments or anything else. So, I grew up reading quite a lot and was well ahead of my grade level.

As we got older, my parents tried to have us continue our interest in reading and we would have reading contests during the summer to see how many books we could read and we would get prizes for the number of books and how big they were and our understanding of the books. So, we'd always be challenged to read more than each other, better books and different books. So, by the time I was in Grade 5, I was reading six or seven hundred-page novels—fantasy, mystery, sci-fi—things that interested me and my creativity and my imagination.

In Grade 5, a new teacher came to the school who didn't know my reading level. I was already long into a Grade 9/Grade 10 reading level. The other teachers in the school did, but she wasn't aware. In Grade 5, once a week, we'd go to the library. We'd take out new books and we would read. The first time that this came up in the year would be in the third or fourth week into September. I didn't take out any books, but I brought my own. I brought an eight-hundred-page novel and I still remember which one it was. The author was *David Eddings* and [the book] was *The Bulgarian*, a nice compilation of three books in this one novel and I brought that in and I was reading it in the library while everyone else was looking for books.

My teacher walks up to me and she says, "Where did you get that? Why are you reading that because there is no way you understand it!" and she took the book away from me. She confiscated the book and she wouldn't let me have it back. I was shocked, I was stunned and then, she went to the shelf and took out a book, it was a *Goosebumps* book, and she took that off the shelf. She gave it to me and she said, "This is your level, this is closer to your level, why don't you read this instead?"

I did end up getting my book back. My parents [came] into the school quite upset after I went home without the novel. My parents found out the story from me and we went right back to the school to the teacher and the principal, got the book back, and things were set straight, but [the experience has] followed me [since].

> Instead of seeing if the book was appropriate for the reader or the circumstance of the individual, it was more right down to the grade level. This is what you should be reading, so read it. So, that still stayed with me to this day (Patrick, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

The "goose bumps" that must have come with the shock rippled over me as Patrick told this story, but what appears to be the transformative turning point, the teacher snatching the book away, is relational to the emphasis on reading and competitive spirit within his family.

Patrick: I know the experience definitely pushed me to continue with my reading. [I had] a will to continue reading, though at that point in time it was more defiance. If I had a book that was too tough for me, instead of putting it aside, I was more driven to try and get through it even if it took me longer than any other book or if I had to reread pages or whole sections or whole chapters of the book. I attribute that back to this experience because I'm [still] hesitant to say any book is above my reading level even if it clearly is.

> [The teacher] was definitely shocked when my parents came to inform her that she had done something very inappropriate. They weren't happy with what she had done because it had gone against what they had pretty much been teaching me since I started reading, which was to challenge myself to read as much as I could (Patrick, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

After his parents came in to express their displeasure with the teacher's action, I wondered if Patrick held any long lasting animosity toward the teacher or if she maintained any sort of grudge.

Patrick: Overall, I would say, no. For the first little while she was apologetic. She personally gave me the book back. She didn't just give it back to my parents or the principal. She came up to me after the meeting with my parents and the principal and she apologized. She just disregarded that I was reading different books. I didn't notice that she was either angry or a little upset about the fact that she thought she was in trouble because of me or anything like that (Patrick, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

I wondered if a teacher apologizing to him for the shock she caused was transformative in itself and if Patrick thought the teacher was transformed by the experience?

Patrick: I think so. I hope so anyway that she would look a little more into a situation before reacting to a situation. Looking at in a different light now, if I was the teacher in that situation and I saw a student reading a book that normally would be far and

> above what the class would be reading, it would raise suspicion in me right away as well, but since it happened to me, I wouldn't react in the same way. I think it's a lot to judge a student just based on one book or one instance (Patrick, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

Patrick's narrative continued with a description of how he felt as the novel was taken from his hands in Grade 5.

> Patrick: I had no idea at that moment why my book was taken away. So, confusion definitely comes to mind and disbelief, because no one had ever done that [to me before]. It had been the complete opposite. Everyone had been pushing me to read. I didn't feel like I was going to break down because of what was happening, but I definitely felt lost, like, I didn't know what to do next. I was staring at this book that was simplistic compared to the book I was reading. What am I supposed to do with this now?
>
> I would describe it more like an insult that someone [would take] that away from me. Like, how dare you do that? What right have you to do that to me? I would say that it was an insulting action that she did to me. I know I was definitely embarrassed and blushing at the time for sure. She didn't say it with a quiet voice really. So, there were enough kids staring at me at the time. It seemed like I brought the scene on and everyone was staring at me, not at us, right at me. I felt I was the centre of attention and I felt like a fool. I'd been going to school with them for five years, since kindergarten, and they knew me more than the teacher, but I felt as though they would side with the teacher more than me (Patrick, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

The emotional rollercoaster Patrick was on in an instant of indiscretion was formidable and transformative, indeed. I wondered if he had a like experience of being isolated, embarrassed, and feeling the fool any other time in his life.

> Patrick: Sometimes I would isolate myself. I mean, I was very active and at recess I would still play soccer with the kids, but it would be a fifty/fifty split between me playing games and talking with friends at lunch or at recess and me sitting on the steps of the school reading a book away from the rest of the students. At times, I just preferred to have my nose in a book and be reading than be around other students and be playing a game.
>
> I think part of it comes from before. My parents, during our summers, made our reading a contest. So, we were challenged to read more and to beat our siblings [with] how much we could read. I think the defiance was brought upon by that event. So, it was because someone took my book away just because of the size of the book or what the book was without knowing. So it definitely sparked that or

> reignited that defiance in me. I think I still have a bit of defiance in what I read (Patrick, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

The competitive nature of family reading and the "defiance" he felt after what was a very emotional and life-altering experience in Grade 5 still influences his reading and his decisions today. I wondered how transformative the family reading competitions were and whether Patrick could connect his Grade 5 experience with that familial game play.

> Patrick: Well, the competition we were in was always fun because everyone got prizes by the end. My parents were never ones to limit that reading. If you read let's say, ten books, you'd get this kind of prize. If you read fifteen books, you'd get this kind of prize and so on, but between us siblings, we always made it a game during summer to see who could read more than the other. [We even counted] the number of pages in the books to see who read the most pages or who read the most books that had pictures in them compared to books with texts. So, where my parents made it a fun competition to see how much we could read personally we made it, between ourselves, a competition to see who could read more than the other.
>
> I can see how they're similar, the competitive aspect and that defiance. Competitive is always trying to outdo someone else, but I see the defiance in the fact that I didn't want to back down. I never wanted to stop reading. Often I would even try to convince my Dad, who coached me [in] baseball at the time with my brothers, [to let me] out of that and other competitive sports so I could read because I didn't want my brothers to get ahead. Even in school, I would race through my other subjects so I could take my book and I could read while everyone else was trying to finish their work (Patrick, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

It seems the competitive spirit was overpowering in Patrick's life, so much so that the transformation to a kid who "didn't want to back down" was more exacerbated by his teacher's choice to take his book rather than the centre of the transformative experience. Competition carried into all aspects of Patrick's familial and school life.

> Patrick: My brothers were very athletic. They were leading our baseball teams. I was still really good at baseball, but they were the ones that people talked about and they would say, "Oh yeah, they have a younger brother. He's pretty good too". In school my sister was the one who topped the charts all the way through grade school, all the way until Grade 12, and even in postsecondary. My sister was in Grade 8 or 9 when I was in Grade 5 and they were still talking about her in the elementary because she had gotten almost 100% in every subject every year she was in elementary. I was good at school too. I studied hard in school and got really good

> marks, but never as high as her. So, it seemed that no matter which way I [went], even in elementary, I couldn't really differentiate myself [from] my siblings.
>
> I was compared, one way or another, to what my siblings had already done, but there was nothing new from me at that time and that changed when I was in Grade 6. I ended up breaking out on my own and my parents let me do different sports than my brothers had never done before and I joined different programs when I got into junior high that my sister never did academically.
>
> I could never hope to achieve the same as my sister because she just excelled academically. Even if I did the best I could, I could only be the same as my sister. I could never excel past her at that point because, well, you couldn't beat a perfect score.
>
> In Grade 6/Grade 7, I started doing different sports outside of school, which no one else had done in my family. For the first time it felt good because, yes, it was something that I enjoyed doing, but more so that people were finally noticing that I'm different and I don't have to be the same as my brothers and my sister. For once, I was finally going somewhere by doing a different sport. No one even knew I had brothers and sisters let alone that I was trying to be different than them.
>
> Even to today, graduating university doing a program that no one in the family has ever done, it's completely different now than then (Patrick, Transcript 1, April, 2012).
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> .

I wondered if the competition amongst siblings was encouraged by Patrick's parents.

Patrick: Yes, absolutely I would say. My brothers excelled athletically, but my sister was the opposite. [She was strong] academically, but not [in] athletics. I ended up in the middle. So for report cards, for example, we were always encouraged to get good marks and we got paid for getting good marks. We never got an allowance at any point in our lives, but when report cards came out, we would get twenty dollars for every *A* we got and we'd get five dollars for every *B* we got on our report card, but we would have to pay five dollars for every *C* we got and for every *D* we got on our report cards (Patrick, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

Patrick was so driven to compete with his siblings that he gravitated to his strengths away from academic excellence in opposition to his childhood training.

Patrick: I was never getting the awards even though the awards were grades-specific. For example, in Grade 9, I managed to pull off a very high 90% average, but the only award I got was an honours medal because there was one student who had a better average than me by one point and there was someone that was better than me in every subject, but worse in everything else. At that point, I lost my interest in trying to do well in school because I didn't see any benefit out of it and even the money didn't bother me.

I had a job at that point. Getting a thousand dollar scholarship for getting honours after a year of working in school was nothing because I was making a

> thousand dollars every two months at my part-time job. It just didn't hold enough sway to keep me interested academically and then, same thing for sports. I was never good enough to get on sports teams in high school. I did well enough to get by and I just didn't care in school anyway. So, I focused on the extracurriculars during the school year instead of on school (Patrick, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

The competition and now the disengagement from endeavours in which he could not "excel" were transformative threads, along with the shock of his Grade 5 teacher's behaviour that stitched the narrative of transformation together. However, Patrick entered another extremely significant choice into the narrative resulting from his previous transformative experiences.

> Patrick: In Grade 6, I took up Tae Kwon Do and I carried that through. It took me awhile, but when I was in Grade 10, in the summer between Grade 10 and Grade 11 is where I got my black belt in Tae Kwon Do and something my brothers had never done. They tried doing Tae Kwon Do and they quit as red belts, but I got my black belt and I had stepped past them and I became an instructor in high school. I taught Tae Kwon Do during the evenings and that's where I really shone and my parents saw that and they understood (Patrick, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

Competition with a measure of defiance led Patrick to a martial art that finally made him feel like he "really shone" and more importantly, that his "parents saw that and they understood". At this point in Patrick's narrative, the interconnectivity between his early competitions with siblings, his Grade 5 experience, and the transformation he was about to disclose came together. As with all participants, the transformative experiences Patrick told of are webbed through with inter-relational links and the historical spiral of life and school experiences lead to an even more transforming experience.

> Patrick: It was a difficult time for me. I ended up skipping my high school graduation because I had the choice—and it came down to the same weekend [as Grad]—between trying out for Team Canada or going to my high school graduation. It was either going to Toronto that weekend or staying here for my graduation and it was tough because I didn't know what to do. I ended up going and trying out for Team Canada and I made it, but my friends still never forgave me. To this day, I've never talked to any of my friends from high school. There is one I stay in contact with, but that was tough, but my parents (*Patrick becomes quite emotional at this point*), but my parents finally realized, sorry . . . (Patrick, Transcript 1, April, 2012)

I said, “Don’t be. Keep going”. After a moment to recover, Patrick continued his story.

Patrick: I still teach Tae Kwan Do and I still compete. I have been to the World Championships a few times on Team Canada, but that first time, knowing that that was the choice I made to give up all of that stuff, I didn’t know that my friends would do that. That was shocking. They were more upset that we had spent months planning our graduation, the parties and we’d all paid for everything like the Limo and all of our tuxes, like, the whole nine yards. I told them, “Do you know what? I’m not going to take my money back. You guys have a good time, but I’m not going to be there anymore” and for them it was just a shock.

I know and I understand that it was a shock. For six/seven months we’ve been planning that one day and then, two weeks beforehand when I realized I could compete, I quit on them at the last minute. For a lot of them, it was just unthinkable that I was willing to give up them for just a chance. I assumed that my friends would always be my friends, they would always be there, and they would be happy for this chance, even if it meant missing such a big day. My one friend understood and we’re still friends ‘til this day. He’s my best man at my wedding in a few months. That was a big shock. It made it hard to compete afterwards with that hanging over me (Patrick, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

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I wondered if he had regrets about making the choice to compete.

Patrick: I’ll never change that. Even right now, if I had to do it again, I would choose the exact same way. It was tough making the decision beforehand realizing that I had to give up my graduation and all this just for a chance, but as soon as that weekend was over and I knew that I was going to be on Team Canada, all was different. That made me realize it was totally worth it. I don’t think they would have talked to me even after my graduation if I hadn’t made Team Canada. I went over and over it for almost a month before I told my friends. That I made my choice and it was making a choice for a chance—that’s what hurt them. To be given up for a chance, not even a certainty, that still gets me.

I felt like I was letting them down. We had all these plans and I wanted to be there. Why couldn’t it have been a different weekend? Why couldn’t I do both? So, yeah, I felt like I was letting them down and after, everything changed (Patrick, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

Patrick brought in an artefact as well that represented his transformative experiences. The artefact was the record book used in the family to document the books read, the amounts paid out, and the titles of hundreds of books collected during his childhood summers. The central theme of

his transformative experiences was competition after all. I asked Patrick how he would connect the impacts of the transformations he experienced.

Patrick: At the time that each of them occurred, they're equally as drastic. Now, I would say that the one in Grade 5 doesn't even hold water compared to my high school one, but I think time was a big factor. I think it was just more recent and I had a strong influence on how some things went [in high school] compared to Grade 5.

As long as I continue to do Tae Kwon Do, that will still influence me. I mean, that was my first World Championships. It was my first international event with Tae Kwon Do and so, I'll never be able to forget my first World Championships. When I think of my first Gold Medal at the Worlds, one thing leads to another and I think about the high school *drama* that led to that point (Patrick, Transcript 2, June, 2012).

The transformation rolled forward in an evolutionary, long lasting, and ongoing experience and the effects of the transformative experiences related by Patrick are always with him. He will continue to talk about them long into his adult life. Patrick concluded his narrative with a reflective summation.

Patrick: I can definitely say and something that I hold to be true is that first experiences are a big deal. My relationship with friends is true even now. I hate going out in public. I never go dancing, to the bar or clubbing or anything like that. I'd much rather have a couple of friends over to chill at my house and does that spawn from my experience in high school? Yeah, absolutely, for sure. (Patrick, Transcript 3, December, 2012).

Patrick's transformative experiences were life-altering and irreversible.

Helen

Helen is the ninth participant that I have included as a way of comparing the data I was receiving from the other eight participants. After discussing the inclusion of such a perspective in the dissertation with my Supervisor, I asked a colleague to offer an adjunct point of view and to tell her story of transformation to see how it connects with the others in the study. Helen, a colleague, provided this additional point of view in juxtaposition to the others in the study. Though

the participant group is diverse in background, life experiences, age, and country of origin, they all were pre-service teachers in training with a subject commonality in English Language Arts. Maria was a long-time Science teacher with teaching experience in two countries and she was working on her PhD. I wondered if greater life and teaching experience and her focus in another area of expertise would influence the character of her story of transformation in ways different from the other eight participants.

My familiarity with Helen's story of transformation began prior to our first research session together. At a conference, Helen and I struck up a conversation about where she was from. Hearing her talk to other people at the conference suggested to me that she was a local resident of the area. She found it surprising that I would hear that proximity in her voice considering her "brownness" as she put it, and I found her suggestion that I would not likewise surprising. Though Maria was born an Albertan and felt entirely Canadian, throughout her life she "did not feel at home" in her homeland.

This dichotomy between her identity and how she was perceived becomes central to the transformative experiences Helen related in her narrative, but she started off pretty much like the other participants did with the influences that evoked the transformation she embraced and grew from.

Helen: My junior and high school English and Science teachers were probably my most influential, [the two subjects] that became my major and my minor. And Science became my major by happenstance. I was actually the weakest in Science and English was my strongest subject. In junior high I had a phenomenal Grade 9 English teacher who was also my homeroom teacher. I came from quite a traditional junior high, but she would bring in cake and popcorn and she just made more of a family environment where we all just really bonded. My English teachers in Grade 7, 8, and 9 were really strong writers so they really focused on our writing. I think that's why I remember them so distinctly. They were really strong women.

And then I got to high school (*said with a laugh)* and my English experience could not have been more polar opposite. It was such a negative experience and

> my Grade 10 teacher was just horrible, absolutely horrible. Beyond the classroom management problems, she didn't know how to relate to kids who were different than her. I still loved the subject so in Grade 11 I took the advanced class. There were twelve of us total and we were doing things like *Beckett* and *Beowulf* and *Canterbury Tales* and she seemed to pick on me and kind of isolate me. Later on, when I was in a club in the school, she actually vocalized this to someone else, negatively commenting on me and my friends were there. I just remember thinking, you are a horrible, horrible person and she did it a lot with kids who were visibly different than her.
>
> My Grade 12 teacher was the same as my junior high teachers. She chose to focus on the students and she gave a lot of options. . . . Looking back, she didn't associate with the other teachers. She came in and she taught her one class as a part-time teacher and then, she left. No one else had her in the school. We were her only class.
>
> Ironically, it was my negative experience with that Grade 10/11 teacher that made me decide to go into English in university. I was so upset by [my experiences in her class] and [later] I remember sitting in my IPT class and there was quite a few of us. One of the things we talked about in our class was how none of us every saw ourselves reflected in what we read—be it as a tall male hockey player or a little Chinese girl, none of us saw that we were reflected. We had no concept of relevance until my Grade English 12 teacher. My Grade 12 teacher was the first one to write "you've got great ideas, but we need to work on your grammar". And that was from elementary school. I came through an elementary school where they said, "Write want you want. We don't care about punctuation". I didn't know where anything went and she tried to help me; whereas, my Grade 10/11 teacher destroyed my self-confidence.
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> My first year university teacher did the same thing. She was horrible. She'd write down the mark that I could have had and then, write down the mark I got. Well then, help me. Don't just destroy my ego (Helen, Transcript 1, September, 2014).

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So far, Maria's story contained elements of negative and positive stimuli to her transformation to become a teacher very like those of the participants in the study. She went on to tell of the ethnic profiling and racism she and her friends experienced growing up as Albertans.

Helen: I was very fortunate. In my group of friends, I had a German girl, a Dutch girl, a Samoan girl, a Chinese girl and every one of us was from "somewhere else". That was a great thing about this city, but we each experienced something as a result of that because our teachers were so different than us. A lot of them didn't live in the same neighbourhoods as we did, not because we lived in bad neighbourhoods, but they just didn't and they didn't know how to relate to us at any level.

One of my friends, she waited until she was out of high school to come out because she was too afraid of what the teachers would do. This was a city school;

> people think that that must happen just in the rural communities. Actually, there's a lot of racism and a lot of my friends experienced that and mainly at the hands of teachers and I think that's what took be a long time to process until I became a teacher. Even then, it took me moving to another country where most of my students were visible minorities to really comprehend the impact of having a teacher you could look at and say, "Oh, you understand" (Helen, Transcript 1, September, 2014).

As Maria's narrative continued she illustrated how time and experience can cause a person to become reflective about past influences. Although all participants were somewhat reflective looking back upon there transformative experiences, they each had limited teaching experience in the public (or private) education system. Maria had been able to learn from her transformation to see with keener eyes and with a more open mind the students in the classrooms within which she taught.

Helen: I'd say it didn't really hit me until I started my Masters, which was what, seven/eight years after I started teaching that I really started to come to grips with how my experiences in school impacted not only how I taught, but how I looked at things. I was in a little bubble. I was an Honours kid, I was in Band, you know, a geeky little kid, and my Brother was the polar opposite so, I didn't see what he saw. He was a bit more nitty-gritty.

Elementary was *so* community-based, but my Mom was told not to speak to us in Punjabi by the teacher—I didn't know this until much later. My Dad didn't even tell me. He told my friend. My parents are grandparents now and they very much talk to my nephews in their native languages, which flips between Punjabi and Hindi depending on what they are saying. My friend was there [one day] and she's known my family forever and my Dad said to her, "Yeah, we're not going to make the same mistakes we made with [her brother] and [Helen]". She asked, "What do you mean?" He said, "We made a mistake not talking to them in [our native languages]. We should never have listened to that teacher". What ended up happening was my brother and I couldn't speak [with our parents in their languages].

There was a massive disconnect in our family, but that happened to every single one of my friends. So, none of my friends of my generation can speak their parents' home languages with the exception of my one friend (Helen, Transcript 1, September, 2012).

The *double whammy* of struggling with English grammar throughout her life and having that pointed out by teachers aggravated by the "massive disconnect," which impeded

communication within her own family at the behest of a teacher have been life-altering to Helen in ways she knows and in ways she is yet to know. Again, the transformation to self-aware teacher comes with the purpose to make a difference so that the experiences of Helen and her friends do not continue to be manifest in the future.

Helen: [Early in my life] my question was more, "how can a teacher do that or think that?" But I still had this implicit trust in authority. You just never talked back; you never questioned. When I moved [to England], what bothered me more was [in my home city] that feeling of never belonging. I never saw an image of anyone in an advertisement or on TV or anything except maybe the Cosbys, but there was no colour anywhere. No colour in the newspapers or in the broadcasters or even [the local TV stations]. I think that impacted me and I just never felt like I fit in. It never felt like I would ever have a life here.

When I travelled, "Oh, you're from Canada?" and I still get that because there is this image out there in the world of what a Canadian is. A Canadian is white, which is funny because people don't think that about America.

If you look at our political leaders, there are only a handful of political people in Canada who are not white. So, when I got to England and I saw *Kumars* on TV and I saw all these advertisements for people from all different backgrounds, I was like, wow, this is different. There is a different perception of beauty here; there's a different perception of where you're from. It was *so* different that I realized I don't think I felt I fit in anywhere until I moved there.

A lot of my friends were English-born—they are Ghanaian or Nigerian or Bangladeshi, but they are never English. That was our norm; that was our school [in England]. It was half Ghanaian, half Nigerian with a flicker of Bangladeshi and Somali and, I think, six white kids by the end. But they were Ghanaian and Nigerian, some very African kids.

In high school, my passion for English faltered dramatically because of my teachers, but that's where my passion for teaching came from. As teachers, we spend more time with kids than almost anybody else and if you're fortunate enough and you're in a school for long enough, you are with that child for some of the most important years of his or her life. [You are there while they are developing] who they are and who they are becoming and if that happens to have a negative influence, the damage is really traumatic.

I went to Sciences and I chose the most "lefty" Science possible, *Environment*. My parents are happy it's Science. It's not really Science, but I think that mentality still very much exists. If your child is educated in Science, there are options for them as an adult; whereas, if you are educated in English or in other subjects like that, they don't have any options. Though I have two major subjects or two core subjects, I never taught English. I had the Science.

And so, when I got to England, I really wanted my kids to have opportunities and because they were from the lowest classes, they really needed

> exposure to other programs. I built that all up and after six years, you have a lot of contacts. Not one of those programs continued after I left, but my first kid finished medical school this summer. He emailed me, "I'm a Doctor!" Oh, my lord that's crazy, but, you know that's amazing!
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> Thanks to [my Grade 12 English teacher], I ended up teaching my students the positivity of reading as a Science teacher who had fiction books in her classroom for her kids to read. If you had talked to me at twenty-six, no way—ten years later, yeah and I know my other friends, we can reflect on our history as something in the past and not be so attached to it anymore (Helen, Transcript 1, September, 2012).

The reflective journey came full circle, the transformation explained, and the story without end continues into perpetuity via her students. In many ways Helen's story possessed the elements foundational to transformative experiences that will be discussed in detail in the *Findings*. She has had more time to reflect and to take the understandings she has gained into her life, personally and professionally, but the transformative experience for Helen was similar to those of the other participants.

Just before ending our time together, Helen related an experience that exemplifies fully the transformative impacts of her early school experiences upon the choices she made as a teacher and human being in her adult life.

Helen: You know what has just come to me, in elementary school you know how you have to write stories? I can't remember the assignment completely, but it was something like we had to pick a fairy tale and write what fairy tale represented us. I wrote the *Ugly Duckling*. I was in elementary and I wrote about the *Ugly Duckling*. There must have been some kind of feeling as a child that I didn't fit or I didn't belong or otherwise why would I write a story where I was the ugly duckling? English was the class where that maybe seeped out the most because I think that's the only subject where the opportunity [exists] for it to seep out. I think that was also the subject, depending on the teachers, where it could do the most harm (Helen, Transcript 1, September, 2012).

Helen's story generated a very interesting comparative account of transformation, but in most ways, not a lot different from the other narratives featured in this inquiry. Whether negative

or positive or both, transformative experiences are life-altering and, in my experience, *most* people speak of these most significant experiences long into their adult lives.

From these transcripts emerge the inquiry findings which are detailed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

The Findings

> A fundamental interpretive guideline is that the storyteller should be considered both the expert and the authority of his or her life, thus having the final say in what gets told (Atkinson, 2007, p. 239).

The personal, historical, and theoretical framework of *Chapter 1* explains the roots of this inquiry's research, but because research is also connected temporally back through time and with the future, the findings of this inquiry are part of an academic discourse long underway and still in motion. I have endeavoured to move the pedagogical discourse forward in transformative teaching and learning as is my objective and obligation, but I cannot claim complete originality in each finding. As Dewey pointed out "human time is fluid, as we travel prospectively into possible futures and retrospectively back into possible pasts" (Downey/Clandinin, 2010. p. 395) and this research inquiry is part of a scholarly trajectory that has long been in progress through time.

Seven primary findings have emerged through this inquiry:

1. Transformative experiences are life-altering and irreversible.
2. Transformation occurs contextually along a spiralling and unending continuum.
3. The long-term effects of transformative experiences are revealed through ongoing reflection.
4. Positive or negative experiences or both can engage transformations; but ultimately, they foster self-belief and confidence and are life-affirming.
5. Transformative experience can be generated out of spite or despite the actions of others or from self-determination and often evokes a person's inner strength.
6. Life-altering transformative experiences occur without contrivance and are a synergy of student(s), teacher, subject, and context(s).
7. Participants found the research process itself transformative.

Three secondary findings have also emerged through this inquiry:

1. Transformation has a knock-on effect in that the transformed transform.
2. Transformative experiences, most often, occur with little conscious awareness and are seldom epiphanous.
3. Artefacts symbolize, trigger, represent, and sustain the memories of transformation.

Collectively, these *Findings* represent the inquiries contribution to academic epistemology, to the pedagogy of professionals in the field, and to what fosters a teaching praxis that transforms. Of course, a significant part of scholarly endeavour is to make the findings public, which "is the best way of getting [them] validated" (Eisner, 1994, p. 162). Eisner went on to say that this validation process "indicates that you have nothing to hide and are willing for others to scrutinise what has happened to help you move your thinking forward" (p. 162). Detailed below is each of the findings listed above.

1. Transformative Experiences are Life-altering and Irreversible

> To think as a narrative inquirer is to think of events as happening over time; each event or thing has a past, present as it appears to us, and implied future (Clandinin/Rosiek, 2007, p 45).

My research into an *educational praxis that transforms* has shown that transformative experiences are "irreversible" (Taylor, 2007 p. 180). The irreversibility of transformational experience has been predicted and claimed for some time now, particularly amongst Transformative Learning theorists; but the research and participants of this study more than demonstrated the reality of Taylor's assertion. The participants do not use the word "irreversible" explicitly, but the permanence of their transformation is implicit, if not overt, in their narratives. In addition, the longevity of such experiences is evidenced by the fact that they affect the transformed long into adult life. With ongoing reflection, the participants also gain new understandings from transformative experience into the future. The effects of transformation have not been undone, though they may evolve, and as will be revealed below, the participants view their transformations as life-altering, even if incidents within the experiences were exceedingly negative.

To start, Anthony's transformative trajectory from "uncertainty" in school to "clarity" after his Cambodian experience helped him and continues to help him with "life choices".

DHKB: When talking about life experiences, on a scale of one to ten, one being the least significant and ten being the most, what number would you attach to this transformation that was part of your decision to become a teacher?

Anthony: I would say an eight or nine . . . . It was the most important thing that guided me toward teaching and towards clarity in my life. Without [this transformation] there's a lot more uncertainty in what I do. So, I think, the power that they have [is] to offer clarity in life choices and in what you want to do (Anthony, Transcript 3, October, 2012).

Similarly, Amy also attached life-altering significance to her transformative experiences, particularly, those related to the familial relationships developed in childhood with bedtime stories.

DHKB: Out of all of your experiences that might have been transformative . . . was that the most significant of your experiences in your life?

Amy: I'm an English teacher and that has become my entire universe so, right now, that's everything and the excitement I had then is what I'm trying to get my students to see in a more sophisticated way, but it's that same passion and life and energy that we were talking about.

DHKB: So, is that a ten, then?

Amy: I would say a nine or a ten (Amy, Transcript 3, November, 2012).

As Anthony had done, Amy assigned "a nine or ten" numeric value to her transformative experiences, but the career that was the evolutionary outcome of these life-altering changes, which she described as her "entire universe," implied a more than significant transformation.

Geoffrey's story of transformation started with an early university experience in an English course, but as his narrative continued, it was clear that his story had roots in a life-altering childhood experience of abuse. He gave a numeric value of 7 to the transformative effects of his experience exploring Chaucer's *Paradise Lost* in university, but to "anything that happened age one to five" (Geoffrey, Transcript 5, October, 2014) he assigned a 10.

All three of these transformations continue to affect these people in their adult lives, and any suggestion that the effects of these experiences could be reversed or somehow undone seems contrary to human behaviour, and certainly not desired by these participants.

Patrick also started his story in school with a stunning incident where his Grade 5 teacher snatched a book from his hands suspecting he was pretending to read beyond his reading level, but the transformative journey spiraled into an experience with choices made in high school that affects his life to this day, and there is no indication the effect will ever subside. His ability to trust in a group of close friends was seriously compromised when the group closest to him in high school reacted so strongly against his choice to join a national Tae Kwon Do team instead of attending their high school graduation.

> Patrick: I've never felt comfortable being surrounded by lots of people and small chat and the small talk, I don't know. It's not me. I'd rather just chill with one or two friends or maybe a handful . . . . How I face relationships now has been ingrained in me from past experience, from my first big experience and my first big negative experience with relationships was in high school (Patrick, Transcript 3, December, 2012).

Patrick is young. His feelings and ideas about relationships are likely to evolve as is the nature of such experiences, but I trust in his words "how I face relationships now has been ingrained in me". This transformation is unlikely to reverse itself or be reversed by Patrick himself or by others.

Emily said of her interconnected transformative experiences with family, school, and friends, "I wouldn't be who I am without it and I wouldn't have made it through high school without it" (Emily, Transcript 5, October, 2012). And Maria said that her choice to leave high school and to eventually find her own way "saved" her life (Maria, Transcript 1, July, 2012).

Thomas faced the perplexity and pain of the anxiety that originated in a motor vehicle incident with his family during childhood with boundless self-determination and a great deal of spiritual, familial, and professional support. The passage from struggling elementary student to English teacher was fraught with challenges. Following is what he said of the transformative aftermath of the motor vehicle incident that almost claimed his mother's life:

> Thomas: Life as I knew it completely changed. So, I think that's why when it became unstructured I developed a lot of anxiety around that. Everybody has to go through change in life and it's not always a comfortable thing, but for me and for a lot of people that have an anxiety disorder, it's a big deal (Thomas, Transcript 2, May, 2012). . . . Maybe because I had seen little improvements in myself over the years and because I had seen improvements, I knew I wouldn't have to stay the same, I could keep on improving (Thomas Transcript 2, May, 2012).

Thomas' transformation is still in motion; and even though the emotional and psychological intensity of his experiences provide ample evidence for the irreversibility of transformative experience, his desire for self-improvement alone will maintain its perpetuation.

Arthur's narrative also supported the finding that transformative experience is not only long-lasting, but irreversible:

> Arthur: Even then, I didn't know what the significance would be as time passed . . . . This was not the be all and end all. This was the first step in a larger journey (Arthur, Transcript 4, August, 2012).

Arthur's "journey" was set in motion by the transformative experiences of his life thus far from the "au pairs" to his family relationships to his studies of Hawthorne's character and literature, but the storied evolution into the future is yet to be told.

I will close the presentation of the finding that *transformative experiences are life-altering and irreversible* with one final evidentiary comment from Helen, the ninth participant included to provide a comparative narrative to the eight other participant stories. The "her" in the

following statement refers to the teacher who inadvertently synergized a pivotal transformation within Helen.

> Helen: I acknowledge I would never have gone into English if it had not been for her. I've learned a lot about transformational experiences, but I've also learned a lot about the fact that it's never just a moment; it's an evolution (Helen, Transcript 1, September, 2012).

Since Helen is well into her career, I believe she is more than a casual observer of the longevity and irreversibility of transformative experiences.

2. Transformation Occurs Contextually Along a Spiralling and Unending Continuum

> Experience gains its density and elusiveness precisely through a continuous contextualizing or meshing of part to changing whole; the relating of itself to itself. It has ever unfolding richness or expanse before our reflective gaze (Merleau-Ponty, 1991, p. 17).

Transformative experiences are often initially described within a single context, but inevitably they telescope and magnify into a cornucopia of complex and interconnected contexts as the narrator tells about his or her experiences and delves deeper into the interconnectivity of life-altering effects. Transformation nurtures introspection, self-learning, and personal growth and as Mezirow and Taylor (2009) pointed out, to develop "an awareness of context when fostering transformative learning is developing a deeper appreciation and understanding of the personal and socio-cultural factors that play an influencing role in the process of transformative learning" (p. 11). In addition, and as will be born out in the data below, transformative contexts within which human beings live, learn, and grow are often emotionally charged, socially mutable, and ever-evolving.

Transformations evolve toward or from a triggering event or experience and along a spiralling progression of experiences within a transformative story that move into the future. They

also tag back onto previous experiences as the story springs backward and forward through time. Telling a story about past experience is a metacognitive process of self-reflection and through their narrations participants discovered experiential relevancies, impacts, and connections in their lives far beyond the triggering incidents they describe initially as their transformative experiences. In Narrative Inquiry, "inquirers less try to drain the "swamp" of experience though a systematic analysis of particular aspects of situations than try to make its muddiness, if anything, even more generative in the sense of opening up possibilities for it to be otherwise, for different stories to be lived and told" (Clandinin/Connelly, 2000, p. 395). In other words, participants told their stories somewhat uncertain of their significance or meaning; but through narration, reflection, and analysis, the "muddiness" clears into a complex weave of meaning interwoven through every aspect of their lives in ways even they were not fully aware of initially.

Amy was the first of the participants to focus my attention upon an intercontextual and spiralling *slinky-like* continuum upon which hung the interrelated experiences of transformation.

> Amy: So, if I think of it in terms of transformation, it was like a continuum. There are certain moments along the way that stand out. It's not like, "bam!" this day, was when everything happened, everything changed (Amy, Transcript 1, May, 2014).

Clearly, Amy understood transformation as an assemblage of interconnected experiences that reflect meaning upon each other during a lifetime while maintaining "Dewey's notion of continuity in experience—that is, that every experience both takes up something from the present moment and carries it into future experience" (Clandinin/Rosiek, 2007, p. 69). Amy described the multiple contexts in school and out of school within which her transformation to English teacher came to fruition this way.

> Amy: I think my transformation was rooted in my home life and my family and personal experiences and even though I expressed my love for English in my schooling, I don't think my love for English was transformed in school and I don't think my

> journey happened alongside my schooling, but it didn't happen from my schooling. I think of English [as] part of who I am and I think that's the source (Amy, Transcript 2, June, 2012).

Amy's early closeness with her sisters and her parents, her love of literature, and storytelling, her less than effectual school experiences, the unfortunate divorce of her parents, her decision to become an English teacher, and her inspirational teaching engagements with her own students are all linked through an intercontextuality of personal, familial, social, educational, and professional transformative experiences. Amy described this life-long progression of transformation as "everything else adds in and you grow as a person and everything changes" (Amy, Transcript 2, June, 2012).

Emily's transformative experiences are engrained in positive preschool experiences at home but proceeded into very negative incidences in and out of school including ability coding in grade school and bullying. Ultimately, she is transformed into the confident teacher she is now within a number of social and personal contexts and through a liberating synergic experience with a very perceptive teacher in an English class. This life-long multiplicity of transformative contexts is evident in Emily's narrative.

Emily: It's my whole life. I had my one best friend. She's been my friend forever. She and her sister are very close friends of mine and I always had them to lean on . . . . People and I just didn't get along. I just didn't want to get along with people. I'd go with a group of friends and I'd just do whatever they did and I just followed everybody . . . high school was the most dramatic part of my life, that time in my life I worked a lot and I had a boyfriend who passed away while I was there so that was really [difficult]. Writing was a very big thing for me, but . . . . I had that one great teacher in [junior high] school that set in what I wanted to do (Emily, Transcript 1, April, 2012). I know [the transformation] didn't happen right after that teacher helped me like, "Oh yeah, I can do this!" I think, over the years I've realized that I made these choices and I started to have control of my life. As I was choosing who I was and what I wanted to do, I was gaining respect from people and respect for myself and that made me realize I'm responsible for who I am and I choose (Emily, Transcript 2, May, 2012).

Emily's transformation was influenced within a variety of emotional, social, personal and familial contexts, not the least of which were living with the bullying that ultimately resulted in a court order against the bully and enduring a childhood transition into kindergarten that included having to become "girly" when she felt more like a "tom-girl" (Emily, Transcript 3, June, 2012).

Within a mesh of interwoven contexts, Patrick found three of particular significance along his transformative journey: the reading competition encouraged by his parents, the confiscation of a favourite book by his Grade 5 teacher, and the loss of close-nit friends in Grade 12. While he was thriving on the competition with his siblings to read the most, the best, and the lengthiest books, Patrick faced the first major triggering incident that pushed his transformation forward.

> Patrick: That brought along that attitude I had in reading to read more or to read bigger books because that would help me beat my brothers and my sister in our competition that we always had reading books. That event that I had in elementary in Grade 5. That one definitely pushed me. That [was] more constant, the desire to continue reading and to continue reading different books, harder books always one step up from the one I read before or if it was an easier book, read it faster or something like that (Patrick, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

The interplay between the home and school settings "pushed" Patrick's desire to be "one step up" throughout his life and that competitive compulsion instilled in his psyche as a child drove him to his eventual transformative decision to miss his high school graduation with his friends.

> Patrick: Everybody knew I was into sports and I did other things outside of school—we all did—but mine was the first time that the stuff outside of school really had a huge impact on our group. [Graduation] was the one big event that we all planned and it was my personal choice to be different and take myself out of the group and it was one of those things that once you leave the group then, they made it really difficult for you to get back in because then you were different (Patrick, Transcript 2, June, 2012).

Transformative experiences occur within a context within multiple contexts that generate new contexts and upon reflection, Patrick understood how each contributed to his transformational journey.

Patrick I didn't want to lose my group of friends because they were the main reason I went to school. I wasn't really strong with relationships. I didn't really have a group of friends until high school, which is why I think it was more hurtful when I had that negative experience with my high school friends (Patrick, Transcript 2, June, 2012).

Patrick's life rolled forward within new contexts—twisting, turning, and touching back on previous contexts through, what will be in all likelihood, an ongoing transformative future.

Though people live a multiplicity of contexts through their lives, there often are core transformative experiences that occur in particularly influential contexts that affects every other life experience in every other lived context. For example, Geoffrey's need to *play it safe* to the point of writing papers cautiously and only with academic approval in an educational context is rooted in the abusive daycare situation he suffered as a child and in an unflappable dedication to the mother who extricated him from that trauma. Even he wasn't sure of this origin in his transformation as his narrative began.

Geoffrey: It's probably the ultimate question of my life because its relevant to all aspects of my life and not just when it comes to literature, but why I don't apply for certain jobs or go out to a certain bar on Saturday night or what-have-you. It is the ultimate question. I don't know where it stems from though. I don't know why (Geoffrey, Transcript 4, June, 2012b)

As is presented in Chapter 2, Geoffrey recovered *a long lost memory* that revealed the negatively intense circumstance through which he lived as a child. His mother was there to talk him through this long-term, life-altering experience as he remembered it and she was there when she had to pull him out of the abusive childcare situation, but this was the context that manifests itself in "all aspects" of his life. Geoffrey continues to learn from this core transformative experience, a childhood context from which he was extricated, but the repercussions of living within such circumstances are multifaceted and manifold.

Geoffrey: It's a search to become a better person and what makes you a better person is what makes you happy and I'm a lot happier now trying to do things and I'm more open-

> minded than I was back then. It feels good and that tells me that I'm on to something; I'm on the right path (Geoffrey, Transcript 1, April, 2012a).

Geoffrey's "search" for self-improvement and personal growth is unfolding through his ongoing transformational experiences. Others described the meanings of their transformations in less accentuated ways, but all of the participants find transformative origins in singular contextual experiences that spiral into the changes that continued to affect their lives. For Amy it was her "home life and my family". For Emily the preschool context of home life affected the rest of her transformative journey and for Patrick the reading "competition" with his siblings was the source for the drive that kept him "one step up". Other participants found other originating contexts.

The layered contexts that people live simultaneously also include other socio-cultural factors. "The focus of narrative inquiry is not only on individual's experience but also on the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted" (Clandinin/Caine, 2013, p. 6.). Helen's multidimensional transformative story is especially affected by this supracontextuality of societal norms suggested by Clandinin and Caine. She was born Canadian, an identity she firmly embraces, but racism and the dominant social narrative identified her as a cultural minority from somewhere else. She also had to navigate the cultural expectations of her family and of school in making her decision to become an English Teacher.

Helen: > I think here, the school stuff never really hit me because I think this is a generational thing. There was implicit trust in a teacher. You respected your teacher. You respected your principal. My parents listened to them. They were all-knowing kind of like a doctor; hence, that's why I said my parents did what the teacher said and stopped talking because the teacher knew best. You don't question someone with that kind of authority. So, I think even though this stuff had happened, it never occurred to me to analyze or think about it because it was the teacher saying it . . . but even then, that deeply impacted me, but I didn't reflect on it because it was still *teacher* (Helen, Transcript 1, September, 2012).

The transformative changes Helen had experienced were filtered through these "social, cultural, and institutional" overtones. Maria's experience was similar and even after multiple careers, educational endeavours, and transformative moments she still says "I don't fit, I don't" (Maria, Transcript 2, August, 2012). She did "find a niche in the creative community" a place she describes where "people moved through the world differently" (Maria, Transcript 2, August, 2012). Her early origins in the Southern Baptist church in America, her *blackness*, and her early educational experiences somehow set her apart in a province that was part of a *multicultural* Canada. But as human beings are wont to do, she proceeds with hope and dignity as her transformative story continued to evolve reflexively in multiple and new contexts:

> Maria: The story is not over. This is a place in the story. It really is a blessing to be at this place in the story, but this is just one place in the story and there have been other places in the story that I didn't know about. Maybe this is the way this person is presenting to you, but that doesn't mean that is all that there is or all that will be (Maria, Transcript 3, September, 2012).

Anthony did not have the racial and cultural nuances to negotiate, but as part of his transformation he did struggle with social and educational contexts that seemed adverse to his ways of knowing, thinking, and being:

> Anthony: I've had some struggles with it and it's a learning experience and you start out at whatever level you start at and that's not the same as other people and I sometimes get criticisms from whomever and [I think] this is going to be a struggle, you know, maybe we're just not like that and if I hear anything like that that is definite, it is instant motivation for me to say, no (Anthony, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

Anthony's defiant "no" has driven his transformative experiences forward into the present as he pushed-back against having his life determined within those contexts he found in opposition to his personality and needs. His time away in Cambodia, the influence of his friends and family, and inspiration of his mother's life and the devastation of her unfortunate passing, helped him with his decision to become a teacher; but in the center of his temporal, contextual, and

multidimensional spiral of transformation was an inner strength, a determinative and psychological context, to find his own way.

I leave to two members of the participant group to bring the explanation of this finding to a close. Arthur described the breadth of interrelated and intercontextual experiences that transformation represents and links together.

> Arthur: I think of transformation in a broader sense of ongoing growth as a person, [which] is certainly going on, but I think [in] transformation itself I can point to a particular moment. It's not so ambiguous that we can't look at moments and events that are distinct events and moments and yet, I really do believe things are interconnected and so these different experiences and moments are linked in some way (Arthur, Transcript 3, May, 2012).

And Thomas closed with a description of the numerous contexts he lived simultaneously and the core experiential environments within which he found stability in his life.

> Thomas: I had a good circle of friends. I was well-liked by everybody. I never got in the crowd that drank or partied. I also grew up in a very conservative Christian home so I didn't even have the first beer in my life until I was twenty. I was in Scouts and Ventures and went camping a lot. It was really good. They were very supportive. Of course, nobody knew about the stuff that was going on in my life and I didn't know about anything that was going on in any of their lives. I still keep in touch with those guys (Thomas, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

3. The Long-term Effects of Transformative Experiences are Revealed Through Ongoing Reflection.

> While Dewey considered continuity and interaction part of all experiences, he believed a particular kind of thinking to be best suited for living in the midst and muddles of experience and as such capable of increasing the overall value of any experience. He termed this reflective thinking and built his entire notion of education around fostering it (Downey/Clandinin, 2010, pl. 348).

I have already made reference to the revelatory qualities of narrative processes; but self-reflection bears greater explanation because in telling their stories of transformation and then participating in the subsequent preliminary analysis, participants discovered more about

themselves and their transformative experiences than was initially anticipated. Arthur vocalized the advantages of self-reflective contemplation with, "it's not just that reflective people are more aware of their transformations, but they also undergo more transformation" (Arthur, Transcript 4, August, 2012). Arthur was further transformed by the self-reflective nature of the narrative inquiry and he became more self-aware.

> Arthur: I think this has made apparent that the continual struggle with losing people I care about, not wanting to lose them and yet being thrown into situations where it happens anyway . . . is the struggle and this is a life-long thing . . . . When something significant happens and I recognize this is important, I attach a certain kind of significance to it and say, this is what this means, this is what this is going to do for me now, but as time goes by and events unfold, I realize that that was just the beginning and there's more to this than I originally thought (Arthur, Transcript 4, August, 2012).

Thomas also commented on the poignancy of telling and reflecting upon his story of transformation.

> Thomas: It's brought back a lot of the emotion for sure—everything from sadness to pride to confusion. The over-confidence was a cover so people wouldn't see how scared I used to be . . . . I didn't really want people to see me scared so I went through these things as overcoming it so I could be successful, but then I didn't really realize that it's okay to stand out and it's okay to be normal. And it's okay to have anxieties and it's hard to come to terms with that at times (Thomas, Transcript 2, May, 2012).

Amy had already moved to developing a teaching praxis that transforms in her career. In her narrative she spoke of the professional advantages as well as the personal benefits to the reflection engaged during this inquiry:

> Amy: I think it's been great. All through the Education classes, they talk about reflective practice and it became a catchphrase that gets tossed around so often it doesn't really have any meaning anymore, but this was really good reflective practice. It made me really think about what I really believe about teaching and what I want teaching to be and what it is now and what my experiences have been and it brought it all together in a nice little package for me. It's been very fulfilling for me (Amy, Transcript 3, November, 2014).

Anthony's transformative struggle with the decision to become a teacher beleaguered him for a long time; but upon reflection, he placed his personal and professional transformation in perspective.

> Anthony: I've gotten more clarity into that experience. I had thought a lot about it, but the questions you've posed have helped to make certain aspects of that moment more clear and maybe guide them in a direction that I haven't done before. I think I learned more about what I was feeling at the time and what things were important and what weren't. I'm going to be a proud teacher and proud that this will be my life. I made it a huge deal where, at the end of the day, I think I'm Anthony, not a teacher and only a teacher. I can do other things, but I know that this is what I'm most excited doing now (Anthony, Transcript 2, July, 2012).

Emily found her confidence grew as well through the narrative and reflective activities during the inquiry and the artefact she brought in to represent a particularly meaningful experience in her transformative journey became a symbol of her character moving forward into the future.

> Emily: I did a lot of self-discovery. I learned a lot about myself that I had forgotten or hadn't noticed and I think it will help me remember who I need to be and who I want to be as an educator. My *believe rock* is self-belief. This rock is my solid reminder not to forget how I came to believe in myself. It's the rock in my personality (Emily, Transcript 3, June, 2012).

Time for reflection in and out of session is a real asset offered by narrative inquiry. Geoffrey's story embodied the benefit of this methodological attribute when he and his mother had a chance to talk between sessions about his dispiriting negative daycare experiences and when he communicates his enjoyment with the self-discovery process.

> Geoffrey: It confirms that I've had a love of literature from a very young age and that's really why I am in the position that I am in now just getting hired by the school board. It's just fun to understand yourself more and that's something I didn't really have. Before I didn't really question why I was an English teacher as opposed to a Social teacher or why I chose this career at all and so that's something I have a better understanding of now (Geoffrey, Transcript 5, October, 2014)

Maria connected the reflective qualities of her personality and life while expressing what she learned through understanding more completely her transformative experiences.

Maria: I had a reflective personality and my Mom says that when I was really, really young I would play with other kids and then it would be my quiet time and this was when I was two or three years old. I was thinking about this today. I would say that I learned about honesty . . . . [There are] many different perspectives, many different places, so many different gazes, you know. We're lucky to go into those worlds and to be able to be there—it's a privilege (Maria, Transcript 3, September, 2012).

Helen's praxis, as a long-time teacher, included ongoing self-reflection and educational professional development, but as experienced as she was, she still found the study of her transformational experiences through self-reflection revelatory.

Helen: I don't think at any point that I belonged in this city, [but] I think my big transformational moment was when I moved to England. I think one of the first things I [discovered] that I was completely unaware of that is not spoken about in this city is class. I was of a different class from my students, which I never really acknowledged because I never had to here. We kind of ignore class issues [here], even though, they're all over the place. We highly ignore them so, when I got to England, I didn't know how to deal with some of my students. I never had issues of hunger or of [poverty] and that's what, I think, my teachers must have thought about us (Helen, Transcript 1, September, 2014).

Understanding at this time in her life and career that her own childhood teachers treated her and her friend *of colour* as if of a lower class is a profound and transformative realization that Helen may not have come to without taking the time to tell and reflect upon her transformative experiences.

To conclude this finding I present another part of Patrick's narrative. In his reflection, Patrick expressed how his musings may affect his future students.

Patrick: I think it's more vital to understand the students and then, the material will come, but the first step is, you have to move the students. You have to let the students know that you're a human being and you're not infallible. You're going to make mistakes just like they are, but that's life. That's how human beings are (Patrick, Transcript 3, December, 2012).

4. **Positive or negative experiences or both can engage transformations, but ultimately, they foster self-belief and confidence and are life-affirming**

> For us, life—as we come to it and as it comes to others—is filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities (Clandinin/Connelly, 2000, p. 17).

As has been evident elsewhere in this document, adversity is as much part of transformation as serendipity or affirmation. Transformative experiences originate within negative or positive circumstances and often within a combination of the two. The triggering event that precipitates a transformative journey does not always inspire the kind of "disorienting dilemma" suggested my Mezirow (2000, p. 21). Not only is the deliberate construction of such a dilemma through an equally constructed *critical incident* unnecessary for transformation; the participants in this study demonstrate that transformative moments, negative or positive, are most often faced with determination and resolve not with a sense of perplexity. A dramatic change in a person's way of being, knowing, and thinking may have a concomitant unnerving effect because the *continuities* of life are in flux, but all of the participants saw these "unities and discontinuities" in their transformative stories as growth and essential to their personal and professional development.

In Emily's narrative she described the bullying and labelling she faced as painful and transformative, but by junior and senior high school she was no longer willing to accept that her identity had anything to do with the biases and misperceptions of others and she was not going to let the bully that injured her shoulder and psyche live on with impunity.

> Emily: Before I wouldn't really say anything to anybody. I wouldn't tell anybody that would just give them more ammo to make fun of me, [not even] my parents and I know they would never had made fun of me for it, but in my head, I didn't want to appear weak. So, I was standing up for myself for making it known what he was doing and not letting it happen anymore; at least, making him know that I was going to fight him on it in the best way possible (Emily, Transcript 3, June, 2012).

Emily was not crushed by the devastating experience of being coded and segregated for *special* remedial work nor was she willing to take the distressing punishment dealt by a bully

forever without a "fight". She may have been disillusioned initially, but she was not disoriented or defeated. Emily went on to explain how she dealt with that sinking isolation she felt in school.

Emily: I don't know when it went away. I think it was gradual. The pain just ebbed away. That kind of hurt takes a long time to heal. The emotional baggage that comes with being teased and picked on sticks, but everybody has their days—I stopped letting it control me, which is when I stopped letting it hurt me so much (Emily, Transcript 3, June, 2012).

Emily took "control" of her emotional and social life and "stopped letting" the hurt inhibit the strength of her character. Of course, part of that self-belief and confidence came from the affirmative action and teaching of an English teacher in Grade 8; but her overall reaction to the negativity she faced was positive, which Emily recognized as essential to the person and educator she had become.

Emily: If it didn't happen, I'd be a very different person and I don't want to think about that kind of person . . . . I was in junior high, super vulnerable and everybody is making make fun of me and he, [the Grade 8 English teacher], became the light for me. I could always go to him. If I needed help, I'd go to him. I found myself through that (pause), and it makes me very emotional. I could have gone years without ever having it happen and I would probably be a very different person because I wouldn't have believed in myself throughout school. I probably wouldn't have gone into the plays in high school. I wouldn't have gone on Student Council. I wouldn't have become the open person that I am, I wouldn't have half as many friends as I do, I would not have met any of the amazing people that I know, [and] I doubt, I would have come to post-secondary. I don't know what I would be doing. I think it needed to happen for me to be who I am now and who I am now is exactly who I want to be. And it's also helped me realize that as an educator, I can have that same kind of effect on someone, both positively and negatively so, I am very conscious of everything I do and everything I say and I want to make sure that if I do have impact on somebody's life, that it's a positive one (Emily, Transcript 3, June, 2012).

Anthony's transformation likewise began with a disparaging educational experience in which a teacher predicted he had little potential in English Language Arts and that negativity recurred when he entered university the first time under duress shortly after which, his mother passed away.

Anthony: I felt forced. I felt forced and even before the end of the Winter Term my first year, I went, I'm not going back this next year. I got to take a year off and think about what I actually want to do and not just go to school to go to school. I had the mindset [about] going travelling [and] that I was going to figure out what I was going to do and I really needed to get away from everyone. We found out [my mom] had cancer, I think, the day before I started university and then, she passed away on the 23rd of September. My Mom and I were very close and she passed away very quickly from cancer. It was a shock and that, alongside other things that you go through as a nineteen-year-old (pause), it was a tough time (Anthony, Transcript 2, June, 2014).

The thoughtful and heartfelt emotion underlying Anthony's understated "it was a tough time" was evident in the audio and visual records of the data collected, but he too faced this adversity with fortitude and willpower, turning a negative into a positive.

Anthony: Those few years were a tough time in my life for that and other reasons. From that, I always think what she would like me to do and that she would want me to be happy with what I'm doing. It was kind of affirming in a way; it kind of helped me in that way. She talked to me about that before she passed away. It was tough, but I think it helped; it helped me get some clarity in a tough time (Anthony, Transcript 2, June, 2014).

Anthony's perspective on the reasons for transformation is also instructive.

Anthony: I think when you're in a transformation, you're in an area in your life beforehand where you're not happy or you need something and you need to transform yourself to an area where that problem is solved. I think if someone didn't have any uncertainty in his or her life, there's no need for transformation in the first place (Anthony, Transcript 3, October, 2012).

The suggestion that people are predisposed to transformation through the negative impacts of early experience is an intriguing concept for future research, but whether this inclination is part of all transformative experiences or not, Anthony believed that his transformation, however dark at times, was a journey to greater happiness.

Amy was much inspired in her choice to be an English teacher by her bedtime story experiences with her siblings and her father and by her mother's sense of resilient independence,

but her transformation was, to a large extent, motivated by her desire to change how she was taught English Language Arts.

> Amy: In high school English, I was incredibly frustrated by my English teacher, because this was the subject that I loved so much, she really didn't put any pizzazz into English and it was just kind of a slog (Transcript 1, Amy, May, 2012). I think when I decided I wanted to go into education, I went in knowing that while my teachers had been very nice people and had taught me the basics and had done a fine job it hadn't been memorable or magical in anyway. I thought it could be done better and I went in wanting to make those changes and have an impact on my students. I made that decision knowing that I wanted to change the way people thought about English and about school and about themselves and I saw being a teacher as the way to do that (Amy, Transcript 2, June, 2012).

Amy's life-altering transformative experiences motivated a strong belief in herself, a sense of purpose, and a career path.

Maria's transformative moments were both positive and negative with experiences from racism to the "real sense of community" (Maria, Transcript 2, August, 2012) she felt in the Baptist Church; but like Amy and other participants, she moved forward with confidence into the teaching profession, though the negative impacts sometimes outweighed the positive experiences of her life.

> Maria: I think that if one is different at all and doesn't fit into easily definable groups and that's all people see, it just feels like surviving like that line from Desiderata about things that are vexations on the spirit. There were things that people don't see and that people don't know that one has to deal with if you're a minority. For me it's colour, but I know that there are different things for different people . . . . I think you have to think about why you decided to do this and I feel like the reason that most people want to do this is because of the students and I would say, make it about them—to remember as much as possible to make it about them (Maria, Transcript 2, August, 2012).

In a similar way, Helen's negative experiences, especially with her first university English teacher, transformed her career aspirations.

> Helen: I feel really passionate about it when I talk about it, but I have let go of that English teacher. I've let her go. I understand that if it wasn't for her, I may not have become

> an English teacher. I acknowledge I would never have gone into English if it had not been for her. She and her negative experience made me want to make sure my students never had that [and] I thank her for that (Helen, Transcript 1, September, 2014).

Thomas' transformation that had its genesis in the tragic motor vehicle incident in which his mother was severely injured was, ultimately, life affirming.

> Thomas: I didn't know what I wanted to do for a long time, but I always remember thinking even as far back as Grade 6, I am going to be successful some day and I always remember thinking that and knowing it and that was along with all the anxiety. I was influenced by my parents, by my Mom really. She is the one that took the courses to learn [the program] to help me and when somebody has spent that amount of time and energy to help you with that much belief, I think you inherit some of it. There is something to this and they believe so, you might as well believe in yourself. And at the time, I didn't really know what that meant, but I had these small successes and I knew that I could keep challenging myself a little bit more because it was slow. It was a slow, gradual process, one thing at a time (Thomas, Transcript 2, May, 2012).

Patrick had also come to philosophically understand his negative and positive transformative journey more like a rite of passage from which he had developed life skills, self-confidence, personal affirmation, and values to live by.

> Patrick: Now that I am a teacher, I see the value of reading and how it impacts people and their education and it's vital to get kids reading at a younger age, but I don't know if I'm going to make sure my kids read for that individual reason to make sure they start off with a good education and a good reading background before they get into school, or if I'm doing it to make sure they stay away from negative friends or from other negative influences. Hopefully, they are educated enough at a younger age they can realize if something is going to be a negative impact on their lives, they will stay away from it (Patrick, Transcript 3, December, 2012).

In closing the enquiry of this finding Arthur added another constituent of transformational experience. He expresses a sense of feeling more comfortable in his own skin and a maturity that allowed him to proceed into his professional and personal life with a greater self-belief and self-assuredness.

Arthur: I think for a long time, I have been curious about why things happen and what does this mean and so, I suspect that has been with me for a long time, but it is only as I've gotten older that it's been brought to the surface and I've recognized how concerned I am with understanding. What does this mean? What is true? I think that answering the questions and going through the inquiry feel quite natural to me. I can today spend a fair bit of time asking myself, why am I doing this, why am I upset, what am I doing, and those kinds of questions . . . . I am more comfortable with incomplete answers or fragmented understanding than I was in high school. There are many things I don't understand and there are some things I probably won't understand until the day I die, but that isn't as troubling as it was perhaps in high school (Arthur, Transcript 4, August, 2012).

5. Transformative experience can be generated out of spite or despite the actions of others or from self-determination and often evokes a person's inner strength.

Emily: I'm a very stubborn and determined person so, I want to do well, especially if someone's told me I can't, I want to do it. I don't know if it was all about spite, but I'm sure I was trying to prove the doubters wrong (Emily, Transcript 1, April, 2014).

A concomitant finding to outcome four that elucidates how negative and positive experiences eventuate in affirmative transformations is how the inner strength of participants came to the fore particularly in difficult times to energize the transformative trajectory of their lives. Some participants like Emily reacted to personal challenges with spite or despite the problematic experiences of their lives. Others reacted with quiet resolve or a force of will.

Anthony's spiteful response to his elementary teacher's judgement about his English skills was transformational in itself because he was spurred into self-discovery.

Anthony: I think spite was going to prove you wrong *Mrs. So-and-so*, but in that I found that I really liked to read. I'm always reading whatever it is and I love the escape-based element plus the expansion that your mind can do through reading and I love it and I like the creativity (Anthony, Transcript 3, October, 2012).

And Helen's childlike spitefulness came from the need for a sense of belonging regardless of the cultural milieu within which she lived.

Helen: I remember my Dad and I had a tumultuous relationship—and I remember it was the middle of winter, I was ten or eleven, and we had one of our huge arguments. My father wanted me to do something and I refused and so I remember running around the kitchen table screaming, "You can't make me, I am Canadian!" I remember I had had all these negative experiences, I never felt like I belonged, I never felt like I was represented, but from a very young age, I was always Canadian and that part of me has not gone (Helen, Transcript 1, September, 2012).

Somehow Helen's young consciousness had already been imprinted with the multiethnic discord of her environs, but her Canadian identity was a transformative thread throughout her life that gave her a sense of stability even if, in this case, she was only in disagreement with her father.

Amy's reaction in spite of her school English experiences still motivates her love of the English language and her development as a transformative teacher.

Amy: I remember all of my classmates just hating [English class]. It wasn't inspirational by any means and I think that's part of the reason me and this friend started reading on our own and just talking about books between the two of us and sharing books (Amy, Transcript 1, May, 2012). Then, [in] university is when I really got passionate about it again because I was talking to people who cared about books and who knew about books and who had new ideas for things I could read (Amy, Transcript 3, November, 2012).

Geoffrey's force of will helped him overcome a debilitating compulsion to be *best*, a transformation that gave him respite from an early life that he lived, perhaps, desperately *safe*:

Geoffrey: I put pressure on myself—it didn't come from my parents—but I put pressure on myself in that this is my identity and so, if I didn't do well, I was disappointing myself and disappointing others. I like to do my best in things and to me, to be the best is to be the best, and that's an attitude I've been working on. I don't think it's healthy to base your identity upon being successful . . . . I felt terrible when I didn't live up to those expectations that I set for myself. You're not going to be good at everything, but that doesn't mean you can't enjoy it and it doesn't mean that it can't contribute to a healthy part of your life. I can't expect myself to be good at everything and it doesn't mean that I'm a bad person or that I shouldn't be doing this, but that was my attitude early on in life (Geoffrey, Transcript 1, April, 2012a).

Similarly, Thomas' transformational experiences were galvanized by his determined effort to find strength when his anxiety provoked fear and a doubt.

Thomas: Yeah, the more involved I am, the less anxious I feel. Unstructured environments cause me to be anxious so, in high school it was fine because it was very structured. I had choir before school and after school and during the day and there were classes (Thomas, Transcript 2, May, 2012). Then, I graduated and I was still probably one of the [most frightened] people you'd ever know and I knew that about myself and I didn't want to be like that so, I looked for the toughest jobs I could do that would force me to grow (Thomas, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

In Patrick's transformational experiences, strength of character and a determined desire for self-improvement were significant motivating factors. He had to prove to his siblings that he was not just a clone of them and to his teacher that he had more ability than she thought.

Patrick: When I was in Grade 5, I say that was a stronger influencing factor because that had never happened to my brothers or sister before; that was unique to me and it changed my perspective of reading. Now, I am reading not just for enjoyment. I'm not just reading for this program; I have to read because I'm not going to give that teacher the satisfaction of knowing that she was right.

By the time Patrick was in high school his childhood spite had transformed into an ability to make his own decisions and to determine what was best for him.

Patrick: Thankfully, with my mind, I was able to block out things. At least, they didn't really affect me when I was focusing on my competition. I definitely made the right choice then. That made things easier. I was at the World Championships that summer after high school. I was competing at the Worlds after I'd gone through all this relationship drama and after all this stuff and winning at the Worlds kind of set everything straight for me.

With the self-reflection and quiet resolve that is part of his philosophical nature, Arthur reveals a transformation within a transformation. His own personality may have been overshadowed temporarily by the imposing character of his high school English teacher and Drama coach, but the transformative experience she fostered, reinforced Arthur's inner strength, which, in turn, stimulated Arthur's personal and professional growth.

Arthur: After I had left high school, [I] had some time to be more honest about some of her foibles and to get away from her influence. What she did was good at the time and I really do think that she did a lot for me, but as time went by I realized there are even more things to learn and there is a way for me to take things she gave me and

> to honour that, but also to find my own path as a reader and a lover of literature and also as a teacher of [English Language Arts] (Arthur, Transcript 1, April, 2012a).

I will let Maria conclude the presentation of this finding with two quotes she finds particularly significant in understanding and driving forward her transformative experiences. Once again, Maria demonstrates that transformation is as much generated by the personalities of the transformed as they are by outside forces.

Maria: It took me until I was older to not just see the flaws in me. It is a healthy response to be angry and say, no. There are quotes in my mind that I have used and [that] I write down like, "if you can't run walk, if you can walk crawl, if you can't crawl, by all means, keep moving" . . . [and] "life must be lived forward, but it can only be understood backwards" (Maria, Transcript 2, August, 2014).

6. Life-altering transformative experiences occur without contrivance and are a synergy of student(s), teacher, subject, and context(s).

> Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful (Clandinin/Caine, 2013, p. 1).

Prior to this research, educational stories I have heard usually ascribed the initiation of any transformation to the teacher of a particular subject, but the connections the participants in this study attribute to teacher or subject may be strong, weak, nebulous or non-existent. What is manifest in transformations that are not contrived into being is a synergy that churns within the amalgam of student(s), teacher, subject, and context(s) resulting in life-altering, irreversible change in the lives of those involved, which they may not be fully aware of at the time. Even though participants highlighted certain times, places, people, and contexts as particularly transformative, the evidence they have provided indicates that the momentous incidents or experiences identified as the initializing events have occurred within an ongoing spiral of other interrelated, interconnected, and inter-contextual life experiences. The participants credited

various people or events as crucial motivators in their transformations, but all come to understand that their transformative experiences have multifaceted origins often synergized through happenstance in an amalgam of people, contexts, endeavours, and materials.

Arthur was highly influenced by his study of *The Scarlet Letter* and his teacher's way of encouraging students to see beyond the obvious in literature; but what he has taken from that profoundly transformative time in high school is a personal and professional understanding of the multifaceted nature of transformational experience, which unfolded over a number of sessions as he told his story. Initially it seemed he believed the sources of his transformation to be his English teacher and Hawthorne's philosophically, based literature; but he eventually narrated a more comprehensive interpretation of his experiences.

Arthur: I still have a great deal of appreciation for what she did and I would certainly say even if she may not be the best teacher I've ever had, I think she is definitely a contender for that and she certainly the most influential I've had in my life thus far and I have had a lot of great teachers (Arthur, Transcript 1, April, 2012). In my case, it was not an immediate thing; it was a very slow, gradual realization that something has changed with this class (Arthur, Transcript 1, April, 2012a). I attached the significance of the authors and their writings to the teacher because she was the one through whom the exposure came. It was very natural to attach them and everything they represented to her (Arthur, Transcript 3, May, 2012). [School] is something greater than [the teacher]. It's a combination of [the students] being here and the experiences [they] bring and my being here and what's going on in our school community, what's going on in our lives, and what [they're] going to be doing after [their] school years down the line (Arthur, Transcript 4, August, 2012)

Emily attached considerable weight to her Grade 8 English teacher's influence in her life and rightly so, but even she understood the multiple interrelated contexts and experiences that combined to vitalize her transformative journey.

Emily: Teachers have had the biggest effect on my life, but English is where I am most strongly rooted. I love English. You always play with your friends and I always wanted to be the teacher, but I never thought I could do it until I started to get good at things. He, [my Grade 8 English teacher], really encouraged me and that made

> me have confidence in myself and in what I was doing. I went out of my way to read more and do more and not feel ashamed about it because I wasn't the stupid girl anymore. He believed in me. I think had it happened in another subject, it wouldn't have been as powerful because writing and reading is what I like to do . . . . Now I had this teacher that was telling me not to give up on myself so, I think it did need to happen in English (Emily Transcript 1, April, 2012). I think it was just the atmosphere and the environment that teacher had built for us. We all felt comfortable without having to be this pretend person that everyone builds up around them in junior high when you're trying to fit in (Emily, Transcript 4, October, 2012).

For Emily the subject area was inspiring and the teacher was more than "encouraging", but the "atmosphere and environment" he "built" for the entire class was contextually constructed by more than an *electrifying* teacher and his inspired student. Twenty-four other students had to join in collaboratively to develop and maintain the magical ambiance that Emily said existed behind the English classroom door (Emily, Transcript 4, October, 2012).

Geoffrey's progression was replete with numerous life-altering transformations, but he highlighted an educational experience in a subject area of particular interest as he started his narrative. He is blunt with his thoughts regarding the inspirational qualities of the professor teaching the course, but the subject and the literature he found so compelling were also secondary transformative influences to his need to live outside a self-imposed comfort zone. Geoffrey's belief that he needed his work authorized by a credentialed professor and that the literature he studied had to be from the great Western canon also contributed to the synergy of his transformative journey.

Geoffrey: Her teaching was boring, but I loved the course in spite of her. I guess I'm thankful that I got a good grade on it and she was probably a better marker than she was a lecturer. I could write something that my peers could see and so, I didn't have to play it safe like I do in my life. So, in that sense, it was dangerous for me to step out of my comfort zone and also dangerous for me to invite an unpopular response from people because they would likely react the way that I first reacted. How could Satan be the protagonist? And then, I can go on to show them how. If it hadn't been *Paradise Lost*, it might have been another text, but maybe it wouldn't have

> been because that's the one that she had mentioned. So, I think it had to be that particular text. That text is held in such great esteem. It's still around and we still study it for a reason and so, this is obviously a great piece of literature that would benefit me to know; whereas, you don't know if a new piece of literature will do that (Geoffrey, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

The subject, the professor, the literature, even his classmates were necessary in activating Geoffrey's transformation, but the driving force in this synergic experience was his transition outside his comfort zone. In addition, Geoffrey described a place he would go to complete his research and homework. This environment also became part of Geoffrey's transformative experience by providing respite and a study space during this dynamic time in his life:

Geoffrey: At the same time, reading this book, I always think of the pool at [university] and where I used to go to study, because it was warm in winter. It's really hot and there'd be people swimming in the pool or in the hot tub or whatever, but there were tables for people to study at. That takes me back to there, and I haven't been there in years. It's a good memory (Transcript 2, Geoffrey, April, 2012a).

An account of Amy's inability to connect with inspirational English teachers during her schooling has already been well-documented in this dissertation, but the reason that she didn't receive the extra attention as very capable English student might expect is the most curious motivator in her story of transformation.

Amy: [My teachers] were talking to the class; they weren't talking to me so it didn't make a personal impression. I think I was one of those students who listened and did what they told me to and I handed work in on time and I didn't warrant personal help. I didn't really need one-on-one help to understand something so they probably spent more time with the kids who didn't get it. I don't have any strong memories of teachers working with me (Amy, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

Within the convergence of multiple transformative influences there exists this disheartening, if not annoying, abandonment by her teachers, which, more than subject or context, or personalities, became a driving force in Amy's transformation and her desire to be a different sort of teacher.

For Patrick, it seems at first glance that the actions of one teacher set in motion a lifelong behaviour pattern; but in his narrative the reaction of his parents to the teacher's conduct, the competitive reading program at home, his desire for greater understanding and knowledge, and his changing sense of purpose also breathed life into this transformative experience.

Patrick: My teacher was very startled that my parents came back to speak with her about it. She thought that, perhaps, I had taken the book without my parents' knowledge or my parents had no idea what I was reading and they were disconnected from my reading levels. She was under the assumption that I had taken the book on my own and I didn't even know it was above my reading level (Patrick, Transcript 1, April, 2012). I would definitely put more time to reading than other things from that point, definitely in that school year. If I wasn't doing something I had to do, like mandatory school work, I'd be reading. In any class, I always had a book and that continued with me from that point all the way through until university. There are lots of different novels and different genres that are way beyond my capacity to understand. I'll still push my way through so I can get a better understanding or read through that book, through that novel, but [I also have] an enjoyment purpose [now] (Patrick, Transcript 2, June, 2012).

Anthony's transformative trajectory also seemed set in motion by the opinions of a single teacher, but there were other factors influencing the synergism of his transformation.

Anthony: I hate whenever anyone refers to anyone in terms of [absolutes]. Even if I don't succeed, it always shows that I make progress even if I don't get to the level that I'm striving at. Nothing like that is definite and I don't see things in those terms. I know there were a lot of personal things going on when I was in that grade and that maybe detracted from my grades and detracted from my focus in school . . . . I think for me to hear that as a ten-year-old, I would just never be a good English student, really set things in motion for me to affirm myself . . . . The escapist in me loves doing English. I love going to different worlds and experiencing different new things and seeing different points of view and everything that it brings . . . . I used to sit in classrooms and think maybe I'll be a teacher. I like the idea of having a body of knowledge and imparting it to people (Anthony, Transcript 1, April, 2014).

His own "personal" issues, his need to "affirm" himself, his intrinsic motivation to teach, even the "escapist" in his character all played significant roles in Anthony's transformation.

Maria's early life in Alberta was neighbourly and community oriented, and some of that sense of belonging continued amongst the students in the neighbourhood; however, school

morphed this supportive environment into an accumulation of painful experiences of submission and prejudice:

> Maria: I remember kids came over to play and lots of kids in the neighbourhood would come over to our house and we would build forts in our back yard. It was not like that in elementary and again it's because, the [neighbourhood] was a community of *Others*. There were Polish kids, Chinese kids, First Nations kids, yeah. We were all alike. I came to this understanding, finally, that I have my Grandmother's voice and that it *is* a rich, Black women's voice. I think people weren't used to that . . . . I remember the girls [in school] not being very nice at all; the guys weren't very nice at all either (Maria, Transcript 1, July, 2012)

Before travelling to England to teach, Helen's transformative experiences were likewise engaged intercontexually with teachers and a subject essential in the mix. However, her need to make a difference for others in a society that treated her stereotypically and without individual regard propelled her transformation forward.

> Helen: Elementary was *so* community-based. I still talk to my core group of friends from kindergarten. I think that speaks a lot to what we were like as a little school, but then again, as I told you, my Mom was told not to speak to us in Punjabi by the teacher. The kids were connected, but there was a disconnect between the staff and the kids and there was also the time when we would have the Lebanese corridor. You'd have this corridor, that corridor; you'd have the racialization in the high school and then you get the typical things as the Band corridor, the Football corridor . . . . English was such a negative experience and my Grade 10 teacher was just horrible, absolutely horrible. My Grade 12 teacher who was the best high school English teacher I had was also the only part-time teacher and I don't know if that made a difference. Now, looking back as a teacher, she didn't associate with the other teachers. She came in and she taught her one class and then, she left. Ironically, it was my negative experience with that Grade 10 and 11 teacher that made me decide to go into English in university (Helen, Transcript 1, September, 2012).

Thomas is another participant who attached significant inspirational impacts in his transformation to his teachers.

> Thomas: There are a few teachers, [particularly] in English. I really connected with [my English teacher's] personality and she was just a nice, really caring woman and she's probably the teacher that I connected to with the most in high school other than the music teacher and I really liked my Spanish teacher too. I think the

> connection with the teacher definitely helped in the transformation, particularly because of the connection I had with her. I enjoyed learning in her class. So then, when it came time for me to pick the Major in university, it was easy to go with subjects that I enjoyed. If those programs hadn't existed, I'm not sure what would have happened.

There, of course, is no intent to undervalue the influence teachers play within transformative experiences, and Thomas' story is a tribute to those teachers whose connection with students powerfully alter their lives. Students most often relate experiences where the relationships they had with teachers made all the difference in their lives, but there had to be more to those transformations than just a teacher whose ways of teaching transform perspectives and encourage self-belief and self-confidence. The fact that the student is always part of the collaborative synthesis of contexts, experiences, people, and subjects already implies an interactive transformation. This finding simply reinforces this dynamic interconnectivity and points out that there is more to transformation than teacher/subject/student relationships.

7. Participants found the research process itself transformative.

Transformative learning begets transformative learning (Mezirow, 2009, p. 75)

Through Narrative Inquiry the time is taken in the investigation of participants' stories to deeply and carefully ascertain their meaning. Each participant, in one way or another, expressed that through this methodological endeavour of discovery, he or she was further reaffirmed, enlightened, and changed. As Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) point out, "the researched and the researcher are seen to exist in time and in a particular context. They bring with them a history and worldview. They are static but dynamic, and growth and learning are part of the research process. Both researcher and researched will learn" (p. 14). In other words, the participants found the

processes of the research transformative. Here is how they communicated the transformative powers of this inquiry:

Anthony: Times where even I lose faith [and] looking at that transcript, especially, it's a reaffirming thing where I can see thoughts and I can go back into what I really believe and it's a reaffirming process. I think I learned more about what I was feeling at the time (Anthony, Transcript 3, October, 2014).

Emily: Therapeutic (Emily, Transcript 5, October, 2012b).

Geoffrey: It's fun to explore why I became an English teacher because I am going so far back and I am discussing things up to university and to the present day and it begs the question why I am doing something. It confirms that I've had a love of literature from a very young age and that's really why I am in the position that I am (Geoffrey, Transcript 5, October, 2012).

Arthur: I think we're well on our way. I think we're not done yet. One big wow moment for me today was your point that I kept saying that I was raised by au pairs instead of raised by my parents. It's a small thing, but it's a huge thing. Just one word makes a huge difference (Arthur, Transcript 3, May, 2012).

Patrick: That's what it brings back, just fun memories of me and my brothers and my sisters sitting in the basement on the couches and chairs and floors and reading and every few pages we'd look up and see how fast everyone else is reading. When I was thinking about this whole reading process, this came to mind because this was still one of those things I think back on and it's one of the things I'm going to be doing with my kids when I have kids to get them reading during the summer instead of playing video games; I'll be happy (Patrick, Transcript 2, June, 2012).

Thomas: Yeah, discomfort for sure. Not that that's a bad thing. It's just that it's tough to (pause), it's not like I spend my day talking about these things to everybody else (Thomas, Transcript 2, May, 2012).

Helen: I [became] more aware of it and as I grow from it and as I continue changing from it. I also at some point have to let go of some of the negativity associated with it (Helen, Transcript 1, September, 2012).

Maria: [Transformation] comes from students, from the universe, from accidents, from (pause) because I think some of the most interesting things come from accidents and allowing for that [is] okay (Maria, Transcript 3, September, 2012).

Amy: All these thoughts that I've been having, came together really well. It's been very fulfilling for me (Amy, Transcript 3, November, 2012).

No one expected the research data collection process to be transformative at the outset, but all of us were transformed in one way or another.

This concludes the presentation of the seven primary findings of this research inquiry. In the following chapter the significant impacts of these findings upon transformative teaching praxis will be examined. Before leaving Chapter 4 there are three secondary findings I believe significant enough for presentation, but without enough substantive evidence to warrant primary finding status. These three ancillary findings require further research, which may eventually place them amongst the principal findings.

Secondary Findings

> Narrative inquiry understands "stories both lived and told" as the connector of the person in the world, framing narrative as both phenomenon under study and method of study (Clandinin/Connelly, 1990, p 385).

The three secondary findings are:

1. Transformation has a knock-on effect in that the transformed transform.
2. Transformative experiences, most often, occur with little conscious awareness and are seldom epiphanous.
3. Artefacts symbolize, trigger, represent, and sustain the memories of transformation.

1. Transformation has a knock-on effect in that the transformed transform.

> A life story offers a sometimes hidden glimpse of the human qualities and characteristics that make us all so fascinating *and* fun to listen to (Atkinson, 2007, p. 235).

As seen in primary Finding 7, there is a *knock-on* effect of the narrative inquiry process, but secondary Finding 1 speaks to the transformations that the transformed initiate and energize. Changes in a person's ways of being, thinking, knowing, and doing affects their relationships with others in the contexts that person lives even if we narrow the parameters of those effects to what

he or she will no longer do or will do from now on. Below, you will read accounts from three participants that illustrate the viability of this finding, though other participant narratives did not contain such evidence.

Through her experiences as a student and as a teacher, Maria knew that she would teach in ways that embraced difference and supported the individual needs of students.

Maria: I do like silence, but in the context of school, I felt like my voice wasn't wanted and I felt like I was misinterpreted lots of times. That's why I so related to that student [while student teaching] when he said to that teacher, I have to go for a walk. The teacher asked, where are you going and he said, I have to go to the library and I thought, can you not see what he is saying. Can you not talk to him? Can you not get to see what's behind here instead of having a yelling match with him? I think it is so important that he spoke up . . . that's why I write things down because it helps me to remember the things that I need to remember like that (Maria, Transcript 3, September, 2012).

Amy was already working on a teaching praxis that transforms based upon her transformative life experiences.

Amy: I see myself as very lucky because of my background. I value that very strongly and I think that's very important. That was a great environment for me to have been raised in, but I also see that I could be that transformational person for people who don't have the same background as me (Amy, Transcript 1, May, 2012).

Geoffrey reflected upon his experiences and realizes the importance of being aware, particularly as parents, of the lifelong and life-altering effects of transformation and of how early in life they often begin.

Geoffrey: I learned, in my opinion, that [transformative experiences] occur at a young age and younger than junior high/senior high school. It's probably elementary at the youngest and probably before they are even into the school system. I think it really starts at home. It's really up to the parents to instill experiences that prepare students to develop their love for something and what they're exposed to at home, perhaps their parents' opinions or attitudes toward something can really influence their own as they grow up. In terms of educational transformative experiences, I'd have to say that they occur before they get into the secondary level of school (Geoffrey, Transcript 5, October, 2012).

These participants discovered a novel desire to encourage or a greater awareness of the transformative effects of transformation. Further research may support a more widespread finding related to the knock-on effect of transformative experiences.

2. Transformative experiences, most often, occur with little conscious awareness and are seldom epiphanous.

> A person is, at once, engaged in living, telling, retelling and reliving stories (Clandinin/Connelly, 2000, p. 4).

I know from my own life that the realization and actualization of transformative experiences start with triggering events or moments and continue to spiral forward in effect into perpetuity. The stories of students also support this perpetual potential, but none of the transformations I am privy to, including those of the participants in this study, contain any description that would indicate a eureka moment or epiphany at any turning point during their transformative experiences. Self-reflection often produces "I hadn't thought of that" or "that makes a lot of sense" insights, but no one speaks of the proverbial "light bulb going off".

Arthur gives a particularly lucid explanation of the simmering synergy of transformative experience.

Arthur: Where there are transformative experiences we can point to particular moments. When someone brings this up we snap to, oh I remember this time, [and] point to a particular moment and yet sometimes it seems the significance of that moment is greater than what we recognize at the time . . . . Time passes, other things happen to us and, at least, in my case I recognize this was going to lead to other things down the road. The full impact of the experience is not immediately apparent when it happens even if you have some sense that this is important; this means something. It's only after time has passed and you realize, yeah that was important. After the experience, things happen and so we can talk about transformative experiences both as particular moments and yet if we really dig into them, we're going to start talking about what came before and what came after and we're going to start putting them within the larger narrative of our life's journey (Arthur, Transcript 4, August, 2013).

Emily was taken aback by a noteworthy realization as we conversed about her early upbringing. I wondered why in reading back the transcripts I discovered several references that indicated a *boys are boys* and *girls are girls* bias. She found this revelation quite out of character for her, but her response was still more reflective than epiphanous.

Emily: I didn't realize I was doing that. I just think (pause), that's weird to me because I'm very much about equality, guys and girls are the same (pause) that's strange… can I blame it on the fact that that's how my Mom raised me (*said with a chuckle*). I think I pushed away from that attitude from my mother's ways. I had a choice and I pushed away and I think I still am. I do like to get dressed up, but I'm more a *Tom-girl* about dresses. For a girl who likes to talk I don't have much to say right now (pause). I think it was always something I was trying to get away from and it was just another thing I was trying to fit into. I think the way I was living, the way I was raised; it was just another reason why I was different and it just caused more of a rift and so it was something I was pushing against even though I was being forced (Emily, Transcript 5, October, 2012b).

While his narrative unfolded, Anthony came to an understanding about why his Cambodian experience with the village children spurred on his decision to become a teacher. In Anthony's life, this was a momentous and transformative time, but he still did not describe the experience as an epiphany.

Anthony: I think the place itself was very calming and we did a lot of really cool things around there and I think this sort of simplicity in my life and the time I had to reflect without even those children, I think [is why] I would have come to this conclusion. I think they, [the children], brought it about more quickly, but I don't think (pause), maybe they were the catalyst, I guess, would be the best way to think about it (Anthony, Transcript 2, June 2, 2012).

Further research would reveal whether dramatic enlightenments are a part of any transformative experiences. For now, suffice it to say, these participants suggested transformations occur without immediate eureka realizations of their significance or of their long term effect.

3. Artefacts symbolize, trigger, represent, and sustain the memories of transformation.

There is considerably more evidence for this finding than the other two secondary findings because most of the participants brought in an artefact or two as representations of their transformative experiences, but because artefacts as stimuli in research is a commonly used technique, I haven't included the following data as a primary finding.

Emily brought in a smooth, flat, palm-sized rock with the word *Believe* engraved into it, which represented her personality and her transformation from aggrieved and confused child to confident teacher.

Emily: It says "Believe" on it. I was given this rock right after I graduated high school. I used to be a camp counsellor at a camp for troubled teens and at the end of it, the camp mentor, who managed all of the counsellors, gave us each a rock with a word on it and it was the word that was to represent the kind of mentors that we were and I was the mentor that always believed. I always believed in my group and that kind of stuck with me and I wanted someone to believe in me. I wanted the teacher to believe in me because I didn't believe in myself and I want other people to believe in themselves. I take this almost everywhere. I had this with me every day that I student-taught. I had it with me the first day I went subbing. I have it with me all the time. I just keep it in my pocket. It's my *believe rock* (Transcript 2, Emily, May, 2012).

The artefact symbolized the caring, transformative teacher she had become; triggered intuitive, experiential insights; represented belief in herself and others; and sustained profound memories upon which she has based principles of her life.

Amy had a selection of five books with her that represented a most transformative time in her life. These were stories her father read to Amy and her siblings.

Amy: I picked ones that had been given to me because I figured those were more attached to my story than my family's story and I had to pare it down somehow and I picked the ones I remembered reading the most so that I had the most vivid memories because there are some that I know we read twenty or fifty times, but they just don't have the same [impact] on me. These ones I remember looking at the pictures and hearing the words. Those are the ones that stuck with me (Amy, Transcript 3, November, 2012).

Amy settled into telling of her experience with one story very important in her childhood with her family and bedtime stories.

> Amy: *The Name of the Tree*. It's kind of like the *Tortoise and the Hair*. It has a moral to it and so basically all of the animals on safari are starving and they have to go to the king who was the lion to ask the name of the tree so that the tree will bear fruit for them to eat and none of them can remember it except for the tortoise who everyone says will never be able to remember it because he cannot get there and back fast enough, but he does and the name of the tree is *Ungalli*. In that story, I think it was mostly the pictures and the repetition. Let me see if I can find it. So, the tortoise as he's coming back after the king it goes, "as he walked he said *Ungalli*, *Ungalli*. The name of the tree is *Ungalli*. *Ungalli*, *Ungalli*. The name of the tree is *Ungalli*," and I remember when my Dad would read it to us that was the part we had memorized and so we would just repeat it and it was like a mantra that we would say. We would just chant it together so that's the part I really remember (Amy, Transcript 3, November, 2012).

The enthusiasm and speed with which she retold *The Name of the Tree* is indicative of the prevailing, transformative effect this artefact still had for Amy.

Arthur brought with him his copy of *The Scarlet Letter*.

> Arthur: There was a photograph from when I visited *Walden Pond* right before I started Grade 12 where I took a picture of a rock and I wrote my name on it and placed it there, which I had brought back to her as proof that I had been there, to show her what I'd done there because we'd also talked about Thoreau in her class and that was another one of my favourite authors to talk about when I was in it, but I was hesitant to bring this in as my artefact because a part of me thought that's too easy or that's too obvious. When I was asked to bring an artefact, this was the very first thing that came to mind. I thought, I'm going to try to pinpoint a turning point in the class [and] I think this was it, *The Scarlet Letter*. This class was brand new and I was really excited about what we were up to. I loved almost everything we read in that class, but of all the works we read, this is the one that has remained the most important to me since I took the class and this remains one of my all-time favourite novels and Hawthorne remains one of my top five, even three favourite writers (Arthur, Transcript 2, April, 2012b).

Arthur's story about the transformative effects of Hawthorne's philosophy, *The Scarlet Letter*, his teacher's approach to literature, and his reverence for the copy he had in his hands

during this session has already been entered in this document; but the representative, symbolic, activating, sustaining influences of this artefact in his life are undeniable.

Geoffrey's need to experience "danger" by writing a paper outside of his comfort zone was embodied in the literature textbook he used in university to study John Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

> Geoffrey: This is the original anthology that we used in the class and with it is the *Paradise Lost* version that I first read. I've got just a couple notes that I used. I used the quote that I based my research paper [on]. It says, "While they adorn me on the throne of hell, lower still I fall only supreme in misery." And then, underneath that I highlighted *research paper*. That was Satan speaking in *Paradise Lost*. I was flipping through it on the bus ride over and I also found when it's introducing *Paradise Lost* it says, "so powerful is Milton's opening portrayal of Satan that the romantic poets thought Satan was the hero of the poem. Focussing on the first two books, the romantic reading sees him as a dynamic rebel". I knew I could fail miserably and this could be an awful essay. And I knew that I shouldn't expect top quality from myself if I'm first getting out of that comfort zone . . . . I like how the paper feels, you know, it's different kind of paper from a regular book. The book itself brings me back to a time when I first started appreciating English. And so, yeah, the artefact itself is important to me, besides the literature that it holds (Geoffrey, Transcript 2, April, 2012b).

Geoffrey continued to experience the artefact temporally, texturally, experientially, and transformatively.

For Maria, books became more than illustrative artefacts.

> Maria: I guess for me the thing has been books and I don't know if it's one specific book because it changes all the time and I think it started when I was a little girl. My mom was doing her Master's degree and we would go to the library with her and she would hand us a book to read. So, books have always given me peace and comfort and I've always been able to find answers in books, not so much from people. Even when the teacher was teaching me, I would go deeper and find what I needed in a book and I would often reread books. Books have been really good friends to me (Maria, Transcript 3, September, 2012).

In an unfriendly, unresponsive, and prejudicial world, Maria found solace in books. Even her strong ties to family and church were not as comforting to her as what she found in literature.

She mentioned several titles and quotes from books in her narrative, but specific books were not as significant as their general ability to provide "peace and comfort".

I will close this secondary findings section with part of Patrick's narrative. In this part of his story he presented his *log book* from the reading program set-up by his parents. This artefact symbolized Patrick's transformative experiences that began with a competitive reading program; triggered an entire life of competition with both positive and negative effects; represented a time in his life when a reading competition was just fun; and sustained the happy, childhood memories he had with his siblings and parents, which he would like to regenerate with his own family when the time comes.

Patrick: Okay, so, in the last session, I mentioned the reading program my parents had for us, my brothers and sisters, that competition. I dug out my log book because we had to write down every book that we read, how many pages, how many points it got us, and everything like that. So, every time we read a book we'd show our parents and we would count out or, depending on how old we were, our parents would count out the pages. We wrote down total number one, a hundred points and then, we'd get our first prize. And then, we'd just keep reading and then total number two. I started when I was five or six doing this program so, at that point in time, I'm reading twelve page books so, my parents would sit down and read with me and I'd read to my parents. I see it just about every day when I go in my closet because it is always sitting there on top of one of my shelves. It's just right there at my height so, I can't miss it. I don't know, it was fun (Patrick, Transcript 2, June, 2012).

What has been known in research about artefacts is that they generate scholarly, professional and personal discourse, but what may be new with this secondary finding is that artefacts engender and embody transformative experiences as well.

Conclusion to Findings Chapter 4

This inquiry has revealed important findings in answer to the stated research question that inform, influence, and resonate within a teaching praxis that transforms. Chapter 5 will present

those helpful elements of praxis that the participants have divulged through there narratives for teaching and learning in our schools. In summary, I once again, leave it to one of this study's participants to conclude the chapter.

> Emily: I think the possibility for transformation is endless and when I was at that point I was so low that my outcome at the time would have been negative, it became positive. Somebody made it possible for me not to go through a negative transformation. So something at the time that could be very negative doesn't mean it's not going to end up positive. There's still that chance for things to turn out better. I think transformations don't necessarily have an end point. Things still change. They will change for me and I think that a person can pull back or be pulled under at any point. All you really need is self-belief or a lack of self-belief, a catalyst and a lifeline one way or the other. And I think, luckily, I am at a point now where I am high enough above the water that nothing will touch me to a point where I am drowning again and I am going to do my darnedest to get to know how to swim (Emily, Transcript 5, October, 2012b).

Chapter 5

Transformative Teaching Praxis

> We often see people who have had little schooling and in whose case the absence of set schooling proves to be a positive asset. They have at least retained their native common sense and power of judgment, and its exercise in the actual conditions of living has given them the precious gift of ability to learn from experiences they have (Dewey, 1938, p. 48).

Transformative Teaching Praxis as a teaching and learning concept and method does not appear in literature *per se*, but as can be inferred, I believe the participants of this inquiry and the scholars, philosophers, and pedagogical theorists included in this dissertation have recommended and offered education various constituent qualities or principles of such a praxis. This chapter offers a synthesis of voices speaking for different approaches in teaching and learning than those methods born of the Industrial Revolution and so long embedded in our institutionalized educative systems. Chapter 5 also presents observations and recommendations for prospective research to further understand and foster transformative teaching and learning praxes.

I have cited the primary findings of this inquiry within the context of the aforementioned synthesis to indicate their connections to transformative teaching praxis. To avoid repeating explanations already written in Chapter 4, for ease of readability, and for quicker reference, I have included here a summary list of this inquiry's seven primary findings:

1. Transformative experiences are life-altering and irreversible.
2. Transformation occurs contextually along a spiralling and unending continuum.
3. The long-term effects of transformative experiences are revealed through ongoing reflection.
4. Positive or negative experiences or both can engage transformations; but ultimately, they foster self-belief and confidence and are life-affirming.
5. Transformative experience can be generated out of spite or despite the actions of others or from self-determination and often evokes a person's inner strength.
6. Life-altering transformative experiences occur without contrivance and are a synergy of student(s), teacher, subject, and context(s).
7. Participants found the research process itself transformative.

Qualities of Transformative Teaching and Learning

> When a student transforms her assumptions, becoming open to alternatives and new ways of thinking, it is a magical moment in teaching. We cannot teach transformation. We often cannot even identify how or why it happens. But we can teach as though the possibility always exists that a student will have a transformative experience (Cranton, 2002, p. 70).

Because transformations are irreversible, lifelong, and life-altering learning experiences (Finding 1) and because they are multi-contextual (Finding 2), the significance of an informed teaching praxis with the synergic, but indeterminate potential to transform (Finding 6) lives, obligates teachers to consider "a new pedagogy which recognizes at its center the question of children as a question which calls for a new self-reflection [Finding 3] on our part" (Smith, 1988, p.27). That the participants in this study and the students who led me to this research found greater meaning in relational educative experiences with certain teachers than in the subjects these teachers taught is an important and transformative insight for educators and teacher-trainers to include in their professional discourse. *How* we teach is so much more important than *what* we teach. Subjects, core or otherwise, are not educational if students are bored or diminished or made apathetic by them. As Dewey (1938) wrote, subjects usually taken up through textbooks are of little use if teachers ignore a student's natural ability to discover what is meaningful:

> What avail is it to win prescribed amounts of information about geography and history, to win ability to read and write, if in the process the individual loses his own soul: loses his appreciation of things worthwhile, of the values to which these things are relative; if he loses desire to apply what he has learned and, above all, loses the ability to extract meaning from his future experiences as they occur? (p 48).

Each participant travelled, narratively, from a transformative turning point related to English Language Arts through a complex continuum of interrelated and intercontextual experiences to a career as an English teacher and then, beyond to an understanding that being a

subject teacher is not enough. As Bruner (2004) pointed out "life as led is inseparable from a life as told—or more bluntly, a life is not *how it was* but how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold" (p. 708). In other words, the participants were continuing to live their stories as they told them and not only understood them retroactively, but also proactively. Their transformative experiences affect and will continue to affect how they will teach and work with students (Findings 1, 2, and 7). And because all of us live ongoing inter-relational, inter-contextual, and interconnected lives (Finding 2), the participants may experience the transformative effects of their convictions amongst their colleagues as well as their students. The transformative experiences of their earlier grades have engendered the development of multiple qualities of praxis participants will teach with in their classrooms.

"There are no special methods that guarantee transformation" (Cranton, 2002, p. 71); however, the participants have expressed, explicitly or implicitly or analogously, a number of common phrases or specific qualities constituent in a transformative teaching praxis supporting a teaching and learning environment "that provides both welcoming acknowledgement to exactly who the person is right now as he or she is, and fosters the person's psychological evolution" (Kegan, 1994, p. 43). Common in the participant narratives were phrases like, *teach the student, not the subject*; *the teacher is more a facilitator or coach than an instructor or lecturer*; *student ideas matter*; *believe in the ability and worth of all students*; and *the curricula or programs of study are frameworks not prescriptions*. The fact that these participants felt they needed to reiterate what seems obvious catchphrase-like refrains of the teaching profession means they did not expressly experience the impact of these beliefs in there school experiences except, in some cases, with particular teachers. That students and *who* they are matters above subjects and curricula is a common theme expressed within the participant narratives. "This is the fundamental requisite for

giving children a sense of membership in the human community, for one learns to find one's voice only in an environment where speech itself is well understood as having a listening aspect" (Smith, 1988, p. 27). The relationships with their teachers and how they were treated by these teachers was far more important and meaningful than the classroom activities they were engaged in during class time. The interesting side effect of such relational engagement is that the participants also did well in the subjects through which they were being taught.

All participants valued their transformative educative experiences as primary in their educational, personal, and professional development and all were happy to contribute their ideas regarding what fosters such life- and self-altering transformations. They spoke with some certainty of the qualities of teaching and learning they found most transformative and effective. Teacher/student relationships were foundational to the transformations the participants experienced; however, the additional qualities or principles offered for an effective and transformative teaching praxis beyond that initial footing varied somewhat from participant to participant. In what follows, the participants' views come together with philosophies of those who speak and have spoken for teaching praxes that differ markedly from those common in schools.

Arthur believed in teaching and learning within a non-prescriptive framework that allows for creative thinking and growth "with the freedom" of both teacher and students "to grow naturally instead of mechanically" (Arthur, Transcript 1, August, 2012). The teaching and learning synergy of student(s), teacher, subject, and context(s) (Finding 6) is not a "mechanical" or prescriptive process. Structure for students should not interfere with free and creative thinking. Westerhof-Schultz/Weisner (2004) wrote:

> Educators in this democratic society must rethink our tendency to inculcate an uncritical reverence for and singular focus on expert knowledge. Their time in the classroom should not socialize them to rely upon the mediated views and beliefs of

> others no matter how authoritative or expert these others may be. Even the novice has a right to develop the intellectual and social skills that will make her a more effective self-governing member of an increasingly diverse society (p. 48).

Anthony added student interest as a focus in a transformative teaching praxis. He had a firm belief in the educative and socialization purposes of school systems, but did not believe a teacher can create interest in a subject where the interest doesn't already exist. "I think it's important for teachers to find the interests of their students whatever they may be" (Anthony, Transcript 3, October, 2012). Subjects prescribed as essentials to life and learning regardless of interest or need has long been a complaint of students, whether in Grade 3 or 4th year university. "There is a potential for the teacher's ability to cater to the student's interest and to explore different aspects of their subject, but, I still think, there is a limit as to the person's interest and that limits them in a [subject] area (Anthony, Transcript 3, October, 2012). Dewey (1915, [2002]) wrote of innate interest:

> Education which ignores this vital impulse furnished by the child is apt to be "academic," "abstract," in the bad sense of these words. If text-books are used as the sole material, the work is much harder for the teacher, for besides teaching everything herself she must constantly repress and cut off the impulses of the child toward action (p. 73).

Amy entered community, caring relationships, congeniality, and a family ambiance of close listening, mutual respect, and sharing into teaching praxis. It's "like the family in that you listen and you respect and you care and you share . . . because I think kids in junior high and high school don't get a lot of that (Amy, Transcript 2, June, 2012). As Dewey (1915) insisted, schools are "embryo communities" (p, 174) in which each student is a "member of a community life" where he or she "participates" and to which he or she "contributes" (Dewey 1916, p. 88). Almost a century after Dewey wrote these words, Amy recognized a similar need and intended to foster a sense of community within her classroom, if not the entire school. "My goal isn't to teach them

to properly use a colon, although that is also important, but that's not the big picture. It is all about building community and sharing and working together" (Amy, Transcript 2, June, 2012). Amy is clearly optimistic, but she is not naïve. In fact she was quick to state that teaching "takes an insane amount of energy, dedication, and creativity" (Amy, Transcript 2, June, 2012). She is quite aware that teaching does not provide the easy workload and multiple, work-free holidays claimed in urban myth. "It's hard to create that change and I think it is really easy to go back into that rut if you are not focused on having that environment of fun and energy" (Amy, Transcript 2, June, 2012). A familial, community approach to teaching and learning can relapse into the "rut" of routine, rote, and regimentation if "the people in charge cannot lay themselves truly open to the new life in their midst" (Smith, 1988, p. 27). Fundamentally, a student's self-belief and confidence depends on a teacher's realistic belief in that student's inner strengths and ability to learn, not in blind adherence to subject knowledge or materials (Finding 5). A teacher has to model and provide "respect and trust, a safe space, and courage enough so that [students] are willing to take a risk" (Amy, Transcript 3, November, 2012) and "you have to see the potential in your students even when they won't see that potential in themselves and you have to be able to see the best version of them and put them in situations where they can see that too; so, that means they have to trust you" (Amy, Transcript 3, November, 2012). So, fun, energy, trust, courage, risk-taking, and hope are also integral to a teaching praxis with greater potential to transform.

Hope, in particular, is such an underrated concept in educational discourse, yet, there is nothing more disheartening and devastating than a young person in an elementary grade already hopeless in the belief of ever doing well in school. Phenix (1971) places in perspective the vital nature of hope in teaching and learning:

> Hope is the mainspring of human existence . . . conscious life is continual projection into the future . . . . Without hope, there is no incentive for learning, for impulse to learn presupposes confidence in the possibility of improving one's existence. It can be argued that widespread loss of hope is one of the principal causes of the educational problems (p. 329).

For Emily, being recognized as an individual with distinct needs and renewed hope made all the difference. "I felt comfortable because I didn't feel like I was stupid and that I didn't know what I was doing and I didn't feel like I was going to be judged by anybody (Emily, Transcript 4, October, 2012). So much time and energy is given to what little interest students may have in any given subject area, but not much consideration is given to knowing who students are and what they are really interested in is. "Only through the continual and sympathetic observation of childhood's interests can the adult enter into the child's life and see what it is ready for, and upon what material it could work most readily and fruitfully" (Dewey, 1897, p. 83.). Emily's self-belief grew during her Grade 8 year because she "knew that if [she] needed help or if something happened that teacher was there and that everything would be okay" (Emily, Transcript 4, October, 2012). By the time Emily entered university, she had developed a confidence in herself that could not be entirely shaken (Findings 4 and 5) by the impersonal, non-relational nature of many university classes (Emily, Transcript 1, April, 2012). She continues to advocate for teaching praxes that recognize individual students for who they are as contributing members of the educational community (Emily, Transcript 1, April, 2012) in both pre- and post-secondary school.

Transformative praxis engages students and teachers in collaborative, dialogical, inter-relational, and inter-dependent educational experiences where all contribute to the efficacy of the teaching and learning (Finding 2). Geoffrey highlighted the importance of the personal and background knowledge contributed by students to educational environments. "Everybody brings their own unique story to the classroom, but often they're not asked to share that story or are asked

to push aside that story for the hour and a half that they're in the classroom" (Geoffrey, Transcript 5, October, 2012). Since teaching and learning experiences are fluid rather than set in textual or curricular stone, what is learned in any given moment in time is experiential, constructed in that moment with a multiplicity of intellectual and creative inputs well outside the parameters of any lesson plan (Findings 2 and 6). Embracing Dewey's (1897) belief that "education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience" (p. 82) with students as contributing members of that reconstruction, seems more common sense than philosophy. "Progress is not in the succession of studies, but in the development of new attitudes toward, and new interests in, experience" (Dewey, 1897, p. 82).

Geoffrey also re-emphasized the role of teacher as facilitator and the need for student choice in education. "I think in teaching you're more in the role of a facilitator. The knowledge is out there, but you're not the one that is going to put all the pieces together for the students. If students have choice offered to them . . . that's only going to lead to a better teaching and learning environment for everyone involved" (Geoffrey, Transcript 5, October, 2012). Dewey (1910) wrote, a "teacher harmonizes" and the Socratic Dialogue through which "a small group is guided by a facilitator" (Marinoff, 2014, p. 1) indicates the *teacher as facilitator*, rather than lecturer, has a long pedigree, but facilitation is seldom described as a teacher's primary role. Facilitating student choice and including what students bring in background knowledge and experience to class enriches a teaching and learning environment and helps to fend off the boredom of textbooks, worksheets, and endless hours anchored to tin and wooden tables or desks. "An alternative metaphor for curriculum is to help students develop interconnected pathways within a discipline so that they *learn their way around in it* and not lose sight of where they are" (Gardner, 1997, p.

153). The facilitation of discovery stimulated through student choice, interest, and need is far more exciting and engaging than any repetitive activity could ever be.

Maria entered full, honest engagement into the discourse about how transformative teaching and learning works. She believed that "bringing everything you are to teaching" is essential to teaching praxis because "that's what students want to hear" (Maria, Transcript 3, September, 2012). Students want to know they can trust their teachers to be honest with them and genuine in their enthusiasm for teaching and learning. A transformative teaching praxis that electrifies (Eisner, 1994, p. 328) teaching and learning experiences demands full engagement and a complete understanding of each student's needs and interests and:

> In every strategy we use, we need to provide an ever-changing balance of challenge, support, and learner empowerment. Sometimes to ask the right challenging question at the right time is the most important thing we can do. At other times, it is essential to validate a student's thoughts or feelings. And at yet another time, we need to say, 'this is up to you now,' because in the end, it is up to the student to transform" (Cranton 2002, p. 71).

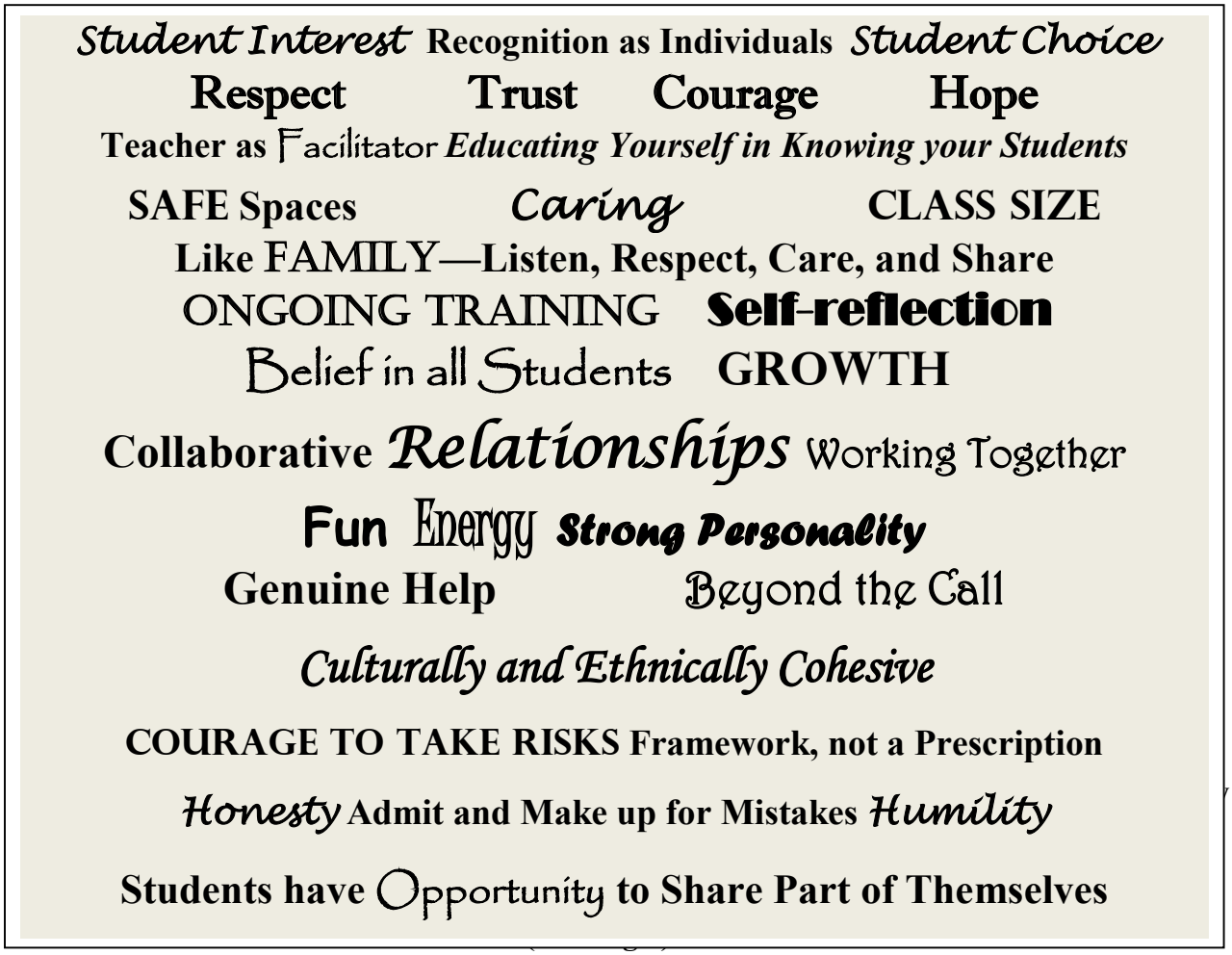
Patrick brought human fallibility and making up for mistakes (Finding 3) to the table of progressive, transformative, and effective educational experiences. "I made sure that my students know I make mistakes? If you tried to set things up so that your students believed you are the be all and end all of your subjects, all that is going to come crashing down" (Patrick, Transcript 3, December, 2012). Mollenhauer (in Friesen/Saevi, 2010) believed "pedagogical action has the form of an experiment" that must be "kept open to correction" (p. 12). If "the experiment becomes closed to ritual" it threatens to extinguish "the child's developmental preparedness" (p. 13). A teacher cannot assume he or she has the best interests and needs of students at heart any more than a teacher can presume to be all-knowing; only ongoing experiential experimentation can help students and teachers know if their educational experiences are effective or not.

Collegial collaboration amongst teachers for the benefit of students is another component of effective teaching and learning environments Patrick believed important. "You definitely will not be able to have all the students be open to you in particular, but it is more a matter of making sure students have someone in the school or someone somewhere that they can be open with" (Patrick, Transcript 3, December, 2012). In order to accomplish this response readiness, make "sure you have a nice spread of different personalities of teachers within your school so that you have the best chance of having all the kids connect with someone" (Patrick, Transcript 3, December, 2012). Patrick's suggestion that schools need different personalities of teachers to suit the characters of the students within has both multilevel administrative and pedagogical implications. Knowing the students in ways the participants in this study are calling for, that is thoroughly and in a timely, pre-program delivery manner, obligates genuine communication and collaboration with students prior to setting the school year.

Participants in this inquiry and many philosophers, scholars, practitioners, psychologists, educators, and artists who came before them call for educational environs much more sensitive and in tune with human character, passion, and compassion. Meaningful education is transformative in nature. The multiple voices presented here, collectively offer safe and caring qualities with which to explore and employ a transformative teaching praxis that fosters meaningful educational experiences. Way (1967) describes "seven resources of human personality: Concentration, The Senses, Imagination, Physical Self, Speech, Emotion and Intellect—order flexible" (p. 13). Self-belief in the intelligence, richness, and worthiness of individual personalities are the curricular obligations of any classroom; subjects are the means through which teachers and students engage and develop the resources of those personalities.

I have borrowed an idea from *Wordle.com* to present an overview of the important teaching and learning qualities presented above as a quick reference and as resource in the development of teaching praxes with the potential to set in motion synergic, lifelong transformative experiences for students. In this *Wordle*, I have paraphrased or chosen wording from the participant narratives that maintained meaning while conserving space and highlighting connotative effect. Essentially their calls for more humane and egalitarian schools echo and reverberate through the ages along with the appeals of so many others that came before them.

Qualities of Transformative Teaching and Learning Wordle



Just a final note about transformation without contrivance before leaving this chapter. None of the participants' transformations occurred through contrived means or with any conscious intentionality to alter lives, yet their lives were changed irrefutably in striking and irreversible ways. The participants in this study wish to foster transformative experiences within the educational environments in which they teach, but they do not promote the contrivance of those transformations as advocated by the Transformative Learning theorists. As Taylor (2007) has written "fostering transformative learning is how to recognize when students are susceptible to or desiring a transformative experience, much of which can come from paying close attention to their discourse in response to personal questions" (p. 183). The ubiquitous nature of stories of transformation suggest that people are always open to transformative experiences, but the word "susceptible" is problematic—who is to judge someone's readiness for transformative experience and what sort of transformation is to be contrived and by whom for those recognized to be "desiring transformative experience?" The participants see such manipulation of human character and of life-altering experiences as folly and doomed to failure. I see contrived transformations as manipulative and highly unethical, especially with children. "I can be a means through which transformation can happen, but it's going to happen not because I planned it" (Arthur, Transcript 4, August, 2012).

The trajectories of transformative experiences are wonderfully unpredictable. "I think change starts with the catalyst and there's all the little obstacles in the middle that slowly form a person one way or the other (Emily, Transcript 5, October, 2012b). There is nothing formulaic about transformational teaching and learning experiences or about the amalgam of qualities with which one pursues a transformative teaching praxis, nor should there be. "There are so many different students, so many different influences, and so many people advance at different speeds

on different things. It's not possible to have one equation that fits everyone" (Patrick, Transcript 3, December, 2012). There is only one known foundational keystone to any transformative teaching praxis: student/teacher relationships. Beyond this foundation, there is no prescription, or equation, or formula with a set of steps, instructions, or outcomes to follow; a transformative teaching praxis relies on intuition as much as intelligence and begins with principled qualities like those included in the *Wordle* above

The Potential for Further Research

> While certainty is appealing, it is contradictory to a fundamental premise of science: All conclusions are to be viewed as tentative and subject to change, should new ideas and new evidence warrant such (Fraenkel/Wallen, 2000, p. 7).

This research study has moved forward my personal and professional journey in search of a teaching praxis that transform in ways I had not expected, particularly in understanding how transformation is so often interwoven with very dark or hurtful experiences and how the synergy within educational transformative experiences is so influenced by the inner strengths of those transformed. I believe the research in how transformative experiences nurture or foster change in ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing, whether in educational settings or other contexts, is in its infancy. I also believe that if educational experiences can be transformative, they should be. My most important experiences in school transformed my life and I would not want it any other way; and that confidence in transformative experiences, whatever their synergic origins, resonates in the participants' narratives. As teachers, our praxes matter and whether we desire any transformative influence in any student's life, we often find ourselves embedded in transformations that change lives. There is infinite room for further research into transformative teaching and learning.

More specifically, I have already written about three supplementary findings that, I believe, require further research: the knock-on effect of transformative experiences; the subliminal nature of transformations as they are initiated; and the artefacts that symbolize, trigger, represent, and sustain the memories of transformation.

Four other aspects of transformative experiences could also provide for rich educational research. The possibility that people become predisposed to transformation as mentioned by Anthony in Finding 4[4] is more than intriguing. He said, "I think if someone didn't have any uncertainty in his or her life, there's no need for transformation in the first place" (Anthony, Transcript 3, October, 2012). Anthony's assertion that certainty or self-confidence may pre-empt the "need" for transformation does not mean such experiences would be excluded from people's lives, but it does suggest that a susceptibility to transformation may exist within people who have lived negative or traumatic experiences.

A second aspect of transformative experiences and, perhaps, related to Anthony's thinking about "uncertainty", is the reality that *pain*—emotional, psychological, sociological, even physiological—was a formidable trigger in transformations narrated by the participants in this study. Is pain or distress a necessary precondition to or, at least, a commonality within transformational experiences? I think future research could reveal fascinating data in response to this question. As Maslow (1943) so aptly pointed out in his *Hierarchy of Needs*, people cannot achieve any sense of self-esteem or self-actualization if they have not had more fundamental needs or the "vexations on their spirits " (Maria, Transcript 3, September, 2012) addressed.

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[4] Finding 4*: Positive or negative experiences or both can engage transformations, but ultimately, they foster self-belief and confidence and are life-affirming*.

A third aspect of transformational experiences that requires further research is related to the retrospective nature of understanding the impacts of transformation. The participants in this study were more aware of the transformative nature of their experiences after much soul searching and self-reflection. The question arises then, is the lack of immediate awareness of any sort of transformation by either the recipient or the person or persons triggering the event essential, or not, to the efficacy of transformative experience? Does transformation *require* the vague or absence of cognizant awareness that so often characterizes the powerful *self- or life-altering experiences that people recount long into their lives*?

That in each interwoven, ever-continuous spiral of transformation related by the participants is a core transformative experience is a fourth facet of life-altering change that, I believe, could be elucidated through further research. There is a multifaceted chain of experiences in any given transformative journey that connects directly back to an originating transformational time, usually in early childhood. For Geoffrey the core transformative experience was abuse at a daycare; Thomas had the horrific experience of almost losing his mother in a motor vehicle incident in which he was also a passenger; Maria suffered racism and bullying as a child; Emily was made to feel stupid through coding; Arthur felt a disconnect with his parents, an experience he is still working out in his life; Anthony lived with uncertainty and defiance through his school life; Patrick discovered his true nature and what friendship real meant to him through a series of transformations initiated before he went to school; Amy's strength of character and self-confidence began with a home of familial support and love; and Helen's experiences with racial stereotyping were at the core of her transformative journey. These instructive details from the narratives begs the question, is the transformational trajectory a life travels set by a core experience in life? Of course, a follow-up question would be, if all transformations are set or, at least, highly influenced

by early life-altering changes, can any person change or be influenced to change the course of his or her life or become a *different person* in any way unrelated or not directly related to that initializing transformative experience? Certainly, another aspect of transformation that gives food for thought and research.

Before leaving this section, I would like to return to three problematic areas of the research design that may be informed if not resolved through further research. The first is encapsulated in the following excerpt from Clandinin and Rosiek's work (2007):

> Inquiry is an act within a stream of experience that generates new relations that then become a part of future experience. It also problematizes the boundaries of inquiry. If experience is continuous, then the initial parameters we set up for our inquiries are themselves a form of relation that can and should be questioned in the course of ongoing research (p. 41).

Though I was careful, during the data collection phase, to use open-ended questions that kept the narratives in the uninterrupted voices of the participants, the time committed in-session and in months to this process lead to friendly conversations about a variety of topics including the research itself. In that time, short conversations in-session and, particularly, pre- and post-session, may have influenced how a participant responded in another session or thought between sessions and that thinking may have had directional impacts in how a participant approached the next session. The continuity and relational nature of narrative inquiry fosters a friendliness and collegial connection between researcher and participants essential to the comfort levels that support the sincerity and honesty of the stories they tell, but these dialogues also may influence the telling in unknown or uncertain ways. In designing future research, this same "form of relation" must be questioned for its potential impacts.

Another problematic matter that needed to be considered in the ethics review of this study is the Drama/Theatre experience *as if* presented in the following excerpt from Merleau-Ponty's work (1991):

> The experience of a past as *if* it were relived or as if "this is how it was" is often enough to draw us into a certain intimacy that may sometimes, though not always, be lacking from simply imaginative projections. However, as especially happens with memories from early childhood, an imaginative projection can easily settle into the gaps left vacant by recollection, such that we can no longer be certain of the difference between them. Imagination very often presents us with a past that we wish we had lived, or with the past as we now wish we had lived it. P. 25

I don't think there is any doubt that a dramatic structuring activity is going on when people are telling the stories of their lives—as naturally born storytellers it could hardly be otherwise—but I also do not believe that participants were dishonest in there narratives as they offered very intimate and emotionally charged details regarding their transformative experiences. The rigour engaged by both participants and researcher also fostered a commitment to the validity and authenticity of the data collected. However, care needed to be taken not to lose sight of the possibility of an alternate reality or the "'Hollywood effect' whereby the narrative is distorted to provide a 'happy ending'" (Clandinin/Connelly, as cited in Webster/Mertova, 2007, p. 20) and this caution will apply to any future research as well. In this study, there was no intention nor was there any indication or evidence to suggest any lack of frankness in the narratives the participants provided.

The last matter I would like to address is the efficacy of the hours and hours of digital film I collected in-session. Quite frankly, I didn't find the footage that useful, except in analyses that involved very infrequent moments in the narrations where body language, gesture, or emotional expression suggested something deeper that needed exploration. For the most part, the trust and candor of the participants facilitated a complex and penetrating investigation without having to

resort to the video replays for evidence. Replays were employed more to reinforce understanding and meaning than to deliver revelatory knowledge. In future research, I would rethink the use of visual, digital recording in data collection.

The potential for future research regarding transformative teaching and learning and a teaching praxis that transforms is, as always, limitless. I have suggested but a few entry points into further scholarly study.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: A Transformative Teaching Philosophy and Praxis

> We might consider the goals that anchor our education of the young: The fundamental growth of the mind, transformational learning; qualitative changes in *how* the student knows not just *what* the student knows (Kegan, 1994, p. 273).

Qualities central to a transformative teaching philosophy and praxis include trust, caring, understanding, honesty, and a sense of belonging. Participants also appreciated and learned most about themselves when they were valued and understood by teachers who were willing to go beyond the call to get to know them. Curricula, subjects, dynamic activities, and work by rote may impact students in transformative ways; but student/teacher relationships built upon qualities of a transformative teaching praxis as previously revealed in this dissertation are what the participants found most meaningful in their educational experiences. Zentner described the abstruse, but potentially weighty nature of these student/teacher relationships on Ideas (CBC Radio 1, 2013) with Paul Kennedy this way:

> I teach creative writing and, you know, it's a really close relationship. I think to be a good teacher you don't teach to the classroom, you teach to the student, which means you have to understand each person on their own level . . . and then, I don't really hear from them and I do sort of wonder what happens. I know that for some students what happens in the classroom with a teacher can really, really influence their lives and I think I want to expand on that and think what happened.

Many teachers who understand, respect, and honour the importance of honest student/teacher relationships in effective teaching and learning may wonder if the benefits of such experiences will resonate beyond the classroom in the lives of their students. The participant narratives indicate clearly that lives are affected beyond the classroom and, because of the intercontextuality and interconnectivity of transformative experiences, have also affected lives interrelated to those initially engaged directly in the classroom. Kegan (1994) expresses the

palpable and profound significance of such relationships in a way I have not discovered written more eloquently or with more meaning:

> After twenty-five years of teaching, I realize what I have come to see as its greatest reward: it allows me to live much of my life in a state of sympathetic friendliness. I suppose the impulse to throw a sympathetic arm around the burdened shoulder of a hard-working neighbor will be regarded as a generous one. And I suppose the gradual training of one's sympathies in the effective friendliness that marks good teaching will be seen as a valuable resource. But I doubt that anyone benefits quite as much as teachers themselves (p. 3).

As teachers new to the profession, participants in this study have already decided that student/teacher relationships were central in their work as educators. For example, Emily has worked with students who were "differently abled" (Bussard, 1997, p. 96) in the ways that they perceive the world and learn.

Emily: Prior to this, I've worked with a lot of alternative learning situations. I was always very careful how I said things as to not discourage them and I realized that even as careful as I was, I knew I had to be more watchful and keep my eyes open because they might not be reaching out to you. It just reminded me to keep my eyes open for what's right in front of me (Emily, Transcript 5, October, 2012b)

Intuitively, educationally, and through transformational, sometimes negative, experiences in school, Emily already wishes to be "careful" and "watchful" so that she might encourage any potential relationships that could help students learn. In her current praxis, Emily exemplifies the "effective friendliness" that "marks good teaching" expressed in Kegan's affirmation.

Emily: I have a student right now who comes into my class and every day she says, "you should listen to this song because it's really great" or she'll write a lyric from something on the board because I once put a quote that I really liked on the board during break, just for fun, and so she started doing that too. She'll come and talk to me inside class and I know from other teachers that she doesn't do that usually, but I took an interest in her and it now means something to her. She had this lyric from a song and so, I went home that night and I looked it up on Google and I listened to the song and I came in the next day and I said, "Oh, I listened to that song and it was really good" and she was excited because I had gone out of my way and I had taken the two minutes and thirty seconds out of my life to listen to this

> song. It doesn't take long or much work to show the kids that you care (Emily, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

More experienced teachers may say that Emily is simply illustrating the naiveté of a teacher without much field experience by thinking listening to a tune or two will change lives; but clearly, paying attention to the needs or interests of others, wherever and in whatever way this thoughtfulness begins, gives any fledgling relationship a chance to grow and be beneficial to those embraced within. Genuine engagement and interest in who students are reflects the best of human qualities and the best a caring profession can offer:

> If we put ourselves in someone else's shoes, for example, then we become aware of the otherness, the indissoluble individuality of the other person—by putting *ourselves* in his position. Transposing ourselves consists neither in the empathy of one individual for another nor in subordinating another person to our own standards; rather, it always involves rising to a higher universality that overcomes not only our own particularity but also that of the other (Gadamer, 1999, p. 305)

From the participants in this study, the devastatingly painful, degrading, and non-edifying effects of any teacher's blatant lack of awareness or complete refusal to take seriously the very personal learning experiences of their students are clear. Teachers unable or unwilling to place themselves in the "position" of their students will unlikely establish the kinds of relationships students desperately depend on. There is a passage in Anthony's narrative that succinctly exposes the one-sided, preconceived perceptions some teachers can bring with them into the classroom, which can inhibit any sort of relational engagement with their students.

Anthony: I think they have too much confidence in their perception of people. They have too much confidence in their own expertise and taking what they know and what they've seen in the past and apply it to someone new thinking that it fits. And I think that they don't look at how they impact students (Anthony, Transcript 1, April, 2012).

Non-contrived, authentic transformations that germinate within enduring, mutually respectful and principled relationships are the life-altering experiences students (I and other

teachers I have known) talk and tell about long into their adult lives. Transformations may be unpredictable, elusive, and imprecise in their origins; but the certainty with which they occur and the longevity of their effects, both positive and negative, exemplifies the need for teachers to be sensitively aware of the impact "two minutes and thirty seconds" (Emily, Transcript 1, April, 2012) may have in a student's life.

A teacher trying to generate an ambiance of learning and respect by tempering and focusing the varied energies students bring with them into the classroom can sow "the seeds" (Zentner, 2013) of a transformative learning experience that makes a durable difference long into a person's future. Emily's narrative also provided a most illustrative example of this unexpected but life-altering growth that resulted from the sowing of educative and transformative seeds by her kindergarten teacher. A friendship that began as an experiment in behaviour modification is now central in Emily's life. In addition to the other transformative links in her narrative, Emily told of meeting her kindergarten teacher years later. Her good friend was with her:

Emily: We ran into her a while ago. She was shocked. [My friend] and I both worked at the grocery store in our town together and [our teacher] came through. This [was our] kindergarten teacher, who we hadn't seen since she retired when we were in Grade 3. I had her VISA card and it had her name on it and I asked, "Did you ever teach at an elementary school?" and she said, "Yeah." And I said, "I was in your kindergarten class, but when I was little, I had hair probably about to my knees and it was really long and curly," and she looked at me. It was fifteen years later. So, I said my name and she said, "Oh, I remember you." I said, "Oh, I really hope you don't. Just wait a second. There's someone else who works here who was in that class." I turned and I got my best friend over to my till and I said, "Do you remember her?" and I said her name. "Yeah, I do. You were really sweet and quiet. You two still know each other?" I said, "Yeah, we're best friends. You made us play together and we've been best friends ever since and we really need to thank you for that. We have each other now." She was a little bit surprised that we were, not just acquaintances, but we were good friends. I don't think she realized quite the effect her making us play together that day had on us (Emily, Transcript 2, May, 2012).

Emily had gone into kindergarten a brash, bossy, entitled little girl and was soon captivated by another little girl who was pretty much the opposite. Not only did Emily become more personable, she developed a trusting friendship she could depend on through her schooling with someone she still calls her "best friend" today. She also felt a long-lasting gratefulness for the actions of a teacher who did not seek to *tame* her, but rather to show her another way.

When we think about what our needs are as human beings, whether in a teaching and learning context or in any other, the essentials are well known. As the public school system was developing, Dewey had already elucidated the uncomplicated psychology of a child teachers needed to thoroughly understand and attend to:

> The child's first business is self-preservation. This does not mean barely keeping himself alive, but preservation of himself as a growing, developing being. Consequently, the activities of a child are not so aimless as they seem to adults, but are the means by which he becomes acquainted with his world and by which he also learns the use and limits of his own powers (Dewey, 1915 [2002], p. 8).

In addition, all of us crave a sense of belonging and the security that we will be loved, taken care of, and not be alone in the world. That we feel we will be all right and happy with others in the world is fundamental to our human psyches and primal to all endeavour no matter what we try to fill our lives with. As educators, being mindful of these basic needs is not only fundamental to a teaching philosophy and praxis that transforms, it is the purpose many teachers say they come to the art and profession of education, which they often encapsulate in phrases like "I love kids" or "I want to make a difference" or "I want to help kids learn". Innate human needs do not change throughout our lifetimes, whether in preschool, in kindergarten, in grade school, in secondary, in post-secondary school, or in our adult lives.

Maslow (1943) had it right. Teachers often try to teach at the self-actualization and self-esteem levels or the peak of the *pyramid of needs*; but many students, whatever their age, cannot work at these stages of learning because so much of what they need beneath has not been fulfilled. Students at all ages want to be cared for as individuals, have real friends, feel self-worth, and the participants in this study have reinforced these realities. Students also want to be healthy, safe, and not hungry. Pointing fingers at whomever should be responsible for the first three tiers in Maslow's Hierarchy (1970) doesn't change the fact that the needs of students are whatever they come to school with.

Teachers and students face daily an often unresponsive, imperceptive, ever-churning system that exhausts us all and generates more angst than learning. When I work with young children, they exude such joy for learning. How does the *educational system* turn students from learning for learning's sake to what Amy described in her narrative?

Amy: All along, I have said that it takes absolutely nothing to graduate high school with a high school diploma. If you can't get the high school diploma, there is something wrong because you sit there, you do absolutely nothing, you write three words on paper, and you basically get 50% on everything that you do because you can do just the bare minimum without exerting yourself at all without learning anything, but you can pass and I know people who have a high school diploma, but did nothing for twelve years to earn it (Amy, Transcript 3, November, 2012).

Manifest in Amy's words are the consequences of the education system that Dewey warned against in 1915. "The conventional type of education which trains children to docility and obedience, to the careful performance of imposed tasks because they are imposed, regardless of where they lead, is suited to an autocratic society. But in a democracy they interfere with the successful conduct of society and government" (p. 303) and schools. Of course, a transformative teaching praxis does not guarantee joy in the classroom nor would it mitigate all social ills; but a teacher's presence of mind and heart to recognize people for who they are rather than twisting them into what institutions want them to be would change teaching and learning markedly. I believe that teaching and learning must be about what students find meaningful.

Teaching may not be a *calling* in the destiny-concept of the word, but neither is it just a job conducting students through many hours of their younger days. Teaching manifests in ways of knowing, thinking, understanding, doing, and leading that others outside the profession seldom comprehend. As Friesen and Saevi (2012) point out, pedagogy, teaching, and learning demand much more of teachers than simple "technical excellence" in a subject area:

> The notion of education or pedagogy as an unspecialized practice, as a way of simply and authentically 'being with' children, means that it is not principally a matter if an enumerable set of skills and competencies are (or are not) in one's possession. Pedagogy is instead a question of who and how one *is*. It is a matter of one's disposition, one's personal, physical, and emotional presence or presentation, of one's personal relationship with *this* particular child. Technical excellence in teaching is not, in itself, a sufficient condition for being a good teacher or pedagogue (Friesen/Saevi, 2010, p. 18).

Our responsibility and our privilege as teachers is to take a stand for our students and to create opportunities for teaching and learning that is meaningful to them, not simply to be a proxy in authority over them. Once again Archambault[5] paraphrases Dewey this way:

> If a teacher is really a teacher, and not just a master or "authority," he should know enough about his pupils, their needs, experiences, degrees of skill and knowledge, etc., to be able . . . to share in a discussion regarding what is to be done and be as free to make suggestions as anyone else (Archambault, 1964, p. 154).

Education includes topics of infinite origin, but programmed subjects are, at best, secondary to the essential study in any learning experience—the student himself or herself. How and what students learn about themselves; their potentials, interests, capabilities, personality and needs; and how teachers can facilitate and foster their self-belief and self-confidence are the most essential aspects of pedagogy.

Becoming or *being* a teacher is a transformative experience in and of itself and through that experience emerges the pedagogy that advances teaching and learning into transformative realms. The pedagogical potentials of the profession places teachers on the leading edge of change as teacher-leaders rather than followers in education. "The new secret in leadership today is not always expecting everything of the people you lead, but helping them expect things of themselves" (Bussard, 1997, p. 50). After much research and contemplation, it is my conclusion that an ever-evolving and transformative teaching philosophy and praxis that relies on honest relationships with students has greater potential to generate meaningful teaching and learning experiences than many

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[5] Reginald D. Archambault (1964) "assembled John Dewey's major writings on education. He has also included basic statements of Dewey's philosophic position that are relevant to understanding his educational views. These selections are useful not only for understanding Dewey's pedagogical principles, but for illustrating the important relation between his educational theory and the principles of his general philosophy" (The University of Chicago Press Books http://www.press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/O/bo3617952.html). Of all I have read about and of John Dewey, and his work in education, Archambault's scholarly perceptions and perspective of Dewey's contribution to more than a century of educational discourse was most informative and enlightening.

of the practices engaged in classrooms currently. The participants in this inquiry may desire many things to have been different in their lives, but none understand their transformations as anything but essential in their personal and professional development.

I chose a narrative approach to this inquiry because "story is the very stuff of teaching, the landscape within which we live as teachers and researchers, and within which the work of teachers can be seen as making sense" (Elbaz, 1991, p. 3). Huber, Caine, Huber, and Steeves not only reinforce the need for "making sense" of our pedagogical futures, but they also present a comforting perspective for a different future in teaching and learning:

> In the current push on the educational landscape to live out the narrative of the technical and of standardization, it is common to not fully understand the complexity teachers are negotiating in the meeting of these dominant narratives with their lives and in the meeting of these narratives, their lives, and the lives of children and families. We want to emphasize here how important it is for teachers to have spaces where they can attend to their narrative histories and to all that is at work in the meeting of their and children's diverse lives (Huber/Caine/Huber/Steeves, 2013, p. 231)

Educational experiences can be and are transformational. Teachers who remain aloof of this realization do little to *negotiate* and "attend" to "their and children's diverse lives".

This inquiry has afforded me the inimitable opportunity to live and learn "alongside" (Clandinin/Rosiek, 2007, p. 43) the participants as we, together, explored the complexity and significance of a transformative teaching praxis. I cannot thank the participants enough for their time, their candor, and their many insights. The re*search* articulated within this dissertation reveals that the most meaningful and self- and life-altering educational experiences students recount long into their lives are fostered within teaching praxes that transform. I offer this work as an educational resource to my colleagues, to scholarship, and to education, but as Kegan (1994) so aptly pointed out "I doubt that anyone benefits quite as much as teachers themselves" (p. 3) or as

the researcher in this instance. My teaching praxis has developed and evolved during this study and the pedagogical and epistemological growth I have experienced has been infinitely transformative for me as a scholar, researcher, and educator.

David H. K. Berezan

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Appendices

Appendix A

Letter of Initial Contact

NEEDED: Stories of Transformative Educational Experiences in English Languages Arts!

In Search of an Teaching Praxis that Transforms: An Inquiry of Self or Life-altering Experiences in English Language Arts[6]

Doctoral Candidate: David H. K. Berezan, Faculty of Secondary Education
Graduate Supervisor**:** Dr. Margaret Iveson, Professor, Faculty of Secondary Education
Participants: Advanced Professional Term (APT) English Majors
Location: University of Alberta Campus
Start: February 1, 2011
Time Commitment: Negotiable

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to invite your participation in a study that researches the transformative powers of educational experience in English Language Arts teaching and learning. What the inquiry needs is your stories of experiences you have had in English Language Arts that profoundly changed your thinking or understanding or confidence level or attitude or engagement in class or the way you knew yourself, others or the cultural milieu in which you lived. I would greatly appreciate your willingness to read this letter before advising me of your response.

As an educator, I believe that within the transformative powers of educational experience is the fundamental teaching/learning praxis that promotes growth, self-confidence, self-belief, and self-actualization. I have chosen a hybrid methodology including elements of Narrative Inquiry, Transformative Learning Theory and Documentary film to discover what constitutes transformation within the fusion of teacher, students and subject matter in the English Language Arts classroom. It is the selected mandate of this research inquiry to collect data and provide the meaningful analysis upon which we may draw conclusions from transformative experiences, and in the rendering enlighten our profession with the knowledge and scholarship to enable educators to teach with greater potential for transformation each and every day of our careers for our students and for ourselves. This inquiry will set out to answer the following research question:

> *Within the praxis of English Language Arts teachers and students, what fosters the transformative and self- or life-altering experiences that students recount long into their lives?*

Participation in this inquiry is completely voluntary and participants have the ongoing right to withdraw participation and to opt out of or leave this inquiry at any time as aforementioned. The data collection and the analysis and verification stage of this inquiry will be completed by February 1, 2013. Participants in the data collection phase are obviously not obligated to continue into the analysis and verification phase, but are welcome to participate in the analyses that will eventually be rendered into the findings of the study. Time devoted to the research during these latter phases

[6] As the research, scholarly engagement, and dissertation evolved so too did the title and research question. I have modified the original documentation to include the title and research question consistent with this dissertation.

will be negotiated between the researcher and the individual participants and depend on the reasonable impositions we can place on the lives of the participants, the institution awaiting the findings and the dissertation, and of the researcher. Because participants will not necessarily be on or near the University of Alberta campus after the Winter Term 2012, data collection and analysis may continue via *Skype* technology. If an interview is conducted via Skype, it will still be recorded on digital audio and video recorders as with all interviews. No online or laptop record will be saved or recorded during Skype sessions.

Digital film cameras offer pre-shoot, editing functions that accomplish the initial deletion, revision, re-shooting, editing, proofing and polishing operations before the final edit and is neither in the hands of the researcher or the participant, but in both. I will use film to document the narratives in a non-intrusive, non-threatening and safe manner as the stories of transformation are told and retold and participants can opt for film or audio-recording techniques that will guarantee anonymity. The documentary film that comes of this research will be utilitarian rather than aesthetic and not shown anywhere. This is the stuff of research data collection, not of cinema. Camera shots and angles will employ techniques that avoid facial recognition, unless the participant wishes otherwise, that focus on other tell-tale characteristics of human communication like gesture, breathing, fidgeting, toe tapping, vocal dynamics, emotional expression, standing, sitting, and/or perpetual movement within a comfortable storytelling space.

Camera files will be deleted after they are uploaded into the editing software on a secure computer; digital records and discs along with all hard copy and computer files will be analyzed, kept in locked file drawers or in secured computer files for the five years as required by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta and then all data and the resulting files, hard copies and discs collected in this inquiry will be destroyed. Given the mobility of laptop computers, the personal laptop I will be use to transfer files or to work on documents on location, will only be used to store files temporarily. Such files will be downloaded daily from the laptop to the secure files on the computer in a lockable facility and then, deleted from the laptop.

Again, participation is voluntary and this freedom applies to the film documentation of your stories as well. Participants can stop the camera or delete camera files at any time; have their stories recorded in audio-only recordings; or they can write their stories into hardcopy.

This study receives no funding from any special or specific agency or interest group and is solely conducted in the interests of educational research. Participants will receive no remuneration for their participation in this study.

If you would like to participate, please contact David H. K. Berezan at 780 803 5421 or dberezan@ualberta.ca. by February 28th, 2011. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

David H. K. Berezan, B.Ed., M.Ed.

Appendix B

Stories of Transformative Educational Experiences in English Languages Arts Needed for a Qualitative Research Study!

Doctoral Candidate: David H. K. Berezan, Faculty of Secondary Education
Graduate Supervisor**:** Dr. Margaret Iveson, Professor, Faculty of Secondary Education
Participants: APA English Majors
Location: University of Alberta Campus
Start: February 1, 2011
Time Commitment: Negotiable

Title: *In Search of an Teaching Praxis that Transforms: An Inquiry of Self or Life-altering Experiences in English Language Arts*

As an educator, I believe that within the transformative powers of educational experience is the fundamental teaching/learning praxis that promotes growth, self-confidence, self-belief, and self-actualization. I have chosen a hybrid methodology including elements of Narrative Inquiry, Transformative Learning Theory and Documentary film to discover what constitutes transformation within the fusion of teacher, students and subject matter in the English Language Arts classroom. It is the selected mandate of this research inquiry to collect data and provide the meaningful analysis upon which we may draw conclusions from transformative experiences and in the rendering enlighten our profession with the knowledge and scholarship to enable educators to teach with greater potential for transformation each and every day of our careers for our students and for ourselves. The data collection and the analysis and verification stage of this inquiry will be completed by February 1, 2013. Time devoted to the research during these latter phases will be negotiated between the researcher and the individual participants and depend on the reasonable impositions we can place on the lives of the participants, the institution awaiting the findings and the dissertation, and of the researcher. Because participants will not necessarily be on or near the University of Alberta campus after the Winter Term 2012, data collection and analysis may continue via *Skype* technology. If an interview is conducted via Skype, it will still be recorded on digital audio and video recorders. No online or laptop record will be saved or recorded during Skype sessions. This inquiry will set out to answer the following research question:

> *Within the praxis of English Language Arts teachers and students, what fosters the transformative and self- or life-altering experiences that students recount long into their lives?*

David H. K. Berezan

Please answer each of the following questions by filling in the blank with a *yes* or a *no*.

1. Would you like to participate in this research? _____ (yes or no)

2. The researcher is looking for candid, frank accounts of transformative experiences in English Language Arts that changed dramatically your way of thinking or understanding or confidence level or attitude or engagement in class or the "way" you knew yourself and others. Are you willing to tell your story fully for the purposes of this research? _____ (yes or no)

3. Will you participate in the analysis of the data during the rest of the year ending February 1, 2013? _____ (yes or no)

4. Do understand that you will be filmed as you narrate, read or tell you're of transformation? _____ *(yes or no)*

5. Do you understand that the film will not contain facial recognition if you so choose? _____ (yes or no)

6. Do you understand that the film footage is not for the making or showing of a cinematic documentary film, but rather as a documentary data collection technique that will eventually be destroyed or deleted? _____ (yes or no)

7. Do you understand the research methodology is tri-fold including elements of Narrative Inquiry, Transformative Learning Theory and Film Documentary? _____ (yes or no)

8. Have you seen the list of research questions to be posed during the data collection process? _____ (yes or no) Are you willing to answer these questions? _____ (yes or no)

9. Questions sometimes beget questions and answers sometimes beget more questions. If a question is posed spontaneously (not on the previously agreed to list), do you understand that you may choose to not answer such a question? _____ (yes or no)

10. Do you understand that due to time constraints and the requirements of academic rigour only eight to ten participants will be chosen for the actual participant group in this research inquiry? _____ (yes or no)

Participant

Print Name: _____
Signature: _____

Researcher

Print Name: _____
Signature _____

Appendix C

In Search of an Teaching Praxis that Transforms: An Inquiry of Self or Life-altering Experiences in English Language Arts

Doctoral Candidate: David H. K. Berezan, Faculty of Secondary Education
Graduate Supervisor**:** Dr. Margaret Iveson, Professor, Faculty of Secondary Education
Participants: APA English Majors
Location: University of Alberta Campus
Start: February 1, 2011
Time Commitment: Negotiable

Data Collection and Analysis Research Questions Part 1
(A copy of this page will be handed out to each member of the class)

Whole Class Meeting (there will be two such meetings)

> *Transformation comes about when someone changes 'not just the way he behaves, not just the way he feels, but the way he knows—not just what he knows but the way he knows'*
> Robert Kegan, 1994

A brief, oral overview of Dissertation Proposal will be given by David H. K. Berezan and will explain research proposed, its *raison d'etre*, the question to be answered, the hybrid methodology, and more particularly, why he has come to ask for their help in the inquiry.

In about five or ten minutes, in silence, and on your own please answer the following questions on the back of the hand-out (ask for extra paper if you need it):

1. Can you remember from your grade school English Language Arts experiences a time when life for you or something about you changed in some dramatic, remarkable or even traumatic way because of the class, the teacher, you or all three?

2. Why do think you remember that specific incident or time or place or moment in your life?

3. How were you changed and why is this change meaningful in your life today?

Please do not share your stories with anyone else here. Save it for the research, as it were. I ask you to consider one more question in silence.

4. Why do you think this change or transformative experience occurred at all and why does it resonate in your memory into your adult life?

Your stories are significant to your lives and may become vital to the research that I have proposed. I cannot take up much more of your class time, but I am interested in your stories and would like

to include them, at least, in the preliminary sampling. I will need participants to relive, narrate and analyze their stories in answer to the following research question:

> *Within the praxis of English Language Arts teachers and students what promotes the transformative and self or life-altering experiences that students recount long into their lives?*

5. Can you help me and are you interested in participating in this research?

Your stories will be documented on film using digital video cameras, but no one will be required to *face* the camera in that I will be using camera shots and angles that avoid facial recognition, unless the participant wishes otherwise, and that focus on other tell-tale characteristics of human communication like gesture, breathing, fidgeting, toe tapping, vocal dynamics, emotional expression, standing, sitting, and/or perpetual movement within a comfortable storytelling space. This is the stuff of research and data collection, not of cinema, so don't let the camera scare you away. What film will provide this study is additional or enhanced data for analysis "in real time, real sound, [with] no actors or acting, but actual people being themselves" (Juel, 2011, p.6) as they are, not as they are imagined through words on a page (though writing down your story for narration will also be an option).

Take a look at the second hand-out--*Data Collection and Analysis Research Questions Part 2*. Any questions?

If you are interested in participating in this research inquiry, mutually convenient individual meeting times will be arranged with David Berezan with the help of your professor. Unfortunately, because of the limitations of time, the practical scope of a single dissertation, and the need for academic rigour, I will have to reduce the sample group to eight or ten participants.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please see you see me at the end of this class or contact me by e-mail at dberezan@ualberta.ca

David H. K. Berezan

References:

Kegan, R. (1994). *In over our heads: The mental demands of modern life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Juel, H. (2011) *Defining documentary film: An online lecture*. Henrik Juel, Associate Professor, Communication Studies, Roskilde University, Denmark. http://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue_22/section_1/artc1A.html

Appendix D

In Search of an Teaching Praxis that Transforms: An Inquiry of Self or Life-altering Experiences in English Language Arts

Doctoral Candidate: David H. K. Berezan, Faculty of Secondary Education
Graduate Supervisor**:** Dr. Margaret Iveson, Professor, Faculty of Secondary Education
Participants: APA English Majors
Location: University of Alberta Campus
Start: February 1, 2011
Time Commitment: Negotiable

Data Collection and Analysis Research Questions Part 2
(Second hand-out to each member of the class)

Whole Class Meeting Part 2 (there will be two such meetings)

Following are the questions or prompts that will be posed to get the participants thinking about the meaning and impact of their experiences on their lives before committing their narratives to film. Because questions beget questions and answers also beget questions this is not by any means an exhaustive list of the research questions participants may be asked. The synergy of the moment and the need to keep it alive and moving forward often composes the next empathetic or evocative question spontaneously through the mindfulness of the researcher. The following list of questions or prompts is based on Webster and Mertova's Research Questions (2007, p. 86):

1. Tell me more about the experience in English Language Arts that had such an impact on your life.
2. What do you remember or recall?
3. What was your life like at the time? Before the transformation? After the transformation?
4. If there was one memory that stands out in the experience it would it be…?
5. How would you say this experience influenced you?
6. Without naming anyone, what role did the teacher play in the event that brought about the change in you?
7. What role did the subject matter play?
8. What role did you play?
9. Without naming anyone, were there others or other experiences at home or at school involved?
10. Without naming anyone, have you told this story to anyone else?
11. Without naming anyone, will anyone else be offended if you tell this story?
12. Do you have any artifacts (photos, papers, books, drawings, notes, letters, journals, e-mails, texts, tests, etc.) that remind you of that experience or come from within the experience itself that you have kept from then until now? Are you willing to bring them to be included in the data collection?

Inclusion in this study will depend on the potential for the participant's story to impact positively pedagogical and epistemological outcomes for teaching praxis and will not have anything to do

with storytelling ability or capability with narrative structure or stage fright or camera shyness or introspective delivery rather than flamboyant expression.

With this list, my good will and great thanks take some time to think of your transformative experiences and these questions so that we can start hearing your narratives individually in meetings to be organize at mutual convenience. The camera will be present at these initial meetings, but not rolling as a desensitizing exercise and you will have the option of writing your narratives ahead of the first filmed session or making notes or just composing in your imaginations for an oral storytelling. No actual names will be divulged in the dissertation evolving from this research and as aforementioned, the degree of anonymity desired in the film data (whether facial recognition is included) will also be in the purview of each participant.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

David H. K. Berezan

Reference:

Webster, L. & Mertova, P. (2007). *Using narrative inquiry as a research method*. London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.

Appendix E

In Search of an Teaching Praxis that Transforms: An Inquiry of Self or Life-altering Experiences in English Language Arts

Doctoral Candidate: David H. K. Berezan, Faculty of Secondary Education
Graduate Supervisor**:** Dr. Margaret Iveson, Professor, Faculty of Secondary Education
Participants: APA English Majors
Location: University of Alberta Campus
Start: February 1, 2011
Time Commitment: Negotiable

Data Collection and Analysis Research Questions Part 3
(A copy of this document is handed out to each individual participant)

Individual Meeting

The narratives will be told and retold until each participant has exhausted the wealth of memories embedded in the experiences they recount and then the arduous task of analysis will begin in an attempt to extricate why the transformations took place, how they came about, who made them happen, what combination of elements were involved, where did they occur and when was the critical moment that tipped the experience into transformation? In this task the researcher, as facilitator, and the participant or participants, as collaborative co-researchers, work together to develop the findings. The time it takes to accomplish this *co-mission* will be negotiated amongst us and depend on the reasonable impositions we can place on the lives of the participants, the institution awaiting the findings and the dissertation, and of the researcher.

I will use a "*Direct Interview* technique [where] we see the subject talking on camera, and we see and hear the interviewer asking questions in the same shot" (http://www.tc.umn.edu) or in-frame, but since the interview is not of the essence in this research, I will only intervene with a question or prompt if the participant clearly needs help finding a way to express his or her thoughts. The following questions (and others that may come up) will be used to help the participants complete their narratives or to aid in the critical analysis of their stories afterward. Again they are based on Webster and Mertova's Research Questions (2007, p. 86):

1. What else do you remember?
2. Without naming anyone what can you tell me about your teacher?
3. Without naming anyone what can you tell me about your peers at the time?
4. Within this time and experience was this a particularly stressful time in your school life or in English Language Arts?
5. Why do think you were transformed by this experience?
6. Do you think you were ready for or in need of this change? Why?
7. Why did it happen in English Language Arts?
8. Why you?
9. Without naming him or her why this teacher?

10. This was a significant experience in your life. Was it positive or negative?
11. What do you think teachers need to know about your experience?

"Particular events become important parts of our life story because they provide some meaningful information about who we are, and the narrative forms for representing and recounting these events provide a particular structure for understanding and conveying this meaning" (Fivush, 1994, p. 136). It is the selected mandate of this research inquiry to collect data and provide the meaningful analysis upon which we may draw conclusions from the transformative experiences of these English Majors and in the rendering enlighten our profession with the knowledge and scholarship to enable educators to teach with greater potential for transformation each and every day of our careers for our students and for ourselves.

As previously stated, eight to ten candidates will be selected for this research inquiry into the transformative educational experiences in English Language Arts. Members of the participant group will be contacted directly by David Berezan. Signing the Recruitment and Informed Consent/Information Forms once the participant group is selected.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

David H. K. Berezan

References:

Fivush, R. (1994). Constructing narrative, emotion, and self in parent-child conversations about the past. *In The remembering self*. U. Neisser & R. Fivush (eds.) Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 136-157.

NFB.ca http://blog.nfb.ca/2010/02/05/interview-tips-for-documentary-filmmaking

Webster, L. & Mertova, P. (2007). *Using narrative inquiry as a research method*. London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.

Appendix F

David H. K. Berezan's Dissertation Proposal:

In Search of an Teaching Praxis that Transforms: An Inquiry of Self or Life-altering Experiences in English Language Arts

Graduate Advisor: **Professor Margaret Iveson**
Faculty of Secondary Education
University of Alberta

David H. K. Berezan: **Doctoral Student EdD Program**
Faculty of Secondary Education
University of Alberta

November 2011

Introduction and Research Question

> *I was so lucky to be able to study with you, and gain those values to run with in the future* (Student December 2010)

As an educator, I believe strongly in the transformative powers of educational experience; not easily accomplished and usually overlooked in the present, but often life or self-altering and deeply profound in effect on the future lives of students and teachers. At holiday time in 2010, I received an update from one of my students now at university. She is determined, talented, articulate and inspirational, but she struggles with the insecurities of the move that brought her from "big fish in a little pond" at home to being a little fish in an ocean of sea creatures at university. She was waffling a little in her original educational plan. In her letter, amongst many thoughts, insights, and affirmations, she wrote "I was so lucky to be able to study with you, and gain those values to run with in the future. I may not have a big fancy resume, as compared to most, but I have the morals and the attitude given to me to be successful, all because of you. I think

what I am trying to get at here is, thank you." I am always taken aback and humbled by such testimonials. She, as others have done, reached into the heart of this teacher and enlightened and lightened his soul. But I'm even more flummoxed by this student's *out of the blue* and unsolicited outpouring of thanks because I was not ever sure she even considered me competent as a teacher, let alone someone who helped her "gain those values to *run* with in the future!" Do not get me wrong, she was a brilliant student—every willing to learn, to try new material, to go well beyond the curriculum to be best for herself, her classmates, her school, and her community. I believed (and believe) in her strongly as a student and person, but I did not think she thought I had anything to do with any of her successes. How and when did the transformation that set her post-secondary and perhaps her adult life in motion, begin, take root, and flourish, and can it ever end once set in motion?

The research I wish to conduct combines elements of three major qualitative, methodological or research designs—Narrative Inquiry, Transformative Learning Theory, and Film Documentary—into a coalescence of methods and approaches designed to examine and to discover the synergy of what teachers and students do to promote transformative, self- or life-altering experiences with a desire, not to discover a formula for transformation, but rather to gain greater understanding of how English Language Arts educators can teach with the potential of like transformations on a daily basis.

Central in the methodology of Narrative Inquiry, although conducted in the field in a variety of permutations, "is the study of experience as it is lived" (Clandinin/Rosiek, 2007, p. 69). The phenomenological/ontological nature of narrative inquiry and its stance in "Dewey's notion of continuity in experience—that is, that every experience both takes up something from the present moment and carries it into future experience" (Clandinin/Rosiek, 2007, p. 69) lend

themselves well to the methodological approach I want to engage in this inquiry with English Majors. This investigation will explore, through stories of past lived experience, the transformations that occurred in an English Language Arts context and were self- or life-altering into the future (currently the present) and that may have continuing effects into perpetuity. Though we start in the past, "events, people, and objects under study are in temporal transition and narrative inquirers describe them with a past, a present, and a future" (Clandinin/Rosiek, 2007, p. 69). Many of us have school stories and many have stories of teachers or of classroom experiences that changed attitudes or personalities in dramatic and remarkable ways. I have yet to discover anyone without at least one such story of transformation. The stories are not always positive, but they are always told in narrative form, or as stories, and they are always most revealing, fascinating, informative and often, entertaining. The narratives of the participants, therefore, may divulge elemental actions or choices or attitudes or values or resources in the amalgam of teacher/student/media interactivity in English Language Arts that may provide, for teaching practice, an answer to the question posed by Cranton (2002), "Can we teach as though the possibility always exists that a student will have a transformative experience?" (p. 71).

Transformative Learning theorists, practitioners and philosophers like Paulo Friere, Augusto Boal, Jack Mezirow, Robert Boyd and Patricia Cranton set out to expand the "consciousness" of their students or audience or people "through the transformation of basic worldview and specific capacities of the self" (Elias, 1997, p. 3) like beliefs, attitudes, strongly held values or ways of being and doing. The intentionality of Transformative Learning Theory in practice includes triggering "an activating event that typically exposes a discrepancy between what a person has always assumed to be true and what has just been experienced, heard, or read" (Cranton, 2002, p. 67) and asks (specifically adult) students to critically analyze, revise and

transform their assumptions which "may be painful for some and we need to acknowledge this, or it may be joyous for others" (Cranton, 2002, p. 70). In this inquiry I work from a different intentionality and for a different purpose. I am interested in those ill-defined or undefined and sometimes in-the-moment, unnoticed transformations that have already taken place and what brought them about. In other words, I am using Narrative Inquiry to examine lived experiences in the English Language Arts classroom that have already had their ongoing transformative effect on the participants. This does not diminish the influence of Transformative Learning Theory in this study as described by Mezirow (2000), "In this field, we work to help students shift their 'frame of reference' or 'meaning perspective' so that they become 'more critically reflective of their assumptions and aware of their context'" (as cited in Berger, 2004, p. 337). The difference will be when the students, now adults, become more "critically reflective" as they decipher their stories of those past lived experiences, and with the reflexive, narrative praxis the purpose will be to unravel why the transformative effects came about and what the findings may mean for future teaching practice.

Film documentary records the spontaneous and uniquely personal, nuanced versions of narratives that written words cannot contain and is a "technology" utilized "as a *vehicle* to a students' critical engagement, not as an end in itself" (Dockter/Lewis, 2009, p. 17). Digital film cameras also offer pre-shoot, editing functions that accomplish the initial deletion, revision, re-shooting, editing, proofing and polishing operations before the final edit in the editing software and is interactive, recursive and dialogic inter-activity that is neither in the hands of the researcher or the participant, but in both. Film will document the narratives in a non-intrusive, non-threatening and safe manner as the stories of transformation are told and retold as an adjunct inquiry technique, but participants can opt for confidentiality and film or audio-recording techniques will be used to

guarantee anonymity. "When you see somebody on the screen in a documentary, you're really engaged with a person going through real life experiences. So for that period of time, as you watch the film, you are, in effect, in the shoes of another individual. What a privilege to have that experience" (Maysles, 2001). Though there are direct benefits for the participants of live digital recording once they have developed a comfort level with the medium, the exponential benefit Maysles refers to here is to the researcher and those who might be informed, inspired or even transformed as witnesses to the stories represented in the documentary footage. At the same time, I am cautioned by Canadian film maker, Wolf Koenig, who "reverted to a familiar argument when he told Wintonick [another Canadian film maker], 'every cut is a lie, but you're telling a lie to tell the truth" (Aufderheide, 2007, p. 53). As within Narrative Inquiry, this researcher realizes the import of authenticity and how camera shots and the allure of editing software adaptations can trap us "into what Clandinin and Connelly (1990) call the 'Hollywood effect', whereby the narrative is distorted to provide a 'happy ending'; that is, it all works out well in the end" (Webster/Mertova, 2007, p. 16) or represents only a rendition of the real rather than the reality of the moments captured.

This inquiry does not purport to follow Friere's transformative "emancipation of mankind" (Freire, 2000, p. 37) whereby the oppressor and the oppressed together take action "in cooperation in order to transform the world" (pp. 167-168), but it does intend to reflect Freire's pedagogical and recursive praxis where "the teacher [or researcher] is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teaches" (p. 80). As I conduct this research I am ever cognizant of the connotative powers inherent in terms like "researcher" or "doctoral candidate" or "director" or "film maker" or "narrative inquirer" and the undue influence I might have on what participants reveal or relate and thus,

inhibit what they might teach us about their self- or life-altering transformations. As a researcher, I offer the same egalitarian, interactive and reflexive praxis I try to employ as an educator when working with my students where I engage students in learning not as expert but rather as facilitator or Joker (as in the theatre sense of the word). With a Joker "there is not the pressure to engage in anything more than the conversation" (Boal, 1979, p. 74) and "rapport is established and trust engendered with the [participants] so that they can enter into thoughtful, sociable, entertaining, mutually enjoyable and reflective conversations" (Berezan, 2004, p. 10). In this inquiry, trust, trusting and trustworthiness will be central to the praxis because "only with trust and acceptance can significant conversations and meaning take place" (Norris, 1999, p. 235). In the English Language Arts classroom, how and when does, or why doesn't, transformation occur? The words, texts, technologies or motivators I choose to enter into the cultural milieu of the classroom can result in groans or cheers, literally, but the same resources will not prompt the same, or even similar, reactions in a different class or grouping. Observation, practice and experience tell me that the tone I set, the values I introduce, the trust I engender, and the belief I have in the students are key elements in transformation, but each class is made up of different individuals that impact the group dynamics of the team that we can become, which definitely affects the learning outcomes. I have worked with the most miserable of students and have seen them transformed, and I have worked with the most inspirational of students and seen them remain the same or even lose ground as they traveled through the grades and out into their adult lives. I seek to know more about how people are transformed educationally, socially, psychologically, attitudinally and personally by the synthesis or elimination or configuration of elements and forces—human, resource, technological, principled, personal, and educational-in the English Language Arts classroom. "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless,

impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world and with each other" (Freire, 2000, p. 72). Somewhere in this "hopeful inquiry", what might we discover and come to know and understand about the transformative powers of a teaching/learning praxis that might help more students and teachers "gain those values to run with in the future".

Therefore, my research question is:

> *Within the praxis of English Language Arts teachers and students, what fosters the transformative and self- or life-altering experiences that students recount long into their lives?*

David H. K. Berezan

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Appendix G

In Search of an Teaching Praxis that Transforms: An Inquiry of Self or Life-altering Experiences in English Language Arts

Doctoral Candidate: David H. K. Berezan, Faculty of Secondary Education
Graduate Supervisor**:** Dr. Margaret Iveson, Professor, Faculty of Secondary Education
Participants: APT English Majors
Location: University of Alberta Campus
Start: February 1, 2011
Time Commitment: Negotiable

INFORMED CONSENT FORM:

(A copy of this document is handed out to each individual participant in an individual meeting with the participant)

I, the undersigned, have read the overview *Introduction* hand-out and/or *Initial Contact Letter* describing the research inquiry of David H. K. Berezan, the *Data Collection and Analysis Question* documents *Parts 1, 2 and 3* and the *Recruitment Form* and agree to be a participant in the study.

I understand that participation in this study is completely voluntary and that I have the ongoing right to withdraw my participation and to opt out of or leave this inquiry at any time, i.e. even in the middle of a data collection session. The *Confidentiality Form* signed before participation ensures my privacy and that of all other participants.

I understand that the data collection and the analysis and verification stage of this inquiry will be completed by February 1, 2013. I also understand that I am not obligated to continue into the analysis and verification phase, but that I am welcome to participate in the analyses that will eventually be rendered into the findings of the study. Time devoted to the research during these latter phases will be negotiated with me and depend on the time I have available and upon mutually convenient time scheduling with the researcher.

I understand that because I many not be on or near the University of Alberta campus after the Winter Term 2012, data collection and analysis may continue via *Skype* technology. I also understand that if an interview is conducted via Skype between the researcher and I, it will still be recorded on digital audio and video recorders. No online or laptop record will be saved or recorded during Skype sessions.

I will take part in the data collection stage to be completed by the end of February 1, 2013 _____ (yes or no).

I will also take part in the data analysis stage over the next year to be completed by February 1, 2013 _____ (yes or no).

I consent to being filmed while narrating my transformative educational experience with facial recognition _____ (yes or no).

I consent to being filmed while narrating my transformative educational experience without facial recognition _____ (yes or no).

I will answer the research questions listed on the forms aforementioned, but understand that I may decide not to answer other questions or prompts that may come up spontaneously during this inquiry.

I also understand that the film footage amassed in this inquiry is not for the making or the showing of a cinematic documentary film, but rather as a documentary data collection technique that will eventually be destroyed or deleted. Voluntary participation also applies to the film documentation of my story, as well, and I understand that I can stop the camera or delete camera files of my story at any time; record my story in audio-only recordings; or write my story to be collected in hardcopy.

Participant

Print: _____

Signature: _____

Researcher

Print: _____

Signature: _____