

A NOVEL OF EDUCATION: STORIES OF SECONDARY TEACHING IN NORTH
CAROLINA

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ABSTRACT

MICHAEL ZAN CROWDER: A Novel of Education: Stories of Secondary Teaching in North Carolina
(Under the direction of Madeleine R. Grumet)

On two evenings during the winter of 2014/2015, a small group of North Carolina secondary teachers gathered in a festive environment to tell stories about their working conditions. Recorded by video cameras, the performance of these stories forms the basis of this dissertation which employs the writings of Russian theorist Mikhail M. Bakhtin to inform both methodological and theoretical frameworks.

Bakhtin argued that the novel was the most suitable literary genre for approximating the complexity of life as lived by humans. This life was characterized by *heteroglossia*; a term that Bakhtin used to describe the “situation” of multiple voices and discursive streams that saturate and constitute human existence. The novel, Bakhtin felt, provided the most faithful artistic representation of the myriad language genres that humans encountered in concrete, daily life. Significantly, he also argued that human beings, in selecting from, or responding to, these language genres, author themselves into the world. Thus, our being itself is imbued with an aesthetic quality that is intimately related to the ethical stances that we take as we respond to external conditions.

The stories that the teachers performed reflect varying degrees of the institutional, research, and policy discourses in which their professional lives are immersed. The stories also

include less formal discourses reflecting family, community, religion, and their relationships with the students that they teach. A fundamental proposition in the dissertation is that professional educational discourses are inseparable from geographic, demographic, economic, literary, political, and innumerable other categories of situations that are organized through narrative.

The combination of these discourses blurs the lines between the teachers' professional and private identities and indicates that their working conditions are contextualized by much more than the school setting in which they teach. Further, their stories also point to their perceived inability to communicate with the more authoritarian voices in education and this dissertation explores the dynamics of these multiple, hierarchical relationship. Because intersubjectivity is at the heart of Bakhtin's thinking, this final consideration asks how teachers, located in a multi-vocal context, might maintain a dialogic relationship to the monologic, institutional discourses that govern their work.

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I am grateful to my mother, Sue, for her wisdom and experience in the field of education and to my father, Jim, who introduced me to rhythm and blues music at an early age. Although I do not mention it in the dissertation, I think that the paradox of the blues; the coexistence of joy

and pain, flows through the stories of the educators and is hopefully embedded in my own narrative. Both of my parents played an important role in this.

To my children, Harper and Finley, I cannot begin to express how much your laughter, companionship, and support buoyed me through this process. Every day you make me feel uncommonly lucky. Thank you for being so amazing.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Because of the complicated publishing history of Mikhail M. Bakhtin which is discussed in Act I, I have provided abbreviations here of M. M. Bakhtin, V.N. Volosinov, and P.N. Medvedev works that are cited along with the publication date of the translation used.

- AA “Art and Answerability” in *Art and Answerability* (1990)
- AH “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity” in *Art and Answerability* (1990)
- B “The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel)” in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (1986)
- DN “Discourse in the Novel” in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1981)
- EN “Epic and Novel” in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1981)
- FMLS *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* (1978)
- MHS “Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences” in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (1986)
- MPL *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1973)
- N “From Notes Made in 1970-71” in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (1986)
- NM “Response to a Question from the *Novy Mir* Editorial Staff” in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (1986)
- PND “From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse” in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1981)
- PDP *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (1984)
- PT “The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis” in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (1981)
- RW *Rabelais and His World* (1984)
- SG “The Problem of Speech Genres” in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (1986)
- TPA *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* (1993)

OVERTURE

This is not a novel in the conventional sense of the term. If anything it is an attempt to mine the various connotations of the word “novel” and to play with the indeterminacy of such a term. It is a novel in the sense that it attempts to do something new and different from much contemporary scholarship on education, particularly with respect to work on educational narratives. It is also a novel in that it attempts to present a variety of perspectives as they interact. This idea is developed at length below. Finally, it is akin to a novel in the literary sense of the word in that it does follow a narrative arc; howsoever non-linear that progression may be.

Originally I was interested in using the literary category of the *Bildungsroman* as a marker in the dissertation title. This was also an attempt to play with the notion of a novel of education, formation, or emergence. All good research, it seems to me, is, both procedurally and representationally, informed by the process of each of these things. Written research attempts to educate an audience (presumably the knowledge the researcher has gleaned) through an emergent process. In this instance, the research began with a question about the working conditions of the teachers who participated in my study, and this dissertation attempts to allow them a space to tell their own stories while pointing out the ways that their stories are embedded in a variety of larger narratives. What proceeded from this question was a process of emergence wherein the conditions of teaching, in all their complexity, took shape. The genre of this study: a dissertation, is also, in my mind, definitionally about the formation of the author as a researcher and scholar. A dissertation marks the formal ending to a particular formative, educative

experience. Is it conscionable to appropriate the terms “novel” and “Bildungsroman” for purposes and meanings outside of traditional literary denotations? A standard understanding of research, whether based in deductive or inductive reasoning, is that it is designed to delineate. As I set about the task of creating this dissertation, I wanted to explore the possibility of research that incorporated and expanded.

This work represents the attempt to find techniques and devices for presenting the phenomena of teacher working conditions. It is also about grappling with the knowledge that the researcher has come to through the composition process. In the same way that this work is not a novel, it is not a *Bildungsroman*. But it is an attempt to collapse form and content into something new and this something new is, in fact, all about education, the process of emergence, and the art of formation. Further, one could argue that all novels (all literature, in fact) are about aspects of the conditions of living a human life. Here, the springboard for such a consideration is a survey of the working conditions of educators in North Carolina during the winter of 2014/2015.

It is difficult to argue that the working conditions in North Carolina for public school teachers, as a collective, are (or were at the time of the study) positive. Based on measures like annual income, tenure, and institutional/governmental support, North Carolina ranks at the bottom of the fifty states.

J FOX. When you're number forty-eight, when you're number forty-eight and you're still number forty-eight, there's going to have to come some point when everyone's going to say, "Okay. Enough. You guys have tried to maintain this, it's not working. We do need to take this over." (Appendix 2, p. 409)¹

¹ Page numbers refer to Appendices in this document. Appendix 1 is the transcript of the First Performance Event and Appendix 2 is the transcript of the Second Performance Event. All names of persons except the author are pseudonyms. Place names are pseudonyms with the exception of non-identifying cities and states.

The years immediately preceding this study saw a wage freeze for public teachers because of statewide, nationwide, and global economic downturn. A newly elected Republican legislative majority in tandem with a newly elected Republican governor had dismantled many programs that offered already minimal protections to those in the teaching profession. The Democrats, who had long held power in the state, had made their own mark on the teaching profession through the implementation of accountability and standardized testing policies well in advance of *No Child Left Behind*.

V ROGERS. Who...who's determined the standard of excellence, though.

A KOBE. It's uh...

V ROGERS. It's not really us...anymore. Seriously.

M LOY. You know, I think it's dictated. I think you're right. For us.

A KOBE. But me, I don't blame the kids, Ms. Rogers. For me, it's not the kids. It's the system.

(Appendix 2, p. 408)

The North Carolina teachers who participated in my study went day after day to work in a state that does not allow them collective bargaining power or the right to organize in order to advance their petitions and grievances.

M LOY. Exactly. We don't have a union. That's what we need.

A KOBE. We don't have a back-up. And it's bad.

V ROGERS. You'd get fired if you tried to get a union.

M LOY. Oh my gosh, yeah. You're never going to get a union.

M GREEN. But that's why...it's so...the working conditions are so bad here...

(Appendix 1, p. 327)

These teachers were conscious of the fact that they are collectively characterized for the shortcomings of some members of their profession. They also recognize that this characterization is manipulated for political ends.

M GREEN. No, it's always negative attention.

A KOBE. Voila. And, everything, uh, look at, like...

M LOY. When something goes wrong...

M GREEN. Yeah. It's always negative. It's like a witch hunt. They're like, "Find the bad teachers and put them on spotlight." They never highlight the good teachers.

A KOBE. Voila.

J FOX. Yeah. Yeah.

(Appendix 1, p. 365)

Yet, there is pleasure in teaching despite the unceasing criticism that is leveled against them. The teachers, as I learned from living with their stories, view their work as a process that cannot be captured by sound bites or statistical snapshots. Many of their stories emphasize perseverance and, while celebrating results, also call attention to the ongoing, and not necessarily linear, labor of student development.

V ROGERS. That reminds me of one time I was teaching eighth grade literature. And I don't remember the name of the book but it was a higher level book. It was like a high school level book. But we were doing it with a regular class. And we had a class set. And we were reading it out loud because it was quite difficult and the language was not what they were used to, you know, the vocabulary. And we would read a page and I would ask and nobody ever knew what it meant. So I would explain it. I had to explain that book page by page. And we got over to like page 131, I'll never forget that, 131 and we had read it and I explained it and this kid says, "That's what I thought it meant! I was right!" (raises her hands over head, Rocky-style) And I was like, "One hundred and thirty-one pages!"

M LOY. That's a great story!

V ROGERS. But he got it! And that was exciting.

M LOY. That's a great story.

J FOX. Good education, too, I think, is taking your time with it.

M LOY. To stick with it.

(Appendix 2, p. 419)

This process of teaching and the ability of research to represent it in its complexity is one of the issues that I explore in this dissertation. This is a methodological question. But it is also related to content and form. In the following pages I try to address the richness of the educative process through narrative experiments that complicate rather than simplify the working conditions of North Carolina teachers. Again, this seems to me to be contra to the generally espoused purposes of research. How the teachers experience and frame their work is, I also believe, counter to the predominant narratives of our time. By asking the teachers to tell stories of their working conditions I wanted to discover how, in the context of contemporary and historical representations, they situated themselves. I wanted to know how they presented themselves as being-in-the-world within the context of a constantly changing educational landscape.

The practical question I had when approaching this work was a simple one: How did North Carolina teachers frame their work within the context of an antagonistic environment? I thought of this environment in discursive, narrative terms. It seems an *a priori* condition of educational research and policy stories that the educational system is troubled. This condition then feeds numerous livelihoods and generates enormous profits both in monetary terms, as in the case of products sold in order to reform and improve education, and in terms of personal advancement through the use of crisis rhetoric. This rhetoric, which represents many varieties of ideological critiques of public education since the turn of the Twentieth Century, has also become part of the teachers' stories. However, they were also aware of the dissonance between

this stance and their daily work. In the collaborative story below the teachers acknowledge the troubled state of schooling and through the use of the pronoun “we” they indicate the degree to which they have incorporated the rhetoric into their own sense of responsibility. The passage ends, though, with an indication that the word “education”, itself, is a space of contestation between practitioners and policy makers.

V ROGERS. It's pretty sad, isn't it. I mean, seriously---and I agree with you---but I think it's pretty sad. Because if we know we're broken...

M RYAN. What are we going to do to fix it?

V ROGERS. Yeah. And if it can't be fixed, are we just going to limp along broken? What are we going to do?

J FOX. Take back the root of education. You take it...you take it from what it's become, basically a buzzword for, for career politicians to get reelected. And they'll tell and say whatever they have to do to get it.

A KOBE. That's, uh...

J FOX. And we need to take that word back and make it as meaningful as we can. That's it.

(Appendix 2, pp. 408-409)

Throughout the two storytelling events² that I held, the teachers fluctuate between resignation and various forms of defiance. They are clearly influenced by the discursive streams that hold them responsible for the failure of America's public school system. However, they also recognize the hollowness of the word “education” when bandied by those not involved in its actual practices.

The framing of my overarching question in terms of teacher working conditions led to several consequences. First it provided the teachers a localized field around which to focus their

² Throughout the dissertation I use “storytelling event” and “performance event” interchangeably. For a theoretical justification, see p. 49ff. The teachers were asked to tell stories about the “conditions of teaching” with the intent of highlighting the conscious performativity of my data collection process.

stories. Most often they find meaning in the daily interactions that they have with colleagues, superiors, students and parents. When Jim Fox says above that he wants to make the word education “as meaningful as we can” he is speaking not about “we” in an abstract collective but rather of the aggregation of specific members sitting at the table with him. He is speaking not in terms of broad reform but in terms of individual agency. He is speaking about doing the work of educators in the classrooms.

A second and related consequence of asking about teacher working conditions is that it has enabled me, as a researcher, to explore specific responses by asking other questions. In what ways do discourses like those surrounding a working conditions survey create an institutional version of education that simultaneously restricts the means of expression about it? *The North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey* is an annual survey that attempts to garner localized data on workplace conditions. Its intent is to provide information on individual school settings. Having taken it myself while working in the public schools I felt that while such information could be useful, it was useful in a limited way. The questions and possible responses created a circumscribed universe that defined the processes of education in an exclusive and narrow manner. Further, the results seemed to me to be of questionable validity. The teachers are aware that the Survey is a political tool as well as an analytic one.

M GREEN. Do you guys feel, like, conflicted, too? I feel conflicted when I fill that thing out because I don't want to make my school sound bad. 'Cause it's not a bad place. I love coming to work every day. But, do you know what I mean? It's like, you want to give a critique but you don't want to make Midlands sound that bad...

(Appendix 1, p. 357)

The Survey serves the purpose of not only restricting possible responses, but also of instantiating the categories of possible topics relating to a localized setting. How much more

complicated were the actual conditions on the ground than the Survey had the ability to provide for? I wondered about the silencing of teachers---not only in the context of what they were enabled to say but how they were able to say it.

A KOBE. Yeah, when it comes to... I didn't really like when we said in the exam, when they do survey, like Teacher's Working Conditions...

M LOY. Yes

A KOBE. They don't ask the right questions.

J FOX. Yeah.

M LOY. That's another thing. Good point.

A KOBE. They don't ask the question we want to answer.

(Appendix 1, pp. 356-357)

There are those who will take issue with a claim that North Carolina teachers are being silenced. Some will point to the participatory democracy in which we live. Others will point to the open potential of blogs, editorials, social networking, conferences, and the like, as sites where teacher voices may be expressed. Still others with a qualitative bent will argue that teachers have voices but that they are simply ignored in contemporary policy and research settings. All of these objections are undeniably true. And, in fact, it is contrary to my own personal experience to state that teachers are silenced. I knew firsthand from daily conversations in school hallways that teachers were loud, boisterous, and opinionated. But I also knew that while they felt that they had both solutions to educational problems and critiques of policy decisions, they were constantly made to feel that there was no audience (official or otherwise) to whom they could present them.

So I am not talking here about the quantitative limiting of teacher voices but rather of the subtler, qualitative ways in which their ability to respond to their environment is curtailed. There

are ways that teachers are silenced by official educational agents and corporate bodies but this was not the story that I wanted to explore.³ My story was more immediate and less about the institutions that control education as about the personal interactions with these institutions that teachers feel on a daily basis.

This, then, for me, became a question of language. Given the innumerable discursive streams that make up the educational universe, which strands were utilized by teachers as they told stories about their work? Where, in all of the bric-a-brac of educational theory, policy, jargon, and philosophy, would they locate their own personal working conditions? Related to this, of course, is the question of what they do not say. Or, in a slightly more Bakhtinian way of putting this, whose words are they speaking and whose words are they not?

Mikhail Bakhtin appealed to me because his theories of language insisted on the collision of multiple genres of speech in everyday life. In turning to his works to frame (if frame it can be called) my own work, I realized that there are other possibilities beyond binaries such as silence and vocality. For one there is parody. It is standard liberal arts practice to insist that two subjectivities can view an event in different ways and construct completely different meanings from a single occurrence. This is an oversimplification of complex processes that suggests that we each have an independent vantage point. For Bakhtin all meaning construction is intersubjective and depends upon the social interaction of dialogic processes. Every vantage point is informed by numerous others. Parody has the ability to subvert spoken meaning leaving not only two subjectivities arriving at two different interpretations, but also it demands that these

³ e.g. the teacher protests in New York over standardized tests and teachers' legal right to discuss them or school-level punishments for teachers critical of Common Core. See Strauss (2016) or Harrington (2014) for general examples.

interpretations are themselves reflections of prior meaning making. By manipulating a prior understanding, parody subverts meaning. Parody also allows for speaking the unspeakable.

V ROGERS. It just comes out. I can't talk on the phone to a little kid crying, who's thirteen years old, who has been told that if this paper isn't good enough it's not going in her high school port---fo---lio (drawing the word out in obvious parody) and all this stuff. You know what I 'm saying? I...how can I? And I have the ability. You know, so when I say, "Suck it up, kid. Do the best you can." It's just...you can't do that.

(Appendix 2, p. 420)

Victoria Rogers, who throughout both story events struggles with her sense of duty to her personal ethics and to her professional responsibilities, here parodies the word “portfolio” through intonation. Bakhtin argues that this vocal stylization is an obvious expression of values. While always reluctant to overtly criticize the decision making of superiors, Victoria Rogers momentarily makes explicit her disdain not only for the “portfolio” assignment but for the larger construct that requires a “portfolio”; a piece of educational jargon that refers to a collection of work that shows student progress over time. In her single pronunciation of this word she is criticizing a system that imposes ridiculous strictures on a student, that has failed to provide adequate training to the student, and which relies on threats to carry out its mission. The written transcript, even with my inserted stage directions, does not convey the meaning of the word in the subversive way that Rogers pronunciation makes clear.

This type of moment was what I set out to explore. Storytelling, like parody, is a performance. Bakhtin argues that all of our words and actions have an aesthetic component. He argues that we all author ourselves, drawing from all of the influences of our experience. We select the influences that we prefer and we create ourselves through the resulting actions and words we choose. This selection is an act of creation: our creation of self. As such, there is an identifiably artistic component.

It's not really a question of life imitating art or art imitating life but rather an acknowledgement that both are reciprocal, constitutive elements that are continuously occurring. Further, this aesthetic quality of our utterances is intimately related to the ethical stances we take each time we speak. We frame our ethics through aesthetic production. Rogers intonation as she is speaking the word "portfolio" is a performance that indicates her value judgement which further can only be understood in the context in which she speaks it and by the audience who understands the meaning of her intonation. The performance enables the ethical stance. This stance is rooted in performativity and in individual actions within an institutional, social setting.

M SMITH. But, it is funny because I've heard more than one teacher say, "Well, I put out the pretty ones for them to come look at but I teach from this set." Which, they're just saying, they're just written differently. And, from my perspective, what we've had to change to, is exactly what CTE gives us because we're given, not a lesson plan, but it's a pacing guide with all the details. So we don't have to do anything but plug things in. So we've already had every template they've thrown at it, we just pull it from different spots of what we already have. So, for us, it's easier I guess because it's right there; we just have to move it around. But, for you guys, bless you. (Laughing.) Because I know like for English you still have to pick your book and write it and "Well, how do I do the opening?" and "What graphic organizer do I use?" They actually give us that with CTE. Which is wonderful. Whether we use it or how we use it is different. 'Cause the way I teach is not the way Chef Bolton teaches but our lesson plans have to look the same. Something about that makes no sense, but makes good sense because we do have a lot of kids that transfer from our school to Center and back again. It hasn't happened as much as it has in the past...but, you know, I see where they want the consistency but working so hard for a lesson plan, I'd rather see a good lesson than a good lesson plan. Because if you have a good lesson, then somebody learns something. If you have a good lesson plan, that means you can write crap down on a piece of paper well. (Laughing.)

(Appendix 1, p. 318)

A fundamental tension in American public education is between the freedom of the individual and the needs of the society. This tension has been debated since the founding of the country and is ultimately a debate about ethics within a pluralistic society. In the passage above the question of ethical decision making in the context of larger mandates for uniformity is

situated within the banal context of writing a lesson plan, itself a form of presentation. People express their ethical stance through their word choice and intonation. Political decisions, from voting to policy making, to the distribution of resources, represent, in theory, the values of a society. There is nothing new in saying this. It is also not new to point out that the policy decisions of those in power in a pluralistic society do not reflect the values of many of the society's citizens.

A KOBE. It's, um...they need to review, as a policy, a lot of stuff, and just not with anyone, but those policy maker, or however you call them, news maker, whoever, who are there. I don't know how to call them...

M GREEN. Policy makers?

A KOBE. Police maker...

M LOY. (Laughing.) I like police maker.

A KOBE. They do it and know that teacher, daily teacher, everyone go by that...

(ML and R get up and move around the table talking briefly about the food, obscuring AK's talking.)

A KOBE. I remember, there is, a sign. And on it, it says, "If you can read what I wrote, a teacher impact your life." On a, you know, a sign. Which makes sense. But, you know, put teachers...

M GREEN. I wonder that. I think, "Do these people forget..." Like, they all had to go through school once.

A KOBE. Of course.

M GREEN. And really they must have had teachers that influenced them in a positive way for them to get where they are. But they forget about that apparently. They're probably too arrogant...It's all them and themselves.

(Appendix 2, p. 367)

The question of the individual's needs versus the society's needs is impossible to reconcile. Except that teachers do it every day. Teaching is a political act that incorporates personal values within a nexus of societal values, norms and strictures. The way that we respond to the world makes us who we are as individuals, and this response is fundamentally social.

Throughout the dissertation this methodological point drives the analysis and the presentation. In presenting the following as I have, I am consciously trying to blend the boundaries between the individual and the social, the serious and the parodic. I have attempted to craft a piece of research that is novelistic in the Bakhtinian sense of incorporating numerous voices and points of view and I have tried intentionally to permit the teachers to speak for themselves. By doing this I hope that I have, to some small degree, allowed them to construct their own versions of their working conditions rather than putting words in their mouths, as it were. Research cannot escape representation. By presenting the dissertation in the way that I have, I admit that the teachers who author themselves through their stories, become the heroes of my dissertation. It is impossible that it should be otherwise but I hope that in using an overtly theatrical presentation of an overtly theatrical data collection, I can at least mitigate the reductionism of all too many of the discourses surrounding teachers. The paradox is that in presenting the teachers as performers, I am hoping to show them authoring themselves as they, rather than I the researcher, would choose.

This reductionism in research and elsewhere is a result of the need for us to comply with narrative strictures. If anything, I hope that the form of this dissertation leaves the stories of the teachers and the story that I, as author, am telling, as open-ended and generative, not unlike a good novel. In blurring the lines of performative drama, novel, research, and reportage I hope to suggest that the compartmentalization of educational phenomena is an incomplete practice. This is not to say that it is without worth, only that it avoids the richness and concrete humanity at the heart of education. Teaching is a profession at the epicenter of innumerable discourses. Their collision is the situation of this dissertation. The fallout, as captured in the teachers' stories, is the data. Methodologically it attempts to be like a novel: it is my story of others' stories. I am

calling attention to the novelistic world we live in but the heroes of the story have the final say because it is through their words that my questions are addressed.

The dissertation is arranged in five acts, each of which attempts to tell the story (or stories) of North Carolina teacher working conditions in different ways. I have entitled the sections “Acts” in order to highlight the performativity that is working on numerous levels of this study (and its presentation). Teaching is a performative act undertaken on a public stage, but this performance is always in relation to the personal thoughts and emotions of the teacher. Unlike a stage play, there is not a complete remove as in the case of an actor adopting the persona of an entirely separate individual. The teachers play themselves, or versions of themselves:

M SMITH...and that, that shouldn't be, because we're all there for the kids. That's generally what I thought I came to school for. Which I'm probably one of the few teachers that will talk to everybody in the school, I don't care what you had, I don't care who you like or don't like. If you're having a bad day, I'm going to make you smile at me or at least talk to me. I do that to my own children, I do that to my students, I'm certainly going to do that to the grumpiest teacher in the building. But, most teachers don't have that and they don't want to take the time to do it. I love to torture people.

(Appendix 1, p. 315)

They consciously create personae that serve specific functions throughout their professional day. These characteristics are part of them but there is also an aesthetic component where certain personality traits are brought to the fore and others recede. Most importantly, this is an intentional, directed performance.

Each Act in the dissertation presents a different way of writing about the topic of “teacher working conditions” and each is intended to be written in a different register(s) while maintaining a somewhat consistent narrative voice. I have tried to avoid a linear narrative that

presents an argument and then simply provides evidentiary examples. Each Act has a different argument and, although all are related by common threads, I have presented them here as something akin to a narrative mosaic.

Act I presents the theoretical framework of the dissertation by embedding the teacher narratives in the scholarship and analytic methods of Mikhail Bakhtin. The questions are about history, biography, intersubjectivity, translation, interpretation and methodology. For Bakhtin, interpretation does not mean an evaluation of a speaker's motivations or intentions. This endeavor would be quite speculative, and I have followed his lead in developing this dissertation without overly psychologizing the story tellers. The question I have tried to ask, and that I explore in the first Act, is how might a humanities methodology, as espoused by Bakhtin, enrich our understanding of teacher working conditions? The utterances of the teachers are concrete statements of their real conditions and I have tried to treat them as such. However, their concrete statements, by their very nature, require responses and I have also tried throughout this work to present various responses while highlighting the aesthetic qualities that such an exchange entails. Act I lays the groundwork for my own narrative attitude and tries to push the questions of relativity and concreteness toward the analysis of the final three Acts.

Act I is also an opportunity for me to present Bakhtin's ideas along with some of his central terminology. Elements such as "unfinalizability", "utterance", and "dialogue" are central to Bakhtin's project. My hope is that Act I provides necessary information for the reader to understand the lens that I am using in working with the teachers' stories. Further, I hope that it helps to explain the form of the following four Acts. They have been designed not only as an employment of Bakhtin's ideas but as a display of "novelistic" thinking. This thinking attempts to maintain a dialogic approach in which a particular type of indeterminacy is brought to the

fore. As I have stated above, Bakhtin's frame is less a structure than a collision. He calls this "architectonics". I wanted each of the Acts to represent this in different ways and I think that it is appropriate because, despite attempts to standardize curriculum and education, there is no doubt in my mind that public education---on every level---is a highly combustible and dynamic situation where values, ideals, knowledge, ways of knowing, and content all converge.

Act II establishes the central conceit of the dissertation: heteroglossia. Excerpts of the teachers' stories, both individual and collaborative, are presented within numerous contexts and situations. It attempts to locate the teachers amid a number of discourses, but it also asks and allows them to answer questions about how their physical and social environments influence the ways that they think about the conditions of teaching. The central question that I explore in this Act is: how do the teachers situate themselves within and in response to their environment? There is no collective or universal answer to this question and the structure of Act II attempts to provide a sense of the complexity and fluidity implied within the inquiry.

Act II also narrows the focus to three distinct regions: to North Carolina, to my research setting, and to the teachers' perceptions of the county in which they work. Each of these is an abundant terrain. The chapter includes stories that take on meaning through their juxtaposition with other narratives in the educational community across these three settings. Many reflect the perspectives of various educational discourses, but some are not traditionally associated with schooling. Act II could never hope to be exhaustive. I have chosen my samples purposively for their representative nature and for their relevance to other focal points of the dissertation. My argument is that the teachers are immersed in a sea of stories---a research project among them---and that only in considering them in their plenitude can an analysis address the richness and complexity of educational experience.

In addition to serving these purposes, Act II also serves as a type of hybrid chapter addressing justifications, procedures, and a review of narrative research literature. The concluding sections detail the specific influences that certain works and authors had on the formation of this project. Not all of the authors coalesce around a distinct set of ideological or methodological principles, and this is part of the point. Act II reiterates in a fragmentary form the impact that myriad influences have on meaning construction and hence, on our understanding of the world.

Acts III and IV both use existing novels as jumping off points for analysis of teacher stories. Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw* and Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* serve to frame the conceits of each chapter.

Act III is the more intimate, but it still addresses the contexts established in the first two chapters. Falling at the center of the dissertation it explores the way the teachers personally respond to individual students, within the context of close family relationships, within the school and the classroom, in relation to the rituals of schooling and the calendar. It is a survey of stories that focus closely on the relationships at the school and has narratives with brief commentaries. Using a type of literary analytics, the chapter employs Henry James' novella *The Turn of the Screw* as a model both for the narratives and for a subject of analysis. In other words, how do novels help us understand the world while also being worlds unto themselves? In part I am trying to embed my own work in works that have affected my understanding of educational phenomena. James' levels of frame story help flesh out the complexity. Further, *The Turn of the Screw* is an example of the indeterminacy of interpretation. It provides no solutions to the reader but only a number of possible interpretations from which to choose. The specific issues

addressed in this chapter include teacher surveillance and parenting, both with their own distinct aspects of performativity.

The analysis of Act III focuses on the teachers' day to day activities and with the negotiations of their understandings of their moral responsibilities. Practical issues such as student discipline, interaction with peers, supervisors and parents, and responses to localized pressures take the fore. Throughout Act III I explore questions of teacher self-perception and the internalization of others' views of their work. How, I ask, do the teachers frame their stories within the multiple vantage points from which their work is scrutinized and evaluated? Further, how do they negotiate the issues of authority that swirl around them, at times demanding that they maintain control, while simultaneously undermining their ability to present themselves authoritatively.

Act IV utilizes the Charles Dickens novel *Hard Times* as a counterpoint to James' novella and explores another way of reading the teachers' stories. *Hard Times* is explicit social commentary that critiques broad social movements both in education and in other social effects of the industrial revolution. Act IV examines historical influences and the broader context without seeking a synthesis. External forces, some immediate and some traditional, that affect the teachers are juxtaposed with arguments that the teachers advance. The chapter includes readings of a number of the teachers' stories that examine the way they frame their conditions and explore the ways of thinking about their conditions that they don't articulate. It attempts to draw isolated incidents into a relationship with wider movements. In the excerpt below the teachers are struggling with the small bureaucratic task of filling out a form that has taken on much larger implications as it is absorbed into their broader view of the institutional educational apparatus.

V ROGERS. You know, if we can be calm. That's, that's one of the things...it's so funny at our last teacher...our little mini-teacher meeting, not the last big thing...the one where Sam got up and explained about the little yellow cards.

M SMITH. Oh yeah.

V ROGERS. I walked out of there and I thought, "Boy, everybody needs blood pressure medicine".

(Laughter.)

V ROGERS. And that's just a card. It's just a little thing. And I think what it is in education...you know, we don't know of any doctor being given these 120 or ever how many students you have and you know you have them 30 or 40 at a time...and you have to do everything and you know, so, but we consider ourselves every much as... a professional as they are...

M SMITH. Mhmm.

V ROGERS. But our conditions are so drastic that after a while if we're not careful, everything is panic mode.

M SMITH. Yeah.

V ROGERS. Every single thing is panic mode. There's never, like, you know, this is just a card guys. This is just a card. Okay, just hand it out and let 'em fill it out and bring it back. It's just a card. But it...you know, it's just gets crisis.

M GREEN. But I think that's what frustrates people. Like, it's just a card, but it's supposed to have a bigger meaning behind it; it's supposed to have purpose. But it feels like a lot of things that we're given to do from the higher ups, at whatever level, it's just things to do

(Appendix 1, pp. 312-313)

In Act IV, the Dickens "fable" about education serves to highlight the way small narratives are also part of larger, historical narratives. The chapter makes the argument that nothing that the teachers say is without contexts that contain centuries of meaning and historical precedent.

Temporality folds in on itself and, as readings always inform other readings, I use the Nineteenth Century Dickens novel to illuminate the contemporary stories of the teachers. The specific issues explored in Act IV have to do with the legacies of American educational history and the teachers' relationships to educational policy.

Act V draws on these legacies and includes a discussion of the “reform” tradition of the U.S. and the way the teachers relate to it. Originally I had conceived of the century-long calls for educational reform in the United States as a type of logic unto itself that tended to benefit parties who were not actively working in classrooms. I saw reform movements as driven by corporate and political forces that had become so influential as to obscure the fact that there were great profits to be derived in framing America’s schools as in constant need of repair. The prescribed remedies moved farther and farther away from the situation of schooling. The idea of reform had paradoxically become abstract and unified across a variety of disparate ideological stances.

Victoria Rogers often refers to educational policies as being a pendulum. This metaphor relegates reform to a type of monologism that pretends to be heteroglossic. It’s still about remaining in a single track, on a single continuum. And, the teachers have no control over the pendulum. It is as though it has become a natural law. Act V is an examination of teacher response to this drumbeat and it highlights their ambivalence about the forces that control their work. It is also about the way we speak the unspeakable by subverting dominant discourses. These speech practices tie in to Bakhtin’s notion of play, parody, serious laughing, etc. which he tends to argue is about transgressing boundaries, role-reversal, and so forth.

Finally, it is about the way this project has influenced my own views as I negotiate the space between teaching and research. The genre of novel called “*Bildungsroman*” is both a study of education and a study of human formation and emergence. Presented novelistically. My intent is that this standard literary category which I have chosen as a type of unifying concept addresses a good deal of all of these unwieldy and dynamic processes. My hope is that the category is revealed as something that challenges both the notion of unity with respect to

education and the façade of categorical thinking as an essential means of framing American education.

ACT I. BAKHTIN (THEORY AND METHOD)

*From this story it may be seen what the nature of true storytelling is. The value of information does not survive the moment in which it was new. It lives only at that moment; it has to surrender to it completely and explain itself to it without losing any time. A story is different. It does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time. Thus Montaigne referred to this Egyptian king and asked himself why he mourned only when he caught sight of his servant. Montaigne answers: "Since he was already over-full of grief, it took only the smallest increase for it to burst through the dams." Thus Montaigne. But one could also say: the king is not moved by the fate of those with royal blood, for it is his own fate. Or: We are moved by much on the stage that does not move us in real life; to the king, this servant is only an actor. Or: Great grief is pent up and breaks forth only with relaxation. Seeing the servant was relaxation. Herodotus offers no explanations. His report is the driest. That is why this story from ancient Egypt is still capable after thousands of years of arousing astonishment and thoughtfulness. It resembles the seeds of grain which have lain for centuries in the chambers of the pyramids shut up air-tight and have retained their germinative power to this day. (Walter Benjamin, *The Storyteller*, Published in Germany 1955, English translation by Harry Zohn, 1968, p. 90)*

*"One sphere in which an intimation of totality may be discovered is the sphere of art. Art, for Bakhtin and Benjamin, may be, at its best, a space for benign form-giving, in which the unruly activity of life is gathered up without sacrificing the integrity and specificity of its contents. Artistic form strives to be form that does not violate life, that does not attempt to achieve mastery over life as an object but rather preserves and promotes the complexity of life as the experience of interconnected subjectivity. For both thinkers, artistic form goes some way to being the totalizing solution to the problems that emanate from the fractured nature of existence" (Tim Beasley-Murray, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Walter Benjamin: Experience and Form*, 2007, p. 123).*

Thinking without a Banister

In the 2010 article "In search of a theoretical basis for storytelling in education research: story as method", Kathleen Gallagher, following Hannah Arendt, argues for the use of stories as "a space for probing rival musings and interpretive openings" (p. 52). As a theorist, Arendt offers Gallagher an opportunity to resist the "ethnographic-truth story, [and to] position

storytelling not as a place at which to arrive, but as a place to begin inquiry” (p. 52). Quoting Madeleine Grumet’s phenomenological reading of the Henry James story “The Real Thing” (an ironic story about the validity of aesthetic vision, the fraught relationship between art and reality and the complexity of representation), Gallagher suggests that *storytelling as method* “puts research back together as a partial and intersubjective critical experience... This orientation positions storytelling, as I have argued, as a place to begin inquiry rather than as a place on which to fix pre-existing categories and meanings” (p. 53).

Gallagher crafts her piece in a way that is simultaneously a call for a robust theoretical apparatus for dealing with stories in education research and a model for such a practice. The reader accompanies her as she thinks through the inherent possibilities and complications that such a process might involve. Referencing Arendt’s comparison of storytelling to “thinking without a banister”, Gallagher illustrates this process as she presents an analysis of storytelling data that makes explicit “the endless possibilities of an interpretive act and the ways in which storytelling can perform a multiplicity of potential understandings rather than a confirmation of what is already understood” (p. 54).

Arendt’s metaphor is beautiful because it presents the familiar in an unfamiliar light, something in itself that leads to multiple possible interpretations. It is specific enough to present a simple, clearly defined image, but malleable enough to generate progressive levels of meaning. As an image it feels dizzying yet somehow liberating, akin to Alice’s tumble down the rabbit-hole.

But which Alice and which rabbit-hole? The Lewis Carroll Alice who recites the meaningless (for her) data acquired in the schoolroom---“Alice had not the slightest idea what Latitude was, or Longitude either, but she thought they were nice grand words to say” (Carroll,

1865/1993, p. 2), or the Disney version where she is accompanied on her downward flight by seemingly random bits of Wonderland flotsam and jetsam. Or the Tim Burton film in which Alice become a warrior princess, or the 2012 novel *Alice in Zombieland* written by Gena Showalter? Alice through a Freudian lens, or through an historical lens, both sexually fraught? Or Alice as proto-feminist or anti-imperialist?

For me the phrase “thinking without a banister” has the echoes of a Hitchcockian dream sequence; of a narrow stone staircase in a gothic setting illuminated by a single candle. Or, of the staircase at the end of Peter Weir’s film *The Truman Show* that leads the protagonist from one universe, one entire realm of existence, into another. I see banisterless staircases on Mayan and Aztec temples rising above the jungle floor and in the perspective warping prints of M. C. Escher where, in carnivalesque fashion, they lead upwards to the basement and downwards to the stars. As a piece of language the metaphor is alive with numerous possibilities for interpretation; not solely interpretation as an act of determining or fixing meaning but also as a generative act that makes possible a creative collaboration that produces an alluvium of referential meaning---a gothic castle rising out of the rain forest.

If I understand Gallagher and Arendt’s metaphor correctly, the goal is not interpretation as truth, be it an individual’s or culture’s. In fact, this has been part of the problem with narrative and education research. The point, I think, is to establish an interpretive stance that is fertile and which leads in multiple directions; each one enriching and enhancing the story rather than qualifying and limiting it. For Gallagher, postmodern critical theory provides the ground for such work: the “consensus-resisting, more dialectic, and circling nature of storytelling” (p. 52) that Arendt’s ideas invoke. My own experience with storytelling, oral or written, whether highly stylized or not, is that tellers (all of us, really) do create a dizzying effect because a story

is never about one thing or two things or three things. It is about multiple things, often conflicting, and always drawing from and leading to multiple cascades of other stories. For me this experience is not dialectic. It seeks neither synthesis nor transcendence. It is instead, as Michael Holquist has labeled the Bakhtinian schema, dialogism.⁴

Bakhtin's dialogic is explicitly anti-dialectic with respect to Hegel's formulation. His position on Marxist dialectic is more controversial and is addressed by numerous Bakhtin scholars and is beyond the scope of this paper except with reference to the persistent theme of the indeterminacy of interpretation. There is also much scholarly debate over the frequency of binaries in his conceptual expressions. The issue of binaries will be addressed below. Here, though, is one of several similar formulations of Bakhtin's thought on dialectic: "Take a dialogue and remove the voices (the partitioning of voices), remove the intonations (emotional and individualizing ones), carve out abstract concepts and judgements from living words and responses, cram everything into one abstract consciousness---and that's how you get dialectic" (NM, 1986, p. 147). This passage echoes his insistence on the concreteness of language as opposed to abstract theoreticism. This is his major complaint against Saussure and structural linguistics which I address further below. This nomenclature, adopted by many scholars: "...dialogism denotes an active social strategy for interacting with alterity that implies neither negation nor assimilation" (Peeren, 2008, p. 100) is shorthand for distinguishing Bakhtin's understanding of the world from other systematic appraisals.

⁴ Holquist (1990) admits the trepidation he felt when spawning another "ism". However he justifies his decision by writing: "...the history of Bakhtin's reception seems to suggest that if we are to continue to think about his work in a way that is useful, some synthetic means must be found for categorizing the different ways he meditated on dialogue...Dialogue is an obvious master key to the assumptions that guided Bakhtin's work throughout his whole career: dialogue is present in one way or another throughout the notebooks he kept from his youth to his death at the age of 80: (p. 15).

The unit of analysis for Bakhtin is not grammatically or syntactically bounded. It is not purely distinguishable by what linguists call “turn-taking” or reducible to a fixed formula between two communicating speakers. It is not structuralism, and Bakhtin repeatedly critiques a Saussurean linguistics that privileges *langue*, the fixed system of language, over *parole*, the individual speech act. In fact, Bakhtin argues for just the opposite although his framework doesn’t discount *langue* exactly. He just rethinks its position in relation to the order of things. Clark and Holquist write, “He (Bakhtin) emphasizes performance, history, actuality, and the openness of dialogue, as opposed to the closed dialectic of Structuralism’s binary oppositions. Bakhtin makes the enormous leap from dialectical, or partitive thinking, which is still presumed to be the universal norm, to dialogic or relational thinking” (1984, p. 7).

Bakhtin calls the fundamental component of his analytic framework the “utterance”. And it is fundamentally intersubjective and highly unstable. I use Bakhtin’s insights as a type of methodological proposal for doing educational research that accomplishes something of a paradox. I believe that Bakhtin can serve as a mediating force between the necessary demand of saying something concrete about actual circumstances in contemporary American education while also acknowledging that interpretation is always open-ended and generative, and that education is, as experience, highly subjective no matter what the role of the educational actor. Bakhtin’s thinking negotiates the cognitive and the experiential in ways that I find fruitful for understanding education.

Discursus Interruptus I

Here seems a proper place to more formally introduce Bakhtin’s notion of the utterance. This is Bakhtin’s primary building-block in his theory of (anti-) linguistics and he juxtaposes it

to conventional linguistic markers such as the sentence. In the *Problem of Speech Genres*, Bakhtin describes the “utterance” in this way:

“The boundaries of each concrete utterance as a unit of speech communication are determined by a *change of speaking subjects*, that is, a change of speakers. Any utterance---from a short (single word) rejoinder in every day dialogue to the large novel or scientific treatise---has, so to speak, an absolute beginning and an absolute end: its beginning is preceded by the utterances of others, and its end is followed by the responsive utterances of others (or, although it may be silent, others’ active responsive understanding, or, finally, a responsive action based on this understanding)... These relations are possible only among utterances of different speech subjects; they presuppose *other* (with respect to the speaker) participants in speech communication” (SG, 1986, pp71-2).

Bakhtin’s emphasis on the necessity of more than one person to constitute an utterance is central to the idea of dialogism; a condition of the world and not a state to be desired. It is here that I hope to move forward the thinking on narrative research. Rather than thinking about narrative as a mode of thinking among other possible modes, I will argue in Act II that narrative is fundamental in the way the utterance is fundamental. It is the collaboration with the world that enables us to become.

Story as Method---The Novel

Late in his life Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) reflected on the same methodological problem that Gallagher addresses. He wrote, “The world of culture and literature is essentially as boundless as the universe...The infinite diversity of interpretations, images, figurative semantic combinations, materials and their interpretations, and so forth. We have narrowed it terribly by selecting and modernizing what has been selected. We impoverish the past and do not enrich ourselves. We are suffocating in the captivity of narrow and homogeneous interpretations” (NM, 1986, p. 140). In my own work, located in something we call education research, I see the territory of education as encompassing and imploding the boundaries between

tragedy and comedy, romance, history, science and philosophy. Most importantly I see all of these forming a kaleidoscopic image that we call education policy. American education, and the research that explores its experiential contours is sprawling, boisterous, enormously varied and unfathomably rich. Like a magnificent, multi-directional, multi-dimensional carousel. In turning to Bakhtin, I am seeking a methodology equal to the task of presenting it in all of its “unfinalizability”.

Discursus Interruptus II

A central issue in Bakhtin’s writing is “unfinalizability.” I, as a thinking, creating subject am unfinalizable. That is to say that I am a “life that finds no rest within itself and never coincides with its given presently existing makeup” (AH. 1990, p. 16) because my life is always slipping into the future. The hero (other) however is capable of being finalized in the sense that this person may be viewed by me as a complete whole. This viewing has an aesthetic component---it is created by me.

This dynamic is important with respect to Gallagher’s call for story as method; a call that I take to mean insisting that we consider the unfinalizability of ourselves as researching authors and of the other as our subjects (heroes) while conducting our research. It is for this reason that much education research does not sufficiently comprehend its own project. It fails to recognize that its objects (students, teachers) are themselves enduring their own unfinalizability, and it seeks to impose aesthetic and ethical categories of life onto beings who are generating that themselves, for themselves.

I decided that my data would not simply be transcripts of storytelling events but also video recordings, shot from opposing sides of the room. The videos provide an interesting

perspective on all of this but not in the conventional sense of documentary veracity. Taking it as a text, all of the participants are “heroes”; they are finalized with respect to the aesthetic whole of the taping. The methodological problem arises when one wishes to consider these characters--even myself--as unfinalizable. Any view of the other may become an “aesthetically consummated phenomenon” (AH, 1990, p. 17). For Bakhtin this also entails values because values are what we use to define ourselves and the other. Video allows, on the one hand, for a capturing of “dialogues between whole human beings (in which their faces, their dress, and the setting beyond the bounds of a given scene are necessary, artistically significant constituents)” (AH, 1990, p. 19) to which I would add gestures, posture and the like.

On the other hand, the hero is one who is ultimately consummated, completed. When the video recorder is shut off, the characters of my project are finalized. As humans they continue living but as characters, research subjects, storytellers, present in the video, the transcript, and in my analysis, they are removed from what Bakhtin calls “the open unitary and unique event of being” (AH, 1990, p. 14). The form of this dissertation is my attempt to deal with this problem. In creating a non-linear work, I hope to suggest the unfinalizable nature of the heroic participants whom I, as author, cannot help but finalize. Even myself, playing the researcher in the storytelling event, am finalized within the context of the event once the camera is turned off. It is a dizzying thought.

Heteroglossia and the Novel

For Bakhtin, a methodology capable of properly addressing this whirlwind was not a matter of reflection or representation through some form of mimesis, as the mimetic model established by the ancients would have it. Rather, the answer is to be found in the recognition of the “novelness” of our lives in fundamental connection to the lives of those around us. I use this

term advisedly because although Bakhtin regarded the novel as a relatively “new” mode of expression that arose in conjunction with the modern age, he clearly does not regard the novel as “new” in the sense of unprecedented. The novel, in Bakhtin’s view, outstrips all previous literary genres in its ability to capture the multi-voicedness of our world, and allows for an artistic presentation that can demonstrate individual subjectivities in the process of becoming.

In this work, I address Gallagher’s call for a generative theoretical grounding for the analysis of storytelling, and I also present a way of dealing with the multiple storylines that participate in the American educational environment. (Grounding here, I might add, is something of a relative term.) As I said, this environment, for me, is novelistic in a strictly Bakhtinian sense. Or, put another way, Bakhtin provides a method for working through the network of discursive systems and the variety of actors that play upon the educational stage. He writes that:

The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized. The internal stratification of any single national language into social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day, even of the hour (each day has its own slogan, its own vocabulary, its own emphases) this internal stratification present in every language at any given moment of its historical existence is the indispensable prerequisite for the novel as a genre” (DN, 1981, p. 263).

and it seems to me that each one of the speech types that he describes could apply to the educational environment not only as a whole---the American setting---but also in every school setting in the country. Bakhtin calls this diversity of voices and speech types “heteroglossia”, and it is fundamental to the way he views the literary novel. But Bakhtin here, as happens with regularity, is not only talking about the material aesthetic product that we think of when we contemplate the novel as a book, or even as a particular genre that encompasses this type of

book. For Bakhtin, this situation which provides the “prerequisite” of the novel, this heteroglossia, is the social fabric of the world, and it is the situation that provides the basis of our constitution as human beings, forever in the process of coming to be.

As readers and scholars of Bakhtin attest there is an unrelenting resistance to “system” that courses through Bakhtin’s writing. There are repetitions, contradictions, revisions, reversals and an underlying assertion that not only is every reading partial, but that it is also just one of many readings. The survey of scholarship below bears this out, and I have chosen to present it in a way that I think overtly draws attention to this complexity. It also highlights the tendency of scholars to seek an historical Bakhtin---a diachronic Bakhtin---who always has a “project” in mind that would have presented itself in a logically coherent fashion were it not for the vicissitudes of fate which render Bakhtin’s sustained train of thought inevitably incomplete.

Although I will present these issues (in what I hope is a dialogic way) they have often seemed to me to be beside the point. Bakhtin writes at the opening of Chapter Two in *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, “We have advanced a thesis, and in light of this thesis provided a somewhat monologic survey of the more substantial attempts to define the basic characteristic of Dostoevsky’s art. In the process of this critical analysis, we have made our own point of view clearer” (PDP, p. 47). The same could be said here with respect to what will follow except that my survey will be of Bakhtin’s art. And his life. The two of which turn out to be indivisible. Bakhtin’s reference to the “monologic survey” is something like an in joke. In the following I take note of his disdain for the monologic and attempt to present Bakhtin in all of his dialogic splendor while still working within the requisites of the scholarly genre in which I am participating. Of course, it is worth bearing in mind that a dissertation is a particular type of dialogic performance as well.

Translation

The pre-imminent scholars on Bakhtin's thinking, writing and biography are cited extensively here along with the primary sources of the Bakhtinian canon. The combination of the two, it seems to me, are a necessary part of the dialogic process which is the central preoccupation of Bakhtin's writing. It would be impossible, therefore, to think of Bakhtin without the acknowledgement that his many commentators have been as fundamental to my understanding of his concepts as close readings of his works have been. It is also important to note that this reading of Bakhtin's texts, filtered through the commentary of other scholars and through the historical actions of numerous actors who have made his work available, is also mediated by the translation of his writings into English. I do not read Russian and this inability necessitates a concrete intermediary in the form of a translator in order for me to even access Bakhtin's language.

The issue of translation is important to Bakhtin because all communication is an act of translation. Translators work in different ways with different guiding principles: whether to remain as literally faithful to the Russian text as possible, or whether, by editing the translation to more consistently reflect English grammatical and syntactic structures in order to present a more expressive English text---competing conceptions of remaining faithful to Bakhtin. By way of justification (too easy perhaps), I turn to Caryl Emerson, one of Bakhtin's translators, who points out in the introduction to Bakhtin's re-written and re-revised book on Dostoevsky, that Bakhtin saw all human communication in terms of translation. She writes, 'But what can be said with certainty is that for Bakhtin, to translate was never to betray; on the contrary, translation, broadly conceived, was for him the essence of all human communication. Crossing language boundaries was perhaps the most fundamental of human acts' (Emerson, 1984, p. xxxi).

There is a late passage from Bakhtin to which I will return below because of its relevance to ethnography and research models. Here I only quote the first two sentences but I will use the work of two translators to demonstrate the complexities involved. The first is Vern W. McGee:

“There exists a very strong, but one-sided and thus untrustworthy, idea that in order better to understand a foreign culture, one must enter into it, forgetting one’s own, and view the world through the eyes of this foreign culture. This idea, as I said, is one-sided” (NM, 1986. p.6).

The second is from Tzvetan Todorov:

“There is an enduring image, that is partial, and therefore false, according to which to better understand a foreign culture one should live in it, and, forgetting one’s own, look at the world through the culture. As I have said, such an image is partial” (Todorov, 1984, p. 109).

The differences in word choice here are relatively small but I would argue that they are still influential. There is a difference for me between “untrustworthy” and “false”, between “one-sided” and “partial”. The force that each of these words has is different, their denotations and connotations are different, and their registers are different. And that’s simply for me personally as a reader. They could as well be different in different ways for another reader. Or for another translator. Or for Bakhtin.

Transmission

Indeed, there are challenges at each stage of composition and publication that are present to varying degrees in all of Bakhtin’s work. At times they have been rewritten or revised by Bakhtin himself. At other times, as in the case of the text that Clark and Holquist (1984) reference, they have been reassembled by editors. And, of course, every text has been translated into English, often by various translators who choose different terminology to reflect slightly different emphases in the textures of Bakhtin’s Russian prose. Brandist provides this example of the difficulties arising with respect to translation: “Up to ten different translators have published

work by a writer whose terminology is very specific, often rendering key concepts in a variety of different ways. To take just one example, the word *stanovlenie*, which we now know derives from the German *das Werden*, and which is usually rendered in English translations of Hegel as becoming, is rendered in no fewer than ten different ways in the English translations, including ‘emergence’ and ‘development’” (Brandist, 2002, pp. 3-4). Add to this the slow trickling of materials over time which turned into a flood with the fall of the Soviet Union and the opening of Bakhtin’s archives to the public (Hirschkop, 2001). “Scholars looking through newly available public and private documents, or scrutinizing manuscript versions of by now canonical texts, discovered that much of what we thought we knew about Bakhtin---concerning his background, his education, his life, his actual written output---was false or distorted. Distorted, in fact, by no other person than Bakhtin himself” (Hirschkop, 2001, p. 2).

Additionally, Adlam (2001) has shown how Russian and Western scholars took largely varying positions on Bakhtin’s writing based on their own theoretical inclinations, and that prior to the opening of the USSR, the foci, if not the interpretations themselves of Bakhtin’s text tended to reflect different intellectual and cultural priorities. Prior to perestroika there seems to have been several different versions of Bakhtin that didn’t readily interface based on the exclusivity of borders both national and intellectual. At the Seventh International Bakhtin Conference at the University of Manchester in 1991 which provided the first opportunity for Western and Russian scholars to compare notes, Adlam wrote that “the extent to which Bakhtin’s work was extensively and variously interpreted in accordance with the chief

theoretical allegiances of the representatives of the two national and ‘geographic’ camps...” was revealed (Adlam, 2001, p. 242).⁵

In the West, as Deborah Haynes has written, “...concentration on the carnivalesque or the dialogic has tended to skew the adaptation of Bakhtin’s work by scholars in many disciplines” (Haynes, 2013, p. 2). Haynes then goes on to list disciplines in which Bakhtin’s work has been “fruitfully engaged”. Her list includes: “communications and media studies, composition, cultural studies, education and education theory, ethics, film and television, law and critical legal studies, linguistics and philosophy of language, literature, medicine and studies on aging, multicultural and cross cultural studies, philosophy, political theory, psychology and psychoanalysis, religion, sociology, theatre and performance, and urban studies” (p. 2). It is important to note the apparent ease with which Bakhtin is adapted to widely ranging disciplines. It is further important to point out that many of these disciplines have very little point of contact with each other so that one suspects that there are still a number of Bakhtins lurking in various corners of academia.

There are, in fact, a mind-numbing number of influences whom scholars have noted in Bakhtin’s work. These serve as important contextual markers for understanding Bakhtin and also as testament to his enormous erudition. There is also a sense that all of these referents play a vital role in supporting Bakhtin’s notion of the “dialogic” as they all serve as intertextual notations at play within his text. In this way their acknowledgement supports the spirit of Bakhtin’s project. In reading Bakhtin’s commentators, one feels that the majority of them believe that it is of the utmost importance to trace all of the sources for Bakhtin’s thinking. The

Adlam cites Shepherd (1993) as the chronicler of the Meeting.

tacit expectation is that such a process will demystify Bakhtin by pointing out that he is responding to Husserl here and that he is drawing from Cassirer here and that he is influenced by Einstein here and so on. To be sure, Bakhtin is in dialogue with all of his sources, and it is possible to determine individual influences throughout his work. Somehow, though, this project seems to cheapen Bakhtin's thinking; to show that his ideas are adapted from others, disassembled and then cobbled together back together. Bakhtin says that of course this is so. Bakhtin allows for a dialogic phenomenology in which multiple co-existing voices interact through multiple fields of language. His is always a response. It is always a response that uses language already spoken. The condition of language is heteroglossia.

The teachers in this study are influenced individually and collectively by thousands of voices. It would be impossible to enumerate them all. The point of the research is to find out, at a given place and time, through a performative event (analogous to moments in life themselves), what evaluations they are making vis-a-vis all of the influences surrounding them⁶. The point is not to list the influences---again, impossible. The point is to engage them dialogically in a method of analysis that presents generative possibilities for interpretation that themselves spawn other narratives.⁷

⁶ As I pointed out in a previous footnote, the use of the term "performative event" is itself multi-dimensional meaning the act of conscious storytelling which involves an aesthetically prepared narrative embedded in a real-time interpersonal interaction.

⁷ A word should be said here about the authenticity of several of Bakhtin's works that were published under the names of members of his Circle, Pavel Medvedev and Valentin Voloshinov. The authorship of Medvedev's *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* which critiques the Russian Formalist movement and that of Voloshinov's two major works, *Freudianism: A Critical Sketch* and *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* has stirred controversy for fifty years, more than almost eighty years after both Medvedev and Voloshinov had died. According to Clark and Holquist (1984), both Medvedev and Voloshinov's texts remained unchallenged for decades until Bakhtin rose to prominence and readers began noticing similarities in thought patterns, argumentation and terminology. Since this time a debate has raged as to whether the texts were written by Bakhtin and published under his friends' names or whether they were written independently as a result of general social influences amongst the three or whether there was some sort of conscious collaboration. In 1984, the final assessment from

The debate is not limited solely to historical and stylistic verisimilitude. A related topic, perennially debated, is Bakhtin's stance on Marxism. Paul Allen Miller (2001) succinctly yoked the two concerns when he wrote,

Likewise, among the professional Bakhtinians, the value of Rabelais and his World and the centrality or marginality of this text to the rest of the canon fluctuate according to the author's stance on the related questions of Bakhtin's position on Marxism (both in the Soviet Union and less orthodox incarnations) and his authorship of the disputed texts attributed to Medvedev and Voloshinov. Those who see him as implacably hostile to all forms of Marxist and socialist thought generally argue against any substantial authorial role in the disputed texts and against the centrality of the Rabelais text vis a vis the rest of the Bakhtin canon, and vice versa (Miller, 2001, p. 142).

While such issues are critically important to the critics of Bakhtin, the debate has only peripheral effect on my use of Bakhtin in an educational and narrative analysis. My hope is that the unsettled nature of these authorship and ideological issues merely reinforces my notions about the indeterminacy of readings; both biographical and theoretical.

Dialogic Research

Clark and Holquist is that "Most scholars both in the Soviet Union and abroad believe that Bakhtin played a central role in the production of these texts" (p. 147).

There is also much scholarly debate over the Voloshinov book (1929), its authorship, and its commitment to Marxism. From the Translator's Preface of the English version: "It is known, however that he (Bakhtin, which the translator renders as Baxtin) refused to sign an affidavit concerning the alleged authorship when, shortly before his death, the official Soviet publishing agency (VAAP) urged him to sign for the sake of copyright law" (Voloshinov; Matejka & Titunik, trans., 1986. P. ix). What is generally recognized is that the Voloshinov book is the site where Bakhtinian thinking becomes explicitly focused on the primary role social language plays in human consciousness and human existence. Voloshinov also critiques Saussure in the book categorizing him as an "abstract objectivist" who has made the fundamental error which stresses "That the system of language is an objective fact external to and independent of any individual consciousness" (p. 65). This is an unwarranted abstraction Voloshinov argues that is meaningless in the context of actual, concrete speaking: "The system of language is the product of deliberation on language, and deliberation of a kind by no means carried out by the consciousness of the native speaker himself and by no means carried out for the immediate purposes of speaking...For him the center of gravity lies not in the identity of the form but in that new and concrete meaning it acquires in the particular context" (pp. 67-68).

It is right, then, to think---and impossible to avoid---that Bakhtin, his translators, his commentators and those who have applied his ideas, all play a role in the dialogic process that, here and now, is joined by myself. My hope in this work is to extend Bakhtin's thinking in response to a call from Emerson and her co-author Morson (1989). They make the distinction between extension and application, but I think that this is a misleading dichotomy. Anyone who reads or writes about Bakhtin is necessarily, through dialogic processes, extending his thought. Their distinction is helpful principally in guiding scholarly work and in situating the scope of my own project. I am not so obtuse as to not understand that they are suggesting that some engage with Bakhtin's work and others simply appropriate concepts---carnival (Barta, Miller, Platter, & Shepherd, 2001), heteroglossia, etc.---and use them as an inflexible framework for the imposition of their own ideas. I take seriously this critique and hope that the work performed in this dissertation will perform an extension, an application, and the execution of a number of other dances with Bakhtinian thought. As I stated in the Overture, the boundaries between form and content are here blurred by design.

Below I will try to unpack some of the Bakhtinian ideas that seem most relevant to this dissertation. Here, I refer to Michael Holquist's simplified explanation of **Bakhtin's intersubjectivity**. Holquist writes, "Restated in its crudest version, the Bakhtinian just-so story of subjectivity is the tale of how I get myself from the other: it is only the other's categories that will let me be an object for my own perception. I see myself as I conceive others might see it. In order to forge a self, I must do so from *outside*. In other words, *I author myself*" (author italics, Holquist, 1990, p. 28). This act of authoring is a continually ongoing project and it is the process which allows us individual existence. Furthermore, it is always in response to something else. The context of schooling serves as one of the many spheres where this act proceeds with a high

level of dynamism. The teachers who tell stories during the two events flow easily from one topic to another, authoring themselves within numerous educational contexts and, most importantly, they do this simultaneously. Their identification as a teacher is not a fixed point in time, but is one that is continually revised, expanded, contracted---and responsive.

One of the tensions that the storytelling event highlights is that between the possibilities of self-creation. Victoria Rogers is shown several times presenting herself as seen in the eyes of an authoritative other----we must be professional, whether in dress or subservience; her metaphor of the “pay-grade”, and so on.

V ROGERS. And I'm just like everybody else, I get discouraged, too and I get tired, too. But I also...sometimes worry about our professionalism. It's like people are offended because you asked them to fill this card out. Why? I mean, when I worked in business, I mean I've been a teacher forever, and I've always had two or three other jobs because, you know, you just have to do...

M SMITH. Yeah. (Laughing.)

(Laughter.)

V ROGERS. But you know, I've never huffed and puffed and I might not have wanted to do what they said to do but I realized if I wanted to work for them, I needed to do that. But sometimes it seems like because we're educators, we think it's okay to spew all this (spewing sound) stuff out, you know, and it, it's like it's toxic, you know...

(Appendix 1, pp. 313-314)

However, there are indications that she is also projecting herself under the vision of different others, teachers in some instances, a higher moral power in others; those that ask her to create herself upon different possible lines as someone who stands up for kids, for teachers, for administrators.

V ROGERS. I mean it just jumps right over on you. You know. And that is one thing as far as, as a teacher, I think that concerns me...I mean, I think that I should have your back and I think you should have my back.

M GREEN. Mmmhmm.

V ROGERS (placing her hand on Green's shoulder.) Do you know what I'm saying?

M GREEN. Yeah.

V ROGERS. And I think if you're upset you should be able to come to me and if you need to just explode, be able to do that in every confidence that I'm not going straight to her (indicating MS) and tell her...

M SMITH. Yeah

V ROGERS....about you exploding. You know...

M SMITH. ...And that you're mad at me, I am so sorry. (Laughing.)

(Appendix 1, p. 314)

Her metaphor for hierarchical professional distinctions is the "paygrade". Who is above her paygrade and what is their view of her?

V ROGERS. Yeah. I have something to add to that. Um, I was in a meeting. I used to a teaching coach, a literacy coach for three and a half years---to do that---and then our county...well, the job went away so we ??? like we do now. But I was in a meeting with a bunch of colleagues and there was a problem we were seeing in all of our schools. I mean across the board in the county. And, because of our position of going from room to room, we try to solve this problem and you know how you're discussing...and came up with what seemed to be this really good solution to this, just this one specific thing. And so our, um, county supervisor came into the meeting and, you know, somebody spoke---I was so glad it wasn't me---you know, it's one of those times you're glad it wasn't you that spoke, you know, just brought up the subject that we had all been discussing and how that it was common to all of our schools and it was really an issue. And our take was, you know, speaking like, because...the group had spoken, that this would be an easy fix, you know, and blah, blah, blah, and gave an idea.

Well, when she responded, I became so offended. At first, I mean it really offended me the way she responded. I didn't say anything but it offended me. But I have never forgotten that now...I have told you this (gesturing toward ZC or ML) and you'll probably remember it but it has helped guide my career and some other things since then. Then the lady spoke up and said, "Well, I'm going to tell you what I heard Dan Hill tell some, um, principals in a principal meeting: 'That's above your pay grade'". And it offended me. For that...I mean it really did. Because there was no malice meant, there was no anything, you know, when we were...it was a problem and we were...but you know, and I went away from that and I just could not...But then I understood. And I really did understand. And I think I do understand. I am a classroom teacher. There are some things that are NOT in my power. They are NOT my paygrade. And no matter how I want to...change them, I can offer opinion or whatever...I can ask for change but it is not my POWER to change at that level. But daggone it, everything that is in my power, I can change, and I can effect and I can do. And when they walked in that door, "Welcome to your

world". And you can be just as daggone professional and do what you need to do. And you have that right. It IS your paygrade to do that. And if the kids say, "I got a C", well, "Heck, you better be glad you got a C. You'd better be celebrating that. If you want a B, let's see what you can do." But that has taken pressure off of me. Because sometimes I see you've got issues and you've got issues and you've...and I'm wanting to solve all of them. And I want you happy (putting her hand on AK's shoulder and patting him)...

M GREEN. He does, too.

A KOBE. I want to be happy.

(Laughter.)

V ROGERS. I want the world to be good for you. Yes. But sometimes it's just not in my paygrade. And I don't...

M Loy. Wow!

V ROGERS. ...care how much I want to change it, it's not there. And so, I say, "Dr. Kobe, this too shall pass. We will get through this together. And if there's anything I can do to help you, I will." I can live with me, I've helped him, I've been true to my professionalism. What else can I do?

M GREEN. I'm not that Zen.

J FOX. Me, either

(Laughter.)

(Appendix 1, pp. 342-343)

This is one possible angle for analysis. In teaching there is not simply one set of eyes, one co-constructing other involved, but there are always multiple others, each of them with their own priorities. When we step out of ourselves, as Bakhtin says, to think ourselves through the other's eyes, we begin to create the contours of ourselves. But these are always shifting, liminal.

Bakhtin emphasizes the fact that these processes occur at the borders. The teaching situation determines the other with whom we collaborate. And for teachers, of course, there are multiple simultaneous collaborations throughout an average hour on the job. The stories of the teachers bring these various collaborations into relief, and the contours of the various relationships, each involved in authoring oneself, may be glimpsed but never fixed because there is never a single "other" who provides a sole touchstone. The storytelling, captured on film or in a text,

represents the consummated (only in the context of the event) production of the authoring self (the speaking participants) transformed into what Bakhtin calls a “hero” (as they see each other, as they see themselves, and as my transcription renders them).

The participants, through their utterances, demonstrate this process as they incorporate personal experience with multiple perspectives via an active process. Holquist writes,

“...the utterance is a deed, it is active, productive: it resolves a situation, brings it to an evaluative conclusion (for the moment, at least), or extends action into the future. In other words, consciousness is the medium and utterance the specific means by which two otherwise disparate elements---the quickness of experience and the materiality of language---are harnessed into a volatile unity. Discourse does not reflect a situation, it is a situation. Each time we talk, we literally enact values in our speech through the process of scripting our place and that of our listener in a culturally specific social scenario” (1990, p. 63).

The question with respect to Victoria Rogers and her negotiations of herself and relations of power is mediated through language. Who is she responsible to and for what is she answerable? Not only this, but in what ways does she appropriate alien language, the language of the other, to respond to these questions? Bakhtin insists that our utterances are the way we take responsibility; this is what gives us our existence and the other plays a fundamental role in the process. Again, which others and which responsibility? The educational context, the context of the story event, the context of life experiences, all play a role. We all must speak and author ourselves. The stories present a window into this process, but it must be remembered that it is a process involving a lived past and a projected future. And, it is all in relation to the other.

The stories are expressions of values and evaluations---these terms blur in Bakhtin’s writings---and are part of a system of ethics which is subsumed under aesthetic process. Our stories, our utterances, are our way of responding ethically to the world. Holquist interprets Bakhtin as saying, “Stories are the means by which values are made coherent in particular

situations” (1990, p. 37). But, this is not limited to speech alone and that is why the videotaping of the teachers’ stories was an essential element. In a piece signed by Voloshinov from 1930 which is translated and quoted by Todorov, (1984), the author writes, “Let us call all evaluation embodied in the material an expression of values. The human body will furnish the originary raw materials for this expression of values: gesture (the signifying movement of the body) and voice (outside of articulated language)” (p. 46)⁸. Within language itself, intonation is the expression of evaluation. However, the body plays a role as well in the expression of the evaluations that the teachers make. In both cases, the link between aesthetics and ethics in Bakhtinian thought is clear, and I return to this in later Acts where I examine the ways that the teachers participate in the dynamism between their own self-creation, the responsibilities they feel, their relations to and evaluations of perceived authoritative discourses, and the multiple ways they express these things.

Here, though perhaps it is better to put all of this into a more coherent structure---or at least to establish a basis for working with Bakhtin. I find the next sections of this Act to be necessary because they situate Bakhtin theoretically and historically but such a task, as I mentioned before, has its pros and cons. It is difficult to give an account of Bakhtin’s methodology without first establishing some sort of framework for his ideas. And he resists frameworks. There is also no way to exhaust the possibility of dialogism and there is no way, in my mind, to talk about Bakhtin at all without resorting to a dialogic presentation. To understand Bakhtin then; to understand my understanding of Bakhtin, I might say, requires a story. And every story is really many stories with many participating voices both onstage and behind the

⁸ Original citation: V.N. Voloshinov, “O granicakh poetiki i lingvisistiki”, in *V bor’be za marksizm v literaturnoj nauke*, pp. 203-240. Leningrad, 1930. From Todorov (1984), p. 116.

scenes, as it were. This dissertation itself is, I freely admit, simply a story about stories. Bakhtin stresses that we are not alone because the utterances that make us who and what we are inevitably social in our uttering. But he also stresses that we are alone responsible for the utterances we make with all of their ethical and evaluative import. In what follows, I will try to give an account of Bakhtin that locates him within the evaluations of others who are always and inevitably evaluated by myself. Because, after all, literature reviews are at once utterances, genres, and stories.

Bakhtinian Stories

The first story I ever heard about Mikhail Bakhtin was told by the character Paul Benjamin in the 1995 Wayne Wang movie *Smoke* from a screenplay written by the novelist Paul Auster. The screenplay presents a number of characters who frequent a Brooklyn cigar shop as they go through the cycles of their normal days. Their lives overlap in places; at times they randomly encounter each other and at other times the storyline emphasizes their shared trajectories as though something like the notion of destiny were at play; that their fates were, if only momentarily, inextricably bound up with each other's. Social borders are crossed regularly as characters from different communities interact. One of the plots is a typical coming-of-age story with all of the temporal crossings and liminal spaces this implies. There are geographic movements from the urban to the rural and back again. Throughout it all, the characters tell stories to each other about themselves, their lives, and their influences. Each of these stories is told with varying degrees of validity and truthfulness, a fact that is clear to the audience of the movie in equally varying degrees. Sometimes it is clear that the character is lying; sometimes the level of truthfulness gradually reveals itself, and sometimes, even upon the rolling of the

credits of the film, the viewer (as well as the other characters) has no basis upon which to evaluate the honesty of a storyteller's claims⁹.

At the time of the film's release, Janet Maslin of the *New York Times* wrote, "This is the first screenplay by Mr. Auster, the spare and distinctive novelist, whose methods don't always translate easily into this new medium. The dialog can be blunt and stagy, with an emphasis on long monologues and convenient coincidences. On the other hand, Mr. Auster moves readily between the abstract and the quotidian. And this film has the actors to follow that cue" (Maslin, 1995). Like many great storytellers, Auster draws universal abstraction from his characters' singular experiences. The minor incidents which, taken together, make up their lives---chance mishaps, mostly---take on dramatic import as the consequences of these events touch numerous other lives. The central metaphor of the film is captured by the employment of the cigar shop manager, Augie, as the recorder of history on the Brooklyn street corner where he works. He photographs the same corner every day at the same time. He never misses a day; never takes a vacation. He posts the photos chronologically in albums which he seldom displays. In one of the rare times he does show his "life's work" to another character, in this case the novelist Paul Benjamin, Augie tells him that he must slow down, "They're all the same but each one is different than every other one. You've got your bright mornings and your dark mornings...The Earth revolves around the sun and every day the light hits the Earth at a different angle..."

The character of the author Benjamin, played by William Hurt, delivers the speech that introduced me to Bakhtin during a conversation with a younger character named Rashid played

⁹ *Smoke's* companion piece, *Blue in the Face*, was filmed during two weeks after the first film wrapped. Cast members and other celebrities improvised most of the scenes using the same locations as the original movie. The concept served as one of the inspirations for the research design employed here. Wang and Auster were reported to have been inspired themselves by Roger Corman who frequently reused sets from other films in order to produce movies quickly.

by Harold Perrineau. The Bakhtin tale does, however have implications for Benjamin as it is clear that he and Rashid are discussing the value that he places on his own writing which constitutes his livelihood but also something more esoteric. We might name it something like a “calling” or a “vocation”; words that are certainly in play when discussing teachers and teaching and which shift the focus from performed pedagogy to a ground with more elusive moral shadings. It is also again worth emphasizing that many of the stories told by the characters in *Smoke* are fabrications. This should not be mistaken for dramatic irony; a simple plot device that highlights the difference between what is represented and what is, in a manner of speaking, actually going on. In the case of *Smoke*, the characters tell fictitious stories and misrepresent themselves not to provide the audience with special insight nor to express their particularly modern, self-congratulatory cleverness. Typically, when the characters misrepresent themselves in the movie, they do so out of desperation. Their dissembling is a survival technique, and, although it may be intended to manipulate other characters, there is no malice or self-aggrandizement in it. Their lies seem as natural, to the audience and to themselves, as any other biological necessity of living; breathing, eating, and so forth.

It is in perfect keeping, then, that the story the character of Benjamin tells of Bakhtin is generally thought by scholars to be apocryphal. Historically accurate or not, it’s still a good story:

Paul: It’s 1942, right. He’s caught in Leningrad during the siege. I’m talking about one of the worst moments in human history. Five hundred thousand people died in that one place. And there’s Bakhtin, holed up in an apartment, expecting to be killed any day. He has plenty of tobacco but no paper to roll it in so he takes the pages of a manuscript he’s been working on for ten years and tears them up...

Rashid: His...

Paul: ...to roll his cigarettes.

Rashid: His only copy.

Paul: His only copy. (Sips coffee.) Aahhh. I mean, if you think you're gonna die, what's more important: a good book or a good smoke? So, he huffed and he puffed and little by little he smoked up his book.

Rashid: Nice try. You had me going for a minute but, no. No writer would ever do a thing like that. Would he?

Paul: You don't believe me? Look, alright, I'll show you. It's all in this book...

At this point Paul reaches for a book on a bookshelf and finds a paper sack full of cash. This money presents an immediate, concrete problem for the two characters and the conversation turns. The movie never revisits the story of Bakhtin and the mystery of his missing manuscript.

In a sort of poetic, dialogic, just way, my first experience of Bakhtin is mediated by an unknown, almost mythic source. The work of this source (the book which Paul never retrieves standing as a marker of this) is translated by a screenwriter (Auster), written into the mouth of a character (Paul), performed by an actor (Hurt), under the direction of a filmmaker (Wang). From those consciousnesses, it filters through mine as I discuss the dynamic here. It seems a fitting model to consider the role of biography and biographical research as it relates to Bakhtin, his transmission and, indeed, his legendary persona.

In the thirty years that have passed for me since my first viewing of the movie, the story of the smoked manuscript became something of a pragmatic guide to life while paradoxically taking on the hues and tones of a fairy tale. It represents both the permanence of “the word” and its fragility. The book by Bakhtin is gone, lamented by the scholars below, but the story of the book lingers, told and retold even though its authenticity is dubious. The story blurs the line between historical fact and legend and once heard, the reader of Bakhtin cannot think of his work in entirely the same way again. Through the legend, the utter reality of Bakhtin’s work becomes

somehow more concrete, more materially alive. It influences, or maybe just complicates, the relationship one has with Bakhtin's surviving texts and begs the question of just how seriously one should take writing, storytelling, philosophizing at all. In the end it is a story that calls into question the importance of storytelling and simultaneously, again paradoxically, highlights how important storytelling is in making sense of what it means to be human.

Truly, it is just one of those stories that is so good that it bears repeating¹⁰. It resists censure. Scholars on Bakhtin regularly include renditions of the smoked manuscript story in works dedicated to uncovering Bakhtin's eventful and somewhat mysterious biography or to examining his philosophical explorations by way of unearthing his influences. Bakhtin's life when biographized often seems the stuff of High Romance. It is also a good story. Rumors of noble ancestry; precocious childhood intellect; affiliation with revolutionaries, subversives and artists from the Avant-Garde to Marc Chagall; a brilliant older brother who served as a Classics professor before running off to join the White Guards and then the French Foreign Legion before finally befriending Wittgenstein at Cambridge; a self-sacrificing but capable, devoted wife; an obsession for tea and cigarettes; destitution, persecution, prosecution, exile; an extended stint as a secondary teacher (the most highly romantic occupation of them all); discovery by a young generation of fawning intellectuals and, of course, the subsequent redemption, rehabilitation, revitalization, recognition (Clark & Holquist, 1984) and reappropriation (Kristeva, 1967; Zbinden, 2006).

¹⁰Zbinden (2006) provides a run-down of the history of this story in a footnote on page 8 of her monograph *Bakhtin between East and West: Cross-Cultural Transmission*. I am using the story as something of a unifying thread throughout this section although I use "unifying" in a structural way rather than as a claim to knowledge. This stance is supported by Zbinden's closing comment: "This version of events, however, has been seriously undermined by Brian Poole's discovery of a very substantial fragment of said manuscript. There is to my knowledge no publication by Poole regarding his find. However, Caryl Emerson discusses the significance of his discovery in *The First Hundred Years of Mikhail Bakhtin*" (1997).

Although a leading light among brilliant and talented friends, Bakhtin, disabled by osteomyelitis, leads a life of poverty and hardship during the dramatic political upheavals that occur throughout much of his life. However, the “Bakhtin Circle” a collection of intellectuals led ostensibly by Bakhtin flourished until 1928 when Bakhtin was targeted for arrest (one member of his circle, Pavel Medvedev, was executed near the conclusion of the Stalinist Purge ten years later in 1938¹¹) for his alleged association with “*Voskresenie---Resurrection*”, later described by the authorities as an ‘underground counter-revolutionary organization of the Right-intelligentsia, whose ultimate aim was to ‘overthrow Soviet power’” (Brandist, 2002, p. 9ff; Renfrew, 2015, p. 15). Bakhtin was sentenced to a ten-year exile in a far northern labor camp on the Solovki Islands that would have meant certain demise given his unstable health had not he been resentenced to six years in exile as a clerk in Kazakhstan through the agency of powerful friends Maxim Gorky and Aleksei Tolstoy (Renfrew, 2015). As Renfrew (2015) has noted, this sequence of events has parallels with the life of novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky whom Bakhtin lionizes in his early book on Dostoevsky’s poetics and who also received a death sentence and eventual dramatic reprieve; each man being condemned to a certain death and then miraculously saved from a firing squad (literal, for Dostoevsky, figurative for Bakhtin) at the last minute.

Another oft-repeated story from Bakhtin’s life revolves around the composition and eventual publication of his book on the 16th century author Rabelais entitled *Rabelais and his*

¹¹ Ironically, Medvedev is the signatory of one of the published manuscripts controversially ascribed to Bakhtin, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* (1929/1991) which deals explicitly with developing a Marxist theory of language and literary analysis. As I. R. Titunik writes in an Appendix to another disputed text, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* which treats the same matter, attributed to V. N. Voloshinov, that these writers “whose Marxism, however, was to prove other than the regulation kind, and who were to suffer dire consequences despite, or likely on account of, their Marxism...” (1991, p. 176). Graham Pechey (2007) pointedly remarks that the “independent tradition of Western Marxism” is clearly at odds with the “Soviet Marxism dominant at the time” (p. 14). The Bakhtin Circle flourished at a time when definitional lines were being created and theorized. Not all Marxisms end up being the same by the time of the Stalinist Purge of the late 1930’s.

World (1968, 1984) in the English translation. After the War, Bakhtin returned to Saransk where he submitted his doctoral dissertation on Rabelais, written in the late 1930's for approval to the Gorky Institute of World Literature in Moscow in 1946. The defense of this dissertation is also now famous for its seven-hour length and its fractiousness, and it is easy to read the event as Bakhtin's stand against the authoritarian nature of the state. The dissertation did not have enough support to pass for a Doctorate degree and was referred to the "Higher Attestation Committee" which held another hearing in 1947. The Committee's concern, in part, was that "You concentrate almost exclusively on the so-called folklore realism of Rabelais, on scenes and images involving the fool, and, moreover, show a proclivity for looking at images of a crudely physiological character..." (Quoted in Clark & Holquist, 1984, p. 324) In the end, they finally awarded Bakhtin a Candidate's degree in 1952, a step down from a doctorate in the Soviet Union. It was not until 1963 that events would conspire to drive publication of the Rabelais book, which occurred in 1965 followed by an English translation in 1968. The drama and the volume of years surrounding the progress of the Rabelais book is somewhat emblematic for Bakhtin's career as a whole. And, in another emblematic twist, the Rabelais book which spawned a veritable industry of "carnival" scholarship, is also contentious for the alternate readings that it inspires.

The Rabelais book, in particular, has been interpreted over time as reflecting myriad Bakhtinian stances on his own cultural context. Clark and Holquist dedicate a large portion of their analysis of this period to a discussion of Bakhtin's potential capitulation and/or subversion of contemporary political exigencies: "Rabelais presents, inter alia, a critique of contemporary Soviet ideology. It offers a counter ideology to the values and practices that dominated public life in the 1930's" (1984, p. 307). However, this critique was masked in the use of "carnival

laughter” as a metaphor for liberation from authoritarian discourse. In an interesting passage from Bakhtin’s own notes of 1970-1971, he writes, “The better a person understands the degree to which he is externally determined (his substantiality), the closer he comes to understanding and exercising his real freedom” (N, 1986, p. 139). The image of Bakhtin as trickster---he writes of loopholes that allow for a relationship between freedom within an otherwise deterministic world---is informed in complicated ways by the history of the Rabelais book, its actual text and its critical reception.

Another way to interpret these events is within the context of the dominant intellectual tradition of linguistics forwarded by Ferdinand de Saussure. Is Bakhtin’s critique of Saussurean structural linguistics actually an attempt to counter argue (in code) the strictures enforced by the Soviet regime? Is Saussure’s schema actually a metaphor for totalitarianism---the all-powerful system under which individual acts/speech are unimportant? Bakhtin writes, “Therefore, the single utterance, with all its individuality and creativity, can in no way be regarded as a completely free combination of forms of language, as is supposed, for example by Saussure (and by many other linguists after him) who juxtaposed the utterance (*la parole*), as a purely individual act, to the system of language as a phenomenon that is purely social and mandatory for the individuum” (SG, 1986, p. 81). Is this why references to the current political situation (i.e., references to Stalin, Lenin, Peter the Great and Ivan the Terrible---the latter perhaps being symbols themselves for Stalin) were edited out of the manuscript prior to publication? And so on.

The questions that biographical and archival research have raised only complicate the issue when considering the Rabelais book. Which is all for the better. But, the research also highlights another aspect of Bakhtin that complicates the reception of all of his work. It also

raises the question of Bakhtin's intentional dissimulation or, at least his strategic use of literary analysis to make political points; to both code his critique in more innocuous forms and to edit himself in accordance with the political situation. And this raises the question of whether Bakhtin, master artificer, is simply able to do this owing to his brilliance or whether we all do this constantly, moving between silence and coded metaphors in order to present issues in non-incriminating ways. This, from the beginning was one of the central concerns of the research presented in the following chapters. Do the teachers resist the monologizing forces of a system under which they toil or do they, in a fragmented U.S. system, long for some sort of structural stability?

In addition to the question of Bakhtin's intent, another problem for biographers has been that Bakhtin himself was not especially helpful in confirming or denying issues of authorship. He is known to have knowingly misrepresented facts such as his academic provenance which he borrowed wholesale from his brother Nikolai's resume. Another irony of the controversy surrounding the Rabelais book is that it focuses tightly on the distinctions between high and low, both in aesthetic representations and in cultural life. Bakhtin's valorization of the peasantry in the book is the clearest instance where Bakhtin opens himself to charges of Romanticism as he promotes values intrinsically tied to the representation of the folk. This itself is a complicated matter where Bakhtin plays both sides: "The opposition is not merely between two different concepts of the common man, but between two fundamentally opposed worldviews with nothing in common except that each finds its most comprehensive metaphor in 'the folk' (Holquist, Prologue to RW, 1984, p. xix). Holquist notes that both Bakhtin and the Soviet regime valorize the "folk" through mutually exclusive means. Bakhtin by example, then, demonstrates the

possibility of negotiating the boundaries of categories and hitting grace notes within the agendas of oppositional interest groups.

This is Bakhtin himself as a liminal figure, himself wandering these boundaries between the claims any worldview has on “the people”. Sometimes he seems to acquiesce to the necessities of the time and space in which he finds himself, finding ways of responding without implicating himself but always aware of the fact that his work is playing with boundaries of multiple kinds and that the point of encounter with multiple voices is a borderland between consciousnesses.

These issues may seem tangential to the work at hand and the reader may reasonably ask why I belabor these points. My response is that they are intimately intertwined with the goals of this project which concerns itself first and foremost with the ways in which teachers themselves negotiate the complex and politically charged contexts in which they find themselves. I will readily grant that the apparatus of the American school system is not comparable to the political machinery of Stalinist Soviet Union. I do think, though, that human beings find ways to order their experience, to communicate, and to respond to external pressures by all sorts of strategies and that these strategies are mediated and made present through language. This is where Bakhtin locates our ethical selves: in the responses we give. In our own “answerability”. Bakhtin here, swept up in torrents of interpretation, serves as a type of model for the complex relations that my analysis of teacher storytelling will entail. Another way of saying this might be to suggest that Bakhtin, embedded in the discursive system of his time, responds to the world as he experiences it both from his perspective and from that of the other. The reader of Bakhtin and the literature surrounding him does the same. The reader makes an evaluation but the possibility of alternate interpretations always exists. Teachers, embedded in their own lived realities do the same thing.

It is not a question of truth but rather of the selection of one response among numerous options; numerous combinations. This response, though, is, in itself, only a momentary stance---a link in a chain but, particularly in the context of the storytelling event, it leads to other utterances that have a concrete relationship to what comes before.

Bildungsroman

The point of all of this is to indicate just how much historical events and precipitous changes are considered in tandem with Bakhtin's work as a philosopher and literary critic; a connection that I will make in Acts IV and V to teachers and their work. This temporal aspect in Bakhtinian scholarship has led scholars to seek a developmental process in Bakhtin's work as they show how he graduated from metaphysical thinking, through a linguistic turn, to a more refined and, although partial, rounded expression of his views. This process is complicated by the publication history but also because there are large portions of Bakhtin's life that are relatively silent. It is a fundamental tenet of Bakhtin's work that one can never fully enter the consciousness of another (what Bakhtin calls pure empathy), and for Bakhtin, empathy involves inner and outer movement. This moment of empathizing is always followed by the moment of objectification. Bakhtin explains it thus: "That is, a placing outside oneself of the individuality understood through empathizing, a separating of it from oneself, a return to oneself. And only this returned-into-itself consciousness gives form, from its own place, to the individuality grasped from inside, that is, shapes it aesthetically as a unitary, whole, and qualitatively distinctive individuality" (TPA, p. 14). As we try to map Bakhtin's scholarly progress we are not allowed a consistent, consecutive back and forth with his consciousness. In practical terms, Bakhtin's periods of silence are attributed to political and practical conditions, but the overall

impression of trying to cobble together a consistent intellectual arc in Bakhtin's work is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle with numerous pieces missing.

One piece that scholars particularly lament is the missing book that forms a thread of exploration through this portion of this paper. We now know that, ironically, it was on the *Bildungsroman*, the novel of education, which treated the theme of "the image of man in the process of becoming in the novel" (B, 1986, p. 19). This returns us to the story told in the movie *Smoke* and also introduces the idea that life itself is but a long series of becomings. These are marked by utterances that begin to form the pattern which will situate us as individuals. When the teachers lament the lack of stability in educational policies, part of their complaint is that they are unable to pattern their responses across time. I will return to develop this idea more fully in Act V.

In the most recent major commentary on Bakhtin, Alastair Renfrew (2015), like so many others, cannot resist addressing the legendary tale of the lost *Bildungsroman* commentary. He adds another layer of speculation as to the disappearance of this book: "This is never more dramatic than in the alleged fate of his book on the novel of education or *Bildungsroman*: the typescript may have indeed perished in the publisher's offices under German bombing, but did the chain-smoking Bakhtin, starved of cigarette papers during the Nazi invasion, really roll the only surviving copy up and smoke it?" (p.9). Here, the Germans/Nazis are the antagonistic force; Bakhtin (and the world), one way or another, is deprived of the book as a consequence of German aggression. The framing is different than in Auster's screenplay version. It is situated here not as a global human catastrophe---"one of the worst moments in human history"---but as a confrontation between a hero and the enemy. The tension between the value of art and concrete

living conditions is still there, but in Renfrew's version there is a sense that Nazism has the ability to triumph over the coming-into-being which the "word"¹² represents for Bakhtin.

The intersection of mythic tradition and empirical evidence, a dialogue in and of itself, is an extraordinarily rich location for exploring the generative aspects of storytelling. Early Bakhtin biographers Katerina Clark and Michal Holquist (1984) suggested that, based on surviving fragments, the lost book treated Goethe, one of Bakhtin's favorite authors, and they further suggested at the time that its destruction might have carried with it political undertones. "Publication was never carried through, however, because the war intervened, and the manuscript was destroyed. Bakhtin used much of his remaining copy for tobacco paper, which was then in short supply, and the fragments that have survived do not include his coverage of Gorky or socialist realism. Although circumstances explain the disappearance of most of the manuscript, the question as to why Bakhtin destroyed his one overt critique of socialist realism is one of the enigmas left by him" (p. 273).

Here, legend and empirical evidence (the lack of evidence itself becoming empirical evidence) combine to generate further stories. Bakhtin's enigmatic character lends itself to speculation but his ideas on the impossibility of pure communication: perfectly transmitted information, and pure empathy simply require the proliferation of meaning(s). Fragments of the book, published in English in 1986, do indeed indicate that Bakhtin was interested in using

¹² With so much to unpack, I have decided against treating Russian words as they are translated into other languages with this exception. The Russian word *slovo* can mean either "word" or "discourse". To those of us in the West, this seems a very large distinction but in most of the scholars I've encountered, such semantic leaps are accepted as part of Russian vocabulary. In fact, Bakhtin seems to welcome these ruptures where words have multiple meanings. Echoing this, Emerson & Holquist, in their translation of *The Dialogic Imagination* (Bakhtin, 1981) justify their titling of the essay "Discourse in the Novel" instead of "The Word in the Novel" because "what interests Bakhtin is the sort of talk novelistic environments make possible, and how this type of talking threatens other more closed systems" (p. 427).

Goethe as a model for a type of *Bildungsroman* which he most admires as it addresses the “assimilation of time in literature” (SG, 1986, p. 54) much like he uses Dostoevsky as the exemplar for the novelist. In a sense, careful archival detective work has uncovered hidden aspects of Bakhtin’s general plan. In another sense, the documentation of fragmentary evidence only creates a different type of void where Bakhtin scholars wrestle with filling in the unrecorded gaps in the record.

Ken Hirschkop (1999), another of Bakhtin’s influential commentators, addresses an entire chapter of his dissertation (written under the direction of Terry Eagleton) turned book to “Bakhtin Myths and Bakhtin History” (pp. 111-185). Casting doubt on both the existence of the book and its eventual destruction through inhalation he writes, “The legend regarding the fate of Bakhtin’s second copy...always suffered from the excessive meaningfulness of myth. But according to the most recent editorial information, the myth of the smoking copy only distracts us from a more fundamental illusion: the belief that this text existed in the first place. There is plenty of material in note form, there is a plan, there are letters to the publisher---but no evidence that a book on the *Bildungsroman* was ever completed or sent to press” (pp. 113).¹³

Interestingly, one of the other myths that Hirschkop debunks is that of Bakhtin’s erudition. Rather than reading the primary sources which he cites, one line of thinking argues that he had merely read commentaries on these sources. The evidence is based on abnormal transliteration of Greek names in Bakhtin’s manuscripts. Hirschkop writes, “The German

¹³ Hirschkop includes a footnote here directing the reader to a thorough examination of the story “by V. Kozhinov in ‘Kak pishut trudy’” (p. 113) and to a personal email from Brian Poole, editor of the volume of the Russian *Collected Works* stating he had seen a draft of a letter to a publisher, manuscript pages that became other essays, a plan for the book and notebooks containing relevant writings on the *Bildungsroman*. In almost all cases it helps to be able to read Russian; this lack of ability is a weakness that I have not overcome although should I at some point in the future, it still seems unlikely that access to Bakhtin’s archives, still restricted, would be permitted.

literature on classical, medieval, and Renaissance writing on which Bakhtin took extensive notes accounts for much of his field of reference---which is to say that Bakhtin may not have read many of the texts he confidently slots into his philosophy” (p. 114). Add that to the point Hirschkop makes later: “When Bakhtin claimed that ‘every word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially tensed life’ (DN 106/293) he forgot to add that the definition of a context, a biography, an intellectual source, is a historical act, too, rent by social tensions and struggles” (Hirschkop, 1999, p. 114) and you can see the astute observation that Bakhtin’s very program is what renders him so difficult to pin down. It is very easy to go from a firm biographical/historical foundation to flights of fantasy with Bakhtin because, it seems, that’s what you are supposed to do. Fragments of texts, rumors of educative resources, vaguely pronounced dictums all come under the contextual influence of the reader.

Brandist (2002) adds this note, “Between 1936 and 1938 he completed a book on the *Bildungsroman* (novel of education) and its significance in the history of realism; this was allegedly lost when the publishing house at which the manuscript was awaiting publication was destroyed in the early days of the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. Voluminous preparatory material still exists, although part is lost according to one, possibly spurious, story because Bakhtin used it for cigarette papers during the wartime shortage” (p. 10). Brandist elsewhere presents some of the content of Bakhtin’s existing notes on the topic. His interpretation depends on an issue that is central to Bakhtin studies: the historico-cultural context out of which Bakhtin’s writing arises. “Bakhtin’s perspective on human self-education and the formation of the self and the world that constitute the two aspects of the German *Bildung* (education and formation) is deliberately presented in terms that suggest connections with the Marxist idea of praxis. This was inevitable in the closed ideological environment in which he

hoped to publish his work” (Brandist, 2002, p. 153). Again, Bakhtin is frequently read with a speculative eye towards how he is (must be) responding to his practical environment. Indeed, Bakhtin’s insistence on the importance of context with respect to becoming seems to lead commentators to read political context into interpretations that, paradoxically, over-determine Bakhtin and his thought.

Discursus Interruptus III

This tendency toward over-determination has provided me useful fodder as I strive to develop a methodological apparatus that takes into account the process of becoming and the historical, social, political settings of American education. In my view, we tend to think of variable contexts, when we think about them at all, as a schematized set of concentric circles gradually widening the frame outward. As I explored the stories of the teachers, I often had the habit of thinking of the school surrounded by the district, surrounded by the state, surrounded by the federal government. It is difficult to escape this conceptualization, and my early thinking on this project was really interested in the question of which discourses, appropriate to which setting, were being utilized by the teachers as they told stories of their working conditions. Ultimately though, I have come to believe that this is an overly simplistic way of thinking about the teachers and their settings. The image of nesting, while providing an accessible means for analyzing their stories, fails to capture the profoundly individual capacity of each storyteller. Each of these nested contexts has different meanings which carry different weights in the stories that the teachers tell. The concentric circles that I had originally envisioned are not clearly delineated but instead they bleed into one another through the complex interaction of experience and language. As a result of this discovery, I began searching for a way to incorporate multiple settings without resorting to something that could be diagrammed. Act II treats, in a dialogic

manner, the question of setting and attempts to demonstrate the fluid relationship between contexts and Bakhtinian utterance.

At long last, I think that these examples suffice to introduce the complications and possible implications of using Bakhtin's work as a conceptual framework for analysis of a taped performance event in which participants tell stories of themselves and their contexts. There is something appealing for me, though, in these complications because they, in and of themselves, seem to demonstrate Bakhtin's insistence on contingency and indeterminacy. As noted above, the problems with using Bakhtin has an historical and practical component. Bakhtin's life was highly erratic. He lived and wrote during the First World War, the Bolshevik Revolution, the rise and fall of Lenin, the Second World War, the Stalinist purges, and through the Cold War under Khrushchev. It is impossible to separate Bakhtin's writing from these historical settings because they not only inform the things that he can say, the ways that he can say things and the physical settings of his writings. But they also emphasize the changing nature of the world and the spaces we inhabit as they grant us, always fleetingly, a vantage point that is our own.

Intertextuality

This is, I think, a fact: Bakhtin was born in 1895. Another one: by 1918 Bakhtin was living in Nevel participating in an intellectual group that would be the precursor of the Bakhtin Circle. And another: this early instantiation of the intellectual circle included members with wide ranging interests---philosophy, language, mathematics, music, art and biology. Apparently at the time specializations were thought to overlap. (The preceding statement is, I suppose, pointed opinion.¹⁴) In 1920 many of the original group had moved to Vitebsk and until 1924 it

¹⁴ With all respect to David Foster Wallace.

appears that Bakhtin wrote constantly. The original version of his book on Dostoevsky is attributed to this period as is the origination of a much larger project, pieces of which survive as *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* (ca 1919-1921), *Art and Answerability* (1919) and *Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity* (ca. 1920-1923). Still, these appear to be put portions of the project as originally conceived (Bakhtin, 1993, pp. vii-ix). These texts, as they exist in English translation today, lay the groundwork for Bakhtin's theories of "architectonics" which establishes his position on self-other relations, or the fundamental process of intersubjectivity in human existence (this then leads to the "unifying" conceptual rubric of "dialogism"¹⁵) and for the importance of aesthetics in human understanding and meaning making.

While readers in the Soviet Union were rediscovering Bakhtin in the 1960's, most scholars agree that it was Julia Kristeva who introduced Bakhtin to the West. Owing to her publication of "Bakhtine, le mot, le dialogue et le roman" in 1967, most Western readers were introduced to Bakhtin through the concept of "intertextuality". As an important point in not only Bakhtin's reputation but in the transmission of his thought, this moment is worth a bit of attention. Zbinden (2006) provides a useful summary and analysis of the impact this publication had as well as an analysis of Kristeva's reading of Bakhtin. In the end Zbinden argues that Kristeva did not serve Bakhtin well as she misrepresented his conception of "dialogue". She writes, "It seems that Kristeva has successfully 'transformed Bakhtin into her own', 'surmounted his otherness', to echo the words of Bakhtin quoted earlier. And even though she has developed, in intertextuality, a very productive concept, she has silenced the voice of the other, ended the

¹⁵ Just to be clear. Bakhtin conceives of the human condition as fundamentally dialogic; that is, intersubjective. This notion runs throughout his writings. Holquist gives the name "dialogism" as a unifying title to the breadth of Bakhtin's work. While Bakhtin uses the concept of "dialogue", he never refers to his system/anti-system as "dialogism".

dialogue. Her appropriation of Bakhtin is complete, finalized, and thus more akin to distortion” (p. 21).

Zbinden, in tracing Bakhtin’s translations and interpretation in France and the West also perceptively notes how he has been claimed by both structuralists and poststructuralists. Again, referencing “intertextuality”, she notes, “Whichever position one may subscribe to (or not), it is undeniable that the concept of intertextuality has been used on the one hand in a structuralist perspective to ‘posit certain formal connections among domains of culture hitherto studied separately under the historical or evolutionary model that dominated the humanities and the sciences’ while, “as its subversive and radical supplement, deconstruction uses intertextuality to open up the epistemological field so that any and all connections among human discourses may be made””(Zbinden, 2006, p. 97). In other words, “intertextuality” can either serve as a determiner of meaning within the system of language, or it can indicate the indeterminacy of meaning through its inherent destabilizing nature.

It is also worth noting that the issue of context and hindsight can be a thorny one. With respect to the teachers and the stories they tell, there are numerous indications that they are situating themselves historically both in their localized setting as well as in a larger educational environment. Using Bakhtin’s publication history, I am trying to establish a viable way of presenting contexts novelistically. That is, overflowing with voices. In Bakhtin’s case, as I would argue is also the case with the teacher/participant/heroes of my story, there is the vacillation between meaning-making, responsibility-taking stances. As is to be expected within the world of dialogue. With respect to the relationship of author to hero, Todorov notes Bakhtin’s vacillation although he frames it in the terms of dialectic: “A few years later, however, in 1929, there appears the first publication signed by Bakhtin: the book on Dostoevsky. A

radical transformation has already taken place between, let us say, 1924 and 1928: Bakhtin has reversed his ‘prescriptive’ statement and he now espouses Dostoevsky’s viewpoints. Far from ‘verifying’ his initial theses by analyzing Dostoevsky’s works, he has replaced them by their antitheses” (Todorov, 1984, p. 103). Todorov’s insight offers a perspective that, I think, is relevant to the research that I am conducting. Teacher working conditions and teachers’ perceptions of their working conditions are highly susceptible to change depending on circumstances. It seems safe to say that responses to a survey question concerning how safe one feels on the job might be directly influenced by localized events---the breaking up of a fight, for instance---as well as nationally publicized events such as the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary in Connecticut. What Todorov highlights is whether the changing of one’s mind is a process of back and forth between pro and con or whether the contingency of human life requires constant readjustment to experienced stimuli and more nuanced positions. It seems a reasonable goal to me that if we are to comment on educational processes, we should take into account these types of nuances.

Dialogism promotes the changing of one’s view of things as a rich and variable experience. The flexibility of humans to adapt, to rationalize and justify contradictory positions is one of our basic characteristics. This flexibility is one of the factors to be considered in the teachers’ stories. It is not a question of either/or but rather a process of assimilation whereby we are always, at every moment, called to be accountable for ourselves: to take an ethical stance. As Bakhtin makes clear, this ethical stance is not driven by the neo-Kantian “ought”¹⁶ which is an

¹⁶ The theory of social justice espoused by John Rawls (1971/1999) would be an example of this; i.e., the way actors in the world SHOULD make decisions versus how they actually do.

abstraction that may or may not play out during real world situations that are imbued with a multitude of other voices and intentions.

This overlap is not, however, a simple charting of the referents for someone's thought. Intertextuality is another (somewhat dangerous as shown in the Kristeva discussion above) factor that will inform this study's analysis as well. When Poole, (1998) demonstrated unequivocally after the release of archival materials that Bakhtin had lifted entire passages of his book on Rabelais from Neo-Kantian philosopher Ernst Cassirer (cited in Hirschkop, 2001, p. 3), there could be raised all sorts of questions about quotation, indirect speech, and double-voicing. This, ironically, is a subject that fascinated Bakhtin (and his circle, depending on the attribution of authorship of *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (Volosinov, 1973, 1986)). These aspects will be treated more fully in Act V where analysis of the teachers' stories circles around the variety of storytelling techniques they employ as they discuss their working conditions, particularly with respect to the way they often share stories either by collaboratively building them or incorporating each other's as they respond around the table. As they tell stories, they are simultaneously creating themselves and positioning themselves with respect to an alien other. Their utterances stake a claim for their identities and justify such claims.

The utterance is inevitable because it is the way we exist in the world. Elsewhere in the same essay quoted earlier, *The Problem of Speech Genres*, Bakhtin expands the definition. The translation, as above is by Vern W. McGee.

Others' utterances can be repeated with varying degrees of reinterpretation. They can be referred to as though the interlocutor were already well aware of them; they can be silently presupposed; or one's responsive reaction to them can be reflected only in the expression of one's own speech---in the selection of language means and intonations that are determined not by the topic of one's own speech but by the others' utterances concerning the same topic. Here is an important and typical case: very frequently the expression of our utterance is determined not

only---and sometimes not so much---by the referentially semantic content of the utterance, but also by others' utterances on the same topic to which we are responding or with which we are polemicizing. They also determine our emphasis on certain elements, repetition, our selection of harsher (or, conversely, milder) expressions, a contentious (or, conversely, conciliatory) tone, and so forth. The expression of an utterance can never be fully understood or explained if its thematic content is all that is taken into account. The expression of an utterance always responds to a greater or lesser degree, that is, it expresses the speaker's attitude toward others' utterances and not just his attitude toward the object of his utterance" (SG, 1986, pp. 91-91).

It is interesting, then to think not only of Bakhtin's plagiarism of Cassirer but also of Kristeva's response to Bakhtin as seen in the development of her idea of "intertextuality". Bakhtin assumes that we reassert the voice of the other---one way or another it is inevitable because words themselves only have meaning within a social context. This, of course, applies to methodological considerations as well.

The Methodology of Creative Understanding---Author, Hero, and Other

Earlier in this chapter I quoted a brief portion of this response from Bakhtin. Here I reproduce it in full, in the McGee translation, to call attention to Bakhtin's thinking on a particular type of research methodology.

"There exists a very strong, but one-sided and thus untrustworthy, idea that in order better to understand a foreign culture, one must enter into it, forgetting one's own, and view the world through the eyes of this foreign culture. This idea, as I said, is one-sided. Of course, a certain entry as a living being into a foreign culture, the possibility of seeing the world through its eyes, is a necessary part of the process of understanding it; but if this were the only aspect of this understanding, it would merely be a duplication and would not entail anything new or enriching. *Creative understanding* does not renounce itself, its own place in time, its own culture; and it forgets nothing. In order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be *located outside* the object of his or her creative understanding--in time, in space, in culture. For one cannot even really see one's own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help; our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space and because they are *others* (NM, 1986, pp. 6-7)

This passage, in its own way, encompasses a huge portion of Bakhtin's thinking on the issue of intersubjectivity. It can be read as a statement of the impossibility of "going native" although there is clearly something to be gained by stepping into an alien environment. So long as one recognizes that the other is always fundamentally other. And always a part of oneself as a constituting element. In typical Bakhtinian fashion, this passage serves also for a metaphor of this very process of co-being (co-existence) that Bakhtin understands as occurring between a self and the other. His thought is always to be taken as working on several levels. When Bakhtin speaks of "author" and "hero" he makes interesting observations about the way literary products work with respect to the subject who composes the work. But he is simultaneously making parallel observations as to how the self, itself, works in its relation to the concrete world through which it moves.

In working through this research process, the previous passage has often moved to the forefront of my thoughts. In the first place, I have placed myself at the center of a research project as a participating character and on the other, I am authoring myself and others. The dynamics of authoring are illustrated here:

"It should be quite obvious, moreover, how unreliable must be the evidence provided by an author's comments on the process of creating a hero, if we take into account all the chance factors that inevitably affect what an author-as-person has to say about his own heroes, that is, if we take into account such factors as the critical response to his work, his own present world view (which could have changed considerably), his aspirations and pretensions (cf. Gogol'), various practical considerations, and so on" (AH, 1990, p.7).

This I take as a general warning. The unreliability of narrators will be discussed in Act III as will the issue of the "intentional fallacy". Here, though, it is important to note that Bakhtin doesn't privilege the author's intentions nor his understanding of his own work. This, I think has important implications for the research at hand.

In Bakhtin's view, an author is an unreliable source of information about his own creation. Granted he is thinking here about fiction writers, but the thought has certainly occurred to me that, although I have empirical data---recorded stories spoken not by characters but by actual humans---there is no sense in pretending that my presentation of their words doesn't recreate them as characters. The creation of these "heroes", as Bakhtin would have it, is influenced first by the various factors which Bakhtin lists above during every stage of this research process. Rather than addressing this influence, as much research does, as a question of positionality, I am openly acknowledging, and, in fact, welcoming the fact that my study is a collaborative, aesthetic production. The choice of holding a storytelling event rather than a focus group is a conscious one that was designed to emphasize the theatrical aspect of research that, if Bakhtin is correct, depends on intersubjective relations whether we admit it or not. As I will show below, the interrelatedness of acts, words, and performance are central to Bakhtin's program.

Scholars generally note that Bakhtin's work was, in its earliest iteration, focused primarily on the intersubjectivity of human ontology and epistemology. This intersubjectivity has, as a central constituent factor, an aesthetic aspect. In *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* Bakhtin establishes the rudiments of the meditations that will move throughout all of his work. As Holquist (1993) somewhat dramatically says, "The topics of "authoring," "responsibility," self and other, the moral significance of "outsideness,"¹⁷ "participatory thinking," the implications for the individual subject of having "no-alibi in existence," the relation between the world as experienced in actions and the world as represented in discourse---these are all broached here in the white heat of discovery" (p. ix). Holquist also notes that the extant text, as I

¹⁷ Which Todorov (1984) translates as "exotopy", from the Greek "out of place/location".

mentioned above, was heavily damaged and that some sections of Bakhtin's hasty writing are difficult to read with some sections, written in the hand of Bakhtin's wife, Elena Aleksandrovna, being clearer. The first annunciation of anything resembling a Bakhtinian program, then, is already a collusion of two minds and an act of transcription.

In *Towards a Philosophy of the Act* Bakhtin argues that "Every thought of mine, along with its content, is an act or deed that I perform---my own individually answerable act or deed [*postupok*]. It is one of all those acts which make up my whole once-occurrent life as an uninterrupted performing of acts [*postuplenie*]" (TPA, 1993, p. 3). Here, Bakhtin does not specifically differentiate between acts, deeds, or verbal acts---speaking. It is clear that he thinks of them as the same thing: an outward expression in the concrete world.

Bakhtin repeatedly emphasizes his interest in the concrete, actual world. Our lives, he says, should be cast as "answerable, risk-fraught, and open becoming through performed actions" (TPA, 1993, p. 9). He rejects theoretical ethics that describe the "ought" which guides human behavior as being too abstract for the real world of constant, temporally present action. From this position, Bakhtin turns to aesthetics to describe the way in which we exist in the world, and the launching pad for this is the idea of empathy. Bakhtin insists that empathy and objectification "interpenetrate each other". Although he describes this process in terms of moments---"Both of these moments are inseparable in reality" (TPA, 1993, p. 16) --- It is the sense of simultaneity that occurs in our concrete lives that matters. This underlies much of Bakhtin's thought and is of the greatest importance in trying to establish a method for analysis. Bakhtin writes,

"This moment of empathizing is always followed by the moment of objectification, that is a placing outside oneself of the individuality understood through empathizing, a separating of it from oneself, a return into oneself. And

only this returned-into-consciousness gives form, from its own place, to the individuality grasped from the inside, that is, shapes it aesthetically as a unitary, whole, and qualitatively distinct individuality. And all these aesthetic moments---unity, wholeness, self-sufficiency, distinctiveness---are transgredient to the individuality that is being determined: from within itself, these moments do not exist for it in its own life, it does not live by them---for itself” (TPA, 1993, p. 15).

Bakhtin says we are culturally defined: our jobs, our chronological setting, our “material budget”. But this does not take into account our uniqueness. “The principle of formal ethics is not the principle of an actually performed act at all, but is rather the principle of the possible generalization of already performed acts in a theoretical transcription of them” (TPA, 1993, p. 27). This critique of ethics is important for education studies and justifies an ethnographic stance. Our ethical stance in the world is an “ought” but not at a level of abstraction. Rather it is rooted in the concreteness of every given moment: “This acknowledged participation of mine (the non-alibi in Being) produces a concrete ought---the ought to realize the whole uniqueness, as the utterly irreplaceable uniqueness of being, in relation to every constituent moment of this being...” (TPA, 1993, p. 57).

As Bakhtin makes clear, though, this type of work must be done with the understanding of the relationship between self and other. These critiques of abstraction and theoreticism (“and this event as a whole cannot be transcribed in theoretical terms if it is not to lose the very sense of its being an event...” (TPA, 1993, p. 30-1)) not only demonstrate Bakhtin’s commitment to the concrete “actually performed act” that constitutes and manifests our existence, but it also highlights his anti-systemacism: “It is only from within the actually performed act, which is once-occurrent, integral, and unitary in its answerability, that we can find an approach to unitary and once-occurrent Being in its concrete actuality” (TPA, 1993, p. 28). Or, as he puts it elsewhere, “What we intend to provide is not a system and not a systematic inventory of values, where pure concepts (self-identical) are interconnected on the basis of logical correlativity.

What we intend to provide is a representation, a description of the actual, concrete architectonic of a value-governed experiencing of the world..." (TPA, 1993, p. 61).

It is the unity of fact (concrete action) and sense (meaning) that we can be known by others or ourselves. This is our answerability: "The answerably performed act is the final result or summation, an all-around definitive conclusion. The performed act concentrates, correlates and resolves within a unitary and unique and, this time, final context both the sense and fact, the universal and the individual, the real and the ideal, for everything enters into the composition of its answerable motivation" (TPA, 1993, pp. 28-29). Our deed (or word) then summarizes our evaluative stance toward whatever we are responding to. It has as one of its components an emotional-volitional tone that communicates our position on whatever we respond to. Each response is a link in the chain of our existence, rooted in a moral response. And still, Bakhtin realizes that this response is necessarily partial owing to its dependence on language: "...unitary and once-occurrent Being-as-event and the performed act that partakes in it are fundamentally and essentially expressible, but in fact it is a very difficult task to accomplish, and while full adequacy is unattainable, it is always present as that which is to *be* achieved (TPA, 1993, p. 31).

Here Bakhtin makes the distinction between something that is given (something that just is---an impossibility) and something that is usually translated as "posited". An object is never simply an object that exists without our involving it in the processes of our dialogic cognition: "And that is why a word does not merely designate an object as a present-on-hand entity, but also expresses by its intonation (an actual word cannot avoid being intonated, for intonation follows from the very fact of its being pronounced) my valuative attitude toward the object, toward what is desirable or undesirable in it, and , in so doing, sets it in motion toward that which is yet-to-be-determined about it, turns it into a constituent moment of the living, ongoing

event” (TPA, 1993, p. 33). Bakhtin points out that we do not come into contact with the objects of the outside world as though they were meteors falling on our heads from out of the blue which then remain in our minds without us thinking anything about them. Instead, we encounter objects that are presented to us and, through emotional-volitional thinking, we make judgements about them. And these judgements are not isolated incidents but participate in all of the other thoughts we have had. Culture plays a role in this, but as a particular system of values it cannot be read as the defining arbiter for individual decision making. “All universally valid value becomes *actually* valid only in the individual context” (TPA, 1993, p. 36).

The self, what Bakhtin calls our “non-alibi in being gets full treatment in the following passage which I quote at length:

What underlies the unity of the answerable consciousness is not a principle as a starting point, but the fact of an actual acknowledgement of one’s own participation in unitary Being-as-event, and this fact cannot be adequately expressed in theoretical terms, but can only be described and participatively experienced. Here lies the point of origin of the answerable deed and of all the categories of the concrete, once-occurrent, and compelling ought. I, too, exist [et ego sum---in all the emotional-volitional, performative fullness of this affirmation] actually---in the whole and assume the obligation to say this word. I, too, participate in Being in a once-occurrent and never repeatable manner: I occupy a place in once-occurrent Being that is unique and never-repeatable, a place that cannot be taken by anyone else and is impenetrable for anyone else. In the given once-occurrent point where I am now located, no one else has ever been located in the once-occurrent time and once-occurrent space of once-occurrent Being. And it is around this once-occurrent point that all once-occurrent Being is arranged in a once-occurrent and never-repeatable manner. That which can be done by me can never be done by anyone else. The uniqueness of singularity of present-on-hand Being is compellingly obligatory” (TPA, 1993, p. 40)

Bakhtin says that we can abdicate our own uniqueness through passivity and try to claim an alibi in being, at least in theory, but to do so would sever oneself from the “ontological roots of being” (TPA, 1993, p. 44). The very nature of our being is tied up with our non-alibi in being;

everything we think, do, feel, or experience emphasizes our unique obligation to respond to the world. “Being-as-event” is determined “precisely in correlation with my own obligative uniqueness” (TPA, 1993, p. 45). And this being, as expressed in an act which necessarily carries with it a valuation. There is an “eternity of meaning” that is non-valuative but, once we act, “...the eternity of meaning becomes something actually valued---something actually valid and operative” (TPA, 1993, p. 59). Again, Bakhtin recognizes abstraction when he says there is an eternity of meaning out there, but he insists that we, by acting/speaking activate the meaning that is correlated with our being as a real human.

This is but one of the three points (not duality/binary) that Bakhtin argues make up the architectonics of being. There are three basic moments: the I-for-myself, the other-for-me, and the I-for-the-other. This is also where Bakhtin slips the trap of radical subjectivity as well as the notion of a fixed center. For, to reiterate again, Bakhtin is very much opposed to relativism; he always insists on concrete utterances from concrete beings. As Morson and Emerson (1989) put it, “Indeed, if anything, relativism is the worst form of theoreticism---worse than ethical and cognitive systematization---because real moral acts do at least take theoretical knowledge into consideration as part of their ethical stance. Relativism deprives us of those aspects of theoreticism that are helpful without supplying us with a sense of the ‘eventness’ in return” (p. 9).

Architectonics of Research

Bakhtin’s architectonics (derived from a term used by Kant) “...is the general study of how entities relate to each other, whereas aesthetics concerns itself with the particular problem of consummation, or how specific parts are shaped into specific wholes...But it should be kept in

mind that for Bakhtin---the thinker who sought to make loopholes into (almost) metaphysical categories---their wholeness can never be absolute” (Holquist, 1989, p. 156).

In order to fully develop the methodology implemented in the design, execution, analysis, and presentation of this dissertation project, a short explication of several last elements of Bakhtin’s own program needs to be provided. Bakhtin’s theory of intersubjectivity and its relation to aesthetics is of fundamental importance. This then leads to “answerability”: Bakhtin’s alignment of ethics within his overall framework. Language is also central here in the role it plays in aesthetic creation as in the analogy of “author” and “hero” to self and other, as well as to its relation to answerability---the way we necessarily address the world. Once language is implicated, an analysis of the nature of language is helpful in situating the analysis. Language is rooted in concrete utterance which Bakhtin defines as something that itself is complete in requiring a response. Hence, this could be one word or many. Again, he eschews any grammatical/syntactical design as generating the element of analysis. From the utterance comes intertextuality which, of course, reflects back on aesthetics---we craft our responses---but this is governed to some degree by the strength of monoglossia and heteroglossia.

His argument about centrifugal and centripetal forces is aligned with this---that language is always pulled between stabilization and destabilization; both are active at any time, but the context makes only certain amounts of each available. These forces should also be understood as working on several planes. Our cognitive processes work centripetally in order to make sense of the chaos of the outside world. On a societal level, the “centripetal forces of language” (DN, 1981, p. 270) serve to “unify and centralize the verbal-ideological world”. Bakhtin argues that these forces, however, “...operate in the midst of heteroglossia” (DN, 1981, p. 271). These forces are simultaneous and co-existent: “Alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces

of language carry on their uninterrupted work, alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forward... The authentic environment of an utterance, the environment in which it lives and takes shape, is dialogized heteroglossia, anonymous and social as language, but simultaneously concrete, filled with specific content and accepted as an individual utterance” (DN, 1981, p. 272). Heteroglossia is the situation of the world which is composed of innumerable voices. Language has a tendency both towards unification---we narrow the possibilities of spoken expression in order to communicate effectively---and disunification---language is always adapting and changing in accordance to the numerous voices at play.

This individual utterance, issued in the heteroglossic world, then expresses a value in the axiological sense. Bakhtin points to intonation as a primary force for establishing this value. He writes, ““Expressive intonation is a constitutive marker of the utterance. It does not exist in the system of language as such, that is, outside the utterance... Thus, emotion, evaluation, and expression are foreign to the word of language and are born only in the process of live usage in a concrete utterance” (SG, 1986, pp. 85-87). Elsewhere he says,

“To a certain degree, one can speak by means of intonations alone, making the verbally expressed part of speech relative and replaceable, almost indifferent. How often we use words whose meaning is unnecessary, or just repeat the same word or phrase, just in order to have a material bearer for some necessary intonation. The extratextual intonational-evaluative context can be only partially realized in the reading (performance) of a given text, and the largest part of it, especially in its more essential and profound strata, remains outside the given text as the dialogizing background for its perception” (MHS, 1986, p. 166).

In monologic discourse, the centralizing effect is in full force, and hence, the possibility of speaking against the accepted discourse is extremely limited. The analog for Bakhtin of a

fully unified discourse is the genre of epic. Alternately, the Rabelais book is as an example of the centrifugal force of language that expresses the potential for polyglossia as it explodes and overturns the general rules of standardized language. It is in the book on Rabelais that Bakhtin also brings body and action into the picture, justifying the use of video, feasting, and theater and reminding us that originally, in his philosophical texts, he did not necessarily differentiate between speaking and acting, and that he also considered the body and its relations to the event as an essential component.

In the storytelling events designed to emphasize the aesthetic (as opposed to a focus group or interview), the participants share their stories: a way of expressing value through an overtly aestheticized means, but they also take responsibility for their stories which express the ethical stance that they are taking. As Bakhtin pointed out, the two are indivisible. The utterances are events in need of response and the shared “stage” offers an opportunity for an analysis of social meaning making, intertextuality, double voicing and performed intersubjectivity. What interests me about this intersubjectivity, among other things, is its role in the dynamics of values. Bakhtin writes, “The I and the other are fundamentally value categories that for the first time make any actual valuation, and the moment of valuation, or rather, that of the valuation attitude of consciousness, is present not only in an act proper, but also in every experience and even in the slightest sensation: to live means to take an axiological stand in every moment of one’s life or to position oneself with respect to values” (AH, 1990, p.188).

In the writing of this dissertation, myself, as author, brings another aesthetic dimension to the proceedings. Bakhtin’s description in “Author and Hero” describes the intersubjective experience as one in which the author’s aesthetic practice consummates the hero. During his critique of “expressive” aesthetics, Bakhtin argues that it is impossible to empathize totally with

the other. Using the example of viewing Da Vinci's Last Supper, he points out that one cannot understand the group pictured as a unified whole but can only understand each individually, "...each participant is intensely individual, and they are all in a state of active contraposition to each other" (AH, 1990, p. 65). Instead he poses the possibility of co-experience with the author: "While each hero expresses himself, the whole of a work is said to be the expression of the author" (AH, 1990, p. 65). However, this too is not true co-experiencing because it does not access the author's inner life the way that co-experiencing a hero (character/other) does. Instead, the viewer co-experiences a position with the author and becomes not a co-experiencer but a co-creator.¹⁸ This is a dangerous line to walk because, as Bakhtin points out in his brief passage on stage acting, the actor becomes a hero and a passive one at that. The line that my research is walking is the same as that of those who would script teachers. Does it simply come down to which author we would prefer? The only solution that I have to this problem, which is the same problem that Gallagher meditates on, is to present my heroes as fully as possible and to do that, I necessarily must try to provide contradictory and varied readings of their own stories. The various forms of empathy/sympathy/co-experiencing that Bakhtin refers to fall into the category of "impoverishing theories "because they seek to explain the creatively productive event by reducing its full amplitude...What one gains in this way is a purely theoretical transcription of an already accomplished event." (AH, 1990, p. 87). They assume that merging of consciousnesses is an enriching process whereas Bakhtin argues that the opposite is true.

¹⁸ I should add here that Barthes' conception of the author is different from the Bakhtinian usage. Although it would be interesting to think through the differences, it is beyond the scope of the dissertation. The Hirschkop & Shepherd (1989), and the Zbinden (2006), would be good places to start. Zbinden particularly complains that Bakhtin is situated against his will as a structuralist by Kristeva and Todorov. Many authors link Bakhtinian ideas to Derrida, Lacan, Foucault, etc. Of course if Gallop (2011) is right, Barthes should be taken with a wink and a nudge; something Bakhtin would surely appreciate.

Bakhtin's distinction between art and life centers on the way we conceptualize their continuity. As seen below, it is most essential to understand how life and art are related. In Renfrew's (2015) words, "'Life', for Bakhtin, is distinct from art and literature in that it is fundamentally not 'finalizable' in any sense, whereas 'aesthetic activity' implies some kind of provisional finalization.

Bakhtin juxtaposes epistemological consciousness with aesthetic consciousness and provides a roadmap, hopefully, toward presenting the transcribed material in a way that doesn't imply the unity that he so condemns here:

"Epistemological consciousness, the consciousness of science, is a unitary and unique consciousness, or, to be exact---a single consciousness. Everything this consciousness deals with must be determined by itself alone: any determinateness must be derived from itself and any determination of an object must be performed by itself...Any unity is its *own* unity; it cannot admit next to itself any other unity that would be different from it and independent of it (the unity of nature, the unity of another consciousness), that is, any sovereign unity that would stand over against it with its *own* fate, one *not* determined by epistemological consciousness...Aesthetic consciousness, on the other hand, as a loving and value-positing consciousness, is a consciousness of a consciousness: the author's (the I's) consciousness of the hero's (the other's) consciousness."
(AH, 1990, pp. 88-9)

The challenge, and one that is taken up as I try to follow Bakhtin's definition of "novel", is to organize the heroes in such a way as to consummate them fully. As I have struggled to do this, I have realized that there is a danger in turning "the novel" into another system. At times it has seemed like an impossible task to try to incorporate the voices of the teachers without subjecting them to categorization, systemization, or reductive analysis. But, it has also seemed that the attempt is imperative. Following from this goal, the aesthetic design of the dissertation must present the event as heteroglossic and must attempt to present the participants, now heroes, as full human beings with all their contingencies, deep contextualized nature, and immanent aesthetic powers.

While scholars have consistently traced Bakhtin's pattern of thought from one book to another, from one era to another, he remains human in his resistance to totalization. Perhaps the way to avoid being consummated is to continually change both in content and in form. The following chapters attempt to do this in various ways. In my presentation above, I sought to present Bakhtin as a hero whose indeterminacy is part of his makeup. It is an aesthetic creation but one that, I hope, emphasizes the mobile nature of both Bakhtin's life and his interpretation as a model for thinking about educational issues.

An accurate representation of the dialogic cannot be fixed. Consider this example: In 1989 Michael Holquist writes,

“...we may usefully invoke a distinction introduced by one of Bakhtin's more sensitive British readers, as he extends the work of one of Bakhtin's more acute French readers. Tony Bennett writes that Julia Kristeva's concept of intertextuality comprehends references 'to other texts which can be discerned within the internal composition of a specific individual text [whereas] we intend the concept of inter-textuality to refer to the social organization of the relations between texts within specific conditions of reading' ... The manifold strategies by which the novel demonstrates and deploys the complexities of relation---social, historical, personal, discursive, textual---are its essence. Heteroglossia is a plurality of relations, not just a cacophony of different voices” (Holquist, 1989, pp. 88-89).

In this example, a reading of Bakhtin has developed through three separate readers who are also themselves writers (plus myself). The relationship between each is situated---British, French---in ways that are more loaded than a purely spatial placement would indicate. Holquist himself is one of the foremost commentators on Bakhtin, historically speaking. When I engage with him, I engage with Bennett, Kristeva and, of course, Bakhtin. There are multiple conversations going on.

This is how life always is and this is how the participants in the storytelling performance are variously constituted. Research that is sensitive to this multiplicity must be presented

differently from that which produces the results or findings of a study. While I have no complaint with science, this is not science. It is not replicable; my analysis is not reproducible. The teachers who generously gave their time and their stories to me do not exist now as they did in the moment of the filming...and the eating, and the talking, and the laughing. They would not tell the same stories again. They talked back to each other around two particular tables using each other's newly-minted language.

And they are also voicing, responding, answering, expressing, multiple relations within their professional and personal lives. Their relationship to authority; their relationship to their students which inverts their own subservient position; their relationship to media pronouncements; their relationship to parents; their own experiences with their own children; their own experiences as children. Indeed, they are responding, as we often forget no matter what our methodological proclivities, to research. And in potentially the unending multiplicities of relations that inform their daily lives. One way of trying to get at this phenomenon is to create a work that participates in novelty. A work that explores both determinism and agency. What seems paradoxical is, for Bakhtin, simply the tension of relations always dynamic. Novelty reflects heteroglossia, the situation of dialogue, by stressing intertextuality. Nothing is our own, all communication is shared both in the moment and in our cognitive processes prior to utterance. And our utterance is a reflection of our agency. It is our answerability and our responsibility. It makes us alive and it is unfinalizable.

In the next Act, I begin to address the working conditions of unfinalizable teachers who are also research subjects. This paradox is explored by a manipulation of the presentational form. I also situate the work that I am doing in terms of current trends in narrative and education

research. The Act is entitled “Setting (Heteroglossia)” and in the spirit of the many Bakhtins, it sets the stages for the performances to come.

ACT II. SETTING (HETEROGLOSSIA)

“Willkommen, bienvenue, welcome...”

From the 1972 film *Cabaret*, directed by Bob Fosse, from a screenplay originally written by Jay Presson Allen, revised by Hugh Wheeler. Screenplay based on 1966 Broadway musical by John Kander (composer) and Fred Ebb (lyricist) who adapted their stage play from the novel *The Berlin Stories* and the 1951 play *I Am a Camera* by Christopher Isherwood. Kander and Ebb wrote the musical numbers for the film and the song was performed by Joel Grey as the Master of Ceremonies. John Van Druten and Joe Masterhoff also contributed to the writing of *Cabaret* although their level of participation is somewhat murky. Official citation for Fosse film version is: Kander, J. & Ebb, F. (1972) *Willkommen*. [Recorded by J. Grey] On *Cabaret: Original Soundtrack Recording*. Universal City, CA: MCA.

Dramatis Personae, Part I

Victoria Rogers---Educational Jack of All Trades, Servant Leader, Teacher¹⁹

Dr. Arsene Kobe---French Teacher, Chair World Languages Department

Myrna Loy---Guidance Counselor

Jim Fox---Theater Arts & ELA Teacher

Monica Green---ELA Teacher, Chair English Department

Mary Smith---Culinary Arts Teacher

Marjorie Ryan---Spanish Teacher

Zan Crowder---Author, Researcher, and former Latin/ELA Teacher

The Research Stage, Part I

First Performance Event---December 19th, 2014

The meeting room is sparsely furnished, utilitarian and the walls are uncovered. There are two windows looking out on the hotel parking lot with partially closed venetian blinds. The carpet is hotel standard, patterned with geometric design. Several tables are set up for a presentation

¹⁹ Professional titles chosen by V.R.

with chairs behind them facing the front of the room. The fluorescent lights of the room are bright, clear white. No extra lighting is necessary for filming. The room is not warm but it is serviceable.

There is a whiteboard easel pushed to the corner. The white board has been erased but the underwriting, "Happy Birthday, Bob" is still dimly visible as though it were written in permanent marker that no amount of scrubbing will efface. A number of tables have been pulled together near the front and covered with a white paper tablecloth. A separate table serves as a drink station. It is not covered. On it stand three two-liter bottles of soda, a roll of paper towels, a stack of plastic cups and a bucket filled with ice.

On the banquet table there is an assortment of food platters. A deli-tray of croissant sandwiches filled with egg salad, chicken salad, tuna salad, a crudité tray with ranch dressing, several plates containing cookies and a roll cake. The plates are secular, winter holiday design: snowmen, snowflakes, candy-shaped and there is one tray shaped like an evergreen containing chocolates. There are red and white paper plates and matching napkins. No centerpiece. Candy canes and chocolates wrapped in red, green and silver foil are scattered across the table top. From left to right, facing camera #1 are seated Arsene Kobe, Victoria Rogers and Monica Green. Across from them, from left to right, facing camera #2 are Mary Smith, Jim Fox and the researcher, Zan Crowder. Myrna Loy is not present at the start of the event. When she joins, she sits to the right of Zan.

Zan starts the cameras and takes a seat next to Jim Fox. He eats a sandwich while the performers sign IRB Consent forms and return them to him for his own signature. Throughout this process he explains the Consent and the guarantees of privacy. Once the forms have been collected Zan, as the primary investigator, presents a brief explanation of the research project.²⁰

²⁰Non-essential footnote for only the most avid reader: In December, 2014, a volume of *Educational Researcher*, one of the flagship publications of the American Educational Research Association, was published that included three studies directed toward the research community. In this volume, published in the same month as the first performance event, there is an article entitled "Moving through MOOCs: understanding the Progression of Users in Massive Open Online Courses" that utilized descriptive analysis ("Descriptive analyses are a necessary first step in this new area of inquiry" (p. 423)) to answer the research questions: "1. Do MOOC users progress through a course sequentially in the order identified by the course instructor, or do users determine their own approach to accessing content? and, 2. What are the milestones that predict course completion?" (Perna, Ruby, Boruch, Wang, Scull, Ahmad, & Evans, 2014, p. 423). The second published study entitled "Patterns and Trends in Grade Retention Rates in the United States, 1995-2010" that seeks to improve measurements of grade retention across the United States. From their abstract: "We conclude by describing how our measures might be used to model the impact of economic and policy contexts on grade retention rates" (Warren, Hoffman, Andrew, 2014, p. 433). The final article entitled "Who Enters Teaching? Encouraging Evidence that the Status of Teaching is Improving" studied data sets on New York teachers to "...document how the relationship between academic ability and the decision to become a teacher changed over the 25 years between 1985-86 and 2009-10" (Lankford, Loeb, McEachin, Miller, & Wyckoff 2014, p. 445). Using SAT scores as a proxy for academic ability the authors report that since 2000 there has been a rise in the SAT scores of teachers entering the profession. They conclude, "The reversal in trends in academic ability over the last decade signals a resurgence of interest in teaching in public schools as a respected and worthy career and the rising status of the teaching profession" (p. 451). For the record, I did not ascertain my participants' SAT scores for this study.

Story

The basic premise of this work is that humans understand their world through stories. This is, in narrative research, an adage that has been repeated so frequently as to undermine its import. In Bakhtin's terms, it has become part of a monologic discourse. For Bakhtin, the world is heteroglossia; full of a multitude of voices. Narrative then, as I point out below, is also heteroglossic. As is education. Bakhtin's insight is that language, when it coalesces in our utterances, contains vestiges of multiple discourses, multiple genres and multiple vocabularies. Our intentions are overflowing with the intentions of others.

All forms of discourse participate in this multiplicity. It has long been noted that public policy is simply a manifestation of a society's values; the coalescing of ethical intentions writ large. There are stories within stories here, political pundits have made fortunes peddling a type of insider knowledge that purports to lay bare the motivations of policy makers. "This is the real story of how these decisions were made," they proclaim. And then they tell their story. Professional analysts, gorged on statistics from market data or sports esoterica proffer their insights based on their arrangements of the data. There is a universe of data available to all of us. What we choose, how we choose it and how we present it are all stories.

This then is the central point: Stories are not only a way in which we understand and order our world, they are the raw material that constitutes that world. We are born into them. Everything is story. This is a radical claim and there are numerous conventional ways to dispute it, many of them leading down the binary path between the myriad versions of mind versus world. Thus, it should be restated here, Bakhtin does not, in any way, deny the existence of a

“real” world. In fact, he rails against abstract concepts that would fill the world with hypothetical possibilities and he condemns structuralist interpretations as overly abstract and for ignoring the dynamics of the concrete word. Even more vociferously he condemns relativism; pure individual subjectivity. In doing so, he concludes that, given an acceptance of a concrete, empirical world, the object of research is to explore human interactions upon that fundament. And, that fundament is populated by dynamics both between humans and the inanimate objects that surround them---think of the nuances and ruptures that our consciousness can bring to a simple object such as a barn set back from the road in an empty field. And of course we bring these shadings into our interactions with other humans. Certain research methodologies and certain research procedures have been developed to counter this phenomenon both in quantitative and qualitative research, and I am here saying that from drug efficacy tests to economic statistical analysis to grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), each one of these models is another story and their results are yet more stories and their dissemination comprise even more stories flowing outward.

The Dancer and the Dance

It could be remarked that I have conflated Bakhtin’s notion of the “utterance” with my own sense of story and I think this is certainly a justifiable criticism. Bakhtin defines the utterance as something which requires a response. He does not distinguish between one word utterances and novels that constitute a complete utterance. He is not interested in linguistic and semantic markers as such, because for him, the most basic unit of speech that can be analyzed is that which is complete in its anticipation of a reply. Again, a novel, comprised of many utterances that indicate the interactions (and interrelatedness) of subjectivities, is also itself a whole. It is an aesthetic product that most clearly mirrors the processes of real life, and he

valorizes the genre for this reason. The storytelling events which I recorded are aesthetic events comprised of numerous utterances; these informed by so many more. The novelistic work that I am writing here, as a dissertation, is a presentation of research that attempts to incorporate Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia and the novel. This means that the act of presenting research is itself implicated in the heteroglossic situation.

I would argue that all utterances are stories, populated by numerous voices, and that my presentation here is an attempt to both capture this phenomenon in, I freely admit, an utterly limited way and to attend to the fact that there are multiple levels of aesthetic creation taking place simultaneously. This means that I am also playing somewhat loosely with what is traditionally considered either a story or a narrative. Since classical times the definition has been tied up in two concepts, one concerning imitation and the other concerning a temporal sequencing. Both of these ideas I discuss at length below but for now, I acknowledge the fact that my definition of "story" is, arguably, broader than some would say it has any right to be. My arrival at this definition of "story" is, in fact, one of the plotlines of this entire work. In creating the presentation of this research, I found myself rethinking the traditional uses of narrative structure as methodology.

A research methodology is, let us not forget, both a metaphor and a narrative in itself. Narrative research has historically presented itself as an antidote to positivistic research models that collapse the practices of scientific inquiry into social science models. The needed critical self-awareness for narrative research, in my view, is not that it provides an alternative to narrow, behavioral studies. Instead, narrative research must be aware of the way that it has collapsed humanities research into the social sciences. Those of us who work with narratives/stories must understand that although literary criticism, philosophy, anthropology and historical research have

at times tended toward structural formations, likening themselves to a procedural scientific process for analyzing and interpreting data, the act of dissolving narrative into larger reductive arguments between quantitative and qualitative researchers could be viewed as a similarly co-opting move that serves ideological, academic debates rather than the research phenomenon (itself a social science term) itself. That said, it is difficult to think outside of the standard research procedures and methodologies. Throughout the storytelling events my own reluctance to let go of traditional understandings of narrative are evident. For me, there was a moment when I realized that these traditional understandings were, themselves, stories.

In other words, narrative, which has been with us as humans from the beginning, before even written language facilitated transmission, is neither a qualitative nor quantitative methodology. One can create methodologies and arguments about how to employ narrative, presumably in ways that either challenge or find legitimacy in their relation to other social science methodologies, but this only turns a blind eye to the fact that narratives are a Tower of Babel. We live in stories, and the fundamental principle of the particular type of research that I am attempting here is to show that we, as humans, are embedded in multiple layers of stories and that this is the fundamental fact of our condition. Stories are our setting. They are about many things, often simultaneously and they come in many forms. Each section in Act II is both a story and a setting. My intent is to show how different and sometimes unexpected stories participate in teacher working conditions and in a research project that purports to explore them. The device of performativity allows me to collapse (what are for me) the artificially delineated borders between the act of research and the research project itself.

The Research Stage, Part II

Second Performance Event---January 16th, 2015

The banquet room at the Meeting Place has been prepared for twelve people but only six are seated. There are two sets of doors, each with frosted glass panes. One door exits into a small hallway that leads to the kitchen and the other doorway, filled by a pair of French doors, leads into the dining room of the restaurant.

The square table is covered by a dark blue table cloth and set with numerous baskets of food lined with checkered paper. The fare includes standard pub food---appetizers, chicken wings, fried onions, etc. as well as a large bowl of Caesar's salad, bread, and two cheesecakes. The participants have already served themselves, family style, and are in the process of eating when the taping begins. Each participant has an opaque plastic glass of ice water and each has ordered another beverage. Ryan, Loy, and Kobe each have a glass of red wine and the half emptied bottle stands between Loy and Kobe on the table. Zan has a glass of beer, Rogers has a glass of soda and Fox has iced tea.

Zan Crowder, playing the primary investigator, is seated at the corner of the table closest to the kitchen exit door. To his right, with their backs to the dining room doors sit Loy and Kobe. Opposite Zan sits Rogers with Ryan to her right and Fox at the farthest right. The side opposite Kobe and Loy is empty and there are two stacks of papers there---the consent forms; extras and those that have been completed by the participants. Extra plates, saucers and coffee cups are also on the empty side of the table top.

The room is pleasant, the lights somewhat low and the walls are close to the table that occupies nearly the whole of the space of the room. The participants have room to push back from the table comfortably but there is then little room for someone to pass behind the chairs.

As the event starts everyone is still eating and food is being passed throughout the event. Occasionally the participants speak while they are in the process of chewing or pause during speaking to swallow.²¹

Procedures

The descriptions above were composed as I originally transcribed the video recordings from two separate storytelling events that I held as a way of collecting rich data for my dissertation research. I was interested (and still am) in the working conditions of secondary

²¹ The titles from AERA's *Educational Researcher* for the volume published at the time of this event are: "Experience-Sampling Research Methods and their Potential for Educational Research" (Zinkel, Garcia & Murphy, 2015) and "Reinventing the Role of the University Researcher" (Nelson, London, & Strobel, 2015). Note the lack of colons in both titles. Outliers among title data.

teachers in North Carolina's public school system. My contention was that "teacher working conditions" were made up of hundreds, probably thousands, of intertwined elements and that teachers were not a species to themselves but rather human beings working in often difficult situations without consistent leadership. I wanted to explore the ways that the teachers presented their experiences through stories. I also wanted to probe the stories that went untold, either because there was not a model for them because they were sanctioned, or, because there was simply not a combination of words that would capture something as fleeting as instantaneous impressions.

In the act of transcribing I chose to use ellipses when there was a distinct pause (longer than the normal flow of conversation) and to use commas to reflect the often staccato rhythm of pauses and shifts in the speech of the participants. As I note at the end of the second description, because these events were informal and completely unscripted (in the sense that none of the remarks were written in advance), some pauses were due to factors such as chewing, drinking, swallowing and other disruptive physical action. The video recordings enhanced my ability to discern this and I tried to include "stage directions" to indicate when these physical movements affected speech. When particular words were given heavy emphasis I transcribed them using all capital letters. This should not be construed as shouting but merely as indicating an irregular force given to a word. Shouting is indicated with exclamation points and all other intonations follow normal procedures of punctuation. I tried to transcribe the speech of participants as faithfully as possible and did not correct or change word choice, syntax, or grammar.

Although the teachers were aware that they were being filmed at all times and occasionally make reference to the fact, they did not directly look into the cameras when speaking nor did they make gestures that called attention to the cameras that had been placed

opposite each other in as unobtrusive positions as possible. A viewing of the digital files suggests a surreptitious recording of a dinner party with the varying levels of self-consciousness that any such gathering naturally arouses. It was not entirely real but we pretended that it was.

Much like the role of “dinner party guest” I do not believe that “teacher” is a distinct persona that one puts on when one enters the schoolhouse. Instead, I believe that on any given day, teachers bring the numerous experiences of their lives, codified and organized by stories, into their work. I also believe that teachers consciously organize their experiences, their thoughts and emotions, into particular forms that are their presentations of themselves when they perform their work. These presentations are aesthetic acts. Bakhtin argues that all of our interactions with the outside world are. They are also ethical stances with heightened accountability due to the public nature of the work. This work cannot be clearly delineated from the ongoing act of constant becoming. Our utterances are the product of complex negotiations between ourselves and the exterior world, and they constitute the process by which we draw from the inexhaustible stimuli of our experiences in the world, arrange our response to these stimuli, and take a stand in a moment of self-creation. This self-creation is not autonomous, however. It shares in the enormity of the social world and the empirical world and refuses the easy individual/collective dichotomy. Self-creation is both and...

This is why I chose storytelling as a means of getting at the experiences that interested me. Storytelling is how we make sense of the world, how we order it and generally how we attribute cause and effect. It is also fundamentally social. It draws its components from the available linguistic elements to be sure, but it also draws from more intangible aspects of our lives. Bakhtin argues that human existence is immersed in the situation of “heteroglossia”. This

situation presents us with an almost infinite way of putting together the narratives by which we define ourselves and our world.

This raises fundamental questions about the way we use stories in what is thought of as a typically linear way. If I follow through with the thought processes that I have tried to describe here, I am left with the conclusion that although there are structural ways of thinking about stories, the simple fact is that stories are continually morphing and assimilating new elements. This is counterintuitive and difficult to reconcile with traditional theories of narrative. It is, in fact, the major way that my thinking developed over the course of this study. The journey from stories as linear, causal arrangements to stories as atemporal and indeterminate is an important story of this dissertation.

The unfixed nature of stories is because of their dependence on the social, but is also a symptom of the world which Bakhtin describes. Stories, like ourselves, are open-ended. They are created within a linguistic system that is always caught between centripetal and centrifugal forces without ever achieving anything more than a fleeting stasis. If even that. Even the most formalized stories, the script of *Hamlet*, for example, or a State of the Union Address, or an advertisement for Coca-Cola, or an episode of *The Walking Dead*, or a research study about the failure of STEM programs to provide opportunities for low-income students in urban high schools (Weis, Eisenhart, Cipollone, Stich, Nikischer, Hanson, Leibrandt, Allen, & Dominguez, 2015)²², each has multiple meanings depending on multiple factors. The teachers whose stories

²² This article was published in another of the American Educational Research Association's flagship journals *American Educational Research Journal* during the month of the completion of the first draft of this dissertation. The title of the article is "In the Guise of STEM Education Reform: Opportunity Structures and Outcomes in Inclusive STEM-Focused High Schools". The volume 52(6) contains five other articles: "Understanding Effective High Schools: Evidence for Personalization for Academic and Social Emotional Learning" (Rutledge, Cohen-Vogel, & Roberts, 2015), "Competitive Networks and School Leaders' Perceptions: The Formation of an Education Marketplace in Post-Katrina New Orleans" (Jabbar, 2015), "Embedded Formative Assessment and Classroom

were told during the course of the two events and whose stories are retold here were not fixed from the moment they exited their mouths. They were not fixed in their heads although it is clear from reading them that some were prepared ahead of time. More often, though, the stories came out through a collaborative process and followed each other with a type of coherent logic that could not have been scripted but instead followed extemporaneously as the events proceeded. As I will illustrate in upcoming chapters, the teachers often ended stories only to begin them again later. For me, this is evidence enough to challenge rigid notions of what formally constitutes a story. Often times during this process I found myself unable to place a marker at the ending of one story and the beginning of the next.

The point is, we don't know in advance exactly what story we will tell in any given communication situation because we don't know what comes before or after. There are too many variables, many of which Bakhtin explores in his writing as he points out that we consciously prepare for expected responses which are sometimes not what actually happens. Even a published novel has complex negotiations of meaning involving questions of tone and intonation; two related concepts upon which Bakhtin roots his own version of individual expression and its relation to value judgements. For him, meaning is not only communicated through words but also through the way that the words are pronounced and the gestures that accompany them. The video recording of the storytelling event allowed me to think about these pieces of communication in a way that listening to an audio recording or reading a transcription

Process Quality: How Do They Intersect in Promoting Science Understanding?" (Decristan, Klieme, Kunter, Hochweber, Buttner, Fauth, Hondrich, Rieser, Hertel, & Hardy, 2015), "Gifted or Maladjusted? Implicit Attitudes and Automatic Associations Related to Gifted Children" (Preckel, Baudson, Krolack-Schwerdt, & Glock, 2015), and "How Well Aligned Are Textbooks to the Common Core Standards in Mathematics?" (Polikoff, 2015). Each one of these articles describing research studies tells a story. Each of the stories that are told in the articles have untold numbers of other stories that inform them. Even their titles, which in theory provide a shorthand to the academic audience for whom they are intended, encompass tomes' worth of information. The stories that the authors of these articles tell are selected from myriad combinations of stories that are possible prior to the telling.

couldn't. The use of the video cameras made the event performative, and this added another layer to interpretive possibilities. The teachers knew that they were being watched and this, by design, highlights the aesthetic act.

It is my hope that the presentation of the research compiled for this dissertation serves a similar purpose. If nothing else, in this Act I hope to show that the concepts of "situation" or "setting" or, perhaps worst, "context" are all terms that vastly oversimplify the places in which we find ourselves. We are always in multiple places, not just as participants in discourse communities, now speaking this way and now that, depending on our audience, but also because our setting is never so neatly delineated and never fixed. Bakhtin stresses that our spatio-temporal location is the single thing that makes us distinct. But he further makes clear that the individual sitting in the chair at a particular time, with a vantage point necessarily limited by these two factors, is only a unity in the sense that the chair sitter is the foci of numerous social, relational interactions.

Research

"Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose. It is a seeking that he who wishes may know the cosmic secrets of the world and they that dwell therein.

I was extremely proud that Papa Franz felt like sending me on that folklore search. As is well known, Dr. Franz Boas of the Department of Anthropology of Columbia university, is the greatest anthropologist alive, for two reasons. The first is his insatiable hunger for knowledge and then more knowledge; and the second is his genius for pure objectivity. He has no pet wishes to prove. His instructions are to go out and find what is there. He outlines his theory, but if the facts do not agree with it, he would not warp a jot or dot of the findings to save his theory. So knowing all this, I was proud that he trusted me. I went off in a vehicle made out of corona stuff.

My first six months were disappointing. I found out later that it was not because I had no talents for research, but because I did not have the right approach. The glamour of Barnard College was still upon me. I dwelt in marble halls. I knew where the material was all right. But, I went about asking, in carefully accented Barnardese, 'Pardon me, but do you know any folktales or folk-songs?' the men and women who had whole treasuries of material just seeping

through their pores looked at me and shook their heads. No, they had never heard of anything like that around there. Maybe it was over in the next county. Why didn't I try over there?

(From *Dust Tracks on a Road*. Zora Neale Hurston, 1942/1991, pp.127-8)

Horizons and Creswell

As a starting point, consider “setting” in relation to the spoken word. In *Discourse and the Novel*, Bakhtin writes:

The linguistic significance of a given utterance is understood against the background of language, while its actual meaning is understood against the background of other concrete utterances on the same theme, a background made up of contradictory opinions, points of view and value judgements---that is, precisely that background that, as we see, complicates the path of any word toward its object. Only now this contradictory environment of alien words is present to the speaker not in the object, but rather in the consciousness of the listener, as his apperceptive background, pregnant with responses and objections. And every utterance is oriented toward this apperceptive background of understanding, which is not a linguistic background but rather one composed of specific objects and emotional expressions. There occurs a new encounter between the utterance and the alien word, which makes itself a new and unique influence on its style” (DN, 1981, p. 281).

Bakhtin here moves from a consideration of the loaded aspect of any word as referent to an object (the signifier, loaded with nuances, subjective understandings and value judgements) to an “internal dialogization” wherein the speaker projects him or herself into the subjectivity of the listener and prepares the utterance in such a way as to take the listener’s point of view into account with all the possible responses that might engender. This dialogization occurs in the mind of the speaker before the utterance is to be spoken, and, for Bakhtin, it necessarily enriches the utterance once it comes to be spoken. Of the speaker he says, “Therefore his orientation toward the listener is an orientation toward a specific conceptual horizon, toward the specific world of the listener; it introduces totally new elements into his discourse; it is in this way, after all, that various points of view, conceptual horizons, systems for providing expressive accents,

various social “languages” come to interact with one another” (DN, 1981, p. 282). “Language,” he continues later, “is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker’s intentions; it is populated---overpopulated---with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one’s own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process (DN, 1981, p. 294).

Now consider this obligatory John W. Creswell (whose work establishes the setting for many students learning to do educational research, being, as it were, a standard text on the matter) quote which is included in his comments on “narrative research” in education:

The **setting** in narrative research may be friends, family, workplace, home, social organization, or school---the place where a story physically occurs. In some narrative studies, the restoried accounts of an educator may actually begin with a description of the setting or context before the narrative researcher conveys the events of actions of the story. In other cases, information about the setting is woven throughout the story (Creswell, 2008, p. 522, author’s bold).

It is illuminating that the majority of sites that Creswell chooses for examples of setting are not explicitly physical, geographical spaces but rather are places of social interaction. To say that friends or family are a setting is to acknowledge that Bakhtin’s observations are apt. We locate ourselves in and through others, irrespective of where we might be physically standing at any given time. For Bakhtin, this spatial and temporal aspect is important in defining our individuality but it is meaningless without another object, particularly another person by whom we can evaluate our own location and situation. My argument is that, for nearly all of us, the settings that Cresswell lists are all combined to generate another setting. This, following Bakhtin, would also require considering state of mind as one of the many aspects of “setting”.

Divisions

One way to establish the setting might begin like this:

My commute to Midlands High School followed two highways that crossed Brandt County like perpendicular lines. It was a forty-five-minute drive to the campus each way, and I spend approximately equal amounts of time on the north and south bound Highway 19 and the east-west Highway 44. The north-south highway was sparsely populated, but here and there were small housing developments with names like “Woodland Point”, “Sherman Pines”, or “South Ridge”. Many of these subdivisions, surrounded in every direction by fields, were merely one short road lined with houses that led to a cul-de-sac visible from the highway particularly when winter has stripped the few deciduous trees of their obscuring leaves. The grandiose signs naming them and serving as entrance markers seemed pathetically hyperbolic, hopeful, or crass examples of simulacra, in their suburbanity depending on the general disposition of my mind as I passed. When, after the first several months of the daily commute I stopped thinking about them at all, I didn’t notice that I had done so. The landscape then had developed a relation to my inner, mental state. Not exactly like the House of Usher in the Poe tale but vaguer and more variable, like a map of the day’s concerns. The land passed fluidly outside of the car; the landscape populated with the musings of a given day: an argument with my wife, a curriculum plan, a health concern, a daughter’s recent success.

The changing of the seasons brought about renewed interest in the features of the County as the familiar dissolved and other details became prominent. In the spring the air smelled of the fertilizers used to treat the fields and in the early autumn the tobacco and cotton and soybeans muffled the earth obscuring the soil from which they grew. The winter commute passed through empty fields remarkable only for the exposed earth of the plowed furrows and the scraggly stems left as the only remainder of the harvest. The metal outbuildings: sheds, tractor barns, grain silos, and rental storage units stood out in winter in sharper relief against the sky, grey or a

white-washed blue, as did the red brick churches that appeared sporadically at the side of the road. These churches, standing empty on the weekdays when I passed by, felt as deserted as the fields, their windows dark and their parking lots empty save for a sentinel church van. On the right as I traveled southward someone had erected at the edge of a field a fifty-foot tall cross made of steel girders painted white. At the base of the cross were two benches and several small azalea bushes. There was a gravel turn-out where one could park and traverse a portion of the field to meditate at the foot of the cross although I never saw a human being there. The churches and the enormous cross were both subtexts to the County; their lack of citizens still suggested a potentiality. The empty spaces were haunted by human need, desire, anguish and joy.

Eventually, after I traveled about fifteen miles towards the southern border of the county, I turned onto Highway 44 leading westward. I crossed the Cape Fear River, slowed to twenty miles per hour for the five stop lights of the main street of the county seat, and then abruptly the town disappeared and the commute resembled closely the north-south passage I had just traversed.

This geography plays a role in the teachers' working conditions. It is inseparable from their labor.

M SMITH. Well the Board and the County Commissioners are kind of like James County on a smaller scale. They haven't gotten along for a while. Um, and they don't like particular things that happen on our side of the river, as they say. Um, and I agree---that's part of our problem.

V ROGERS. Well I agree, that is the truth. Because I'm from Ashton and FOREVER, ever, since I first came back, you know, I did my first four years out of Brandt County but then, ever since then, it was always talked about "this side of the river" and "that side of the river". ALL my teaching career. It has...and that is the truth. Because on this side of the county, there is very little change. There are teachers that go there when they're twenty-two and they graduate---thirty years---you know, to retirement.

M SMITH. They don't ever go to your classroom but twice, maybe.

V ROGERS. Before Soddy and Ashton middle schools, maybe Inland...

M LOY. But that's not the demographic of Midlands.

V ROGERS. I know, but I'm just saying that that has been an overriding mentality and then they see this over here as, "These people over here are just really different..." Nothing we do is right...

(Appendix 1, p. 332)

The churches bordering Highway 44 were similar to those along Highway 19 as were the subdivisions like crop circles deposited by alien spacecraft in the middle of the fields. Here, though, there were also collections of mobile homes. These were parodies of the subdivisions, flimsy looking aluminum containers strewn along dirt circular drives. The communities bore names as well, often lettered on clapboard signs that looked as old as the trailers that inhabited the bare patches scraped out of the surrounding pine scrub. M.H.P. is the most frequent acronym: Mobile Home Park, generally preceded by the owner's name. "Phillips M.H.P." or "Tinton M.H.P.". Sometimes the vehicles parked before these mobile homes were what one might expect as a cliché of rural, southern poverty: rusted pick-ups, square and faded over-sized sedans, but more frequently the parking pads were topped with relatively recent model cars with exteriors that were bright and clean like holiday ornaments shining in the oppressively white sunlight of the early fall and late spring days. In the winter the dirt and gravel drives turned to mud and the low areas in and around the trailers would hold water in flat, round, disks the color of chocolate milk. Inevitably at the end of the work day I would get behind school buses that dropped groups of children at each of the mobile home parks along the highway. Primarily these were children of color but not exclusively. The students would disembark and scatter toward their various front doors. In general, they were lively and chatty as they stepped from the bus. Watching this transitional process---from student to not-student---I wondered how the children spent the portion of their day not engaged in formal education.

A School Day

M LOY. At the very last minute, I told Mrs. Ansley, who's the principal now, right, I said, um, "You know what we haven't done this year and, it's because we're always stuck doing everything else, but we didn't do anything for our really needy students. And she said, "Oh my gosh, you're right." Um, so, I said, "Let me put together a list and we'll come up with something." And then I called the Hightown Women's Club, and they were willing to donate...first she said "How about 4 seventy-five dollar gift cards from Walmart?" and I said "how about 6 fifty dollar...cause we can get more kids that way. We can cover more ground, right?" So she said, "Okay, good". She does our scholarships out there and she's a wonderful...they're a wonderful group.

So, then, I went to Ansley and said, "Hey, we've got some donations," and she said, "Well, I'll put in a thousand dollars of, um,...that would be twenty-fifty dollar cards from the school."

M SMITH. Wow.

M LOY. Yeah, no kidding. So then we had to compile the list. So then everybody's arguing about "Who...What is really needy? Um, will we hurt anybody or offend anybody if we put them on the list and we send something? What do we do? Don't, you know, don't do this, don't do that. What...what's right?" I call the social worker. I must've called about fifteen different people, ran that list through about twenty people there. And it's the same day that Sara is retiring, right. So everybody's in the office. Her last check that she cut was the check to go run over to Food Lion to get the gift cards. We come back and Ansley says, "Okay, I'll address half of them, you address half of them." Now, this is, we, everybody's gone, they're trying to say goodbye to her, this is the day...we were going on Christmas break. And we were sitting there in her office, she's writing her pack of cards, I'm writing my pack and we put them all together and she goes, "I'm really glad we're doing this" and I said, "You know what, I'm really glad we're doing this." And we did, we came up with we had one student that had a fire, two on the list that were homeless, we...you name it, I mean, that was the way to end before Christmas break. So, far as I'm concerned, we're doing it right. I mean what else is there? Right? That's what we do things for and even if it's last minute, or even if it, it just...it just felt really good. And I know that every kid on that list, that, that kid belonged on that list...to get something.

(Appendix 1, p. 316)

Another School Day

The North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey presents eleven possible categories for the passage of teacher time:

Time

Q2.2. In an AVERAGE WEEK, how much time do you devote to the following activities during the school day (i.e., time for which you are under contract to be at the school)?

None

Less than or equal to 1 hour

More than 1 hour but less than or equal to 3 hours

More than 3 hours but less than or equal to 5 hours

More than 5 hours but less than or equal to 10 hours

More than 10 hours

- a. Individual planning time
- b. Collaborative planning time[1]
- c. Supervisory duties[2]
- d. Required committee and/or staff meetings
- e. Completing required administrative paperwork[3]
- f. Communicating with parents/guardians and/or the community
- g. Addressing student discipline issues
- h. Professional development[4]
- i. Preparation for required federal, state, and local assessments
- j. Delivery of assessments
- k. Utilizing results of assessments

1. Collaborative time includes time spent working with other teachers within or across grade and subject areas as part of a Professional Learning Community to plan and assess instructional strategies.

2. Supervisory duties include hall monitoring, recess, bus and cafeteria coverage, etc.

3. Paperwork means both electronic and paper forms and documentation that must be completed to comply with federal, state and local policies.

4. Professional development includes all opportunities, formal and informal, where adults learn from one another including graduate courses, in service, workshops, conferences, professional learning communities and other meetings focused on improving teaching and learning.

(NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey, 2013-14, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2016b)

This is an influential, institutional speech genre that defines the work of teachers. The measuring of time is used to structurally limit possible teacher behaviors. Additionally, the categories are distinct and this imposes a strict, progressive, chronological structure on time wherein two things shall not be occurring concurrently. There is an ethical consideration here as well. Is it possible to respond without considering the evaluative reception, even at an abstract level, of the response? Following this, then, the completion of the survey becomes an artistic act. A performance.

Speech Genres

Along the sides to the two highways is a large variety of signs that advertise firewood, church services, fund raising dinners, local cottage industries, fast food, items and houses for sale, political candidates, official road signs, etc. The variety and construction of these signs is informative. As I entered Brandt County I was greeted with the “Now Entering” sign that proclaimed, “New Growth. Strong Roots.” This slogan, the result of a branding overhaul of Brandt County in 2002, was created by a design firm based out of Raleigh and is currently used on Brandt County letterhead and is prominent on County websites. The slogan is Janus-like addressing at once the past and the future; the imagery taken from the natural world suggesting agriculture and new technologies co-existing in an organic framework. Once in Brandt County, the speed limit rises from 45 miles per hour to 55 miles per hour, but it frequently drops again as the driver passes schools and intersections of highways that generally support a cluster of businesses and convenience stores.

In the essay “The Problem of Speech Genres” (1984) Bakhtin indicates that speech genres work much in the same way that the road signs bordering the highways of Brandt County

work. In the opening of the essay Bakhtin writes, “Each separate utterance is individual, of course, but each sphere in which language is used develops its own relatively stable types of those utterances. These we may call speech genres.” The next paragraph continues: “The wealth and diversity of speech genres are boundless because the various possibilities of human activity are inexhaustible, and because each sphere of activity contains an entire repertoire of speech genres that differentiate and grow as the particular sphere develops and becomes more complex. Special emphasis should be placed on the extreme heterogeneity of speech genres” (SG, 1986, p. 60). This distinction is at the heart of Bakhtin’s argument about the way language works. There are infinite possibilities, just as there are infinite possibilities of sign verbiage but, in the end, language ends up by being relatively stable so that signs participate in a limited variety of discursive possibilities.

In fact, Bakhtin later recognizes that speech genres have such a tendency toward stability that “a large number of genres that are widespread in everyday life are so standard that the speaker’s individual speech will is manifested only in its choice of a particular genre, and, perhaps in its expressive intonation. Such, for example, are the various everyday genres of greetings, farewells, congratulations, all kinds of wishes, information about health, business, and so forth” (SG, 1986, p. 79). The issue of intonation is addressed elsewhere in this dissertation but the idea of standardized genres that are nearly inescapable deserves attention here.²³

Just as the road signs participate in a stable number of discursive forms, (“I Fix Fords” stenciled in white on the navy background of a 4x8 plywood sheet being my favorite along the commute to the school) they are all general declarative utterances. The wire framed “For Sale”

²³ Others have theorized a similar thing---Lyotard via Wittgenstein as “language games”, J.P. Gee as big “D” and little “d” discourses. The linguistic terrain that we pass thorough.

signs that sway slightly forward and backward in the breeze of passing cars, the church names on free standing signs of various structure and design, the hand-painted signs for produce, wood, eggs, or lawn services, the “construction ahead” signs, the billboards declaring the distance to the nearest McDonalds or Chick-Fil-A. All of these participate in modes of expression that are so standard as to be unnoticeable. The real difference in the signs is the placement proximal to the road and the quality of the graphic design. The corporate billboards: fast food, car rentals, and so forth are provided a place of priority high above the highway. The rest of the signs dot the road side. Read against the county motto, the roots represent the local and the new growth could be said to be represented by the corporate billboards high above the treetops. The commute which I undertook for two years could itself be read as characterization of the county itself: the land, the buildings, the signs, the construction; all of these things comprising the reality of the county but also, working in coordination, comprising a story of the county.

In my analogy, the signs individually represent simple, primary speech genres. Reading the entirety of them as a way of characterizing the county is a novelistic act²⁴. Novels fall into the complex, secondary category of speech genres. In toto they make up a complete utterance but they are comprised of a plenitude of other utterances: “These primary genres are altered and assume a special character when they enter into complex ones. They lose their immediate relation to actual reality and to the real utterances of others” (p. 62).

²⁴ Paul Ricoeur (1984) makes a similar point but with a different focus about the way contemporary novels encompass a clash of voices: “The labor of imagination is not born from nothing. It is bound one way or another to the tradition’s paradigms. But the range of solutions is vast. It is deployed between the two poles of servile application and calculated deviation, passing through every degree of ‘self-governed deformation’. The folktale, the myth, and in general the traditional narrative stand closest to the first pole. But to the extent we distance ourselves from traditional narrative, deviation becomes the rule. Thus, the contemporary novel, in large part, may be defined as an antinovel, to the extent that contestation wins out over the taste for simply varying the application of the paradigm” (pp. 69-70).

Fiction and Truth

A research project such as this that seeks to utilize the concrete utterances of others must recognize the fact that transcription, reproduction and presentation are all aesthetic acts that create something different from the concrete reality. There is no escaping this. The educational scholar Peter Clough has experimented with a novelistic approach that draws from phenomenology as a basis for challenging the distinctions between fact and fiction. Quoting Merleau-Ponty he argues that phenomenology is “less a question of counting up quotations than of discovering this phenomenology for ourselves” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, xii, original emphasis, quoted in Clough, 2002, p. 10), and Clough goes on to say, “I suggest that this is similarly my book’s chief didactic point: that its readers learn not how to write stories as such, but rather something of the much more radical architecture of making and communicating data *for their own moral and political purposes*” (Clough, 2002, p. 10). For Clough, the use of fictional, novelistic form is a way for research to progress. Citing Scholes and Kellogg’s 1966 work *The Nature of Narrative*, he argues for the novel as a research form:

“Scholes and Kellogg (1966: 130) have described two main and antithetical modes of narrative; the *empirical*, which has ‘a primary allegiance to the real’, is realized by the *historical* account, true to fact, or else by the *mimetic*, which is true to experience; the other mode, the *fictional*, has ‘its allegiance to the ideal’ and its forms are *romantic*, ‘which cultivates beauty and aims to delight’, and the *allegorical*, which ‘cultivates goodness and aims to instruct’. It is immediately clear that the novel can have any of these forms, and has done so in keeping with developments in human knowledge...The novel is a search for the form which can carry the weight of its ever-unfolding insight...” (Clough, 2002, p.97).

These ideas travel all the way back to Plato and Socrates’ discussion of poetry in Books II and III of the *Republic* where Socrates makes distinctions between falsity and truthfulness in storytelling (Book II) and between narrative and imitation by way of direct and indirect speech (Book III).

Distinctions between history, myth, fable and poetry are also made by Aristotle in his treatise on tragedy with Aristotle arriving at a different conclusion than Socrates' determination to ban the poets. He writes, "Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars. By a universal statement I mean one as to what such or such a kind of man will probably or necessarily say or do---; by a singular statement, one as to what, say, Alcibiades did or had done to him" (Aristotle, p. 235). The distinctions between these "modes" and "forms" have been a source for comment into modern times as scholars have challenged the boundaries between, for instance, historical events and the way they are communicated (White, 1973, 1987) by means of traditional storytelling plotlines that fall into categories such as romance, tragedy or comedy. It is an old debate. Herodotus, known as the "Father of History" in the Western tradition---the Greek word "historia" originally meaning an "inquiry" --- is called the "Father of Lies" by Plutarch, the later historical biographer.

Further, Clough is responding explicitly to the "crisis of representation" that he also terms the "crisis of apology" (Clough, 2002, p. 14).²⁵ Drawing on Denzin's (1997) work on interpretive ethnography, Clough points out that for all of Denzin's superlative work, there is no attention to "demonstration" as an interpretive mode. For Clough, this mode may be produced through a presentation that, while not following verbatim reportage, acknowledges the aesthetic verisimilitude of a narrative. This question, harkening back to Plato and Aristotle, and the debate over the usefulness of imitation (or the truthfulness) hasn't really changed. What has changed, it seems to me, are the versions of the stories that are currently in vogue. Narrative work of the

²⁵ My first introduction to ideas of this sort came from Spivak (1988). It is very much in the post-structuralist tradition that Clough is responding here.

type Clough describes as “demonstration” seems akin to the “Show, don’t tell” technique that is certainly one of the elements of this dissertation.

Clough and I, while differing in the strict traditions in which we situate our work, share the same basic argument that research which addresses a subject like education is well served by a form that can take into account multiple variables in the presentation of its data and analysis. This explicitly means that I am not arguing for my own personal understanding of educational phenomena as a last resort for subjectivity in the fractured postmodern world. Meretoja’s injunction here is apt:

“While the crisis of storytelling is bound to seeing narratives as intrinsically distortive, the narrative turn entails seeing narrative interpretation as a crucial form of making sense of our being in the world. This does not mean rejecting the postwar epistemology of uncertainty that stresses the fundamental limitations of our cognitive capacities. However, it does entail regarding narratives as not only indispensable but also cognitively significant, capable of providing us with models for interpreting our experiences and orienting ourselves in the world...it is decisive that the process of narrative interpretation does not succumb to a solipsistic project of weaving private universes of meaning” (Meretoja, 2014, p. 223).

Descriptive Statistics

One way of characterizing Midlands High School is by performing a search on the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction’s website for “School Report Cards”.²⁶ Subcategories on the website list “Student Achievement” and “Teacher Quality”. To reach the data on any given school you must pass a portal that bears the slogan, “SAS: The Power to Know”²⁷. The report card for Midlands is basically this: School performance, a “C”. The grade range for a

²⁶ Here is a piece of revenge or, possibly, a clever pun: the business of schooling is report cards, how about report cards for schools? Kind of like collecting taxes *from* the IRS.

²⁷ This is brilliantly Biblical but dangerous marketing. On the one hand, SAS is godlike. On the other hand, pursuit of knowledge or claims of accomplishment thereof are a little overreaching. See Faust, Dr. Frankenstein, etc.

“C”: 55-69. Growth Status for the school: “The School Did Not Meet Growth.” What this means: “The Growth Status measures the academic growth of a school’s students from the previous year to the current year.” Midlands’ designation according to ESEA: “Our school met 55 out of 73 targets. Our school is designated as ‘consistently low participating’, meaning that one or more subgroups did not have at least 95% participation in the same subject area for 2 consecutive years.” Other pertinent information: The students at Midlands scored appreciably lower on English II, Math I and Biology End-of-Course tests than the state average.

With respect to the faculty at Midlands there are a number of demographics and statistics to be found on the NCDPI website. For the 2013-2014 school year there were 95 total classroom teachers. Of these, 75.7% were fully licensed. There was a 31.7% turnover rate while the state average rate was 16% (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2015).

According to Teacher Evaluation data on the NCDPI website (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2016a), the majority of the faculty was consistently evaluated in the 88% range for their performance of Standards 1-5. On Standard 6, however, which incorporates student growth, 18 teachers did not meet expected growth (i.e. “the student growth value for the teacher (or school) is lower than what was expected per the statewide growth model”), 3 met expected growth and 4 exceeded growth. This means that 55 teachers were assigned scores based on the performance of their students as regards expected academic growth. For the rest of the teachers “this rating is populated with school-level growth and not data from the performance of the individual teacher’s students” (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2016a).

The value-added measure has been controversial in its application to teaching and learning. There are several ways of looking at this measure as an evaluative tool. The case is generally

made for using growth measurements instead of achievement measures because demographic characteristics (low SES) are correlated with achievement but not with growth. On the one hand, this measure might be seen as being good for teachers who are not responsible for their students' performance prior to entering their classroom and it attempts to measure only the individual influence of a given teacher. On the other hand, it means that a teacher is solely responsible for a student's achievement during the time in which she or he is enrolled in their class independent of any occurrences that affect the student's life during the period of the class.

External Events

M SMITH. So, you know, I have to be a little careful. So being calm is definitely one thing. And, um, non-educationally-wise, sometimes we're counsellors because I had the whole family of the last death that we've had. And eight of my children were out, out of the twenty in my fourth period class because they all lived in the same neighborhood. Um, that's part of scheduling that we've had at our school but, you know, those kids really took that hard and there wasn't a whole lot of interaction from guidance once that first day was over and these kids really needed it. Today, the two siblings that are still with us were both in my room.

(At this point Jim Fox leans over and whispers to Zan who gets up to greet Myrna Loy.)

M SMITH. Now they had other teachers in there with me to make sure nothing happened or what have you, but, it was, um, it was very interesting to see how they were dealing with it because some days it's like nothing happened and some days it's like, "Somebody's going to get hurt today." But, you know, I can't...I think we need to handle things better, 'cause it has nothing to do with teaching because I think we all know how to teach....

V ROGERS. Well, most of us do.

M GREEN. Well, it's a learning curve...

(First Storytelling Event, p. 315)

Classroom Management

“Classroom management refers to all of the things a teacher does to organize students, space, time, and materials so student learning can take place.

Brophy and Evertson say, ‘Almost all surveys of teacher effectiveness report that classroom management skills are of primary importance in determining teaching success, whether it is measured by student

learning or by ratings. Thus, management skills are crucial and fundamental. **A teacher who is grossly inadequate in classroom management skills is probably not going to accomplish much**” (Brophy & Evertson, 1976).

Classroom management skill includes the things a teacher must do toward two ends:

- 1) Foster student involvement and cooperation in all classroom activities.
- 2) Establish a productive working environment.

A well-managed classroom has a set of procedures and routines that structure the classroom. The procedures and routines organize the classroom so that the myriad of activities that take place there function smoothly and stress free. These activities may include reading, taking notes, participating in group work, taking part in class discussions, participating in games, and producing materials. An effective teacher has every student involved and cooperating in all of these activities and more” (Wong & Wong, 2009, pp. 83-4, original bold)

Facilities

The Midlands campus is built adjacent to the Midlands Middle School and across the road from the Midlands Elementary. The area containing the three schools is vast but it is possible, although there are other feeder schools, for a student to span the whole of a K-12 career within this centralized location. The high school was built in 2004 to ease overcrowding in the county and by 2012 when I began work there it was filled beyond capacity and utilized a number of mobile units that were situated between the main school building and the football stadium.

The county is currently attempting to address the overcrowding:

Brandt voters OK school bond issue to ease crowding

November 4, 2014

COUNTY SEAT – Brandt County voters narrowly granted approval Tuesday for county officials to borrow as much as \$100 million to build new schools.

According to unofficial returns, the measure won approval from 52 percent of those who cast ballots – 13,283 to 12,293.

County officials were vocal about the need for the bond sale, which will help address school crowding in the western part of the county. According to state law, new schools cannot be financed through a school district’s regular budget, and a previous vote had already raised the county’s sales tax.

Bond proponents noted that Brandt County’s continued growth has strained existing school capacity. The county currently has nearly 4,000 students in more than 200 mobile classrooms, and the number is

expected to grow. Funding from the bonds will allow the county to build two new schools and make additions to three others. (Jacobs, 2014)

There is a long row of glass doors through which one enters the school. From a vestibule there is access to the auditorium and the main gym. To the right is a door to the front office which is open during school hours. Beyond the vestibule is another row of glass doors which open onto a central common area. These doors are locked during school hours so that anyone entering from the front of the school must pass through the lobby of the front office.

Once through the second set of doors the school is spread out like three radiating spokes. The hub of the wheel is called the Commons and one may cross it to enter the second door to the front office, the cafeteria, the media center or the guidance department offices. The center of the Commons is vaulted and there is a second floor common area that looks down upon the open space of the ground floor. There is a set of grand staircases that lead to a landing and then on to the second floor. During class changes the Commons and the staircases are crowded with students and there are two stairwells at the ends of each of the three radiating halls to facilitate traffic flow. The main halls are labeled A, B, and C; classrooms and labs on the first floor are numbered in the 100's and upstairs rooms are labeled in the 200's. While teaching at Midlands, I was upstairs on the B Hall, Room B216.

Each of the upstairs halls itself comprises a loop so that one may enter one end of B Hall from the Upstairs Commons and traveling one way, pass every room before returning to the Upstairs Commons through a different doorway. The downstairs halls are not loops but have short auxiliary hallways that access the visual arts rooms, the choral and band rooms, the auditorium, the two gymnasiums, the Career and Technical Education classrooms which range from computer labs to wood working shops, culinary rooms, nursing classrooms and agricultural

sciences space that exits outside to a greenhouse. To many in the world, the facilities would seem extravagant.

M LOY. Exactly. And they've been through it. And they say...No. Do you think they think about that in Europe or somewhere else? Engaging a student in a South African village with a dirt floor. ENGAGING a student!? Are you... You know, and I think about that...my daughter taught in Russia, in Novo Sibersk, in Siberia. She was going to engage? She said, "I had kids in there from the age of five to maybe fifteen. And then I had some adults." She said, "Engaging was, shhh, forget it. I didn't have props. I barely had...every once in a while we might have a computer. Every once in a while..." So we are the luckiest society...

A KOBE. We are the luckiest.

M LOY. We are the educationally proficient and prominent and really wonderful. You know, we have all the props that go with it. And we feel like, because as teachers, that we've been told we have to, um, be the, um, actor and actress in from of the room to engage them. Well, yeah. I remember how many thirty years ago going through saying, "I don't want to dress up like a mannequin to teach German holidays..."

J FOX. There's nothing wrong with that.

(Laughter.)

(Appendix 2, p. 393)

Collegiality

Upstairs the Halls are not divided by disciplines or by grade level. Science teachers are generally assigned rooms that contain lab tables and equipment rather than desks but otherwise, there is no overarching organizational plan for the assignment of rooms.

This is not to say that there is no conscious design. The most recent administrations have created a dispersion of content-area teachers so that departments would not be isolated in particular areas of the school. The possible reasons for this distribution are numerous. It could be to encourage fraternization across content areas and to foster larger collegiality across the faculty. It could be to keep teachers from the same department from developing a singular

identity that is separate from the broader school mission. It could be to represent the idea of shared mission across the curriculum through interdisciplinary contact. It could be to reduce the possibility of factions developing around content designations. Or, it could be that with over 26% and 31% of the faculty leaving after the last two school years it's simpler and more practical to just fit people in as vacancies are created and filled.

V ROGERS. But you know, I've never huffed and puffed and I might not have wanted to do what they said to do but I realized if I wanted to work for them, I needed to do that. But sometimes it seems like because we're educators, we think it's okay to spew all this (spewing sound) stuff out, you know, and it, it's like it's toxic, you know...

J FOX. Yeah, yeah...

V ROGERS. ...and it, and it, seeps down the hallway. And I tell my, I tell my new teachers, I work with the BTI's this year, particularly, and before then I worked with everybody. But, you know, I tell them, "Watch who you stand in the hall with" because it wipes off on you.

J FOX. It does.

V ROGERS. I mean it just jumps right over on you. You know. And that is one thing as far as, as a teacher, I think that concerns me...I mean, I think that I should have your back and I think you should have my back.

M GREEN. Mmmhmm.

V ROGERS (placing her hand on Green's shoulder.) Do you know what I'm saying?

M GREEN. Yeah.

V ROGERS. And I think if you're upset you should be able to come to me and if you need to just explode, be able to do that in every confidence that I'm not going straight to her (indicating MS) and tell her...

M SMITH. Yeah

V ROGERS....about you exploding. You know...

M SMITH. ...And that you're mad at me, I am so sorry. (Laughing.)

(Laughter.)

V ROGERS. But you know...

M SMITH. But...but that is a problem. And I've worked at how many schools in Smith County? It seems like forever. Because I am a K-12 teacher so I work at all the schools: big schools, little schools, you know, the alternative school, um...and...our school isn't different but it is, um.

Sheer size alone makes us different, but, the transient population because of the military does add a...a special twist and the, um, the transient teachers because of being military spouses or what have you. But, um, something that shouldn't be different then it is, is what you're talking about a lot of that, you know, "Have your back". Because I've been at elementary schools where, you may not...I may not like Jim, but I'm not gonna go, "Hey, I really hate you so I'm not going to help you out...". Where, sometimes it seems that our school...I'm just not going to show up, I don't care if you need me or not...

J FOX. There's a lot of personal stuff, I think...

(Appendix 1, pp. 313-314)

Teaching

Another way of thinking about teaching from an institutional view revolves around job performance. The categories below indicate the multiple ways of thinking about what this might mean and how it might be evaluated by both teachers and an outside entity. Importantly the range of questions indicates the myriad relationships that link educational actors.

Instructional Practices and Support

Q9.1. Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about instructional practices and support in your school.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly agree

Don't know

- a. State assessment[1] data are available in time to impact instructional practices.
- b. Local assessment[2] data are available in time to impact instructional practices.
- c. Teachers[3] use assessment data to inform their instruction.
- d. The curriculum taught in this school is aligned with Common Core Standards.
- e. Teachers work in professional learning communities[4] to develop and align instructional practices.

- f. Provided supports (i.e. instructional coaching, professional learning communities, etc.) translate to improvements in instructional practices by teachers. ● ● ● ● ●
- g. Teachers are encouraged to try new things to improve instruction. ● ● ● ● ●
- h. Teachers are assigned classes that maximize their likelihood of success with students. ● ● ● ● ●
- i. Teachers have autonomy to make decisions about instructional delivery (i.e. pacing, materials and pedagogy). ● ● ● ● ●
- j. State assessments provide schools with data that can help improve teaching. ● ● ● ● ●
- k. State assessments accurately gauge students' understanding of standards. ● ● ● ● ●
- l. Teachers believe almost every student has the potential to do well on assignments. ● ● ● ● ●
- m. Teachers believe what is taught will make a difference in students' lives. ● ● ● ● ●
- n. Teachers require students to work hard. ● ● ● ● ●
- o. Teachers collaborate to achieve consistency on how student work is assessed. ● ● ● ● ●
- p. Teachers know what students learn in each of their classes. ● ● ● ● ●
- q. Teachers have knowledge of the content covered and instructional methods used by other teachers at this school. ● ● ● ● ●
1. State assessments include end of course and end of grade tests.
 2. Local assessments are standardized instruments offered across schools within the district and can include any norm or criterion referenced tests, diagnostics, or local benchmarks.
 3. Teachers means a majority of teachers in your school.
 4. Professional learning communities include formalized groupings of teachers within or across grade and subject areas that meet regularly to plan and assess instructional strategies for student success.
- (NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey, 2013-14, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2016b)

Real Estate

If you decide to buy a house that is zoned for the Midlands area, Zillow.com offers the following information about the high school: 32% of students passed the Biology End-of-Course Exam, 52% passed English II, and 42% passed Math I. The ration of teachers to students is 16:1.

The Ethnicity breakdown is 7% Multiracial, 42% White, non-Hispanic, 36% black, non-Hispanic, 2% Native American or Native Alaskan, 13% Hispanic, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 0.9% Asian, 0.7% Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.4% Pacific Islander, 0.2% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. 45% of students are on free or reduced lunch.

A quick scan of houses sold in the last month or so in the Midlands area show prices generally between \$100,000 and \$300,000 dollars although there are a few properties that sold for almost nothing---sweetheart deals, perhaps, and a few houses above \$400,000. There is a golf club that is located in the zoned area. There are also several subdivisions that are primarily for military use. While not in the same county as the nearest armed forces base, the Midlands area is close enough for many service members to commute. When one steps outside of the high school, one can often hear the sounds of training exercises many miles away. The rumble of the ordinance carries and sounds like an impending storm. Aircraft also fly low over the campus on a regular basis as they approach the base. A number of the teachers at Midlands are military affiliated.

Support

M LOY. What brought you here?

M GREEN. The military.

M LOY. Oh yeah, that's right.

M GREEN. I wouldn't even be here if it wasn't for the military. I mean, I enjoy working at Midlands, but compared to previous schools I worked at in Tennessee and Ohio, it has been a struggle. I almost quit after my first semester at Midlands.

M LOY. Why? Because why?

V ROGERS. It's a shock your first semester.

(Laughter. Everyone talking at once.)

J FOX (Over the din:) She's not alone on that. She's not alone. The only reason I was there, remained there is because of him (indicating ZC) and Lane and her (indicating MS).

M GREEN. There's no...There are... There are, um, very good teachers at our school.

M LOY. Yes!

J FOX. Yes!

M GREEN. But! There is also a lot of lack in support from administrators, from other people, you know, that should be mentoring you. I mean we have a lack of mentor teachers because we have all young teachers.

(Appendix 1, p. 325)

The NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey includes a section for new teachers to respond to the practices that the school sponsors in order to ease their transition. The categories themselves tell a certain kind of story. This story creates a model universe by which the new teachers can situate their own experiences.

New Teacher Support

Q11.1. As a beginning teacher, I have received the following kinds of support.

Yes

No

- a. I received no additional support as a new teacher.
- b. Formally assigned mentor
- c. Seminars specifically designed for new teachers
- d. Release time to observe other teachers
- e. Access to professional learning communities where I could discuss concerns with other teacher(s)
- f. Regular communication with principals, other administrator or department chair
- g. Reduced workload
- h. Orientation for new teachers
- i. Common planning time with other teachers
- j. Formal time to meet with mentor during school hours
- k. Other

(NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey, 2013-14, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2016b)

There is a type of rational thinking whereby these questions are used to determine deficiencies in new teacher support with the ostensive purpose of addressing them.

A KOBE. We...we do this survey for since I've been here. Every year we do it...

M LOY. And we always wonder what it does or what...

A KOBE. Every year we do it. And we never see any change.

M GREEN (Laughing) Yeah.

J FOX. Yeah.

(Appendix 1, p. 358)

This rational thinking becomes another story.

Structure and The Narrative Turn

There is a distinct separation between narrative thinking and rational thinking in current academic discussion of narrative research. This is attributable to Jerome Bruner whose work is often cited in narrative research. Before examining Bruner's influence both within the educational sphere and without, it seems useful to take up a brief discussion of the "narrative turn" in general. There seems to be consensus that the "narrative turn" in research began at some point after the publication of Labov and Waletzky (1967), whose methods of narrative analysis were later expanded and refined (Labov, 1972, 1981). In their influential 1967 article the authors analyze stories through the use of structural, linguistic models focused on clauses which could be assigned to narrative categories that contain moments in the narrative's progress: abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution, coda, and evaluation.

Perhaps more importantly, Labov and Waletzky provide a definition of narrative, descended from Aristotle, that designates it as “accounts of events in chronological sequence” (Daiute, 2014, p. 33). In their own words, narrative is “one verbal technique for recapitulating past experience, in particular a technique of constructing narrative units which match the temporal sequence of that experience” (Labov & Waletzky, 1967, p. 13). Although Labov’s model has been heavily critiqued: “Overall, though, lack of attention to context (be it situational or sociocultural) has become the hallmark of the critique of Labov’s model. The view that structural units can be postulated by the analyst a priori of local contexts and as context-free, universal elements has been criticized as to static” (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012, p. 36), it seems difficult to escape the conventional wisdom that narrative must involve the unfolding of events within a temporal sequence and that research involving it should be grounded in a systematic approach.

This systematicity is part of the debates which still surround the broad field of narrative research. In the humanities, structuralism had a strong influence on narrative analysis. Barthes, Todorov and especially Gerard Genette pushed for a way of thinking about literary texts that did not seek to interpret literature but to understand its underlying structural components. Of course this movement itself was not new in the humanities in the 1960’s and 1970’s. Bakhtin critiques numerous adherents of this practice in his early writings, but around the time of Labov and Waletzky’s work, the ideas were again resurging in corners of academia outside of the social sciences.

Interestingly, Genette, in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1972), presents a formula to analyze narrative in which he is keen to categorize aspects of narrating but also consistently warns against “hypostasizing”. His primary text for analysis is Proust’s *A la*

Recherché du Temps Perdu, variously translated as “*Remembrance of Things Past*” or “*In Search of Lost Time*”: a collection of volumes with a vexed publication history. Because of this, Genette highlights the imperative of considering Proust’s work as unfinished. His final lines are informative: “Laws of Proustian narrative are, like the narrative itself, partial, defective, perhaps foolhardy: quite empirical and common laws which we should not hypostasize into a Canon. Here the code, like the message, has its gaps and its surprises” (Genette, 1972, pp. 267-68). For Genette, a structural approach does not require unity; this is, it seems to me, a particularly Humanities-based way of thinking---his complaint is about the way works are read and understood rather than insisting on a unified theory. The search for method in the human sciences, on the other hand, often times seems singularly preoccupied with decoding.

This debate centers primarily over whether such research should involve scientific methods or whether it should involve something---sometimes anything---else. The argument for narrative as a branch of human sciences follows this train of thought: “A human science should involve an integration of scientific processes, such as analysis, and humanistic processes, such as gaining insights about individual and societal understandings, affects, and activities (Daiute, 2014, p. 227). Later she adds, “An advance in narrative inquiry is to do analyses that can be checked for reliability, ensuring stability of each category of analysis. Reliability checks of analytic concepts and procedures are important for researchers wanting to maintain consistency in their analyses over time, for readers of the works wanting to check their agreement on any examples presented, and for future applications of the method” (Daiute, 2014, p. 256).

An alternate viewpoint is proffered by Bill Ayers (2012):

“There are actually ancient approaches to understanding human affairs, relatively new only to social scientists. We struggle to understand both the importance and the elusiveness of meaning for human beings---we understand, for example, that

you can't get a joke by following objective laws or logical progressions, nor can you grasp the reason for a rebellion or the workings of a school from a mathematical model. We know that knowledge is not, and cannot be a disembodied view from nowhere, something mechanically attained, free of perspective, point of view, or situation. We see knowledge as entangled, rooted, complex, and various. And we seek, therefore, consciousness, the root of meaning, rather than an unreasoning or automatic apparatus" (Blake & Blake, 2012, p. 212, Afterword: Telling Stories Out of School).

The juxtaposition here of Ayers and Daiute forms the crux of the debate which I will explore in the following pages. Narrative is itself a contested field: Daiute, a professor of psychology, titled her book *Narrative Inquiry: A Dynamic Approach* and while it is one of the most thoughtful manuals on doing narrative research that I read in compiling this literature review, her goals are clearly to develop a structural way to analyze stories.²⁸ The volume *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology* (2007) edited by D. Jean Clandinin, one of the foremost figures in narrative in educational research, proposes a vastly different set of ideals in the employment of story analysis. I discuss Clandinin's conception of narrative inquiry below, but the fact is that identical terminology such as "narrative inquiry" is employed in the scholarship to indicate widely disparate conceptions and procedures.

I also use these examples to highlight the differences between narrative research

²⁸ A blurb from the back cover of Daiute's book aptly sums up a definitional debate in narrative research: ---"Daiute brings a lot of clarity to what has been a 'fuzzy' field of inquiry. The many examples from her personal research connect the strategies she offers to actual studies" Mary Louise-Gomez, University of Wisconsin-Madison. This also serves to highlight the particular stance that her book takes with respect to systematic analysis. For all of her terrific insights, things like this: "Also, destabilizing the idea that narrating would be in any singular way authentic is a fact that many beginning researchers notice; Participants often check with the researcher for 'Is that what you want?'" (p. 16), she is driven to provide a template, complete with checklists, for treating the dynamic and fluid nature of narrative. While she espouses a constantly reflective approach, this is difficult to codify through the use of structural, taxonomic designs.

in education and narrative research in other fields. I will turn my attention shortly to the movements in narrative research generally and then turn to an appraisal of the forms it has taken within specific educational contexts. These movements and forms, of course, are contextual and follow trajectories similar to those elsewhere not only in academia but in larger societal settings.

Change

V ROGERS. ...from, you know, way back, I mean, from the beginning. And so most of our districts are countywide districts throughout this whole state. Unless you have areas like the Charlotte city, because it's a huge city, or Raleigh because it's a big city. But, historically...now, we probably all agree it needs to change, but even in Brandt County---thank god this is anonymous and all this stuff---I mean, the good ol' boy system has been the way Brandt county has always been run.

J FOX. That's...that's part of it

(Everyone talking at once. Mostly establishing where folks are from.)

V ROGERS. But, now, some of you guys were not here then but we had, two or three superintendents back, we had our first in my memory, out of county, truly out of county...

M LOY. And he was truly out of his mind.

V ROGERS. ...superintendent come in. But he did not survive. He did not last very long at all. So, I mean, you are running...

M LOY. I never thought I'd see a woman as a high school principal in my lifetime. Never.

V ROGERS. See, he didn't realize that she's the first one in Brandt County (gestures toward ZC and referencing a conversation prior to taping).

(Talking at once.) M LOY. She is the first one...

M GREEN. Who?

M LOY. Ms. Ansley.

M GREEN. What???

M LOY. She is the first...I was amazed, amazed that we even saw that happen. But then I found out why, which is not a good idea for right here, but...

M GREEN. Yeah.

M LOY. Still...the first one in Brandt County. And I cannot imagine what that is like...

V ROGERS. ...for her high school...

M LOY. ...for her high school...sitting in meetings with all...ever, ever...that's huge...of the biggest high school.

V ROGERS. But, let me, just to put that in perspective for you, that sounds amazing but do you realize the first woman physician for Brandt County is still alive. And she was the only female physician for twenty-five years in this county. Now that should give you some perspective...

(Talking at once.)

J FOX. Oh, I understand, I understand... Change is slow to happen. Even in Ohio it's like ridiculously slow on things.

V ROGERS. You know we're talking...

J FOX. But, right, right, right, right, right. Now, like I said, with this new population, and this explosion of population, they're gonna have to change...

V ROGERS. Yes...

J FOX. ...and there's going to be a lot of turmoil, that's the other part. There's gonna be...

M SMITH. But it's going to have to go through all the vote. It's going to have to start from outside the county, go to the bo...go to the commissioners, and then slowly get into the school board.

J FOX. Yeah. That's right.

M GREEN. But, I mean, this is all inside our county but, I mean, there are other areas of the state that you would think would be much more progressive but they're really not that much more progressive. And I don't understand, we have all these, we have all these institutions of higher learning that are famous throughout the country...

J FOX. James...James...yeah keep going.

M GREEN. Right. And yet, and yet, we don't support, um, education at the lower levels in this state...

J FOX. Right.

M GREEN. I don't understand that. How do these...If I was a, well I'm not a parent, but if I was a parent I would not stand for my kids being in some of these schools.

M LOY (talking over MG:) Money making institutions. It's a business versus the elementary schools are not a business...

M GREEN. Yeah, but I'm saying, if, like, okay, if you're trying to attract...let's say you want to grow the economy of the state...

M LOY. Why don't we attract...

M GREEN. ...we want to attract businesses. If I was a business owner, a CEO...

M LOY. ...but partially we don't want to attract...

M GREEN. ...I would say, "Look how terrible their schools are. I'm not bringing my kids there."

M LOY. Brandt County doesn't. If you talk to the board of commissioners, they like it just the way it is.

V ROGERS. Listen, when I was a little girl, school didn't start in the fall until after tobacco was harvested. Because kids were needed at home...

(Uproarious laughter spurred by exchange between ML and AK as they pass the bottle of wine.)

V ROGERS. ...to harvest the, the crops...and they, they postponed school at the start because kids stayed out anyhow. Because they were needed. All right. So now, even though...then we went through the wave when we had regular migrant workers, which you don't see many migrant workers at all because they moved and stayed here. But for about ten or fifteen years there we really had migrant workers...

M SMITH. They migrate between the same five farms now...

V ROGERS. But even after the need for those kids being home, that mentality was still there and it effected how the schools were run. And it still effects, even today. And it's not so much a farmer mentality anymore as it's considered a Southern mentality.

M SMITH. So they just changed the, the word in the last fourteen years.

(Appendix 1, pp. 333-336)

Autobiography

During the school years of 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 I taught English and Latin at Midland High School in Brandt County, North Carolina. I had completed my doctoral coursework and returned to the classroom for several reasons. The first was that I needed the money that full time employment would bring. Although North Carolina teachers are among the most poorly paid in the United States, the income was still a substantial improvement over the stipends I received for graduate assistant work. The practicing teachers who became participants in my study were colleagues whom I got to know and respect during my two-year tenure at Midlands.

The second reason that I returned to the classroom was that I felt that the academic process of the doctoral program had distanced me from the commitments I had when I originally enrolled. I felt that the level of abstraction required to be a researcher left holes in my

understanding; that the stronger the conceptual design became, the thinner my understanding became. In part, this is why Bakhtin became such a good fit for me. His insistence on the concreteness of everyday discourse enabled me to bridge theory and practice in a way that both sociological and philosophical frameworks did not.

While I was originally interested in researching the implementation of the *Common Core State Standards* in North Carolina public high schools, my tenure at Midlands changed my focus. The *Common Core*, or any standards for that matter, were but a minor piece of the dynamics of teaching and learning. The debate about national standards almost never entered into the day-to-day discussions that I was having with my colleagues. Arne Duncan and *Race to the Top* were as far away from Midlands as the moon, although funds awarded to North Carolina by the Department of Education were used to purchase scripted curricular materials aligned to *Common Core* for the district. These materials heavily emphasized the use of graphic organizers.

V ROGERS. No, I tell you fifteen years ago, we had all these massive workshops on graphic organizers. And those little red and white organizers that are up on my wall and a bunch of other people's walls were introduced then. They have not even been changed! They're the same color, it's the same posters! And yet it's the in-thing! And it was here fifteen years ago! So, you know, that change, it'll change, and then somebody has to change it and then somebody has to change it and somebody has to change it. But then it's going to come back. And daggone, you're where you were fifteen years ago. But that's okay, you won't stay there 'cause you're going to go this way for a while. (As VR speaks she uses her arms and hands to demonstrate the motion of the pendulum, swinging them back and forth.) But you'll run out of room and you'll come back. And I've seen it over and over and over and over. And I do agree with you, sometimes it's just change just because we're supposed to be changing.

(Appendix 2, p. 417)

The state of North Carolina's impending plan to revise the newly adopted and only partially implemented *Common Core State Standards* solidified my commitment to thinking through relational aspects of teaching with respect to the multiple discursive strands that teachers

were bound up in. I decided to try and find a way of doing dissertation research that would take into account the universe of meanings which informed the actual job on the ground. I was personally interested in the discourses of education: policy, research, teacher training, etc., and I wondered which would have some recognizable influence if teachers talked for several hours about their work. I learned through the storytelling events that, primarily, the teachers focused on personal experiences in lived settings. Their stories, their understandings, their ethical stances---however one chooses to think about them---were rooted in the land, in their families, and in the local politics of education. In Brandt County, each one of these aspects was in a constant state of flux.

History

V ROGERS. But I will tell you, in Brandt County we were primarily a black/white county.

M LOY. Well that was part, too, of that issue...

V ROGERS. There were...there were very few Hispanics until, my children who are now, like, my son just turned forty and my daughter is thirty-eight...When they were in, like, middle school they had one or two Hispanic kids in their class...in their grade...

M LOY. See, half of the kids in my kids'...

V ROGERS. ...in their grade...

M LOY. So it was another generation...

V ROGERS. That's what I'm saying. So, when that other group, because I worked for eleven years for ESL every summer, and did summer over at Brandt Central---that's where I first met Mrs. Tompkins, we worked together...

M SMITH. A couple of years ago...

(Laughter.)

V ROGERS. ...so, then, because, we had never, we just had never had that in Brandt County. Then suddenly...

M Loy. And what to do with it?

V ROGERS. ...we started having these kids and they would leave Florida and work their way up. They'd work in Georgia a while. They'd come to North Carolina a while. They'd leave and go to West Virginia...

M LOY. Right. Their parents would move with the crops.

V ROGERS. Well, you know I would...

M LOY. Isn't that amazing?

V ROGERS. I would see kids two or three years in a row because every year about the same time they'd come back. Because they were on the circuit.

M LOY. Right. Right.

V ROGERS. Well those kids were horrifically poor. They were the ones that when we started getting the dentist to come...and we would get shoes...

M LOY. And they still have those programs.

M SMITH. Yeah they do.

V ROGERS. All that stuff...

M LOY. The dental van...

V ROGERS. Well, that's when it started...

M LOY. Immunizations...

V ROGERS. Well, then, what happened is, lo and behold these guys came, and suddenly the, um, area nurseries started saying, "Hey, they're good workers," and they started offering them...

M LOY. Or tobacco. Or soybeans.

V ROGERS. So suddenly my kids, that I'd see them for, um, a growing season and say, "I'll see you next year." They always come up to tell you and say, "See you next year". Suddenly they weren't leaving. And so within the space of ten years, you know, or fifteen at the most, we'd gone from one or two Hispanic kids in a grade, to...migrant zip-throughs, to now they're staying. And, you know, I never...almost never have a migrant kid that's labelled a migrant kid.

M LOY. For sure. Not labelled.

M SMITH. "Transient", perhaps.

V ROGERS. But, I mean, before they were labelled, you know?

M LOY. Exactly. It was...

V ROGERS. It was their life. So, you know, now they stay. Well, unfortunately now they're more like our kids...and...having problems.

M GREEN. So...I mean...So, I don't know all the history like you do but, like...so do you...that's what you think the cause is? Like you think that schools have...in North Carolina have lower expectations of their students because of the population of students they had previously catered to?

V ROGERS. No, I think it's history. I, I mean I really do...I think that...

(Appendix 1, pp. 337-338)

Micropolitan

Brandt County qualifies under state law as a low wealth county and therefore is entitled to extra funds. For the Fiscal Year 2013-2014 the county received an extra \$498.75 dollars per child (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2014a, p. 20). 31.9% of this money went to Teachers and Instructional Support with another 20% to Benefits (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2014a, p. 21). According to the North Carolina Department of Commerce's AccessNC website which compiled demographic information using the 2010 U. S. Census, U.S. Department of Education statistics, and the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services data Brandt County has an estimated Median Family Income of \$54,000. The estimated 2013 Median Worker Earnings was \$27,867 and the 2013 estimated Total Population with Income Below Poverty Level was 19,812 out of a 2014 projected Total Population of 127,348. In 2013-2014 the Average Daily Membership was 20,085 and the 2013 estimated figure for members of the population with at least a high school diploma was 84.4%. The percentage of the population with at least a Bachelor's Degree was 18.5% (North Carolina Department of Commerce, 2016). The U.S. Census lists Whites alone, not Hispanic or Latino as 62.7% of the population for 2014, Black or African American alone at 21.5% and Hispanic or Latino at 11.9%. The term "micropolitan" is a Census category indicating an urban area of between 10,000 and 50,000 residents that is outside of larger urban areas (United State Census Bureau, 2016).

V ROGERS. The problem with Brandt county is it's so rural. That it's just always been...Listen, I never heard the word "micropolitan" even associated with this county until last year. And this county is known as the "Inland micropolitan".

J FOX. But, but it's going to have to happen because...it's...they're gonna have to...start...

M LOY. Do you really mean “micropolitan”?

V ROGERS. MICRO-politan. It’s not big enough to be a “metropolitan” area. Nowhere in Brandt County, so we’ve...

M LOY. I haven’t heard that at all.

(Appendix 1, p. 332)

Comparative Compensation

Over the course of two story telling events that focused on teacher working conditions the participating teachers refer occasionally to the low wages they received as employees of the public school system of North Carolina²⁹. A few brief narrative examples here will suffice:

A KOBE. The Humanities. Voila. So I did it. And you, I asked her, she, he wrote that...I was accepted so I went in Boston for a month. This is the time I write that, North Carolina is, you know we got teachers, but the state, for me, the state doesn’t recognize it. By the office of teacher has. Honestly. Because when we talk, we discuss, we discuss about similar stuff, I get the chance to see a French teacher, who has been there twenty years so we shared...You cannot compare it. And when they see our pay...

M LOY. Oh, I’m sure.

A KOBE. No.

M GREEN. No, I know.

A KOBE. No. You cannot...No, no, no, no. They see what...I say, “This is what I’m making”. And, uh, they don’t even know, you know, this pacing guide stuff. “I’ve never used that. That is the first time I hear about that.” Someone who teach for almost twenty-six years. “I heard about it in one of my conferences in, blah, blah, blah.” I say, “This is what we do there.” We need to be recognized. We need to be something valuable. They need to know that. You know, as a teacher, we got a lesson, give us the place we deserve. Okay. This is what I always expect to see in those survey stuff. We never see that. And even to raise teachers’ money, you know how long they fight?

M GREEN. I know.

A KOBE. How long they fight just to...and even this raise, it doesn’t make a difference. Ms. Rogers, I think she gets paid less now...

²⁹ North Carolina employs a graduated step process for public school teachers although the legislature has tried tweaking the formula in recent years, as mentioned by the participants. Individual counties are able to add bonuses to teacher pay, if they can afford to do so. (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2016c).

(Laughter.)

A KOBE. ...than before. She gets paid a little bit less...

M LOY. All I know is that I'm making what I made in 1989.

A KOBE. You see.

M LOY. Yeah. It's horrible.

(Appendix 1, p. 366)

(Shortly after this, Monica Green compares pay and benefits in North Carolina and Ohio within the context of policies toward professional development.)

M GREEN. Well, it's not just that. But, I mean...so, the pay is really low. And they don't give you any kind of money for other things. Like, in Ohio, many school districts will finance your education...to go back to school because they want their teachers to continue their education and keep learning.

A KOBE. Even here they, they try not to pay your Master's degree...

M GREEN. Oh yeah, that too.

A KOBE. They just make you...

M GREEN. Of course. They don't...and so they're not going to pay for advanced degrees. Which means that teachers are not being encouraged to do that. They're being told that's not important.

JF" Yeah.

M GREEN. When I think that's very important. I'm doing my Master's right now and I think I've learned, you learn so much.

A KOBE. Of course.

M LOY. Exactly.

A KOBE. Go ask a teacher to improve their degree. Get their degree...

M GREEN. Yes, of course.

M LOY. In fact that's where to acknowledge it. It really is.

M GREEN. Yeah. And then, so the pay is low. And then in the schools, all the resources are really low, so what do we all do? We all use our money...

A KOBE. Which is not enough.

M GREEN. ...to get our supplies for our classrooms. I added it up last year. I spent over a thousand dollars for my classroom.

A KOBE. See? Lucky you...

M GREEN. Did they? Did those people probably spend anywhere near that for their jobs? No, and they're making much more. So, come on. But, like, when the materials are not there; when you run out of paper, and you still want to make copies, well, you go buy paper. Or if you want to have markers for your board, or if I wanted just a set of books we don't have. I mean, and you just get it. I mean, I don't know. But that's not right.

(Appendix 1, p. 368)

Pay in these instances is something that the teachers seem to think of in comparative terms---with other counties and other states---but it is also a means by which they understand the way that they are valued by the society that employs them. And of course, the economics of the U.S. society are market-based. Hence the recourse to comparative analysis by the teachers. However, longevity pay does not seem to be about financial reward but rather about the level of value the state places on experience and loyalty. For Dr. Kobe the issue of pay is immediately linked to the issue of pacing guides; the standardized curriculum that denies teacher agency just as the low pay devalues their efforts. Given the ranking of teacher pay for those working in North Carolina, though, it is surprising how little the actual topic comes up in the stories of the teachers. In each one of the examples above the pay is linked to other activities that fill their teaching lives. There is no mention of the political hot button topics such as merit pay or pay linked to evaluations during either of the two events. Nor is there acknowledgement that state and local budgets allocate the majority of dollars to teacher compensation.

A survey compiled by the website WalletHub.com found in 2014 that North Carolina ranked last among all of the states for educational environment. This report, published in September, 2014, ten weeks before the first of the teacher storytelling events, was compiled using data from the U.S Census, the National Center for Education Statistics, and the U.S Bureau of Labor. A report on the closest larger market ABC affiliate (trying to balance anonymity here)

was posted on September 29th. “Among the study’s findings,” the report reads, “North Carolina ranked 51st in ten-year change in teacher salary; 48th in public school funding per student; 47th in median annual salary; 43rd in teachers’ wage disparity; and 49th in safest schools (Camp, 2014).

Although there are lawmakers quoted in the article who blame prior administrations and legislative actions, a report published by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction in the Fall of 2015, during the writing of this dissertation and entitled “2014-2015 Annual Report on Teachers Leaving the Profession: S.B. 333 Teacher Attrition Data” showed that the teacher turnover rate in North Carolina had risen for four of the last four years and that, according to a National Council on Teacher Quality showed that although the passage of new raises for beginning teachers raised North Carolina to 42nd among states, the potential lifetime earnings for North Carolina teachers was well below the national median of \$1.86 million at \$1.5 million (Clark, 2015). The NCTQ report was published, it should be noted, prior to the first teacher story telling event and had been publicized locally (for instance, a story on WFDD posted December 3, 2014 entitled “Report: NC Teacher Pay Low compared to Other States” (Brown, 2014).

Budget

According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction’s February, 2014 publication on the state education budget the state had 1, 509, 985 students served by 115 Local Education Agencies (LEAs). The state contributed \$7.81 billion dollars for public schools and the Federal government contributed \$827 million excluding child nutrition programs. 77.2% of Federal dollars went towards Salary and Benefits although this figure includes all personnel (NCDPI, 2014a, p. 36). At the state level, 37.3% of the state general fund was allocated for

public education. There were 95,116 public school teachers for the fiscal year 2013 paid by state, federal and local money and the average teacher salary was \$45,355 or \$40,189 base salary without benefits (NCDPI, 2014a, p. 1). Overall the budgeted funds for teacher salaries was \$2,758,250,828 (NCDPI, 2014a, p. 6). In 2013-2014 the Average Daily Membership (ADM) was 1,456,330 students (charter students not included) (NCDPI, 2014a, p. 4). For high school students, the base state allotment for each student was \$4,138.72 with money allotted to other categories such as Low Income Family, Small County, Low Wealth County, Limited English Proficiency. (NCDPI, 2014a, p. 10). The Federal base allotment for 2013-2014 was \$27.46 with substantial money allotted for Low Income, students with IEP's or with Limited English Proficiency: \$1,822.38, \$1,507.91, \$1,452.26, respectively (NCDPI, 2014a, p. 11). One of the state funding mechanisms is the NC Education Lottery which was established to add money to the Education Fund. For the years 2012-2013, 28% of the Net Revenue from the Lottery of which 49% was used for Teacher's Salaries. The Total Operating revenue for the Education Lottery in FY 2013 was \$1,695,453,000, of which \$454,199,439 was distributed to public education (NCDPI, 2014a, p. 28).

Longevity and Attrition

A recent article that was published during the writing of this dissertation highlights North Carolina specifically in a literature on teacher mobility: "In North Carolina, a report on teacher turnover by the state's Department of Public Instruction (2014b) indicates that 455 teachers (out of approximately 96,000 teachers employed state-wide) listed "resigning in order to teach in another state" as the reason for turnover in 2012-2013 (about 0.5%)" (Goldhaber, Grout, Holden, Brown, 2015, p. 422). This example is one of the authors' justifications for conducting a study on barriers to cross-state mobility that may be leading to teacher attrition. In some stories the

teachers explicitly link their compensation with their sense of being valued. The issue of earnings is not about dollar amount, per se, but about the way the amount reflects their worth.

V ROGERS. Being the most mature---that's a nice way of saying it---I would love to have job security. I worry about being pushed out. Not necessarily from the local, but from the state, too. There are people pushed out everywhere. At the hospital where I work, people are being pushed out. And the older, the more experience you have, the quicker they're wanting to get rid of you. So instead of valuing me for my experience, my years and loyalty, for being a loyal employee, being loyal back to me. But, gee, I worry about having a job. Maybe you guys don't but I do. I certainly do. Because I see that it is a trend in our state. To, to, you know, to, because, you know they can hire two...first year teachers or one and a half or one and a point or whatever. You know, instead of me. You would think that at this point of my career I would feel pretty secure. Pretty secure. I do not. And every year it's worse.

A KOBE. That's true. But it you see the raise. The more experienced you are the less you get.

V ROGERS. Oh yeah. I got a dollar and fifty-three cent less.

A KOBE. This doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense at all. And sometimes the majority doesn't want anything.

V ROGERS. Yeah. So, you know, for me, working conditions, that would be one thing. To be valued for...

A KOBE. ...years of experience, you know.

V ROGERS. I mean, when they take your longevity away and that probably affected everyone here. But, so that doesn't make you feel valued. And...you know. There's just a lot of things that doesn't make you feel valued as an employee. Or feel like, that you've got a job.

M RYAN. For sure.

A KOBE. They took the longevity?

M RYAN. Where were you?

V ROGERS. A year ago.

A KOBE. I didn't know that.

M LOY. When they decided about whether you got a pay raise or not get a pay raise. Remember? That was about a year ago.

V ROGERS. But now you got your longevity check this year only because they didn't finalize it until after some people already had theirs. So everybody got theirs this year but you won't get one next year. So, I'm just saying what benefits you have...

J FOX. Well, I got to be honest, and we kind of brought this up last time, this is what makes states like Texas come in and do a talent raid. That's it. This is what does it.

V ROGERS. Yeah.

J FOX: And what's so interesting, is if you...I watch 'cause I wanted to see what the opinions were...there was nothing, no one had any opinion of it from, from, you know, the local legislature or anything. It was just like...

M LOY. It's a cloud. It just sort of floats over and....

V ROGERS. But this week...

J FOX. But you wait. It's going to happen again.

V ROGERS. You know, this week News Record had an article on the front page that said Brandt County had trouble, you know, keeping quality teachers...

M LOY. Hell. Counselors with ten years in Evan and James Counties are making sixty-one thousand dollars and I'm making twenty thousand dollars less than that. That's the next county, for God's sake. Like (gesture, palms up), I don't have to go to Texas.

V ROGERS. Chris Brewer, Chris Brewer was quoted in News Record, he's the Principal at East, that he lost one of his teachers to James County who got an eight-thousand-dollar raise just for going to James County.

M LOY. That's what I'm saying. Twenty thousand more than I'm making.

V ROGERS. That's a significant raise.

M LOY. Right now.

(Appendix 2, pp. 425-427)

A Form of Value

This story was published during the composition of this dissertation but, as can be seen above, the issues were current during the storytelling events.

Fact check: Examining raises for North Carolina teachers. Dane Huffman, WNCN, September 18, 2015

RALEIGH,N.C. (WNCN) – The new North Carolina budget, signed Friday by Gov. Pat McCrory, is good news for less experienced teachers but not so much for those with more experience.

Teacher pay has been a huge issue in North Carolina in recent years, with teachers receiving negligible raises in the years of the Great Recession. The Houston school district even came to North Carolina to poach teachers in May 2014.

In the new budget, all teachers will get a \$750 bonus this year, but not in the second year. The bonus was a compromise – the House was pushing for a 2 percent raise, and McCrory even released a video in August, telling teachers, “I am working very, very hard with the legislature to continue the pay raises.”

Meanwhile, newer teachers will see base salary increases, but teachers with five years of experience or more will not.

Salaries for teachers with up to four years experience will rise, from \$33,000 to \$35,000.

Base salaries for teachers are paid by the state. Here is the base annual pay for teachers, based on years of experience:

- **0-4 years:** \$35,000
- **5-9 years:** \$36,500
- **10-14 years:** \$40,000
- **15-19 years:** \$43,500
- **20-24 years:** \$46,500
- **25-plus years:** \$50,000

Some school systems like Wake County pay teachers a supplement. Johnston County, for example, pays a supplement, so a teacher with 10 years experience would get an extra \$3,800 from the county. And a teacher with 20 years experience would get an extra \$6,975.

The budget drew mixed reviews, as one might expect.

Senate leader Phil Berger said the raises for less experienced teachers “fulfills a promise that was made by state leaders last year.”

The budget drew a blistering response from Rodney Ellis, the president of the North Carolina Association of Educators.

“The General Assembly’s budget doesn’t come close to meeting the needs of our students and public schools,” Ellis said in a statement. “North Carolina can’t afford to lose a generation of students by disregarding the resources they need to be successful. With a per-pupil spending ranking of 46th and an average teacher pay ranking of 42nd, state lawmakers wasted an opportunity to invest a nearly \$450 million surplus in our students.

“While we appreciate that no further cuts are being made to teacher assistants, since more than 7,000 positions have already been eliminated, other parts of this budget go in the wrong direction. The disrespect for educators continues by failing to provide a professional pay increase and by tucking a provision in the back of the budget that would limit an educator’s ability to be a leader in their association and advocate for what’s best for our students.” (Huffman, 2015)

Nowhere in the working conditions survey are teachers asked to reflect on their compensation. The omission could be justified by saying that the survey’s intent is to look at building level conditions which might be administratively improved. The survey clearly has

particular aims directed at the micro level. My argument is that issues such as teacher pay are, to the teachers who I worked with, as much a part of the conditions of working in a public school as the professional development provided on site. The indirect result of limiting possible responses on the survey is that teachers are stripped of the possibility of responding to issues that, based on this research, they find relevant to their immediate work. The survey, I would argue, is a political act simply because it depoliticizes the conditions of teaching.

The Province of Narrative

Narrative research is ultimately an unfortunate heading that can be applied to a large number of approaches. Throughout the literature there is a self-conscious attempt to give some sense of definitional order to this sprawling, decentralized category which, problematically, was created as something of an anti-category. In this way the field resembles a novel by Bakhtin's exemplar, Dostoevsky, whose work ultimately represents the aesthetic presentation of the dynamic state of human life. De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2012) sum up the complexity like this:

The many elusive and diverse methodological and analytical perspectives on narrative within the narrative turn partly emanate from a lack of clarity or convergence on whether narrative is an epistemology or a method... The very beginnings of the narrative turn are unquestionably epistemological in aims. Narrative, as we have already suggested, was proposed as an antidote to rationality and quantitative measures prevalent in the social sciences at the time as well as a political tool that celebrated lay experiences and lay voices and created opportunities for them to be heard and validated" (p. 19).

Their assessment of narrative research as an "antidote" to positivist, post-positivist, rationalistic and quantitative perspectives (often lumped together) is consistent throughout much of the literature. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) acknowledge this same basic binary: "To this day, most academic work in non-narrative, and in many disciplines the most prominent theories, methods,

and practitioners continue to do work that is based on quantitative data and positivist assumptions about cause, effect, and proof” (p. 3).

Maynes, Pierce, and Laslett (2008) also echo the sentiments above. The following quote is representative:

“Personal narrative analysis, in contrast [to analytic logics based on probability and large groups], builds from the individual and the subjective. It gleans its truths from subjective perceptions about social phenomena, and more particularly through the narrative logics that structure experiencing, recalling, and understanding social action. Subjectivity and narrativity are at the core of the alternative epistemological presumptions associated with personal narrative analysis. Personal narrative analysis can provide powerful insights into social action and human agency, but given its epistemological presumptions that are so different from those of positivist social science, it needs to employ its own specific methods and rhetorics of persuasion” (p. 127).

Highlighting the subjective, the authors fall here on the side of the individual, individual identity and individual agency. Indeed, this is a strain that runs through a great amount of narrative research, and it is generally acknowledged that such a mission is a response to the totalizing and/or reductive influence of other methodologies. Narrative research then has several points of tension, the first between narrative as a methodological response to positivism and another being a response to prevalent calls for a scientific means of evaluating stories.

In the wake of Labov and Waletzky’s groundbreaking piece, the door is opened for narrative to be approached from this scientific perspective complete with the methodological apparatus that this entails. Lyons (2007) tells the story of a conference on narrative in 1979 where it was declared, “The study of narrative is no longer the province of literary specialists or folklorists borrowing their terms from psychology and linguistics but has now become a positive

source of insight for all branches of the human and natural sciences. (Mitchell, 1981, ix-x, quoted in Lyons, 2007, p. 604)³⁰

Cause and Effect

The thing is, cause and effect are a traditional part of the narrative function as understood by many. This characteristic is descended from Aristotle and thoroughly explicated by Ricoeur (1984) who points out that causality is a key feature in Aristotle's understanding of narrative: "The key opposition is here: one thing after another and one thing because of another ('in a causal sequence' [di'allela]) (52a4). One after the other is merely episodic and therefore improbable, one because of the other is a causal sequence and therefore probable. No doubt is allowed" (p. 41). The situation is such that, as Ricoeur points out using an oppositional, binary framework, narrative is often described in terms of either following a temporal pattern implying cause and effect or simply being an incoherent string of episodes. It either makes temporal sense or it is nonsensical.

Binary thinking of this sort forms a great deal of what is written and thought about narrative. Even here, as I try to complicate these dynamics, there is a sense for me that narrative is a response to another dialectically opposed position. My opening speech at the first

³⁰ Lyons follows the same chronological line as I have adopted here in trying to trace the history of narrative as it flowered in the social sciences. It's fairly conventional in narrative research literature. The anxiety that this produces is strong and there could be countless examples from the literature which demonstrate the nervousness narrative researchers feel about their own work. This further example from Mishler (1995) will suffice: "Historically, studies of stories and their meanings were marginalized, excluded from the positivist hegemony in psychology and the social sciences...But the domain of science is now contested territory...There are now strong grounds for its claim to legitimacy as a way of doing science. This does not mean it will be welcomed with open arms by those who excluded it...But the domain of science is now contested territory. We have a firm foothold within it and can have confidence that the work will continue, gaining in depth and significance. (p. 121)." (Quoted in Lyons, 2007, p. 605).

performance event highlights my tendency toward dualistic thought and I look back with a sense of dismay over my insistence that the teachers tell stories according to my structural framework.

(ZC starts the cameras and takes a seat next to Jim Fox. He eats a sandwich while the performers sign IRB Consent forms and pass them to him for his own signature. Throughout this process he explains the Consent and the guarantees of privacy. Once the forms have been collected the Researcher presents a brief explanation of the research project.)

Z CROWDER. In the School of Ed. there's this, kind of, constant tension between qualitative research which is sort of ethnography, um, that focuses on real rich capturing of a like local type of and context where you're embedded and you do some interviews and observations and write that up and then the quantitative, statistical stuff which is really where it seems like everything's going. Um, and what I wanted to do was to sort of side step both of those kind of issues. And so what we came up with was this idea of storytelling. And for me storytelling was, um, fundamentally contextual, it comes out your own personal experiences and stories the way you just kind of order your experiences and we put kind of cause and effect to it, um, just as humans. I had wanted a group of teachers from one central location so they were all speaking to people with a type of common knowledge, um, and so, this brings you all together to share this kind of setting. But I also think that stories when we put structure on the things that happen in life we do so that it communicates sort in a more universal way. We tell stories and they have universal characteristics. So I also think that while we'll tell specific stories maybe about MHS, or whatever you all choose to tell, that some of the things that we'll say would apply to somebody in California, or New York, right, that have been in the classroom and that are dealing with educ...contemporary educational issues. Um, and so that's sort of where story came from. And what I'm going to do with stories---I'm not collecting any demographics from you although I'll email you if something comes up in a story and I want to ask some kind of a background question. But, having been trained as a kind of a literary critic, for me it's the text, once I transcribe these, looking at them as kind of a literary type of text and seeing what common themes there are and what particular language is getting used by teachers that filters down from above or however we kind of come to understand what we do. I think there's a huge gap, as I said in the email, between the people that I work with in the School of Ed. And policy makers that I've had the opportunity to come in contact with and with what really goes on in the schools.

(General murmur. Everyone is sitting at the table in formal postures...Most have hands folded on the table in front of them. There is a slight attitude of tense expectations.)

So, all of these things have kind of led me to this. Along with this performance aspect because storytelling, I think, I mean I could interview you or I could get you to write stories but I think you get something different when you have an audience and hopefully, um, this isn't a formal type of thing that we can just, I mean, I'm hoping to get something that looks like stories but I think a lot of it will look like conversation, you know, and that's cool. Um, I came up with the prompt because last year when we all did the NC Teaching Working Conditions Survey. I sort of felt like they didn't ask the right questions. Um, and I wanted to respond to that too, this sort of quantitative, five possible answer, Likert scale type of thing that somehow was supposed to capture out working conditions when we don't ever actually get to use words, you know, except for agree or disagree or whatever. So, um, the prompt came as sort of a response to that to actually try to get at something that resembles the conditions of what it feels like to be the teacher. Um, and, there was one other thing about that, so that's anyway, that's how I came up with

that, oh, I liked it because it was broad enough, the conditions of teaching could really mean anything, I mean, what part of our outside lives come into this, what, you know, aspects of, I mean, it could really mean anything. So, that's the whole thing. If anybody has any question at any time please stop me and ask me. We'll video tape it until we're kind of ready to not (Laughter) And then you know, I'll go home and transcribe it---not this whole spiel, probably---but, um, anything else that gets said. There's tons of food and there's drink like I said, so, um, the restrooms are right outside and around the corner, you might be able to get to them through right out that door, too. And I can't thank you all enough for being here and doing this. There's no, there's nothing that I'm expecting to hear, you know what I mean, I mean I just want to make clear

V ROGERS. We can tell you're a teacher.

M SMITH. Just try...

(Laughter.)

Z CROWDER. No, no, I think that, yeah, I just want to hear stories that you all have to tell about the conditions of teaching...and that's really...

M SMITH. Are there conditions?

(Laughter.)

Z CROWDER (laughing.) Yeah, well, I don't know. What does that even mean? Maybe. Um, So I, you know, this is now kind of formal and I want to sort of get back out of that again. Um, Victoria, I know you're pressed for time.

V ROGERS.

Z CROWDER. So you're okay with...I don't know if you want to go first, or...so, does anybody have a story? It could be about what happened today or ...whatever y'all want.

V ROGERS. In what context to you want these stories? About what?

Z CROWDER. It doesn't matt... A teaching story. Anything about the conditions of teaching. It could literally be about something that happened today, again, I think we've been having this conversation for like thirty minutes. Or something that's you've witnessed over...especially someone who's had such a long career and seen so much...

(Appendix 1, pp. 309-311)

Over the course of organizing and analyzing the data for this dissertation, I came to realize that my insistence during the performance events on a particular conception of story was beholden to the models that I have described above. If the teachers taught me anything about narrative, it was that the pre-fabricated frameworks were not capable of containing the stories that they told me. I return to this revelation in Act V.

Communication

“If you build your school on the belief that effective teaching is the most important thing, then teachers should have the most influential voice---because no one knows teaching like teachers.

This means teachers need to be empowered to speak up and say what they need---to curriculum designers, technology innovators, principals, superintendents, and school board members---and when teachers speak up, others need to listen. Teachers are the experts. They have the most informed view of what works in the classroom.

That’s why it’s crucial that teachers should speak up to each other. When we’re discussing the most important questions in education, ‘how do we help our kids do better?’---teachers need to be talking to teachers.”

(Open letter from Vicki Phillips, resigning Director of Education, College Ready, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, entitle, “Raise Your Voice”, December 8, 2015.)

Epistemology

One moment that is frequently pointed to as a milestone in thinking about narrative is the publication of Jerome Bruner’s book, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (1986). Bruner shares a basic affinity with Ricoeur in arguing that narrative is “mode” of thinking. His book opens with an epigram from William James that reads, “To say that all human thinking is essentially of two kinds---reasoning on the one hand, and narrative, descriptive, contemplative thinking on the other---is to say only what every reader’s experience will corroborate”. Lyons (2007) describes the impact of Bruner’s thinking, “He asserted baldly that there were two modes of thought or cognitive functioning: the traditional logical-scientific mode and a narrative mode. Bruner contended that although the two modes are complimentary, neither is reducible to the other. Each provides a distinctive way of ordering experience, of constructing reality and causality”. (p. 614). Bruner himself writes, “Each of the ways of knowing, moreover, has operating principles of its own and its own criteria of well-formedness. The differ radically in their procedures for verification. A good story and a well-formed argument are different natural kinds. Both can be used as a means of convincing another. Yet what they convince of is fundamentally different:

arguments convince one of their truth, stories of their lifelikeness. The one verifies by eventual appeal to procedures for establishing formal and empirical proof. The other establishes not truth but verisimilitude.” (Bruner, 1986, p.11).

On one hand, this is about function; Bruner argues that the two modes of thinking serve different human ends. Polkinghorne (1988) addresses the idea that these two ways of thinking work differently from one another, “The two processes function differently, and each mode uses a different type of causality to connect events. The paradigmatic mode searches for universal truth conditions, whereas the narrative mode looks for particular connections of sentences in discourse...the special subject matter of narrative is the ‘vicissitudes of human intention’---that is, the changing direction of human action” (Polkinghorne, 1988: 17, quoted in DeVereaux & Griffin, 2013, p. 94) On a different note, Bruner positions narrative in terms of mimesis or imitation, and he stresses the “lifelikeness” that is at the heart of the evaluation of stories. This, I am arguing, is a reductive view of story that follows an Aristotelian model for dividing up the world into categories. Bakhtin refutes this notion by arguing that ALL utterances have an aesthetic component and blurs the distinctions between imitation (inevitable) and life.

Bruner, however, recognizes that **evaluation** of narrative is an important part of how narrative works. Bakhtin also recognizes this feature and expresses it in various ways at various times. One of these formulations is the way we cast a “sidelong glance” at our fellow interlocutor in order to ascertain his or her probable reaction to something that we might utter. In this way all of the things that we say are both textured by previous stories (utterances) and are also performed with a view towards audience response

This is because language is social. The social as a setting is, however, not an abstraction. Bruner is interested in the relationship between stories and the society in which they are told:

“Like many anthropologists and like ‘conceptual pragmatists’ generally, I believe that we constitute and negotiate our own social reality and that meaning is finally ‘settled’ by these constitutive and negotiatory processes...Neutral, ‘factual’ meanings---the ‘epistemic’ domain in contrast to the deontic---are forever caught or contextualized in these value systems. The efforts of both philosophers and practical men to translate grand concepts like ‘justice,’ ‘equity,’ even ‘altruism’ and health,’ into workaday meanings depends upon understanding how human values operate and change in real life” (Bruner, 1986, p. 281).

Here his rootedness in the concrete world seems similar to Bakhtin who is also aware that all of our utterances are colored by the value-laden setting in which they are spoken. Bruner’s formula, however, seems overly rigid when he writes in 1990, ““Thus, while a culture must contain a set of norms, it must also contain a set of interpretive procedures for rendering departures from those norms meaningful in terms of established patterns of belief. It is narrative and narrative interpretation upon which folk psychology depends for achieving this kind of meaning” (Bruner, 1990, p. 47).

Bakhtin’s insight is that cultural norms, as represented in literary norms, are always in flux due to the centripetal forces that render any one to one correspondence impossible. Again, Bruner’s preoccupation with verisimilitude presents a one-sided view of interpretation wherein “people are expected to behave situationally whatever their ‘roles’...” (Bruner, 1990, p. 48) and that society’s norms dictate roles. Whenever we are confronted with something that doesn’t fit into a “canonical” view, we respond again with a story that will force the phenomenon into something comprehensible: “*The function of the story is to find an intentional state that mitigates or at least makes comprehensible a deviation from a canonical cultural pattern*” (Bruner, 1990, pp. 49-50, italics Bruner’s). This is where the relationship between educational research and policies and teachers is closely intertwined. DeVereaux and Griffin (2013), commenting on something similar write, “An important point, therefore, is that the connections of events through emplotment, a narrative device, is a matter of choice. Elements need not be connected in any

real way for a plot to be constructed from them. The only requirement is that they make some kind of sense to the person receiving the narrative” (DeVereaux and Griffin, 2013, pp. 94-5). This sense making, they argue then becomes a pattern which ultimately constructs the world and our relationship to it. In a way this plays into Bruner’s original binary premise, that we have two modes of thinking, one for universal, empirical phenomena and one for directing our individual intentions outward as we make sense of our universe. This, of course, begs the question as to which of the two modes Bruner’s theory falls into. Is it a universal truth that there are two modes or, is it a way of directing an intention toward understanding by creating a narrative explaining the binaries, and, at the same time, making causal explanations about the way we maneuver the world?

Ontology

The purpose of this dissertation, written in the way that it is, is to question several of these ideas about narrative. From my perspective narrative written in a novelistic form allows for a deconstruction of the canonical view by challenging assumptions that there is any central definition of teachers. Much research would espouse a reductive role for teachers wherein they are considered a fixed identity. Teachers are not a fixed identity and their plurality needs to be recognized more widely in the scholarship that considers them. Bruner’s usefulness, though, is in his insistence on rooting storytelling within a society or a culture’s value system. This, it seems to me, is indisputable. And, it seems that it is one of the core tenants of much work in narrative research. The problem is that our socialness is just that, social. There is no such thing as a cultural deviancy because we are all deviant from narrative norms. In other words, our lives are not “just so” stories that fulfill a narrative plot. Hence another place where I assert a distinction between this work and other scholarly work in the field. The teacher participants in

my study were not subjects from whom I could find answers, per se. Their performances were texts which I could read to understand the conditions surrounding them. There wasn't an ontological inquiry into learning about these teachers, or teachers in general---what makes them tick, and so forth. Rather, I hoped to use their performed stories as a way of thinking about the complex interrelations involved in their experiences, not to underline or analyze their experiences.

A KOBE. Yeah, when it comes to... I didn't really like when we said in the exam, when they do survey, like Teacher's Working Conditions...

M LOY. Yes

A KOBE. They don't ask the right questions.

J FOX. Yeah.

M LOY. That's another thing. Good point.

A KOBE. They don't ask the question we want to answer.

M LOY. That's valuable.

A KOBE. Voila. They ask the question they want us to say something to go by what we say. We...I never find what I want to say.

M GREEN (Laughing) No.

J FOX. Yeah, yeah.

A KOBE. No, I have some answer I want to tell them...to write it...

M LOY. Give me an open space (writing gesture), right?

A KOBE. Voila. Let them ask this question, I will answer it, but they just, "Blah, blah, blah." They just...this is not what we want.

M GREEN. Well, do you...

A KOBE. Honestly.

M GREEN. Do you...

M LOY. "Are you scared of working in your school?" "No. But give me some books."

M GREEN. Do you guys feel, like, conflicted, too? I feel conflicted when I fill that thing out because I don't want to make my school sound bad. 'Cause it's not a bad place. I love coming to work every day. But, do you know what I mean? It's like, you want to give a critique but you don't want to make Midlands sound that bad...

J FOX. Yeah, yeah.

M GREEN. ...because you don't want them to be, to say, "Wow, what's going on over there that it's that bad."

M LOY. And it isn't sometimes.

M GREEN. And it's not, it's not that bad.

A KOBE. Midlands is not bad.

M GREEN. Like there are things that need to be fixed...

M LOY. 'Cause it may be all over...in every high school.

Z CROWDER. And that's...I mean that was the...and I'm trying not to talk much...

M LOY. No... please do.

Z CROWDER. ...but, I think, I mean for me...it was that it doesn't...it's complex. Like all of this is so complex. And it's complex on a different day.

M LOY. The layers upon layers upon layers.

J FOX. Yeah.

A KOBE. Yeah.

Z CROWDER. It's different on every day. So, for me...it just...I'm not opposed to...like, if those are useful to get to some responses, you know, that could maybe make change---which, again, I'm not entirely convinced of---but, um, it just doesn't come close...so, this to me is complex. You know what I mean? I mean, it's...it covers every condition of teaching and they all go together in all kinds of weird and interesting ways. But...

M LOY. Tentacles upon...

Z CROWDER. It just...yeah...and you know, and even your feelings about stuff change when you listen to other people. I mean to me, the world is complex. You hear a story and it changes your mind...sometimes, you know, so that's what I was shooting for and this has been amazing. Because this has sort of captured that...but that was my problem, is that you can't simplify it to just...

A KOBE. No.

J FOX. No. You can't. And I think that's part of the problem. I think part...that, that the powers that be are trying to simplify it and that you can't. And I think they're wasting time doing that, too. I think they're spinning tires trying to simplify something and you can't.

A KOBE. We..we do this survey for since I've been here. Every year we do it...

M LOY. And we always wonder what it does or what...

A KOBE. Every year we do it. And we never see any change.

M GREEN (Laughing) Yeah.

J FOX. Yeah.

*A KOBE. Why? And, that...okay, (assuming position of administration and snapping)
“Teachers, you’re very good at planning. Do it. We need one other person. We do one other person.”*

M GREEN. Do you remember last year when we even had to do the practice one?

(Laughter.)

(Appendix 1, pp. 356-358)

Leadership

The relationship between teachers and administration and the ways in which teachers negotiate their desire to lead is also prominent in the stories. These issues will be covered more fully in Act III where I explore the ways in which they are encouraged and discouraged from forming particular identities both as individuals and as part of a collective.

Teacher Leadership

Q6.1. Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about teacher leadership in your school.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Agree

Strongly agree

Don't know

- a. Teachers[1] are recognized as educational experts.
- b. Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.
- c. Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues.
- d. Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles[2].
- e. The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems.
- f. In this school we take steps to solve problems.

g. Teachers are effective leaders in this school. ● ● ● ● ●

1. Teachers means a majority of teachers in your school.

2. School leadership roles may include formal roles such as department chair, an elected member of the School Improvement Team, mentor, coach or leader of a professional learning community, etc.

(North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2013-14, 2016b)

Educational Research and Narrative

In what follows I will briefly survey the contemporary aspects of narrative in educational research. As I situate myself, I find it reasonable to come into dialogue with the general thinking of scholars in the field of narrative. Here I will try to bring Bakhtin into the conversation as well as I think through the stances on narrative that have influenced the field over the last thirty years. Bakhtin's ideas, I argue, encompass most of these ideas, or at least address them, and still he asks, in the language of improvisation, "Yes, and...?"

Perhaps the most popular form of narrative research performed in the field of education is Narrative Inquiry (not to be confused with Daiute's use of the label). In general, narrative inquiry is a two-fold approach developed by Jean D. Clandinin and Michael Connelly (1988, 1990, 2000, 2006) that emphasizes narrative as both the phenomenon and the methodology. Clandinin and Connelly's narrative work draws explicitly from John's Dewey's writings on experience (1934/2005). "Dewey's two criteria of experience, interaction and continuity enacted in situations, provide the grounding for attending to a narrative conception of experience through the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space with dimensions of temporality, place, and sociality" (Clandinin, Steeves, & Caine, 2013, p. 168). Further, narrative inquiry draws from Dewey's philosophical stance. Here Clandinin and Roziak situate the work of narrative inquiry within Dewey's "ontology of experience" (I have italicized their quote from Dewey):

“Dewey’s (Art as Experience) conception of experience differs from this (Kant and phenomenological views). It does not refer to some precognitive, precultural ground on which our conceptions of the world rest. Instead, it is a changing stream that is characterized by continuous interaction of human thought with our personal, social, and material environment: *‘Because every experience is constituted by interaction between ‘subject and ‘object,’ between a self and its world, it is not itself either merely physical nor merely mental, no matter how much one factor or the other predominates...[experiences] are the products of discrimination, and hence can be understood only as we take into account the total normal experience in which both inner and outer factors are so incorporated that each has lost its special character. In an experience, things and events belonging to the world, physical and social, are transformed through the human context they enter, while the live creature is changed and developed through its intercourse with things previously external to it (Dewey, 1981, p. 251).’* In other words, Dewey’s ontology is not transcendental, it is transactional.” (Clandinin & Roziak, 2007, p. 39)

The term “transactional” is used by Bruner (1986) where he emphasizes the interactive features of language use in ways that echo Bakhtin. “For it is not simply that we all have forms of mental organization that are akin, but that we express these forms constantly in our transactions with one another. We can count on constant transactional calibration in language, and we have ways of calling for repairs in one another’s utterances to assure such calibration” (Bruner, 1986, p. 62).

When these calibrations fail, Bruner argues, we respond with hostility or suspicion. Bakhtin’s advance is in thinking about the calibrations not as successes or failures but rather as part of the complexity of the exchange. In a sense, all calibrations are destined to fail to a greater or lesser degree. There are times when the teachers in my study are talking at cross purposes while maintaining the social norms of conversational exchange. There can be no one-to-one correspondence because, for Bakhtin, there is no centralized unity exclusive of others. Bruner, as a psychologist, sees this process of calibration as something innate, “Human beings must come equipped with the means not only to calibrate the workings of their minds against one

another, but to calibrate the worlds in which they live through the subtle means of reference” (1986, pp. 63-4). He argues that young children are able to display this ability. Bakhtin, while not necessarily disagreeing here, would, I think, argue that these meaning-making structures are constantly subject to recalibration through social interaction. It’s not that we are calibrated. It’s that we are constantly recalibrating. In the end, it’s a matter of emphasis but it affects how we think of personal knowledge.

A central focus in narrative work, in line with Dewey, is the call for attending to the “personal practical knowledge” of teachers (Clandinin & Connelly, 1988). Narrative inquiry stresses the relationship between researchers and their participants and, in another key concept, its practitioners are aware that research inquiries are conducted “in the midst” of the ongoing lives of the participants (Craig & Huber, 2007). These participants lead “storied” lives, a tacit acknowledgement of Bruner’s influence here regarding the way stories provide the medium through which we come to know our world and ourselves. Clandinin & Roziak state,

“Beginning with a respect for ordinary lived experience, the focus of narrative inquiry is not only a valorizing of individuals’ experience but also an exploration of the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals’ experiences were constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted---but in a way that begins and ends that inquiry in the storied lives of the people involved. Narrative inquirers study an individual’s experience in the world and, through the study, seek ways of enriching and transforming that experience for themselves and others” (Clandinin & Roziak, 2007, p. 42).

In many ways these goals resonate with the project at hand. There is a general insistence within the narrative inquiry field that the work acknowledge the ontological aspects of human beings instead of strictly attending to the epistemological as positivist research (again the dualism rearing its head) has tended to do. I will have more to say about this shortly but for now I note that my work hews most closely to theirs when it directs its attention to the social aspects of life:

“These stories are the result of a confluence of social influences on a person’s inner life, social influences on their environment, and their unique personal history. These stories are often treated as the epiphenomenal to social inquiry---reflections of important social realities but not realities themselves: (Clandinin & Roziak, 2007, p. 41). This is an important question for Bakhtin who sees the utterance as life, not as a representation of life but who also sees unique personal history as inextricably bound up in the lives of others. Ultimately it’s a question of subjectivity and intersubjectivity.

The landscape of narrative research in education is, appropriately, analogous to the heteroglossia of the world at large. As I have thought about how to order the myriad research frameworks and foci of the scholarship currently addressing narrative in some way I realized that the easiest way to structure a miniature literature review would be to eliminate some of the possible categories. This is completely arbitrary. It is not to say that the work being done in areas like Critical Discourse Analysis (in all of its variations) doesn’t overlap with the narrative work being done in the categories I do include here. On some level almost all of the work done in narrative addresses issues of power, the status quo, equity, and the codification of values. Many educational thinkers, informed by Freire, focus on the dialogic themselves.³¹ Recent works such as Quintero & Rummel (2015) explicitly acknowledge their debt to critical theory in relation to their narrative inquiry and this is a strong strand of work being done in education. Their work was helpful as I thought about “bricolage” as a type of novelistic methodology and in

³¹ For a recent example of analysis employing Freire’s dialogue see Fernandez, 2015. Freire’s sense of the dialogic, it should be pointed out, is vastly different from that which Holquist assigns to Bakhtin. For Freire, dialogue is an emancipatory process, not always available---Freire writes, “Dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people” (Freire, 1970/2009, p. 89). For Bakhtin, in the sense that I’m thinking about it, the dialogic is simply the state of affairs of the world. For more on Freire’s definition see Chapter 3 of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

my understanding of “story as method”.³² In their epilogue they write, “It is our hope that readers participate in continuing the struggle, going back to our contention that a variety of functions of story can be generative and can be interpreted in many ways” (Quintero & Rummel, 2015, p. 160). Their interest in the “function” of stories is informed by a strong tradition in narrative research in general, as I have discussed, but one which I only share incidentally, by way of considering “function” among many possibilities. As an example of the possible work being done in the field, though, their work serves as a good example of the possibility of bringing the concerns of theory, the enactment of art, and aspects of education into conversation. But I think it is important to say that, following Bakhtin, I am more interested in the aesthetic and ethical components of the storytelling as event, an acknowledged construction that emphasizes performativity. Why we tell stories---the function they play in our daily lives is interesting, but it is something that only needs to be briefly addressed here.

My second point is that there is a danger in using stories to fit into a particular agenda. Quintero’s book is explicit in its social justice mission and in its use of stories is filtered through this ideological lens. This is impossible for me to avoid as well but, by attempting a “novelization”, it might at least be possible to combat my own impulses to read the stories through a single ideology/agenda.

³² Bricolage, in Quintero and Rummel’s view is the use of various research methodologies with leanings toward Humanities research. They include hermeneutic interpretation, phenomenological readings and content analysis in these methodologies. Quoting Kincheloe, McLaren & Steinberg, 2012, p. 27, they write, “The bricolage generates different ways to read, approach, and use research. ‘The bricolage, with its multiple lenses allows necessary fluidity and goes beyond a traditional triangulated approach for verification’. The bricolage is an inspirational frame for looking at story and support research that involves story on multiple levels” (p. 7). While I share their enthusiasm for multiple lenses and indeed multiple interpretive readings, this dissertation obviously is striving for something slightly different.

There is also a large movement for using narrative in the service of teacher education, both with a focus on teacher educators and pre-service teachers (Ayers & Shubert, 1992; Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002; Miller, 2005; Kitchen, Parker, & Pushor, 2011; Blake & Blake, 2012; Chan, Keyes, & Ross, 2012) or of exploring teacher voice (Jalongo, Isenberg & Gerbracht, 1995; Thomas, 1995; Lyons, & LaBoskey, 2002) or student voice within educational contexts (Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2011).

Goodson's (2011, 2013) interest is in "narrative pedagogy". He argues for the integration of life stories considered within the setting: "First the personal life story is an individualizing device if divorced from context. It focuses on the uniqueness of individual personality and circumstance, and in doing so may well obscure or ignore collective circumstances and historical movements. Life stories are only constructed in specific historical circumstances and cultural conditions---these have to be brought into our methodological grasp (Goodson, 2013, p. 31). As opposed to Bamberg (De Fina, Schriffin & Bamberg 2006; Andrews & Bamberg, 2004) who called attention to the analytic possibilities of "small stories", Goodson is interested in life histories. "We are all working with scripts generated elsewhere" (p. 79) he writes, echoing Bakhtin but concludes, also similarly to Bakhtin, that we all have varying possibilities for improvisations. Goodson, co-writing with Biesta, Tedder and Adair (2010), turns his attention to the use of narrative in the classroom and this is another general area where education scholars have done substantial work. Student voice is a further strand of narrative research in education as is narrative pedagogy (Norris, 2015).

Influences, Part I

When I first began my doctoral studies in the School of Education, I discovered to my great consternation that I was to train as a social scientist. The methodologies I employed were to be generally sanctioned by Creswell (2008) and should be able to be easily articulated with what Bourdieu (1993), quoting Montaigne, calls a “gloss”. I was also quickly made aware through the primary indoctrination text (Lagemann, 2000) that I had entered a field that had long contested the role of social science methodologies versus more philosophical processes, and that, in general, the push for social science methods that sought to emulate the mechanics of the hard sciences, had won the battle.

Casting about, then, for a way of thinking about and actually doing educational research that would fit into overall agenda of the educational research environment, I discovered a modest and unobtrusive corner called “narrative research”. Creswell (2008) devoted a chapter to the model, leaning heavily on the work of Jean D. Clandinin and Michael Connelly (1990, 1998, 2000) to discuss the relative merits and shortcomings of the approach. “Narrative research,” he wrote, “is a literary form of qualitative research with strong ties to literature, and it provides a qualitative approach in which you can write in a persuasive literary form. It focuses on the microanalytic picture---individual stories---rather than the broader picture of cultural norms, as in ethnography, or abstract theories, as in grounded theory” (Cresswell, 2008, p. 512). Although I still had a great deal of reluctance in calling the work that I wanted to do “qualitative”, thus juxtaposing it with “quantitative” and somehow participating in the struggle for methodological supremacy that I found silly from the outset, I chose to locate myself somewhere in the land of narrative research: context.

In the end, however, I find myself unable to claim narrative research (at least as Creswell defines it) for my home because, as this dissertation shows, I cannot disentangle the micro from the macro and I believe that both are highly relevant in understanding educational phenomena through their conjunction. This is not to say that I believe there is a method that can encompass both the individual and the larger societal or cultural picture any more than I believe mixed methods is a solution to the qualitative versus quantitative paradigm. What I am attempting to do here is an experiment in order to see if there is a way to write about individual lives and concerns while acknowledging the influence of external educational realities both broad and narrow.

Bakhtin's theories serve well as a framework for such an endeavor but I am also indebted to a number of other works that have influenced the design of my work. The collaborative work completed under the guidance of Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, Accardo, Balazs, Beaud, Bonvin, Bourdieu, E., Bourgois, Broccolichi, Champagne, Christin, Faguer, Garcia, Lenoir, Oeuvrard, Pialoux, Pinto, Podalydes, Sayad, Soulie, Wacquant, 1993) entitled *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society* has been a useful model for some of my procedures of composition. The book which presents full, unedited interview data accompanied by novelistic descriptions of the settings of the interviews and which provides only minor commentary either on methodology or on the interview data itself is an example, I think, of the powerful impact the simple combination of setting and character can have in exploring the experiences of individuals in relation to the social services and institutions which exert heavy influence over their lives.

Bourdieu briefly lays out his program in a two-page introduction and it is worth quoting here at length:

Although these interviews were conceived and constructed as self-sufficient wholes, and can be read separately (and in any order), the reading has been set up to bring together individuals in social categories that might well be found together... We hope that this structure will have two effects. It should become clear that so-called 'difficult' spots ('housing projects' or schools today) are, first of all, *difficult to describe and think about*, and that simplistic and one-sided images (notably those found in the press) must be replaced by a complex and multi-layered representation capable of articulating the same realities but in terms that are different and, sometimes, irreconcilable. Secondly, following the lead of novelists such as Faulkner, Joyce or Woolf, we must relinquish the single, central, dominant, in a word, quasi-divine, point of view that is all too easily adopted by observers---and by readers too, at least to the extent they do not feel personally involved. We must work instead with multiple perspectives that correspond to the multiplicity of coexisting, and sometimes directly competing, points of view" (Bourdieu, et al. 1993, p. 3, author's italics).

These contradictions are what I am also interested in exploring, not in the hopes of resolving them: an impossible task in my opinion, but as a way of noting the complexities involved when we discuss things educational. Too often there is an impulse to reduce these things to a common denominator, particularly with respect to educational policy, in order to set guidelines, standards, expectations and the like.

Bourdieu's choice of novelists from the high modernist tradition is exciting but also carries several pitfalls. One of the dangers is the tendency for authors who excel at "stream of consciousness" writing such as Faulkner, Joyce and Woolf to be associated with an extreme form of subjectivity. The representation of an intensely personal perspective, think of Benjy in *The Sound and the Fury*, highlights the unreliability of a narrator and so calls into question the very basis of the character understanding anything outside of his own perceptions. The result is a pure relativism. This subjectivity is refuted then by the call of scientific methods and models which purport to objectivity in their analyses. Bourdieu recognizes the possibility of this critique and the inevitable refutation of a research community set on discovering "pure knowledge". His response is simple enough. He argues that all research must be aware of its own cooperation in

the game that it is playing. He writes damningly, “Many decades of empirical research in all its forms, from ethnography to sociology and from the so-called closed questionnaire to the most open-ended interview, have convinced me that the adequate scientific expression of this practice is to be found neither in the prescriptions of a methodology more often scientific than scientific, nor in the antiscientific caveats of the advocates of mystic union (Bourdieu, et al. 1993, p. 607). His attempt to find the middle ground here involves removing, to the highest degree possible, the barriers between the interview subjects and the interpretation of their words. His group used several techniques (notably he cites Labov as an inspiration) in order to provide all the pertinent information without interpreting the data themselves and hence, allowing the participants to provide “the means for their own interpretation” (Bourdieu et al. 1993, p. 612).

Unlike Bourdieu, whose spare aesthetic is designed to reduce the “symbolic violence” of interpretation, both from readers and researchers, my idea was to create an almost baroque aesthetic that seeks to color the world as richly as it seems to me to exist. Macbeth’s “sound and fury”; perhaps pointless, yet filled with as many engagements with the world as I can present, the sum total of which can, necessarily, be but a proverbial drop in the bucket.

Influences, Part II

Another model that was closer to the execution I had envisions was the book *Troubling the Angels* by Lather and Smithies (1997). Lather and Smithies’ work incorporates interviews with women infected with HIV/AIDS and incorporates reflexive notes from the researchers on the bottom of pages dedicated to transcriptions of the womens’ stories. Additionally, Lather and Smithies weave throughout the figure of the angel, in a multitude of representations, as a guiding element that adds another layer of depth to their inquiry. Their methods inform my work on several different planes. First, they are aware of their own presences inside and outside of the

stories: “The book is laid out so that, rather than only ‘giving voice’ to the stories of others, this is also a book about researchers both getting out of the way and getting in the way. As filters for the stories that we heard, we have written a book that is about others who both are and are not like ourselves, as we give testimony to what are our own stories and larger than our own lives” (Lather & Smithies, 1997, p. xiv).

Second, while they acknowledge their use of analytic strategies, they state that other considerations were also influential: “While there is some effort to look for patterns as well as differences, our primary interest is in a more interactive way of doing research than is usually the case where researchers are presented as disembodied, ‘objective’ knowers” (pp. xv-xvi). Finally, I have borrowed from their technique of rearranging interview data in order to facilitate my own work with the stories of the teachers. I followed their lead in arranging the material with an eye towards faithful presentation and arrangement that makes a kind of aesthetic sense rather than a chronological one: “Hence quotes from interview transcripts have sometimes been taken out of sequence and combined from across varied support groups for purposes of theme development, dramatic flow and to protect confidentiality. Efforts were made not to ‘sanitize’ each woman’s way of speaking and each thematic grouping of chapters includes some of the women’s own writing” (p. xvii). For my part, I have tried to provide large quotations of the transcripts in order that the context, within the confines of the storytelling situation, might be observed. I have also intentionally tried to provide full quotes from external sources in order that the reader might not feel as though sound bites had been cherry picked independent of the context.

Social Media

Using a software package called “Narrative Analytics” developed by Monitor 360 (Monitor360, 2016),³³ the Gates Foundation distilled social media posts from teachers into nine themes and added one more as a result of interviews. They presented the findings in under the title “In Their Own Words”:

“In Their Own Words originated from the desire to better understand teachers’ ideas, to hear them describe their experiences in their own voices, unfiltered. We wanted to find out: What are the pressing issues for teachers? What are teachers sharing with one another? What are they commenting on publicly—outside of research questions, focus groups, and private conversations?

So we closely analyzed what teachers were saying online from January to May 2014. We looked at over 2,400 blogs, 12,600 tweets, and 16,900 Edchats to get a sense of teachers’ views of their work. What we found are patterns across their comments.³⁴

We are calling these patterns teacher narratives. Teacher narratives are teachers’ words taken directly from social media. They are a collection of statements teachers actually wrote themselves.

This booklet is designed to share these teacher narratives with you. We have a saying at the Gates Foundation: Nobody knows teaching like teachers. Anyone who wants to have an impact on education should understand teacher narratives because they are reflections of how teachers view everything—their classrooms, their profession, and the whole education system.

We also hope that by sharing, we will encourage more teachers to join the conversation. Narratives are not static, nor are they singular. Narratives change over time. They are complex and they are many. We want to invite more teachers to help shape the narratives, so that the results will encompass the widest possible range of perspectives” (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2014, p. 1).

³³ The software got me thinking. Could you feed your diary into it and come away with the themes of your life? As an English teacher I always explained the difference between plot and theme to students as the difference between “What happened in the text” and “What the text is about”. Following this broad definition, the software could tell you what your life is about, hence, the purpose of your existence. That would be handy.

Also, I started thinking of a short story one could write. One could use software of this type to analyze, say, Amazon purchases (I’m sure Amazon already does). The protagonist of my story thinks about all of the books---novels, philosophy, nature, gardening, child-rearing, that he has ordered and all of the music: John Coltrane and Fats Domino and AC/DC and Steve Earle and all of the clothes, posters, gifts---yes, even gifts for others---that he has purchased over the years and thinks that if he could have software to analyze this vast array, maybe it would tell him something about himself. So he runs the program. The computer replies, “The point of your life is consumption.” Kind of a Kurt Vonnegut type of thing.

³⁴ This piece of research claims that it surveyed “unfiltered” voices of teachers but one could argue that social media is a theatrical stage.

The ten themes are: 1) The Art of Teaching, 2) 21st-Century Teaching, 3) Teach the Whole Child, 4) Deserving Professional Respect, 5) Teacher as Learner, 6) New Roles for Teachers, 7) Outside Factors Matter, 8) Education is not a Business, 9) Education is a Civil Right, 10) College is Not the Only Path.

Influences, Part III

Early on in my career as an academic researcher, I read Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) and I can still hear the echoes of its propositions as I employ Bakhtin here. Goffman argues that all social interactions are informed by performance. Sartre writes, "The public demands of them that they realize it as a ceremony; there is the dance of the grocer, of the tailor, of the auctioneer, by which they endeavor to persuade their clientele that they are nothing but a grocer, an auctioneer, a tailor. A grocer who dreams is offensive to the buyer, because such a grocer is not wholly a grocer" (Sartre, quoted in Goffman, 1959, p. 76). Goffman's point is that we all assume roles when we are in public, and we derive the rules for these roles from particular social conventions---"When an individual appears before others, he knowingly and unwittingly projects a definition of the situation, of which a conception of himself is an important part" (Goffman, 1959, p. 242). For me, this echoes one of the fundamental points that Bakhtin makes when he writes about the dialogic nature of our utterances through the process of envisioning ourselves through the eyes and mind of another.

The conventions of what can be said are inscribed through a social process, and Goffman's insistence that public behavior is a performance was, I admit, important in two ways to the framing of my research project. Originally I was interested in the performative role that teachers play every day. From my own experience I was aware that in stepping before a class I was adopting a persona that only existed while that particular social setting was engaged. That is

not to say that I dissembled or was fundamentally dishonest in my working with a class of students but only that my posture, my elocution, my overall presentation was adapted for addressing thirty other human beings on a prescribed (generally) topic. In the service of this assignment I was both more authoritative than I am in other situations and more engaging; witty, singy, dancy. This performance was an amalgamation of teachers I had witnessed, fictional and in my own life history, filtered through my own consciousness into something of a temporary unified whole.

On a second level, I wanted to explore the tensions between this performative aspect of teaching and the fact that as a teacher, the temporary identity that I assumed before a class, I had also adopted aspects of the same identity while away from the classroom. I was not interested especially in filming and analyzing other teachers' performative pedagogy but in removing them from the classroom while maintaining aspects of their professional identities. The focus of the storytelling event on "teacher working conditions" ensured that the professionals who gathered with me to talk of their experiences would never be wholly removed from this aspect of their lives. Goffman does suggest the possibility of dropping particular identities either in what he calls "performance disruptions" where the ceremony is unexpectedly interrupted, or when an assumed identity moves offstage and, free from public scrutiny, is able to drop the performance façade. I wanted to create a space that was on the border of professional performance and, in Goffman's term, the "back region" where the performance is prepared. This setting, I imagined would provide an interesting tableau upon which to explore the tensions between teachers on stage and teachers reflecting on their own performances in relation to the norms by which they were directed.

Goffman (and Bakhtin) is clear that performance has a distinct relation to the values of a society: “Thus, when the individual presents himself before others, his performance will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society, more so, in fact, than does his behavior as a whole”. (Goffman, 1959, p 35). Making the performative nature of this explicit---both to my readers here and to the teachers who agreed to work with me is crucial because one of the topics of the examination is dialogic nature of teachers’ perceptions of themselves and their works. There is, for me, no sense that there is an underlying authenticity that is rooted in a unified whole that, through close analysis, could be determined and brought to light. Given the fluid nature of Bakhtin’s anti-framework, such a thing is impossible. The margins of the performance are the most interesting thing where roles as teachers, parents, employees, and a host of others come together and interact through linguistic presentation but not as distinguishable pieces---and here is where I differ from Goffman---but as a simultaneity; a human being at a moment in time.

In 1976 Madeleine Grumet critiqued Goffman’s performance theory by arguing that the pendulum had swung from “nature to nurture, from a fixed-character kind of determinism to a strident situationism that attributes behavior to a function of the environment and disregards the power of the individual to shape both his behavior and his situation” (Pinar & Grumet, 1976/2006, p. 72)³⁵. Her assessment is in accordance with Bakhtin---what Michael Holquist calls Bakhtin’s loophole---that human being always make choices about their expressions albeit in sometimes very limited ways. Grumet continues in her essay to present an alternate view of autobiography than one espoused by many narrative theorists. She writes:

³⁵ The “pendulum” metaphor, particularly with respect to education, is further explored in Acts IV & V.

What kind of subjectivity emerges as autobiography? Autobiography is a story that I tell about my experience. Self-as-agent, tells the story of self-as-place, the body-subject, its movement in the world, and in the process constructs and reveals self-as-object, or as a reflective self-representation. As such, autobiography is two steps removed from the prereflective events enacted by the body subject. The first step requires the reflection upon the moments already lived that leads to a conscious grasp of their meaning. The second step involves the presentation of those events and their meanings as they now appear to the story teller in terms of his relationship with his audience. Thus, autobiography barely recaptures the past or even records it. It records the present perspective of the story teller and presents the past within that structure. It employs the past to reveal the present assumptions and future intentions of the story teller, an elaborate detour that travels through once upon a time in order to reach now. Its truth is provided in its fictions” (p. 73).

In the end, I think that Grumet is correct. Goffman’s flaw is in suggesting that there are different realms of reality through which one may pass. Video recorded, transcribed, represented, however one looks at it, the stories of the teachers are them and they are not them at the same time.

Polling

Teachers are not solely responsible for crafting their own identities, however. The public nature of their work invites the entire American citizenry to join in their identity formation. And, as natural in our democratic society, the views are varied. Here are “Select Findings” from the 2015 PDK/Gallop Poll conducted in May, 2015. These bullets were published under the title “Make teaching more professional” in the October, 2015 volume of *Phi Delta Kappan*:

- A majority of Americans don’t support tenure for teachers: 59% of all Americans and 54% of public school parents oppose tenure. However, responses from black Americans differ: More blacks (47%) support rather than oppose tenure (32%). Republicans are less likely than Democrats to favor teacher tenure (15% versus 33% respectively).
- 62% of public school parents said they trust and have confidence in the nation’s teachers. Republicans, however, are evenly split on the question, with 42% saying they do trust and have confidence in teachers, and 43% saying they do not.

- About three-quarters of Americans said teachers should be required to pass board certifications in addition to earning a degree, a process that would be similar to professions like medicine and law.
- Teacher salaries in their community are too low, according to a majority of Americans. Republicans are less likely than Democrats to think these teacher salaries are too low (44% compared to 72%). No group said teacher salaries are too high.
- A majority of public school parents said communicating with their child's teacher is easy. Only small percentages of Americans strongly disagree with this statement.”

(Phi Delta Kappa, 2015, p. 57)

Influences, Parts IV & V

The final two works of note that informed my thinking in the production of this study both address the question of narrative's role in identity-making within the cultural context.

Constance DeVereaux and Martin Griffin's book *Narrative, Identity, and the Map of Cultural Policy: Once Upon a Time in a Globalized World* (2013) and Dorothy Holland, William Lachiotte Jr., Debra Skinner and Carole Cain's book *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds* (1998) are in some ways complimentary in that they both explore the interrelations between the stories we tell, how we define ourselves and the way others define us.

DeVereaux and Griffin (2013) are influenced by the work of Sholes, Phelan and Kellogg (2006) who provide a framework for thinking about narrative as tripartite (at least) in that it may be analyzed as a “formal system”, as an “ideological instrument”, or as “rhetoric”. The influence of this framework is apparent in my review of narrative in educational research above which also emphasized the idea that narrative research in itself, as a methodology, and as a phenomenon, is itself a narrative that may be analyzed along each of these three co-existing axes.

Holland et al. (1998) devise their own framework which they call “figured worlds” in order to think about the ways in which human beings are situated historically and socially. They write, “‘Figured world’ then provides a means to conceptualize historical subjectivities,

consciousnesses and agency, persons (and collective agents) forming in practice” (Holland, et al., 1998, pp. 41-2). Influenced by Vygotsky, Bakhtin and Bourdieu, the authors explore the myriad interrelations between the ways we position ourselves and the ways that we are positioned by the stories that surround us. In the case of both sets of authors, the impulse is not to simplify but to find ways of talking about the complex ways that subjectivities shape and are shaped by their settings, in all the complexity that term engenders. Near the end of their study, Holland et al. write, “Figured worlds, the politics of social positioning, and spaces of authoring are our attempts to conceptualize collective and personal phenomena in ways that match the importance of culture in contextualizing human behavior with the situating power of social position. Identities are our way of figuring the interfaces among these dimensions of collective life; our way of naming the places where society organizes persons and persons in turn reorganize, albeit in modest steps, societies; the pivots of our lived worlds” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 287).

It is apparent from this that, although both books use the term “identity” and both address the idea of “agency”, both are seeking to complicate reductive notions of identity as it is acknowledged and informed by stories. As I have noted previously, I do not have any desire to suggest that there is anything that could be called a “teacher voice” or a “teacher identity”. Both DeVereaux and Griffin, and Holland et al. attempt to work through some of the same complex issues that I am confronted with here and whereas there are different theoretical frameworks involved. I do have a sense that there is a similar desire to advance thinking on narrative and the role it plays in human lives.

The one other thing to note, with respect to DeVereaux and Griffin’s work, is that they are directly interested in cultural policy. They write, “In practical terms, cultural policies have the effect of granting or denying rights, conferring benefits, and of acknowledging or denying

identity for official purposes, including the extreme but all too common case of punishing the very expression of identity” (p. 127). Here the authors recognize that identity is a type of position that is fixed by the policies of a given society. While the purpose of this dissertation is, in part, to play with this notion, it seems important to me to also recognize the ways in which we are all fixed, not only by the way society views and labels us, but also by the way we understand this perspective as we negotiate inner and outer subjectivities. It seems impossible for me to argue for the multiplicity of teacher identities without at least acknowledging the ways in which others, society, and language itself are subject to a centrifugal force that seeks to unify and monologize. The dialogic cannot simply be a resistance to a particular paradigm without becoming dialectic.

DeVereaux and Griffin negotiate the tensions between narrative structure and narrative function by way of policy analysis, and this has been a useful model for me as I’ve thought through the relationship of policy, theory and practice. They write, “The value of narrative as an explanatory tool for policy is precisely its ability to illuminate many of the ways in which policy actors and the general public organize items of knowledge, values, causal understandings, beliefs, and opinions into a coherent form that influences behavior. However, we also stress the importance of narrative as the cognitive landscape upon which such things are experienced and carried out. In other words, we wish to emphasize that narrative is not simply an organizational overlay on experience. There is much reason to believe, instead, that it is an inseparable component of experience” (p. 94). In substantial ways this echoes the thinking of Bakhtin who doesn’t use the term narrative but who argues that the relationship between the landscape of language through which we traverse simultaneously informs, responds to and constructs our own view of it.

In the next two Acts I will present multiple readings of several of the teachers stories using two literary works as a guiding template for examining the ambiguity inherent in the way the teachers compose themselves and in exploring the ways they relate themselves with respect to the outside world. Henry James and Charles Dickens, two Canonical novelists, will provide me examples of the ways one might think about stories that, I believe, must remain open-ended.

ACT III. GHOSTS³⁶

Naughty

*Jack and Jill, went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water, so they say
Their subsequent fall was inevitable
They never stood a chance, they were written that way
Innocent victims of their story.*

*Like Romeo and Juliet,
T'was written in the stars before they even met,
That love and fate, and a touch of stupidity
Would rob them of their hope of living happily,
The endings are often a little bit gory,
I wonder why they didn't just change their story?
We're told we have to do what we're told but surely
Sometimes you have to be a little bit naughty.*

*Just because you find that life's not fair it
Doesn't mean that you just have to grin and bear it,
If you always take it on the chin and wear it,
Nothing will change.*

("Naughty" from the musical *Matilda, the Musical*, written by Dennis Kelly with music and lyrics by Tim Minchin. Based on a book by Roald Dahl entitled *Matilda*. First performed November, 2010, at Stratford-upon-Avon by the Royal Shakespeare Company. Minchin (2013) "Naughty" from *Matilda, the Musical* (Original Broadway Cast Recording) performed by S. Gennusa. New York, New York: Broadway Records/Yellow Sound Label.)

Introduction

This chapter is about the things that the teachers *do* say during the storytelling events. In a sense it's also about how they speak about their personal perceptions of their work. It's about what they *can* say, not because they are suffering under some form of standardized censorship (although in cases I think that this occurs), but because the way they talk about their work is not the way others, with less immediate relationship to the classroom, speak of it. Their view is more intimate, and it is informed by their relationships with their own children (parenting is one

³⁶ With all due respect to Jacques Derrida (1993, 1994).

motif they negotiate), their relationships to others in their community and, although they reference larger social forces, the stories in this chapter are focused on the micro level: individual relations with students, classroom dynamics and school-level politics.

My central purpose in using Bakhtinian theory as a mode of analysis is that an investigation of what research subjects say necessarily (whether we acknowledge it or not) includes an exploration of the multitude of voices which serve as a repertoire for building their own utterances. In “The Problem of Speech Genres” Bakhtin writes, “The utterance is filled with *dialogic overtones*, and they must be taken into account in order to understand fully the style of the utterance. After all, our thought itself---philosophical, scientific, and artistic---is born and shaped in a process of interaction and struggle with others’ thought, and this cannot but be reflected in the forms that verbally express our thought as well” (SG, 1986, p. 92).

In my appropriation of Bakhtin, the thoughts of others represent the possible ways of talking about education. Immersed in the dialogic process, the teachers select from these disparate influences in their stories about the conditions of their work. In other words, the universe of possible discourses, limited by the prompt “teacher working conditions” is narrowed by the teachers as they talk and tell stories. The possibilities inherent in a universe of discourse is winnowed to those streams which one might argue are the most influential to the teachers as they speak their stories. This influence is, of course, limited to the time of the telling. The setting of the performance events is critical because we all engage in the creation of utterances based upon the speaking context in which we find ourselves. In Act II I tried to explore the various contexts in which the teachers were simultaneously situated (as authors and heroes) while also stressing the “performative” aspect of the research event which was specifically

scheduled and, in a way, scripted, for reasons that I discuss below. There were parameters to the event which, at least in the design plan, were intended to ultimately create a bounded whole.

The authors of the utterances are themselves unfinalizable. In the context of a novel, my novel, this dissertation, they are ultimately finalized because for me, and for the reader, they make a final exit. In my transcripts I recorded the moment like this:

Z CROWDER. I'm going to...I'm telling you that when that thing hits two hours, I am...that's my...

(The event ends here with great bustle and discussion as the participants fill out forms with "fake names" and talk all at once and in various aggregations. They congenially make fun of each other's chosen pseudonyms, "Myrna...Fox...Marjorie Ryan". There is much laughter which continues until the cameras are shut off.)

Appropriately enough the event ends in a blur of multiple conversations that are impossible to transcribe, my own sentence left hanging without conclusion, and with laughter.

My premise is that, in thinking about the stories that the teachers tell, one might be able to make observations about the ways in which teachers perceive their own work as filtered through the numerous ways that teachers are inscribed by educational discourses. Through an analysis of the telling, one might be able to find a way to talk about the discourses that make sense to the teachers in their daily lives and also, one might uncover some of the ruptures between dominant discursive streams that do not find traction in the teachers' understanding of their own work.

There is no definitive reading, of course, or authoritative tracking of intertextual allusions that might lead to a Q source, as it were. But I suspect that through a close but open reading, one might be able to glimpse the discourses that speak most to the teachers' experience. The strains that the teachers select as part of their own voice constitute their own self-creation---their

authoring. In selecting from the numerous discourses available they take responsibility for themselves through this authoring and stake an ethical ground that situates them, however fleetingly, with respect to their profession. As I said, in the stories presented below, the teachers tell stories that are close to home. They reflect their professional stances but they also incorporate aspects of their experiences that are not what we would consider “educational discourses”.

The concept of the *Bildungsroman* permeates the whole of this dissertation because, as a genre of novel, it emphasizes formation and emergence, but what I find curious is that practical examples only sporadically encompass formal educational experiences. The process of becoming, of which formal education plays but a small role, is foremost. From David Copperfield to Jane Eyre, Holden Caulfield to Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, schooling is a condition of life but not a determining factor. In fact, many *Bildungsromans* (see *Hard Times*, Act IV) are highly critical of formal education and present teachers who are unkind, authoritative, or completely removed from the world that the young protagonist inhabits. Perhaps this is also a characteristic of a novelistic view that is suspicious of a monologic that espouses a unified version of knowledge outside of experience. Teachers, I suggest, work at the intersection of deeply formalized knowledge and the processes of formation and emergence. This Act explores the role that the teachers play within the emerging lives of their students. But it is also about the way that the teachers themselves are constantly engaged in a process of becoming.

In presenting this analysis, I have consciously decided to adopt a novelistic stance that, I believe, more fully than other models represents the educational environment in the local school, Brandt County, North Carolina, and the United States as these settings flow into each other. In

Acts III and IV I have chosen to use the work of two novelists, Henry James and Charles Dickens, to frame the analysis. A word is necessary here, I believe, to defend my choice of this structural decision. In Act II I attempted to demonstrate the proximity and relationships between a variety of educational discourses. The choices I made were not arbitrary and it is obvious that the sections could in no way be all-inclusive. This is part of the point, I think. Education in this country is borderless. If you live in this country educational policies affect you, from property taxes and property values, to social relationships within your community. I also believe that the educational environment is not simply a physical place but that it contains a vast amount of mythology, science, anecdote, legend, fable, satire, and so on. The fictions of Henry James (*The Turn of the Screw*) and Charles Dickens (*Hard Times*)³⁷ both touch on themes of the *Bildungsroman* in that they both address life experiences as a process of coming of age.

Although they do this in different ways, each author comments on questions of epistemology and ontology (the accumulation of knowledge, the development of being), and each explores different ways in which the development of the person is variously maintained, challenged or disappointed by society and its educational representatives. James presents his story of a young governess on her first job tutoring two children as a study of mind: the subjectivity and the ambiguity inherent in making moral decisions in the concrete world. Dickens' work is clearly a satire that attacks certain educational practices at the outset before becoming a more generalized condemnation of the dehumanizing industrial advances of his time. In their novels, the authors are striving for entirely different effects---and affects---and the result

³⁷ Both dead, both white, but both available to Bakhtin as potential masters of the novel genre. An accusation of interpretive bias could be levelled here in my choice of authors to inform my literary analytics. My only defense is to say that a longer work than this dissertation could utilize a wider variety of authors with results that would even further enrich a view of American education.

is two books that could hardly be more different. And this for me is another part of the point. Acts III and IV are intentionally structured to allow for readings of the teachers' stories in different lights. From the viewpoint of different situations. Again, there is no claim to full inclusion; there never could be because educational discourses are constantly shifting. This instability is examined in Act V.

There is a danger here of forcing the teachers' stories into categories that are not natural to them (as I believe that all acts of interpretation impose artificial and arbitrary categories on experience), and I acknowledge in advance that Acts III and IV could be construed as readings participating in the internal/external binary. James' novella is a masterpiece of the psychology of subjectivity and Dickens is responding to the harsh conditions suffered by the poor during the Industrial Revolution. It is true that these two perspectives inform the analysis which will follow here. In this chapter, Act III, I am presenting the stories of the teachers that demonstrate the claims they make and the stances they take in the context of their own lives and classrooms. There are pedestrian complaints and queries---the stuff of everyday life---and there are aspects that are more abstract when the teachers broaden their themes to more generalized levels---also the process of everyday life. It could be said that *The Turn of the Screw* is a novella that demonstrates the effect of the subjective on the real world, whereas *Hard Times* demonstrates the effects of the real world on the psychology of its inhabitants. It is my hope, though, that Act V which deals with parody and satire will challenge these readings and serve as a corrective for any tendency toward an easy dichotomy that I might lead the reader into here.

Before moving to the stories, a final word should be said about Bakhtin's idea of "addressivity". This concept is central to the fundamental intersubjectivity of Bakhtin's architectonics. He argues that every utterance has an author and an addressee---someone to

whom the utterance is directed. The addressee may be any type of concrete audience, each with his or her own dispositions, or it may be “an indefinite, unconcretized *other*”. (SG, 1986, p. 95). He continues, “Both the composition and, particularly, the style of the utterance depend on those to whom the utterance is addressed, how the speaker (or writer) senses and imagines his addressees, and the force of their effect on the utterance” (SG, 1986, p. 95). All speaking/writing/acting is intersubjective. The key here, at least with respect to the project at hand, is that when one crafts an utterance, one takes the addressee into account. The way that one does this is through a mental process whereby one “imagines” the utterance from the addressee’s vantage point. This process is a fundamental part of speaking; Bakhtin argues that the nature of this relationship is “constitutive” of the utterance. We choose our speech genre because of our relationship to the other. This is the heart of dialogism.

Perhaps even more provocatively, Bakhtin posits the existence of a further “constitutive” aspect of the utterance. The “superaddressee”. This is a third party to any dialogue “whose absolutely just responsive understanding is presumed” (PT, 1986, p. 126). The “superaddressee” is that figure to whom we address our utterances who stands above and beyond our partner in immediate dialogic relations. Bakhtin suggests a number of possibilities which he says take on various “ideological expressions” depending upon context: “God, absolute truth, the court of dispassionate human conscience, the people, the court of history, science, and so forth”. (PT, 1986, p. 126). The “superaddressee” is defined by the ideological setting and is not bound by time and space. It is the ghost of someone not present who will perfectly understand our utterance. Superaddressees do not exist, but we can imagine that they do (or will) and, in fact, we always consider them when creating an utterance. The importance of this for research is that this third party can be revealed in analysis of the utterance. The superaddressee itself is a type of

underwriting, projected in the speaker's utterance as one who understands perfectly and responds: "This follows from the nature of the word, which always wants to be *heard*, always seeks responsive understanding, and does not stop at *immediate* understanding but presses on further and further (indefinitely)" (PT, 1986, p. 127).³⁸

This phenomena of address creates a richness in the teachers' stories as I think about the possibility of their addressing each other, both individually and collectively, addressing myself as a researcher who moves on the borders of insider/outsider status, addressing the camera as an impartial observer and addressing a number of other possible superaddressees that I discuss below.

V ROGERS. I don't know but I think if, you know, I, you know, but it...I have really seen a decline. I have seen a decline in teachers. As far as, when I came along, nobody ever told me in college that the Principal was second in line to God.

(Laughter.)

V ROGERS. Nobody ever actually said that. But it was heavily implied. You know what I'm saying? Never in my career---and I've been teaching thirty-three, thirty-four years, whatever it is, a long time---never have I one time, ever, refused to do something I was told. Refused to do an assignment, looked in a Principal's face and told him or her that I would not do it. That I wasn't paid to do it. No matter what it was. Never. And that was not because I was so great. That was standard. I mean, we were all like that. But the teachers now...it's that same entitlement thing. They'll tell you in a heartbeat that they're not going to do something. That they're not paid to do that. That or this, that, whatever. And so, my thing is, whatever has triggered this, has triggered it throughout society. Not just school. But it certainly is in school. And I, I have seen it. With my own...I have lived it with my own eyes. Never would I have had the caliber of students that I have now that would have the lackadaisical attitude. Or would try to talk down. Or...

J FOX. Or the indifference.

V ROGERS. Yeah.

(Appendix 2, pp. 396-397)

³⁸ For further reading: Emerson (1997) discusses this from an ethical and religious standpoint and with reference to Buber's "I-Thou" relationship in Chapter 5. The "superaddressee" is one of the reasons that some scholars are so preoccupied with Bakhtin's religiosity. It is certainly a pregnant concept.

The passage above is ripe for analysis when viewed through Bakhtin's lens of "addressivity" because Victoria Rogers' story, itself about the hierarchical relations of the school building, raises a great number of questions about the varying positions of the audience of her utterances. Her story leads clearly to a condemnation of certain teachers, presumably those who are not present at the storytelling but, in a move that I discuss below, she blurs the lines of an authoritative hierarchy by describing the shifting balance between administrators, teachers, and student, all within the context of "society". Her story contains the Ghosts of the Past (the principal; the norm; the hierarchy; the teacher training ethos), the Ghosts of the Present (teachers "now"; entitlement; disrespect) and the Ghosts of the Yet-to-Come (students, characterized by "lackadaisical" and by Jim Fox as indifferent; the frequent tension in many of the stories between temporality and the unknown). This is a blithe categorization of the story. Another possibility for thinking about the story is that it is an appeal to an idealized value system that existed in the past. Perhaps the superaddressee of the story is the arbiter of this system. This arbiter understands that society has changed for the worse and is sympathetic. The arbiter also understands that, at present, teachers are undermining themselves by verbally refusing to acknowledge their place in the hierarchical system of schooling. Victoria Rogers' story revolves around things that are spoken. There is a clear moral judgement about what should and should not be said. There are voices that are present and voices that reside below the surface of the words that are spoken.

The ghosts of this Act are all of these. They are the words directly spoken and the words only alluded to. Because ghosts can be a lot of things. My general view is that they represent the inchoate voices that we ultimately choose from when we take our ethical stand by speaking. Which ones do we acknowledge? Which ones do we disregard? They are the voices of

colleagues, administrators, policy-makers, the voices of media representations. Which ones do we address? Which ones get slotted into our world view, our self-conception, our identity?

There are a lot of characters assuming a lot of roles in the brief story of Victoria Rogers. And, as is consistent with ghosts, they appear, shift, fade, disappear and reappear. They don't abide by our attempts to constrain them.

The Frame: Working Conditions

One of the difficulties I found in trying to write a novelistic (in the Bakhtinian sense) dissertation is that stories require a framing device that situates the narrative in such a way that the reader can consider something---content or form or a combination of the two---in the process of meaning-making. Of the novel Bakhtin writes:

“The novel permits the incorporation of various genres, both artistic (inserted short stories, lyrical songs, poems, dramatic scenes, etc.) and extra-artistic (everyday, rhetorical, scholarly, religious genres and others). In principle, any genre could be included in the construction of a novel, and in fact it is difficult to find any genres that have not at some point been incorporated into a novel by someone. Such incorporated genres usually preserve within the novel their own structural integrity and independence, as well as their own linguistic and stylistic peculiarities” (DN, 1981, p. 320-1).

In Act II I experimented with this type of structure in order to ascertain whether the incorporation of numerous discourses and genres could sustain a movement that could be called a story. A novel, in contrast to both quantitative and qualitative methodologies dominant in the social science, has the ability to incorporate a multiplicity of perspectives. A survey on “teacher working conditions” limits possible responses by design. Wording is carefully chosen to create the least amount of ambiguity and respondents are limited to five possible responses to a situation expressed in the survey item. My goal is not to launch an extended critique of survey

design (something I am quite unprepared to do), but rather to suggest that it is a fallacy to believe that a narrow and limited use of vocabulary or the reduction of language to the simplest of speech genres can render it value free. This discussion of the *North Carolina Teachers Working Condition Survey* demonstrates several levels of ambiguity that are involved:

A KOBE. Yeah, when it comes to... I didn't really like when we said in the exam, when they do survey, like Teacher's Working Conditions...

M LOY. Yes

A KOBE. They don't ask the right questions.

J FOX. Yeah.

M LOY. That's another thing. Good point.

A KOBE. They don't ask the question we want to answer.

M LOY. That's valuable.

A KOBE. Voila. They ask the question they want us to say something to go by what we say. We...I never find what I want to say.

M GREEN (Laughing) No.

J FOX. Yeah, yeah.

A KOBE. No, I have some answer I want to tell them...to write it...

M LOY. Give me an open space (writing gesture), right?

A KOBE. Voila. Let them ask this question, I will answer it, but they just, "Blah, blah, blah." They just...this is not what we want.

M GREEN. Well, do you...

A KOBE. Honestly.

M GREEN. Do you...

M LOY. "Are you scared of working in your school?" "No. But give me some books."

M GREEN. Do you guys feel, like, conflicted, too? I feel conflicted when I fill that thing out because I don't want to make my school sound bad. 'Cause it's not a bad place. I love coming to work every day. But, do you know what I mean? It's like, you want to give a critique but you don't want to make Midlands sound that bad...

J FOX. Yeah, yeah.

M GREEN. ...because you don't want them to be, to say, "Wow, what's going on over there that it's that bad."

M LOY. And it isn't sometimes.

M GREEN. And it's not, it's not that bad.

A KOBE. Midlands is not bad.

M GREEN. Like there are things that need to be fixed...

M LOY. "Cause it may be all over...in every high school.

(Appendix 1, p. 357)

Throughout this exchange the different teachers propose different analyses of the phenomenon of the survey. This is not entirely an impromptu performance; they are aware that this is in some way related to the topic of my dissertation. It was unclear to me during transcription and it is still unclear to me now whether or not they are talking about this to give me what I want, whether they are simply producing fertile topics, or whether the survey is something that naturally comes up. All of them, I suppose, would be a proper Bakhtinian response.

In any case, what is clear is that they are, in a relatively brief exchange, talking about a number of different but related things. Dr. Kobe is critiquing the design of the survey from a view of its use of language. He says, "They don't ask the right questions" and "They don't ask the questions that we want to answer". Myrna Loy understands his comments to mean that he would rather have open-ended questions ("Give me an open space, right"), and as she makes this statement she pantomimes the act of writing. Her interpretation is about allowing teachers the space, much more prominent in qualitative research, to craft their own responses but it is not perfectly in line with Kobe's critique of the questions themselves. By the end of the excerpt, Monica Green raises an even more complicated issue and the one that is related to assertions that I have made elsewhere. She acknowledges that the survey itself is not an objective tool but instead has numerous shadings and implications. When she speaks of being "conflicted" she is demonstrating her own awareness of the need for premeditated interaction with the survey.

This involves an ethical question. What is the best thing to do for the school which she enjoys but which she recognizes is not as successful an environment as she could imagine? She could be worried about the possibility of unfavorable survey responses leading to new administration and the changes that would follow. Or, she could be worried about the reputation of the school which serves as her place of employment. Or, she could be concerned for the students who could also suffer in various ways under this reputation. In considering these possibilities, Monica Green acknowledges that completing the survey is a performance. She is considering the possible responses of possible audiences before committing her opinions to paper.

It is with these types of complexity that I believe “story as method” or “the novel as methodology” holds promise. For Monica Green there are ethical decisions involved in completing a survey that go beyond reporting the concrete situation. This is, in part, because the survey assumes a comparative object that is a projection: what the school might be. This is a fictive world that is generated through any statement, from a seemingly subjective question “are you scared of working in your school” as Myrna Loy puts it, to an apparently objective question about the number of hours one dedicates to a particular task throughout the week. I would also point out that this is a parodic rephrasing of the survey’s questions on “school safety”. Loy’s response to the “school safety” question is that she needs textbooks. These two unrelated subjects employ irony to make a distinction between what the unseen authority (the survey designers, the survey interpreters) think is important and what she sees as important. Narrative analysis has the ability to address the intersections of both subjective and objective categories and to treat them as insistently fluid and constantly dynamic, constantly participating in one

another. It is able to do this because, in Bakhtin's thinking, it is premised upon the ambiguity inherent in life; because it is premised on intersubjectivity as experienced in the concrete world.

Central to this chapter is the question of ambiguity in the teachers' stories. The type of ambiguity that I am talking about here is the tension between monologic and heteroglossia. How one integrates a moral system that establishes an ethical stance with constantly shifting circumstances on the ground. The use of the *Turn of the Screw* is intended to provide a heuristic model for exploring the tensions between meaning and interpretation. As I discuss below, there is an important distinction in Bakhtinian thought between the intentional and evaluative stance taken by the speaker of an utterance and the dynamic processes involved in its production and in the way it is translated by an audience.

Part of the ambiguity comes through the voicing of others. In James' novella the character of the young boy Miles speaks frequently, but his governess is not ever sure which are his own words and which utterances are the voices of the ghosts whom she fears are corrupting him. The teachers double-voice their stories, peopling them with the intentions, evaluations, expressions of others. They paraphrase, as in the above instance of Myrna Loy, who personifies the survey question by speaking it: "Are you scared of working in your school?" and then continues the imaginary dialogue with her own response.

A ghost story is an appropriate frame then, to my thinking. Myrna Loy is speaking both for someone who is not physically present and also engaging in dialogue with this mental apparition. The choices that the teachers make when they claim themselves and their stances through authorship are chosen from myriad discursive streams and combinations. Through their spoken words, and through the intonations they apply to their speech, they are indicating which voices they are replicating, how they are adapting them to their own lives, etc. This then shows

what has a type of resonance. Whose words are they choosing and how do their utterances express their evaluative stance towards these other voices?

The second question that I address in Act IV is that of whom they do not voice. What discursive streams are not chosen and what are we to make of that? Do we read their non-speech as a type of silencing (language that is unavailable for numerous reasons) or do we conclude that the discourses that they don't address are those that don't resonate or inform their view of their work? For now, however, this chapter will focus on some of what they say and how they say it.

The Frame: Ritual

To participate as an audience requires the establishment of some form of frame (context) from which the listener(s) may proceed in understanding what the storyteller has to say. Bakhtin illustrates the importance of this context when he relates a story about two people seated before a window in an otherwise bare room. Both persons are silent until one of them says, "Well." Bakhtin argues that this single word, spoken with only the minimum of context is unable to convey any coherent meaning. However, he continues the story by saying that the season is early spring following a long and dreary winter. Outside of the window snow has begun to fall. Given this context, he points out, the single word "Well" has rich meaning. Simply knowing the context enables the reader to imagine the intonation of the spoken word---something like disgust, despair, fatigue---any of them or all of them in conjunction expressing a deep human feeling that anyone who has suffered through interminable winters can identify with.

In his example, context provides the background for understanding. It also illustrates the impossibility of human communication from within a vacuum³⁹. Both of the persons in the room

³⁹ Similar here to Wittgenstein's "private language" argument. See *Philosophical Investigations* §§ 244-271.

have an understanding of their immediate situation and are able to express a position relative to their condition with a single, generic word. So, this contextual setting is a narrative frame.

Bakhtin writes:

“A comic playing with languages, a story ‘not from the author’ (but from a narrator, posited author or character), character speech, character zones and lastly introductory or framing genres are the basic forms for incorporating and organizing heteroglossia in the novel. All these forms permit languages to be used in ways that are indirect, conditional, distanced. They all signify a relativizing of linguistic consciousness in the perceptions of language borders--- borders created by history and society, and even the most fundamental borders (i.e. those between languages as such) ---and permit expression of a feeling for the materiality of language that defines a relativized consciousness.” (DN, 1981, p.323-4)

There are numerous possibilities for framing situations and they are all open to instability---as much instability as the “materiality of language” will allow. Even the most avant-garde of storytelling (think about Walter Abish’s *Alphabetical Africa*, *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveler* by Italo Calvino or *Exercises in Style* by Raymond Queneau) require a guiding principal. A set-up, no matter how conceptual, to guide the reader. *Ulysses*, after all, is a day in the life that the characters and the reader alike struggle to get through. Experimental writing without some form of frame simply becomes an example of the billions of times the infinite monkeys typed without composing *Hamlet*.

Closer to Bakhtin, *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Crime and Punishment* both could be reduced to the categorical framing rubric of “murder mysteries”. For all of their novelistic dexterity, the arcs of both stories follow that of television procedural crime shows. Or, rather, procedurals follow Dostoevsky who, himself, is following a genealogical line of literary whodunits. However, Bakhtin makes it clear that content and form are inseparable once one understands the social nature of language. His opening of “Discourse in the Novel” reads: “The

principal idea of this essay is that the study of verbal art can and must overcome the divorce between an abstract ‘formal’ approach and an equally abstract ‘ideological’ approach. Form and content in discourse are one, once we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon---social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning” (DN, 1981, p. 259). The dependence on the social, then, depends upon multiple characters responding to each other within a specific frame which renders their exposition intelligible.

Henry James’ novella *The Turn of the Screw* is another “murder mystery” and, in all honesty, it hovered around this project from the time of its inception. Initially I was drawn to the idea of a storytelling event because I have always been charmed by the tradition, popularized in Victorian England but common elsewhere, of telling ghost stories on a winter’s night. From its inception, the project was enmeshed in multiple layers of narrativity---as I argue that all research is---in this case from the mythological to the quaintly romantic. The dates chosen for the events which generated the data for this analysis were chosen because they were, in the context of the school calendar, unique markers of the passage of time. The first event was held on the late afternoon of the last day of school prior to the winter holidays. The teachers arrived at the hotel shortly after dismissing their students for the next two weeks. The second event was held on the evening of the last day of the semester which was then followed by another break, this time for Martin Luther King Day and several workdays during which teachers finalized grades. School had been in session on this Friday before-a-long-weekend but the teachers had provided no direct instruction. They had merely held the students in their classrooms while the administration tried to complete as many make-up exams as possible in order to meet the required testing quota. On both of these occasions, the teachers had completed somewhat abnormal days, the winter night

had set in by the time they gathered to tell stories and, with the accompaniment of food and drink, they told their stories around a large table in lieu of a hearth⁴⁰.

So, within the context of the events there were certain rituals of the school year that were being enacted. Myrna Loy's story of the Christmas gift cards, which is quoted in Act II, references the temporal setting explicitly. Because it is the last day of the school calendar before the Christmas break, she and the principal set about providing gift cards for some of the students. At another point in the same event Mary Smith expresses concern for the eventual return to school and the testing that awaits the students after the break. She uses the word "scared" and refers to the return as "horrible" before correcting herself. She interrupts herself to admonish "Beware, y'all" ---more O'Connor gothic than James but portentous nonetheless. Several rituals are contained in her brief story: the winter break, teacher turnover (an unfortunate but regular occurrence at the school), the return to school, and the beginning of the assessment period which marks another important milestone in the school year⁴¹:

M SMITH. That's what I was thinking when I was leaving here...because...or leaving school and driving here, I was actually...had time to think. And with the changes in the teachers, because so many teachers retired today, let alone Ms. Tompkins leaving, Ms. Wilson going to the back, Ms. Hoskins coming up front, Ms. Ingalls having to move up front---beware y'all---um, and then all

⁴⁰ The original plan was to meet for a pot-luck at the home of A. Kobe. The Internal Review Board at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill stipulated that the events had to take place in a public location, hence the motel meeting room and the restaurant. The second location, the restaurant, was suggested at the end of the first event by M. Loy. Both locations, while not as casual as the home setting that I desired, served the purpose well.

⁴¹ North Carolina General Statute §115C-84.2. (d): Opening and Closing Dates. -Local boards of education shall determine the dates of opening and closing the public schools under subdivision (a)(1) of this section. Except for year-round schools, the opening date for students shall be no earlier than the Monday closest to August 26, and the closing date for students shall be no later than the Friday closest to June 11. (§115C.82(a)(1)---"A minimum of 185 days or 1,025 hours of instruction covering at least nine calendar months.")

North Carolina passed the school calendar bill in 2012 with heavy support from the tourism lobby. Delaying the opening of the school year has meant that for schools on the 4x4 block system the students generally have an extended winter break immediately before their final exams. See Hui, K.T. (2015) for the climate of the debate at the time of the performance events as well as for documentation of the role of the tourism industry in changing the school calendar.

the stuff that will go on with the children because of all those changes. And then, I mean, I've had students very scared about--- "what about testing?" --- 'cause we're testing one day after we come back. They're really concerned about that, not to mention the freshmen but the other ones, too.

(Laughter.)

J FOX. Those that have been there...

M SMITH. But that is, a horr...not a more horrible thought, but, you know, what's going to happen? They were so off the chain today, the ones that were there, and what's going to happen when they come back?

(Appendix 1, p. 312)

As any horror fan can tell you, aspects of the setting (a gothic house or the weather) can come to personify human intentions or take on participatory roles in a story. The "House of Usher" comes to represent not only the psychological state of its inhabitants and indeed, the whole historical essence of the Usher clan but it also assumes an anthropomorphic malevolence as it implodes in an act that simultaneously serves as the killer of the story's protagonist and the representation of his death. The heath of Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, the moor in *King Lear*, the animated roots and tree branches of Sam Raimé's *Evil Dead*, the winds of Aeolus that drive Odysseus into exile, the labyrinthine cities of film noir⁴², the animated house from multitudes of ghost stories, Birnam Wood: all of these play distinct roles in the lives and actions of the narratives in which they inhabit. It is conventional in storytelling that aspects of the world of setting take on the role of characters through the process of personification.

This personification is the product of a mental process. Below I will focus on the psychology of the storytellers although using Bakhtinian theory rather than psychoanalytic techniques for its grounding. The school, the office, the classroom, the schedule: all of these

⁴² My favorite book on the subject *Somewhere in the Night: Film Noir and the American City* (1997) by Nicholas Christopher explores the way cities in Film Noir represent psychosis, anxiety and existential dread. Just a plug.

develop volitional force of their own through individual and shared stories. And, it must also be remembered that Bakhtin concludes that time and space are the identifiers of subjectivity.⁴³ They are the essential ingredients that separate us from others. Our individual vantage points. However, we imperfectly share these vantage points with others and, in the process, they take on lives that are much more complicated than the mapping them as coordinates would seem to suggest. In elementary, middle and high school language arts classes we teach that the plots of stories fall into basic binary categories; some version of: man versus man, man versus the environment, or man versus himself. The truth of the matter is that all stories are all of these and... We merely ritualize and frame the combinations.

The school calendar is one such example that could merit at least a chapter's worth of discussion. It represents the collaborative work of the society at large. Initially structured around an agrarian economy it now includes the increasingly tacit acknowledgement of religious and patriotic perspectives (not always easily distinguishable) through the scheduling of holidays. It incorporates the science of assessments but not always in the way that psychometricians would prefer. Their products sold to states and school districts, the scheduling of assessments is not

⁴³ In the course of the day (Friday, January 22, 2015) in which I write these words an ice storm has descended upon the town in which I currently reside. Throughout the day, as I stop to step outside to smoke a cigarette, the river birch tree that I planted six years ago slowly encroaches upon the deck upon which I stand. It is now twenty-five feet tall with four primary trunks and the freezing rain has hardened on its branches splaying the trunks apart and downward. The branches now droop over the deck and limit the room that I have to stand to a few feet square. My children are out of school. The eldest has stayed in her room for the majority of the day. The youngest, nine, has watched Episodes 4, 11, 6, 9, and 2 of *Girl Meets World* in the living room while I write in the kitchen (the best place for stories). My dog, Maple, accompanies me when I go outside. She is short-haired and doesn't like the cold rain. Her tail hangs limply because she is suffering from "cold tail" an affliction of dogs with Pointer blood as near as my wife can ascertain from Google. As I stand smoking and watching her gingerly step across the back lawn I can hear the wind cracking the ice in neighborhood trees. It always reminds me of leather twisting. An occasional branch falls. Do these things affect the words that I put on the page, I wonder? Did the Enlightenment create a research environment whose exemplar is the computer, divorced from the vicissitudes of human experience? When a branch falls across the power lines in my neighborhood, how long will the computer upon which I am now typing last before its electric charge will be spent? Such an event seems inevitab.....aaarrrrrrgh. (Silence.) An old joke. Better in a comic strip.

always conducive to most accurately measuring the test-takers knowledge.⁴⁴ The schedule is not only a template against which life is lived. Its demarcation of temporal lines represents something greater than the passing of time. As the story above demonstrates, it is an active player in the environment of education and, as a ritual, participates in the life of students, teachers, administrators, and the community in ways that are deeply attached to the progress and functioning of daily life. M. Smith says that her students are “scared”. We attach emotion to the calendar and, importantly, we visualize possible futures that do not exist but have serious implications for education. Educational rituals like the calendar are about establishing order on the act of becoming.

Concerning rituals Bakhtin writes: “The rupture between real life and symbolic ritual. How unnatural this rupture is. Their false juxtaposition...Pure everyday life is fiction, a product of the intellect. Human life is always shaped and this shaping is always ritualistic (even if only ‘aesthetically’ so). The artistic image can also rely on this ritualism. Memory and awareness in everyday ritual and in the image” (N, 1986, p. 154). The rituals of schooling go far beyond the school calendar or the changing of the seasons. Each day is highly ritualized, each class period is highly ritualized. By staging the performance events on a celebratory winter’s evening I hoped to take advantage of and utilize the notion of ritual that permeates school life.

I also hoped to capture some of the passion and the joy of schooling which I have felt is missing from educational research. John Hattie (2009) writes, “We rarely talk about passion in

⁴⁴ On the 4x4 block scheduling system some students take Advanced Placement courses in the Autumn. The highly regulated and protected exams are given at the end of the Spring term. One might debate the question of whether students, having learned material, should be able to demonstrate this at any time but it seems unquestionable, at least to anyone who has ever pursued the acquisition of specific knowledge, that test-takers who have recently completed a course would have an advantage over those for whom there has been a four-month lag.

education, as if doing so makes the work of teachers seem less serious, more emotional than cognitive, somewhat biased or of lesser import” (p. 23) and I agree with his observation although not entirely with his explanation of the lack of this kind of research. Part of me wants to say that it is simply hard to measure. It is hard to qualify or quantify. Passion in so many stories of education is wrapped up in the big victories that Taubman (2009) points out in his book *Teaching by Numbers*⁴⁵. Passion is demonstrated when low-achieving students pass the big test. For me, passion is intricately tied up in our everyday rituals. As is joy. Or despair. Emotions are comfortably at home in Gothic literature but, perhaps because of their association with High Romanticism, they are permitted in educational discourses only in certain situations, whereas I believe that they are an inescapable facet of every educational story.

Storytelling, like schooling, itself is a form of ritual and Bakhtin’s insistence that we refuse to falsely juxtapose our rituals with our real life is an important point here. The performance of the stories is aesthetic. And it is real life. With passion and joy and disappointment and deep pain. We frame our lives with rituals and the rituals fill the frame. The school calendar, influenced at the legislative level through the legal apparatus of the state, even when informed by the will of local officials, demonstrates the collusion of intentions, these intentions taking on a singularly directed intention that is enacted in and through practical policy. Attribution of intention and the inscription of emotional states to school policies is an act of

⁴⁵ Commenting on the Hollywoodization of teachers such as Jaime Escalante, Rafe Esquith and Erin Gruwell, Taubman writes, “These individual teachers, like their fictional counterparts, are used to substantiate claims that the most important factor in whether or not students learn is the teacher, that education is ‘all about the kids,’ and that if each of us just worked as hard as these heroic teachers, used the methods of ‘best practices’ they used, cared about the kids as much as they did, then our nation’s young would finally get a great education and many of our problems would be solved. Adding irony to the romantic fictionalization of teaching is the depiction of these teachers as rebels, who, bucking the straightjacket of systematized teaching, find a way to ‘teach the kids’ (Taubman, 2009, p. 139). These are important stories about teaching and some of the analysis that follows about teaching and morality owe a great deal to the insights of Taubman.

personification. For the teachers in the study, things like the schedule take on their own emotional-volitional (in Bakhtin's language) participatory role. They become more voices in proceedings that are already heavily populated. When things start to go really south for the governess in *The Turn of the Screw*; when she has begun to expect the appearance of ghosts at every turning, the summer has faded: "The summer had turned, the summer had gone; the autumn had dropped upon Bly and had blown out half our lights. The place, with its gray sky and withered garlands, its bared spaces and scattered dead leaves, was like a theater after the performance---all strewn with crumpled playbills" (James, 1898/1991, p. 50). For the governess autumn is not solely a temporal occurrence; it is also ritualized performance as indicated by the theater imagery. On the school calendar, autumn is a time of rebirth; the starting of the fresh year. The curtain rises. Surely there must be some human psychological tension between autumn as the season of dying and autumn as the season of new beginning. Winter, associated in literature with death, hence the proclivity toward ghost stories, is also a time of reflection. Mary Smith says that driving to the first event she finally "had time to think".

The Turn of the Screw

The Turn of the Screw begins with a cordial gathering. A winter's night (in James' story it is Christmas Eve) and the storytelling taking place in front of the fire. The story begins, in fact with the words, "The story had held us round the fire, sufficiently breathless..." (James, 1898/1991, p. 1) establishing several important points: the setting, of course, but also the emphasis on the society of this story-telling community, the "us" who are held spellbound. As I said, while not perfectly distinct in my conception, the idea of this type of gathering was attractive to me. Originally I had conceived of the event as one in which a single person took center stage while telling their story. In James it seems clear that one storyteller occupies a

central position that is the focus of the audience. An important difference in the way the Events were eventually staged led to what I've come to think of as "collaborative storytelling".⁴⁶

J FOX (excitedly.) I can add to that! I can add to that!

(Appendix 2, p. 394)

As will be seen in the examples below, the turn-taking of the storytelling was replaced with a more communal process. Often times one teacher would begin an extended narrative which would be interrupted, annotated, and extended by the others around the table. Storytelling, which I had always taken as a fundamentally social process, took on another nuance as the teachers crafted larger narratives together and often times ended up in different places than the original narrative seemed designed to go.

My original conception based on the more formal design is illustrated by James through the character of Douglas, the storyteller who reads the central narrative, and is physically situated, "by the corner of the hearth, in the best chair, (where) he opened the faded red cover of a think, old-fashioned gilt-edged album..." In the James novella, however, Douglas is merely a narrative intermediary. The opening lines which I have partially quoted above are written by an unnamed first-person narrator who serves to set the scene. He is a member of the party celebrating the Christmas holidays at an old country house and is on companionable terms with his peers. It is he who introduces Douglas, another member of the company, and he reports Douglas' decision to present a story of his own:

"I can see Douglas there before the fire, to which he had got up to present his back, looking down at his interlocutor with his hands in his pockets. 'Nobody

⁴⁶ Deborah Tannen (2007) has a different take, informed by a discourse analysis approach to Bakhtin. She focuses on repetition in the context of conversation and the dynamics of dialogic interactions that pick up semantic markers as they pass through the exchange. The idea of double-voicing is treated more fully in Act V.

but me, till now, has ever heard. It's quite too horrible.' This, naturally, was declared by several voices to give the thing the utmost price, and our friend, with quiet art, prepared his triumph by turning his eyes over the rest of us and going on: 'It's beyond everything. Nothing at all that I know touches it.'" (James, 1898/1991, p. 1)

Here the elements all come together, center stage is claimed, the audience is willing, even anxious, the storyteller "with quiet art" has aroused and excited the gathering. Except, in a typically Jamesian flourish, the story cannot be told but must be read. Douglas must send to town for a hard copy of the story, written ostensibly by the protagonist of the adventure, the governess with whom Douglas was once in love, and the company must wait in suspense for several days.

When *The Turn of the Screw* was originally written, it was taken by readers and critics as a straight forward ghost story but eventually the case was made to interpret the protagonist as certainly unreliable and probably insane. A great deal of critical debate has followed the novella and these arguments are more important for the development of my ideas than any individual verdict on the characters of the story. In addition to the parallel between the frame story of *The Turn of the Screw* and the occasion of the events held in this study, the conceptual design is informed by the interpretive variability possible with respect to the story. Numerous commentators have realized that an interpretive stance on James' story depends entirely on the reader's decision whether the story reflects supernatural threats which exist in the outside world or whether, in a fairly overtly way, the real danger resides in the interior life of the protagonist as she projects her fears/desires/anxieties/needs into the lives of those around her.

Much of the action of *The Turn of the Screw* is attributable to the character of the Uncle, the governess' employer, who never appears at Bly but who hovers over the characters and effects their actions. His ghostlike presence is attributable to his injunction to the governess that:

“she should never trouble him---but never, never: neither appeal nor complain nor write about anything; only meet all questions herself, receive all monies from his solicitor, take the whole thing over and let him alone” (James, 1898/1991, p. 8). The governess, who Douglas tells us has become smitten with the Uncle during her brief meetings, feels an obligation to handle the increasingly deteriorating situation alone. The reasons for this are complex and James only gives tantalizing hints as to the governess’ true state of mind.

In the character of the Uncle, though, James has provided a concrete “superaddressee” whose projected ability to perfectly understand the governess informs her actions. There is an indication that she will not call the Uncle because it is critical to her to impress upon him her own self-worth. Just prior to the first sighting of the ghost of the Uncle’s deceased valet, Mr. Quint, the governess is taking a solitary walk around the ground and she records, “One of the thoughts that, as I don’t in the least shrink now from noting, used to be with me in these wanderings was that it would be as charming as a charming story suddenly to meet someone. Someone would appear there at the turn of a path and stand before me and smile and approve. I didn’t ask for more than that---I only asked that he should *know...*” (James 1898/1991, p. 15, italics James’). The Uncle does not appear in the rest of the story except as a mental projection of the governess that stimulates her responses

In many of the stories told by the teachers below, I call attention to the role that parents, actual or perceived as a generic form, have in the dynamics at work. In the extended passage below I present a sequence that directly addresses the relationship between parents and teachers, analogous to the relationship between the Uncle, the legal guardian of the children, Miles and Flora, and the governess whom he has hired to provide guidance in their formation. Parents are a

preoccupation for the teachers as is the teachers' evaluations of parenting skills and responsibilities.

M LOY. I have a question for teachers because I deal with this ongoing. I have always asked, the first question when a teacher calls me is... "I have tried to get a hold of this student, I have tried to work with this student, I have... Every day, they come in and they're either sleeping or they're this or they're that or there's some discipline, or some infraction of some kind..." And the first question I ask is, "Have you tried to call the parent?" And nine times out of ten, I get, "No." So then I wonder, "What is it that a teacher expects me to do, if you have not called the parent to engage that parent?" And, honestly, I go through this at least once or twice a day and it makes me crazy. Because I know that, from experience, at least five or six out of ten, that parent will say, "I'm so glad you called. I'm going to look into this." Because most of that block of kids, eighty percent of those kids, a, a parent will respond to that. And I keep asking, and you know it, because you've dealt with me, "Have you talked to the parent?" And it's not you guys, I mean, it's general, because I have sixty-five teachers.

J FOX (excitedly.) I can add to that! I can add to that!

M LOY. So, what should I say? Or how do I...

J FOX. In my training, when I was at John Carroll, they constantly were drilling into us, "You take care of this in house before you go out and contact anybody." And so, it's drilled into me, "Okay, let's see what we can do before we have to extend out," because I do, I, I like to be able to solve my problems within house before I get everybody else involved. I come to you guys sometimes just to bounce off...

M LOY. Right. I know you do. And I love that.

J FOX. 'Cause I do. I need little bits of information 'cause sometimes they tell you stuff that they won't tell me.

M LOY. Or sometimes they tell you stuff.

J FOX. Exactly. And we've compared notes and we've solved some issues.

M LOY. Right. Exactly. I like that.

J FOX. But, but, it's drilled into my teaching and I mean, it's hard to call...go out to that parent because of that training. Because I do. I like to solve my problems in house.

M LOY. Well that's good to know. And that's why I'm asking.

J FOX. And that's why...I like to solve my problems in house.

M LOY. And, you know what, Jim, you personally are one of the few that comes down to my office. I probably have thirty teachers that have never stepped once in my office.

J FOX. Well, it's important. Why wouldn't I. They will tell you things that they don't...that they will never say to me. Of course I would.

M LOY. Right. But why wouldn't a teacher want to call a parent? What are some other reasons? You know, why,,how can I look at that person and say, "I would love to help you"? You have to start with something.

M RYAN. Well, for instance, I do what he does. I first try to solve it with the student. If it doesn't work, then I go to the parent. If it doesn't work, then I go to you.

M LOY. Right.

M RYAN. Because it's like, you know...

M LOY. I don't ask any more if you've call the parents. I know you have. I'm talking about teachers that don't. That don't feel...is it because they're not comfortable doing that?

*Z CROWDER. Well, does anyone have a "calling the parent" story. Like, what happens when...
(VR returns to the table.)*

J FOX. Well, look how teachers have been put in that light...

M LOY. Victoria, we're talking about calling a parent and stories about calling a parent.

J FOX. You know, I'm just trying to...I'm trying to put myself in that... Look how teaches have been painted and sometimes, you know, we really do have such a bad reputation that, I think there's of fear, "Well, if I say this, they're going to come back on me and say it's me." I'm not...I'm just guessing. I'm just guessing. Because, you know, between...between the legislation and everything else, teachers get painted into a really bad light over here, you know. And they are, you are right, they are revered over in Europe. You know, you are really revered as a teacher. It doesn't happen over here. And I've still, I've been struggling to find out the reason why some of these parents go after teachers. Because, I don't know whether they had such a bad experience with them while growing up. I don't know whether they were listening to the media...

M LOY. I think they become defensive on their own families. To, to feel this need to defend.

J FOX (Sounding put out.) Well, okay then...

Z CROWDER. Protection of your children.

J FOX. Well, I don't think it's just that, though.

V ROGERS. I don't either.

(Appendix 2, pp. 393-395)

Three times in this passage Jim Fox refers to solving his disciplinary issues "in house".

Aside from the obvious domestic reference which conflates schooling with home life, there is a

type of projected surveillance at work as the exchange develops. Fox eventually changes his stance from one that claims professional training for his unwillingness to contact parents to a quite different, although related, claim. The passage ends with his acknowledgement of the dubious reputation that teachers have garnered. This itself, he suggests, is a complicated process informed potentially by political rhetoric, media representations, as well as through parents' personal experience. In a way, each of these are influential voices on teaching but are not actually employed in the work of teaching. Fox is aware of a variety of potential oversights as well as his ambiguous position as a titular authority whose decision-making has been, at least in his mind, regularly challenged. It is difficult to say which, of all of these factors, actually undermines his ability or desire to develop a collaborative relationship with parents. He is on his own but there are perceived voices that influence his actions.

Because what I've found at the methodological level is that James' novella offers something of guideline for presenting material which is open to various interpretations and which calls into question the notion of any definitive reading. The more I thought about it, though, *The Turn of the Screw* offers other interesting access points for discussion of the teachers' narratives and for larger narratives in education. Throughout the story above, the teachers' narratives are tinted by a moral obligation that the teachers feel toward their students and an ambivalence toward parental authority. It is not difficult to identify narrative antecedents to both the motif of children in need of practical moral guidance---this is one function of the *Bildungsroman*---and to the motif of children being in jeopardy from numerous dangers (physical, moral, loss of innocence, from themselves, etc.). It seems possible that teachers are unsure where their responsibility for this type of guidance begins and where it falls to the parents. There is also a question, seldom discussed but always hovering, as to how much

responsibility the student should have in their own school performance. Much of this chapter revolves around the unfixed nature of students as objects of the stories. High-schoolers in particular are in a temporal borderland. How do we decide, then, how much moral guidance they need?⁴⁷

In *The Turn of the Screw* Douglas is motivated to read his story because the story being told as the novella opens centers around an apparition appearing to a child. In response, Douglas says, “I quite agree---in regard to Griffin’s ghost, or whatever it was---that its appearing first to the little boy, at so tender an age, adds a particular touch. But it’s not the first occurrence of its charming kind that I know to have involved a child. If the child gives the effect another turn of the screw, what do you say to two children----?” (James, 1898/1991, p. 1). The title of the novella takes its title from this passage and, indeed, concerns the haunting and possible possession of a ten-year old boy and his eight-year old sister. It ends with the death of the boy while in the governess’ solitary presence. Unless one believes in the ghosts.

The motif of children in jeopardy is certainly not unknown in education policy where it sometimes overlaps with national interests as in the anxiety over the state of school affairs with the launch of Sputnik (a touch of science fiction) or the “Why can’t Johnny read?” consternation prior to the publication of “A Nation at Risk” or the fight for civil rights as inscribed in all of the versions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Acts. The warrants of these discourses are not important to this discussion, but they point to the way that children, whether they represent the present or the future, have indeed served something of a literary and rhetorical function for legislative, judicial and bureaucratic decision making at least since the trial of Socrates.

⁴⁷ Nancy Lesko’s book *Act You Age! A Cultural Construction of Adolescence* (2001) provides insight into the Romantic vision of children as “innocents” and in the need to protect adolescents from themselves.

As in Fox's narrative, so in the case of the James novella, the idea of appropriate adult influence is also a driving device. The story that Douglas tells is the story of the young governess hired to attend to the education of the two orphaned children who are residing in the country house of their wealthy London uncle. The uncle, whose personal affairs consume all of his time, is in need of a new governess owing to the unexpected departure and subsequent death of the first young woman he hired. There is an indication in Douglas' peroration which is more pronounced in the Truman Capote scripted film version, *The Innocents* (1961) that the Uncle simply wishes the matter out of his hands. The protagonist, "The youngest of several daughters of a poor, country parson, had, at the age of twenty, on taking service for the first time in the schoolroom, come up to London, in trepidation, to answer in person an advertisement..." (James, 1898/1991, p. 4) secures the job, "'She was young, untried, nervous: it was a vision of serious duties and little company, of really great loneliness'" (p. 5) and it is her first-person account of the happenings at the country house named Bly that Douglas reads over several nights during the Christmas holiday. This completes the quartet of narrators who tell the story: James, the unnamed narrator, Douglas and finally the governess. It is a masterful stroke of heteroglossia: the fusion of layers of voices, each adding to the indeterminacy and the ambiguity of the story.

It is only after arriving at Bly that the governess (who is never named) learns that her predecessor had carried on an illicit affair with the uncle's valet and that the young woman had left Bly in disgrace. Shortly thereafter, in circumstances that are never revealed, the first governess leaves Bly and meets with a mysterious end. In revealing these events, James' attention to ambiguity borders on the sublime: The head housekeeper, Mrs. Grose, responds to the query of the new governess, "Of her real reason for leaving? Oh, yes---as to that. She couldn't have stayed. Fancy it here---for a governess! And afterward I imagined---and I still

imagine. And what I imagine is dreadful” (James, 1898/1991, p. 32). The real problem for the new governess is that this deceased governess is now appearing to her, dressed in mourning, “rather poor, rather shabby...wonderfully handsome. But infamous” (James, 1898/1991, p. 31). According to the governess’ account, the ghost is after the children with whom she had become overly familiar during life. And, the greatest threat she poses to the children is an exchange of knowledge; the knowledge that is tied to her infamy, the threat of corruption is the force which compels the governess to respond. It is a direct challenge to the governess’ sense of duty:

“...I was in these days literally able to find a joy in the extraordinary flight of heroism the occasion demanded of me. I now saw that I had been asked for a service admirable and difficult: and there would be greatness in letting it be seen--oh, in the right quarter!--that I could succeed where many another girl might have failed. It was an immense help to me---I confess I rather applaud myself as I look back!--that I saw my service so strongly and so simply” (James, 1898/1991, p. 27).

The control of knowledge is central to the practice of education. As many of the stories from the teachers show, the struggle to teach is also the struggle to take a stand, not simply on content-area matters, but on issues of upbringing, questions of social value and responsibility, and moral conduct.

V ROGERS. Yeah, I have the philosophy that being a teacher is like being a servant leader. I really...to be a good teacher, I think you have to be a leader. You have to have leadership qualities and you have to have leadership capabilities but I think that leadership has to be tempered by the desire to serve. I had a mother from my Ailes call me before Christmas. An eighth grade teacher here in Brandt County made their term paper, first term paper these kids have ever done with footnotes, the whole thing. MLA style. Due three days after they got back from Christmas vacation. And he told them that they just had to work their butts off over Christmas. And the amount of instruction they were getting was not a lot. In the classroom. They were getting it, but it just, this was their first time ever, you know, doing this. And one of the girls came home and she was crying, one of the eighth graders, and begging her Mama to take her out of this school here in Brandt County and put her in Lake Wood Christian Academy. I mean, she really, she was really upset. And so her Mama calls me. And I, I said, “Put her on the phone.” And I called her by name and I said, “You know, I have written and read and graded and taught more papers than any person here alive should ever have to do. And we’ll get through this together.” And so, she and another kid who goes to my Ailes, we spent between

thirty and thirty-five hours together over Christmas and wrote their papers. And I...that's nothing except to say this: If you really are a teacher, it don't matter where you are...

M LOY. You can't help yourself.

V ROGERS. You can't.

J FOX. You can't.

V ROGERS. It just comes out. I can't talk on the phone to a little kid crying, who's thirteen years old, who has been told that if this paper isn't good enough it's not going in her high school portfolio (drawing the word out in obvious parody) and all this stuff. You know what I 'm saying? I.. how can I? And I have the ability. You know, so when I say, "Suck it up, kid. Do the best you can." It's just...you can't do that.

M LOY. it's like a doctor, when somebody's sick you can't walk away. Right?

V ROGERS. Yeah. And so you help...you know...the kid. And then they're so sweet. And there, it's eleven o'clock at night and you're thinking, "I've got to get up at nine o'clock in the morning..." You know, because we started before Christmas. We worked up to December twenty-third. And I told the girls, I said, "Not even for you teacher are we working Christmas Eve and Christmas day. We're not doing it." And so then they went off and...

M LOY. Why do kids feel l like it has to be perfect every time they hand it...well, not this...some kids...

A KOBE. Some kids.

V ROGERS. Well, these kids didn't even know what...they knew no terminology, so you had to teach...

M LOY. So what was everybody in that class going to do?

V ROGERS (emphatically.) Well I know what TWO of them did. And I think some of the others found people to help them, too. And I don't know what everybody else did.

M LOY. Maybe that was part of the lesson.

V ROGERS. But, my thing is, if you're a teacher, if you're really a teacher, you don't just have the leadership part, you've got the servant part, too.

J FOX. Yeah.

V ROGERS. And I don't care what type of servant you are, if you don't have the leadership part, you're not going to be effective. You've got to have both to be effective in the classroom. You have to.

M LOY. That's pretty profound.

(Long pause.)

Z CROWDER. Nobody ever wants to follow Victoria's stories.

J FOX. No one. That's a hard act to follow.

(Appendix 2, pp. 420-421)

By the end of the governess' story the knowledge is linked to a form of possession. The knowledge is related to all of the things we associate with a loss of innocence: death, sex, worldly knowledge, vice; things that the first governess, Miss Jessel, and her partner in the illicit affair, Mr. Quint, also deceased, possibly displayed openly to the children while they were employed at Bly. The governess, then, is not solely concerned for the children's physical well-being. She also finds herself responsible for their mental, emotional and moral health. In the story related above, the sense of duty and responsibility is expressed quite clearly. The question is: for whom do teachers perform these duties? In Victoria Rogers' story, the "Mama" is the intermediary who calls originally to ask for help. The thirteen-year-old girl is under her protection, but it is Ms. Rogers who gives up a large amount of her time (during Christmas; also the season of giving) to helping the student when another teacher has failed to fulfill his responsibility. Implicit in this passage is a critique of a fellow teacher who has failed the student by inadequately preparing her and by assigning work over the ritualistically protected time of Christmas break.

Victoria Rogers' story presents her in a selfless, almost heroic light. Many of the stories, not surprisingly, highlighted the teachers' positive qualities. The question for me, particularly in respect to this Act, was the conditions of this positivity. In Rogers' story she notes her technical ability as a teacher but the force of her narrative is rather to highlight her protective, generous and dutiful nature. Below is another account told by Myrna Loy that presents first herself as an

individual and later, as a member of the teaching profession, as having a positive impact on students:

M LOY. I had a senior come in, you know we had the two deaths this year...

J FOX. Yeah.

M LOY. ...one from suicide and...which may or may not be valid, but and another one, so one was a senior and one was a freshman. And a friend of the senior's that had passed came in--- 'cause I had a bunch of kids in my office and they were all sitting on chairs and some were on the floor and it's a small room---so the one sitting right next to me looked at me and...he, for some reason, was helping...talk through to the other students in there about what was going on. And he looked up at me and he said, "So, Ms. Stubbs, do you remember me?" And I'm thinking, "Oh my God, ten years. Which one are you?" I cannot remember. And, you know, so you try and say innocent, "Okay, Jonathon. Tell me. What it is...what is it I'm supposed to know? Refresh my memory." And I always use the, "...cause I'm old. Okay, just tell me." And he said, "You know, four years ago my Dad committed suicide. And you were the first one I came to that next day. I came in and we talked about it." And I said, "You know, Jonathan, I'm sorry, I don't remember that exactly. I don't. But I do remember..." And then he started talking and I said, "Yes," he gave me the details and the details were pretty gruesome and that of course was when it hit me. So, I said---he was in the process of helping everybody else in that room---he said, "You know, all the things I'm saying are the things you said to me when we were talking through that at this point." And he said, "And, you know what, I'm thinking I want to be a therapist." He said, "because I've lived through some of these things and..." And what he was saying was good. I mean it was good stuff. It wasn't...it was solid, it was healthy, it was positive. Um, he said, "I know how long this takes. I get the idea of what grief is. I know, you know, my Dad and all that. And I've never...I never really knew my Dad and, you know, he had all kinds of other things going on in his life..." So, it says to me, "It's the ones you don't expect." I, I, I just...

J FOX. Yeah.

M LOY. ...just sitting there, and I...I'll never, I looked down and I said, "Jonathan, I don't remember. I'm sorry. Right?" And, "Yeah, Ms. Loy. You're the one...I came to." So, who knows? You don't know when you do it. Which is why...and you know that (indicating ZC) when...when you just have to be positive and you have to keep that...that thing going that says, "You're valuable and you're valuable. And you're important." And...and never let that be the thing that makes them any less of a person, you know, or less important. Because they do...they're, they're so hungry. You know?

A KOBE. Teaching is...I think teaching is a good job, you know? Sometimes, you see...they grow up...sometimes as soon as you see them, they're three times myself. They change, they've got the family, and sometimes, "...But you didn't change, Dr. Kobe. You are still like you were eight years ago."

M LOY. Why do they think we change? Right?

A KOBE. No, they expect me to change.

M LOY. We're grown-ups. We started out grown-ups, we're going to probably...

A KOBE. And it's, uh...the kids are good...you like them...but for me, I think we need to place teachers at the right place. Sometimes I have the feeling that some people think, "Teachers are just stupid." I don't know...

M LOY. Babysitters...

A KOBE. We are not. We are not. We.... no.

M LOY. We are not.

(Appendix 1, pp. 363-364)

This story begins with a narrative of the professional care administered to students on a personal level. It also demonstrates an important way that the teachers express their relationship to their work. As the excerpt proceeds, there is also an indication of the instability of this identity---of nurturer, care-giver, moral protector. The focus of Loy's story is the suicide of a student's father, but essential to the account is her role in first, assisting him through the grieving process and second, as providing a role model for his future development. This reported compassion, I think, is complicated by the fact that, as she readily admits, she doesn't remember the details of his trauma until her reminds her. On the one hand, this is a story of positive teacher influence. On the other, it is an account of the type of professional behavior that teachers perform everyday wherein students, despite their remarkable circumstances, are unremarkable due to the sheer number of them that any professional educator encounters. The social order of schooling is always dynamic. Students are individuals and they are part of a collective mass. The relationship of teachers to this dynamic space is already complex without the added weight of distinctions of age, authority, and power.

One of the other dynamics that the above passage demonstrates is again the tension between knowledge, in this case of death, and of innocence associated with youth. The teachers, first Myrna Loy and then Dr. Kobe, turn their exchange into a conversation about age, among

other things. Being old---“and I always use the--- ‘cause I’m old”---is a concrete division between the teachers who don’t change “They expect me to change” and the teenagers who are working through their formative years. Loy references her ten-year tenure at the school and this is a statement that bears consideration. Ten years of students passing through her guidance doors, often times troubled, as the ones in her story are. She admits to not remembering a student’s name and by the end of the story she emphasizes how individual and special he is. The burden of responsibility here is great. Ten years of students, each one of them valuable. Loy is not complaining, however. Her statements are an acknowledgement of the duty to hold each student as an individual and the difficulty that this entails. There is a distinct temporal aspect to this: that fluidity of the students’ lives and the static nature of the “grown-ups”. The categories of “adult” and “child” are fraught throughout the storytelling; at times they recognize the authority of their position and at times they acknowledge how transitory and even illusory this authority is.

Centripetal (centralizing) and centrifugal (decentralizing) forces are at work within the context of every utterance. Remember that Bakhtin defines an utterance as anything that conveys enough meaning as to be given a response. The jagged dialogue of James’ characters, with incomplete sentences, half-finished thoughts and general misunderstandings (characteristic of the genres of spook stories, thrillers, chillers, etc.) demonstrate just how tenuous our grasp on communication truly is. As Bakhtin says, the oppositional forces are at work whenever we speak! The teachers participate in a collaborative storytelling, one story leads to another and they often annotate and punctuate each other’s narratives. Kobe moves a contextually specific story into a broader context. The forces of language create the blossoming of their narratives---originally conceived by myself as linear, Aristotelian sequences (*Z CROWDER. Well, does*

anyone have a “calling the parent” story. Like, what happens when...) ---into dynamic organisms in their own right.

Of course, James being James, it could be argued (particularly for Freudian readers) that the only things that emerge or blossom in the governess are physical manifestations of impulses that already exist. Cause and effect. Her demons are already inside her awaiting vocalization. Or her repressed desires are projected into the physical space she inhabits. And so on. The circumstances of her employment merely provide the setting for what becomes a monomaniacal determination to save the children, both physically and spiritually. For from the beginning she always associates the ghosts with perdition and acknowledges that the danger to the children is the corruption of their souls. She fantasizes herself as the heroine of a gothic romance and this is one of the points that I am exploring in Acts III and IV. What is the influence of stories, even the fictional, on our concrete behavior? The governess acknowledges that her interpretation of events inside the story could be informed by external influences; seeds from particularly Gothic novels: “Was there a ‘secret’ at Bly---a mystery of Udolpho or an insane, an unmentionable relative kept in unsuspected confinement?” (James, 1898/1991, p. 17).

Throughout the storytelling events the teachers gathered around the table speak as though they were fighting a moral battle. There are longstanding debates in curricular studies over the degree to which education plays a role in instilling morals and character traits and the degree to which education is about content mastery. Sometimes stories are told that reflect the imperative of developing academically successful students whose trajectory is college admission. At other times it is clear that for the storytellers, education encompasses a responsibility for developing moral, ethical development. This is apparent in the following extended passage about disciplinary action within the classroom. What is also apparent is the relativity of disciplinary

stances and the inability of the teachers to determine what, exactly, constitutes the moral standards of the school. This is coupled with the relational aspects between the way disciplinary procedures effect the teachers' self-perception and the way they relate to the well-being of the students.

A KOBE. It's kind of, uh...and not only that, you know, when it comes to, like of discipline referral...

(A loud trumpet blast plays. Everyone laughs.)

J FOX. That's my phone. (Springing from his seat to reach in his bag.)

M LOY. We liked it.

M RYAN. Discipline.

J FOX. That's a friend of mine. (He turns his phone off and puts it away.)

A KOBE. If I get a chance, I will suggest that there is like, what do you call it, a barrier. Because sometimes you write, like, two students up, because of some stuff they did. One of them might go to ISS, one of them doesn't get anything. Sometime, even the one who did the worse thing, he doesn't go to ISS, the other one to ISS. It's, it's not, you know, balanced, it's not equitable for me. I think they need to, like, "Okay, you do this, this is the consequence. You do this, this is the consequence." And all of the AP got the same rule, going by it. Sometimes a kid doesn't do much, they are suspended. And sometimes they did worse, nothing happens.

M LOY. Isn't that supposed to be a part of EVAAS...the what they call the EVAAS data. That everybody has the same consequences for the same...

A KOBE. Voila. But, I don't feel that.

M LOY. ...infraction or something.

A KOBE. Yeah, it doesn't...

M LOY. I don't know but I've seen that...

V ROGERS. The problem is you have personalities involved.

M LOY. That's a good point.

V ROGERS. And once person can tolerate more. Or more is more acceptable to them. Or...

M LOY. Or we know what works with a certain student.

V ROGERS. Or they have, you know, you've got a hundred things going and these fifty take more of your energy so even though these fifty are significant, you just, you know...

M LOY. That's a good point.

J FOX. But I've noticed, the discipline, if I write a kid up that has Pruett, that the kids don't even want to go to her. They're terrified of her. But, then, I send someone to Landry, Landry sends the kid back...

A KOBE. Sends them back.

J FOX. ...and says, "You didn't any kind of, kind of pre- anything." And I said...

A KOBE. Exactly.

J FOX. "Look, I gave him a detention." 'Cause I went after her afterwards and I said, "Look, I gave you a...I gave, I gave him a consequence." I said, "He was supposed to serve a detention, he didn't do it." She said, "Well, I needed to know that." I said, "Well, I wouldn't have referred him, otherwise." You know?

A KOBE. You don't have a choice. You go by his name. It goes by name, you know? You have to send some of them to her...

M LOY. Right, as far as that administrator.

A KOBE. Yeah, you send them sometimes, nothing happens.

V ROGERS. Well, I think, part of, you know how they assign them certain letters of the alphabet, just like you guys do (indicating ML). I think the philosophy behind that is, you will see the same students over and over and you will get to know them...

A KOBE. To know them...

V ROGERS. ...and, if, even, no matter what teacher they're from, if they keep coming to the same administrator, they're...But the reality is, administrator X, who is supposed to handle these, is at the County, or is here, or is tied up there. So somebody else handles them. So you still have a lot of...

M LOY. Overlap.

V ROGERS. Yeah.

M LOY. Well, and they took all of Ms. Pruett's discipline during this whole testing thing so that she could do testing. So all of those kids. And, did anybody get to them? I mean, that puts an awful lot more on each of the other administrators. You know, because that's one thing I noticed.

A KOBE. You know, discipline really help teacher. If it's straight it's well, you know, for all of the stuff. Sometime, don't feel like writing anything because you write...

J FOX. You know, you feel defeated in a way.

A KOBE. Yeah. You just, you try to deal with it until...

M RYAN. This one hasn't happened to me but I've heard...where, you know, someone wrote up a...a student and the administrator comes back to the classroom to ask the student, "Okay, tell me what happened?" And then, it's basically they believe the student and the student could come back to class. And they don't do anything about it. So then you look like a fool. So why even bother doing it?

M LOY. They actually bring them back in that ninety-minute block?

V ROGERS. Oh yeah. Sometimes very quickly.

J FOX. Or even worse, I took a stud...

M RYAN. And they say, "Okay we want to know what happened?"

M LOY. Is that in front of all the kids?

M RYAN. No. Outside.

M LOY. Okay.

M RYAN. But still, you know, it's like, it's your word against mine, so then why do I even bother telling you if you're going to turn around and believe the student...

A KOBE. The student.

M RYAN. ...and say, "Okay, come in." And...

M LOY. Well let me play devil's advocate. Just, just because...So, is it, do you honestly think it's believing the student or is it just to the point of, "On a scale of one to ten, I'm only going to take the eight, nine and tens and do something about it. The sevens...ones through sevens are going to stay in the classroom because the point is to keep a kid in the classroom."

M RYAN. But if it's done over and over and over again, what are we teaching the student?

J FOX. Yeah.

M RYAN. They can do whatever they want. Because seven is not important.

J FOX. I've got a couple of kids on the football team.

A KOBE. Football team.

J FOX. I've got a couple of kids on the football team that think they can do whatever they want in my room. I've written them up and nothing happens. We've already tried that, too, and look what happened. We got no response...

M LOY. We did. Went to the coach.

J FOX. ...from Reese. No response.

A KOBE. One of these kids, football, you know sometimes, I don't know. We need to go by the rule. You know, you play baseball, there is something you really need to have in order to stay with this kid.

M LOY. Well what's written is passing: three out of four.

A KOBE. But, now it's messed up. Because those kids, some of them all are in my class. They don't pass, they still play. And in addition to that...

M LOY. The thing about that is, they're passing the other three of the...and your class is the fourth class. So they don't need that as a core...

A KOBE. So they can...

M LOY. Sadly. So they feel like that one can...they don't have to worry about it.

A KOBE. Now I wrote the kid like two times...

M LOY. But here's what they don't understand about that: Just because they don't need a foreign language to graduate anymore, they need that to go to college. And they all think they're going to play college football, wherever they go. So, in order to get in, they've got to have that foreign language.

J FOX. Yeah.

M LOY. So that needs to be made clear to them. You know, if that's what you're after...Not that we've had anybody, I'm trying to think, in how many years, that actually went and played college ball, whether it's D-2 or D-3...

A KOBE. It's selective. It's very selective. You need to at least...

M LOY. Because of what they're competing against is at such a high level with great grades and everything else. But my point is that the students don't understand that.

A KOBE. I have to call parents. The parent doesn't show up. Guidance help a little bit. Missed you all. "Okay, do good, okay?" And then I went to the coach. I tell the coach. The coach talked to him. And, I refused to, you know, to approve him for those JROTC stuff. I say, "No, you don't deserve...no, no approval. I refuse." This is a time the kid change.

M RYAN. Yeah.

A KOBE. After, you know, everyone...

M LOY. The consequences.

A KOBE. I say, "No, I'm not going to promote you. I need to have a reason to promote you. And this reason, I don't have it." Emilio was promoted and Coach Reese told him that the next time I go there and complained, he's out of the game. He changed because of it, you know, football.

V ROGERS. Well, you have to find out what's important to someone...

M LOY. And you drew the line.

V ROGERS. You have to find out what's important. 'Cause you can take a lot of things and they don't really care.

A KOBE. No, they don't care.

V ROGERS. It's kind of like kids being sent to their room at home, if they have a t.v. and a ipod and a computer and, you know, a door that closes then they don't have a problem with that. So you have to find what's important. But I want to say it's not only sports kids and it's not only, um, lower level students. Because in peer tutoring and also in distance learning, but more so in peer tutoring because they have more freedom moving around. They don't even want...some of them don't even take their little badge, and I'll say, "You know, you have to have that with you in case you get stopped." And they say, "Oh, I'm never stopped."

J FOX. Yeah.

V ROGERS. "I never get in trouble." So, yet, you know, and that's just as wrong as the other thing to me. You know, and the attitude is they're above, like, they don't care if I give you rules as long as it doesn't apply to them. You know what I'm saying? And they're the upper level kids. But...as much as I hate to say it, we have that in our own staff. You know, we have staff members who don't care what Ms. Ansley says or any assistant principal and we cannot...they can tell us all these things to do, as long as it's not them. So, what are we teaching the...it's not just kids.

(Appendix 2, pp. 379-383)

There is a way of reading *The Turn of the Screw* where the governess' actions are completely justified. The ending presents her as victorious over the forces of evil:

“With the stroke of the loss I was so proud of he uttered the cry of a creature hurled over an abyss, and the grasp with which I recovered him might have been catching him in his fall. I caught him, yes, I held him---it may be imagined with what a passion; but at the end of a minute I began to feel what it truly was that I held. We were alone with the quiet day, and his little heart, dispossessed, had stopped” (p. 87).

Miles is dead, surely, but the governess has “dispossessed” him of the influence of Quint by forcing the boy to acknowledge his presence through the vocalizing of the ghost's name. It is a curious moment among many in a story that emphasizes the power of language to conjure and to dispel. It is also a moral victory in the purest sense of the

phrase. Miles, although deceased, has been saved; his innocence preserved. The governess, in this reading, is the protagonist. Unless, of course, she's not.

The teachers, I think, as evidenced by the excerpt above, are seeking the same kind of order in the world which the governess fights for. Their collaborative story, as they flesh out the dynamics of the school is one of the most “nuts and bolts” passages of either event and revolves around the nitty-gritty of the school day and the schooling apparatus. The series of exchanges begins with A. Kobe lamenting the lack of consistency in the execution of disciplinary action. In a way this is about a practical matter: Do the administrators support the teachers in disciplinary issues? But it quickly becomes a litmus test for the way the teachers perceive themselves and their public work. The administrators directly undermine the teachers' authority by either returning a disruptive student who has been removed from class or by challenging the teacher publicly. There are clear demarcations here between students and teachers but the administrators end up assuming a judicial (even parental) role, settling disputes in a way that places students and teachers on the same level.

The teachers who, in one version of this story, are trying to hold a behavioral line, are challenged on their understanding of the moral codes of the school. And this pivots the focus of this exchange. All of the teachers contribute at this point and eventually the question becomes, “What are we teaching them?” if we do not hold them to particular behavioral standards. Here, the parents are no help. The administrators are subverting not only the authority of the teachers but also the ethical stance that they have taken either by removing a student or by choosing another disciplinary strategy. The teacher moves on a stage isolated from support from the outside but not isolated from the voices

that perform internally as the teacher tries to make calculated decisions about actions to take.

The exchange begins with practical policy implementation within the classroom and then moves to larger question that relate to the mission of the school and, I think, education in general. This back and forth movement indicates the complex interactions of numerous discourses. On the one hand, the teachers are discussing the importance of localized classroom management and, in fact, the content of the long passage never moves far from this immediate concern. Basic concerns: how to promote an effective learning environment? how to deal with unruly students? how to motivate students? how to most effectively utilize the resources available?---these are the questions that engage teachers on a daily basis.

By the end of the selection, Victoria Rogers has moved the topic from school discipline to home discipline, and she has also expanded the focus from the students to faculty members as well. Again, parents are implicated. They punish students by giving them every teen-ager's dream: time alone with their technology. This movement is from the specific to the general, from the individual to the social. It is about particular students winning---getting what they want---but it is also about a psychological battle which actually seems more important. "What are we teaching them?" It incorporates all of the school community---at one point Myrna Loy even brings up the EVAAS⁴⁸ program which is state initiated---and all actors, parents, students, teachers, administrators, governing bodies are implicated. Of course all are implicated legally in the "in loco parentis" standard by which the institution of schooling is defined. The problem is

⁴⁸ The EVAAS system is also linked to the value-added models that North Carolina uses to evaluate teachers. This model is predicated on probabilistic predictions of student growth. It is a quantified way of projecting students into the future. It also emphasizes the transitory nature of students---always growing.

that the same question then applies as it does in all judicial decision making: which parents? The “what are we teaching them?” question applies to all educational actors: teachers, administrators, bureaucrats, law-makers, researchers, and even society at large.

The United States Supreme Court, since the 1954 ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* has consistently ruled that education is for the purpose of enculturation. Justice Powell, writing in 1973, declares, “It (education) is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment” (*San Antonio ISD v. Rodriguez*, 1973). In a 1986 free speech case, Chief Justice Burger states in his majority opinion, “The undoubted freedom to advocate unpopular and controversial views in schools and classrooms must be balanced against the society’s countervailing interest in teaching students the boundaries of socially appropriate behavior...schools must teach by example the shared values of a civilized social order” (*Bethel School District v. Fraser*, 1986). Further, in the *Bethel* case, Burger cites *Tinker v. Des Moines*, 1969: “Indeed, the ‘fundamental values necessary to the maintenance of a democratic political system’ disfavor the use of terms of debate highly offensive or highly threatening to others...The inculcation of these values is truly the ‘work of the schools’ (*Bethel SD v. Fraser*, 1986).

In terms of consensus, all of the actors’ intentions vary according to numerous factors. The United States is a pluralistic society. The political parties have sharp differences on the nature of empirical reality, morality and the responsibilities of citizenship. The teachers are left to interpret all of these. Hence, the wish for stability, inevitably, a practical concern. How should one go about performing the job? The simple knowledge of whether an administrator will support a teacher’s disciplinary actions heavily effects a teacher’s classroom decisions. As

the teachers discuss above, the actions of an administrator are based on evaluative behavior; judgement calls. To write a student up or not seems like a simple, if freighted, proposition. And the story of administrative inaction, like an urban legend, becomes part of the teachers' consideration of action. How they act is effected by the perceived response of narrativized, generalized, responding others. It is not surprising then that the teachers, despite their expressed desires for autonomy, also long for a monologizing, unified educational narrative. How better to drown out the ghostly chorus of voices that are constantly evaluating and advising them?

In fact, a number of the stories focus on a desire for stability, not just for disciplinary issues but also with respect to curriculum, teacher training and professional development, policy and demographics. The teachers who, like the governess, find themselves in positions of authority, are forced not only to justify their positions and the actions they take---“So then you look like a fool” ---but they are forced to make decisions based on the expected response of those above them. These responses are projections that reside in teacher consciousness. For the governess the decision to take action is based only potentially on one other outside actor: the Uncle. In one way he could be thought of as her superaddressee; the sole dialogic partner who will have a perfect understanding of her actions. The projection of his surveillance affects the way that the governess acts and speaks. Or doesn't speak. She never communicates with him, per his wishes, although she pretends to write a letter which Miles then steals. The teachers try not to contact parents and they internalize stories of not just administrative inaction but also a type of administrative judgement on their ability to control students. For the teachers, the assessment of conduct is fluid and depends upon a number of contingencies. As Victoria Rogers says, “The problem is you have personalities involved”. This, obviously, is one of the main points of this dissertation. Personalities (perceived and real) create the world that we all live in

and teachers, working among so many with so many differing standards, motivations and intentions, must negotiate them all.

The Frame: Expectations

I recognize that I am treading dangerous rhetorical ground here as there is a seeming one-to-one correspondence between the governess, potentially mad, and the teachers whose stories I am here analyzing. It was for this reason that I deliberated over whether to utilize James' novella as a jumping off point for this analysis. I want to emphasize that, in my view, the governess is much greater than a simple proxy for any given teachers. It seems to me that she represents a particular view of all teachers, or rather of certain qualities of teachers---some of which, I admit, many teachers have adopted, internalized, and quite possibly warranted. The stereotype of a teacher, the ideal, the various media representations, the professional experienced most frequently by every schooled person in the United States; all of these play into the actions and reactions that constitute a classroom learning situation. I am arguing that this is exactly how Bakhtin thinks that the world, with language as the mediating force, works. In the end there is not one frame, not one moral standard, not one communal understanding, but many. His insights help to translate educational phenomena and experience.

Indeed, I am arguing that the proliferation of these characteristics are common enough that they undoubtedly imbue teachers own self-definition and their sense of mission. In this second sense, I am saying that the governess does not represent a single teacher and, although the stories of the teachers have ethical and moral implications, and, although the teachers (myself included) have a tendency to view their work as evangelical (with all the colonial issues that raises), the governess is actually representative of the overriding system of education in the

United States, missionary, forever in crisis mode and often times subject to an inner logic that does not withstand scrutiny.

If anything, the educational system has cast teachers and students in the same reductive light that the Manichean battle of Good and Evil in *The Turn of the Screw* describes. The stories that the teachers tell are most often about students; their gaze is consistently on the practical aspects of their jobs. But the word “practical” does not in any way imply “simple” or “routine”. Their performance is for the good of the systemic whole, caught up in relations with those above them and outside the school building but the actions they describe are generally student focused. Their work is highly contextualized and if there is any messianism to be found, it is in the mission that is imposed upon them from above whether that perceived figure is an administrator, a researcher, or a politician. In the context of religious iconography, the teachers---and the governess---are the angels. They fight the good fight but they don’t really determine the rules of the game. That’s above their “paygrade”.⁴⁹

Consider the following two examples. In 2009 John Hattie published a synthesis of 800 meta-analyses of student achievement which reflected 52,637 studies in order to determine the effects of different factors on achievement.⁵⁰ “Teacher contributions to student learning” are listed as the following:

- The quality of teaching---as perceived by the student;
- Teacher expectations;
- Teacher’s conceptions of teaching, learning, assessment and the students---this relates to teachers’ views on whether all students can progress and whether achievement for all is changeable (or fixed), and on whether progress is understood and articulated by teachers;
- Teacher openness---whether teachers are prepared to be surprised;
- Classroom climate---having a warm socio-emotional climate in the classroom where errors are not only tolerated but welcomed;

⁴⁹ The “paygrade” metaphor, mentioned in Act II, becomes prominent in a story below.

⁵⁰ His list of factors: child, home, school, curricula, teacher, approaches to teaching.

- A focus on teacher clarity in articulating success criteria and achievements;
- The fostering of effort;
- The engagement of all students.

(Hattie, 2009, p. 34).

That's quite a list of teacher effects. Or one could characterize it as a list of goals. It's clearly a type of standard. As Hattie points out, the common refrain in contemporary thinking is that teachers are the most important factor in a student's education. Now also consider the following which was excerpted from President Barak Obama's 2015 *Proclamation for Teacher Appreciation Week*:

"In America, every child is born with limitless promise, and each deserves a chance to achieve their dreams

In classrooms across America, talented and hardworking teachers are nurturing a new generation of thinkers, doers, and dreamers. They teach the subjects and skills that will fuel the next century of growth and innovation, as well as the virtues and values -- like character, compassion, creativity, and resilience -- that will prepare their students to take on the challenges of the future. Our best teachers are role models who show our kids how to work hard and pursue a brighter tomorrow. They encourage our children's passions, inspire their imaginations, and help them realize the best versions of themselves.

Teaching is an all-encompassing commitment, and teachers make enormous sacrifices to support their students.

Great teachers make a lasting impact on their students' lives. When a young person learns from an exceptional teacher, they are more likely to graduate, attend college, and succeed later in life. Teachers lift up the next generation and enrich our Nation, and they deserve our gratitude and thanks. This week, as we remember the teachers who touched our lives and shaped our futures, let us recommit to supporting those who serve in America's classrooms. By investing in our Nation's teachers, we can build a world where every girl and boy can dream big, hope deeply, and realize a brighter future" (White House Press Office, 2015).

Taking Hattie's list of possible teacher contributions to student success and the admittedly different genre of the Presidential proclamation together, there seems to be a lot on the plate of your average teacher. Neither of these discourses is mentioned specifically by the teachers in over five hours of storytelling. Often their stories, at the most basic level, are about leveraging a student's desire to play football into better classroom behavior and/or achievement. Everyday strategies. They tend to talk about their working conditions at the micro level in the same way that the governess does not think about what's best for **all** kids but only for the children in her charge. However, the messages of each of these discourses are enmeshed in their stories, particularly the aspect, tacit in Hattie and explicit in Obama that teachers are responsible for the future. I would argue that it's a burden that weighs heavily on the teachers. It is one thing to idealistically suggest that no child be left behind and it is something entirely different to set a goal that none of **these** children be left behind. By way of introducing the next passage, I would call attention to Victoria Rogers' statement as the excerpt ends: "Unfortunately we don't live in a perfect world..."

V ROGERS. ...but, you know, I think, as a teacher, in my thousand years in teaching, you know, the smaller they are, the tighter your hedges. Even with our own personal children...

M: The smaller they are...

V ROGERS. ...because we're protecting the younger. That hedge around them is very, very tight. Very, very small. And then, as our children grow, whether we like it or not, that starts expanding out because they're going to kick it out, you know, they're wanting independence and growing. But the whole thing as a parent is that you're trying to grow them, grow them, grow them, grow them.

Sometimes in school, I think we forget that. One of the things that I think, and we, we touched on this last time we did this, these girls who are moms at home, who not only have one child, some of them have two and three children. I think their life is such a...dichotomy. You know, you're at home, you're the parent, you're calling the shots, you got one, two, or three kids, whatever, you got to feed them, whatever. But you come to school and you sit there and you got to ask to go to the bathroom. Now I don't think it's wrong to ask to go to the bathroom, I'm just saying that's a lot to handle. You know what I'm saying?

And so, in our effort for control sometimes, as teachers...and I like control, I'll be the first one to admit it, I like a controlled classroom. But if I'm too rigid, I may have a controlled classroom but I won't necessarily have a growing student. You know. And so, to me, I think one of the hardest parts of education is that growing process. In the classroom and out of the classroom. And I think it's hard as the adult, whether you're the parent of the one growing or the teacher of the one growing. You know, when you start out the semester, remember how we tell young teachers, we tell new teachers, "Don't smile till Christmas."

J FOX. That's right.

V ROGERS. You know, you start out tough.

J FOX. The Hitchens method.

V ROGERS. You lay the law down.

J FOX. Hitchens method.

V ROGERS. But as, as they get to know you and you get to know them, then you can ease up a little bit. You know, it's the same principle. It's the same kind of principle. Unfortunately we don't live in a perfect world where these kids will just grow and we can expand and everything will go well. I mean there's a lot of hitches and stuff along the way. But...

(Appendix 2, p. 388)

In one of the most melodramatic moments in *The Turn of the Screw*, the governess wails to Mrs. Grose, "I don't do it!...I don't save or shield them! It's far worse than I dreamed--- they're lost!" (James, 1898/1991, p. 32). This, in and of itself is one of the great unspoken facets of teaching: the tension between salvation (a potentially successful future) and the acceptance of failure. In neither Hattie's nor Obama's discourse is the possibility of failure recognized. That drumbeat is actually sounded quite regularly, however, in other forums and in other genres and it places teachers in an awkward position. Their ability to discuss their failures or the failures of the system in which they participate is derived from the prevalence of the critiques of teachers and schooling so common over the last thirty years, maybe the last one hundred years. Although they tend not to blame themselves personally, it is clear that the specter of personal failure or institutional failure hovers around the edges of their stories.

M GREEN. And like they were...they're proud of themselves. "I earned an A in Honors English III." And then the first six weeks in my class, they're making a C, and they're saying, "What's going on?" Well...

M SMITH. Because they have to work in your class.

M GREEN. I'm actually asking you to record some quality writing, and analyze some texts, and to do these skills that...if you're really planning on going to XYZ college that you listed that you want to go to, then you're going to have to go to do this and actually at a higher level. So, in that sense, we're failing them. Like, yes, there's some kids who fail themselves, or the parents are failing them, but then there's some kids who...these are...these are good kids, these are good kids that are ...doing the right thing. They signed up for Honors English III...

M LOY. And thinking they're getting an Honors level course...

M GREEN. They're working...they're doing all the work. And we're failing them.

M LOY. You know,...

M SMITH. But we are if we're not pushing them hard enough.

V ROGERS. Yeah. I have something to add to that. Um, I was in a meeting. I used to a teaching coach, a literacy coach for three and a half years---to do that---and then our county...well, the job went away so we ??? like we do now. But I was in a meeting with a bunch of colleagues and there was a problem we were seeing in all of our schools. I mean across the board in the county. And, because of our position of going from room to room, we try to solve this problem and you know how you're discussing...and came up with what seemed to be this really good solution to this, just this one specific thing. And so our, um, county supervisor came into the meeting and, you know, somebody spoke---I was so glad it wasn't me---you know, it's one of those times you're glad it wasn't you that spoke, you know, just brought up the subject that we had all been discussing and how that it was common to all of our schools and it was really an issue. And our take was, you know, speaking like, because...the group had spoken, that this would be an easy fix, you know, and blah, blah, blah, and gave an idea.

Well, when she responded, I became so offended. At first, I mean it really offended me the way she responded. I didn't say anything but it offended me. But I have never forgotten that now...I have told you this (gesturing toward ZC or ML) and you'll probably remember it but it has helped guide my career and some other things since then. Then the lady spoke up and said, "Well, I'm going to tell you what I heard Dan Hill tell some, um, principals in a principal meeting: 'That's above your pay grade'". And it offended me. For that...I mean it really did. Because there was no malice meant, there was no anything, you know, when we were...it was a problem and we were...but you know, and I went away from that and I just could not...But then I understood. And I really did understand. And I think I do understand. I am a classroom teacher. There are some things that are NOT in my power. They are NOT my paygrade. And no matter how I want to...change them, I can offer opinion or whatever...I can ask for change but it is not my POWER to change at that level. But daggone it, everything that is in my power, I can change, and I can effect and I can do. And when they walked in that door, "Welcome to your world". And you can be just as daggone professional and do what you need to do. And you have that right. It IS your paygrade to do that. And if the kids say, "I got a C", well, "Heck, you better be glad you got a C. You'd better be celebrating that. If you want a B, let's see what you

can do.” But that has taken pressure off of me. Because sometimes I see you’ve got issues and you’ve got issues and you’ve...and I’m wanting to solve all of them. And I want you happy (putting her hand on AK’s shoulder and patting him) ...

M GREEN. He does, too.

A KOBE. I want to be happy.

(Laughter.)

V ROGERS. I want the world to be good for you. Yes. But sometimes it’s just not in my paygrade. And I don’t...

M Loy. Wow!

V ROGERS. ...care how much I want to change it, it’s not there. And so, I say, “Dr. Kobe, this too shall pass. We will get through this together. And if there’s anything I can do to help you, I will.” I can live with me, I’ve helped him, I’ve been true to my professionalism. What else can I do?

M GREEN. I’m not that Zen.

J FOX. Me, either

(Laughter.)

M GREEN. I’m like mmmmmm (Raising her fists).

J FOX. Me either. I’ve still got the pluck, you know. We’ve still got pluck. We’re plucky.

M LOY. Big egos. I’ve got to do this...

M GREEN. I’m thinking, “I’ve got to change this!”

V ROGERS. When I was in a school with three teachers in the hospital at the same time all on heart, um, monitors, I wasn’t...

M GREEN. Yeah, I know. I’m talking about...

M LOY. It’s a story...

M GREEN. No, I know...(laughing).

V ROGERS. You’ve got to be true to yourself.

M GREEN. Yeah.

V ROGERS. But you’ve got to be the best you can be. And there’s nothing wrong with asking questions and pulling for what you think is right. But, at the end of the day, you’ve got to be true to yourself, but not drive yourself crazy.

M GREEN. I’m going to follow in Zan’s footsteps and get my doctorate and I’m going to change it.

(Laughter.)

V ROGERS. There you go.
(Appendix 1, pp. 342-345)

The Bildungsroman

Originally I had ordered this chapter through the use of a number of headings that I felt represented the stories and the focus of the analysis. What I discovered through writing, however, was that the categories: discipline, duty, “superaddressee”, parents, family bonds, all kept overflowing their semantic markers and that they all interpenetrated each other and eventually blurred into one large portrait rather than a series of snapshots. They are all interrelated in complicated ways that defied clean distinctions. Not unlike the heteroglossia of the novel.

In Act IV, I am interested in exploring the empirical, historical world that is always emerging. The myriad voices that congregate somewhere in the teachers’ psychological states, which I have playfully labeled ghosts, all have physical form in the concrete world. There are actual parents and actual administrators whose concrete interactions with teachers then populate the teachers’ interior spaces. Act IV serves as an exploration of this material world with an eye to the processes that inform its formation. It is not divested of human agency; it is a space where objects and events are understood through stories, and where language, inevitably value-laded, simultaneously centralizing and decentralizing, both generates and expresses our understandings of our world.

ACT IV. HARD TIMES

“One can argue, in fact, that just as there can be no explanation in history without a story, so too there can be no story without a plot by which to make of it a story of a particular kind. This is true even of the most self-consciously impressionistic historical account, such as Burckhardt’s loosely organized picture of the culture of the Italian Renaissance. One of Burckhardt’s explicitly stated purposes was to write a history in such a way as to frustrate conventional expectations regarding the formal coherency of the historical field. He was seeking, in short, the same kind of effect as that sought by the writer of satire.”

---Hayden White, *Tropics of discourse: Essays in cultural criticism*, 1978/1986, p. 62.

“The classification of true, retold, formulaic, and factual stories is based only on the source of the stories, and is not one which would be regarded as making sense to Trackton residents. For them, a ‘true story’ calls for ‘talkin’ junk.’ And only after one has learned to talk junk can one be a good story-teller. Trackton people admit, however, that children hear and read stories from books at school, and they themselves listen to ‘stories’ [soap operas] on television. They also understand that people outside Trackton often mean a factual summary of an event when they ask Trackton folks to tell their ‘story’ or ‘side of the story.’ But in Trackton, there is only the ‘true story,’ which would be to a Roadville resident anything but true. In contrast, neither Roadville’s factual accounts nor tales from the Bible would be termed stories in Trackton. Since Trackton parents do not read books with their children and do not include these in their gifts to preschoolers, they have no occasion to talk of the stories in books. In short, for Roadville, Trackton’s stories would be lies; for Trackton, Roadville’s stories would not even count as stories.”

---Shirley Brice Heath, *Ways with Words: Language, Life, and Work in communities and Classrooms*, 1983, p. 189

”To understand a story is to understand both the language of ‘doing something’ and the cultural tradition from which proceeds the typology of plots.”

---Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, Vol. 1*, 1984, p. 57

VR: But I DID have a story which has nothing to do with this but it was kind of piggy backing...piggy backing off hers. One is a Midlands story and one is another story and that're probably all my stories.

This are not lies, kids are stories.

---Victoria Rogers, First Performance Event, Appendix 1, p. 319

Introduction

In this chapter I explore the ways that the teachers author themselves with respect to the larger universe and history of educational discourse. I emphasize the fact that the teachers, through their stories, are participating in historical roles that are traceable through a long period of educational upheaval not only in the United States but, in this case, Great Britain. Using the work of Charles Dickens' preeminent biographers, Michael Slater (2009) and Peter Ackroyd (1990), and the Dickens novel *Hard Times* (1854/2001) to inform my analysis, I examine the ways our historical and social antecedents inform the contemporary views of the teachers. *Hard Times* is a scathing satire on an educational system which is becoming the dominant mode in mid-century England: a version of which will be familiar to American readers as a form of scientific curriculum making which gains precedence in the U.S. some seventy years later

There is not a consensus in contemporary America about education nor about cultural values, yet the teachers are being held responsible for standardizing procedures that are not standardized and inculcating values that are not inculcated. If George S. Counts (1932/2013) can write, "Representing as they do, not the interests of the moment or of any special class, but rather the common and abiding interests of the people, teachers are under heavy social obligation to protect and further those interests" (p. 45), then how are we to expect teachers to respond in 2016 when the country is politically polarized and the interests of the population are deeply divided? The teachers in my study don't quote Counts nor do they acknowledge his collectivist, meliorist

agenda, although there is a sense in the passage above and in others dealing with student privilege and entitlement, that they can agree on a problem. And, in general, this problem seems to be cultural. It is cultural in a culture that is an accumulation of charges like Counts' that teachers "build a new social order" and in the rhetoric since Sputnik that teachers are failing their students:

J FOX. You know, I'm just trying to...I'm trying to put myself in that... Look how teachers have been painted and sometimes, you know, we really do have such a bad reputation that, I think there's of fear, "Well, if I say this, they're going to come back on me and say it's me." I'm not...I'm just guessing. I'm just guessing. Because, you know, between...between the legislation and everything else, teachers get painted into a really bad light over here, you know. And they are, you are right, they are revered over in Europe. You know, you are really revered as a teacher. It doesn't happen over here. And I've still, I've been struggling to find out the reason why some of these parents go after teachers. Because, I don't know whether they had such a bad experience with them while growing up. I don't know whether they were listening to the media...

(Appendix 2, p. 395).

. There are currently numerous competing agendas for public education in the United States and historically this has been the case as well. Bakhtin's word for this situation is heteroglossia. How are teachers to make choices from amongst these agenda? This chapter explores the ability of the teachers, whose working conditions are regularly changing and whose job description is in a state of constant reappraisal, to make sense of the many influential voices that speak on education. One of these is an historical literary voice, the novelist Charles Dickens, who was writing in England during a time of intense change. Unlike my reading of Henry James, *Hard Times* needs only a brief synopsis to indicate the debates that have shaped theories of curriculum, schooling, and teaching over the last one hundred fifty years.

Dickens' Fable

Consider, in contrast to the ambiguous dialogue in *The Turn of the Screw*, the point of view taken by the schoolmaster, Thomas Gradgrind, in Charles Dickens' novel *Hard Times*. The novel opens with the director of a school lecturing his new schoolmaster thus: "Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to the Facts, Sir!" (Dickens, 1854/2001, p.1). The novel is explicitly about education and Dickens sets out the poles of this universe as "Fact" and "Fancy". Along the way, though, the novel becomes more than a satire of contemporary pedagogy. It becomes a discursus on inequality, maintenance of the status quo, and the rising tide of industrial capitalism. For Dickens, the suppression of "Fancy" is a humanitarian issue. He sees the imaginative impulse as one of the great consolations of the poor. The story, for Dickens, is about education but, not unlike Counts, it is about education's role in the larger society.

Hard Times is not a *Bildungsroman* in the conventional sense in that it does not follow a single protagonist through a single process of emergence but it does show the education and development of three young characters, Sissy Jupe and the two Gradgrind children, Louisa and Tom. The story demonstrates the damage that Dickens believes is imposed upon human life when an adherence to the "factual" world is the sole basis for human development. His satire on the facts of Mr. Gradgrind's classroom was aimed at a number of specific targets as well; primarily against Britain's Department of Practical Art which organized curriculum, but "It was also directed against the contents of Charles Knight's Store of Knowledge (which in fact

introduced the ludicrously literal definition of the horse⁵¹); against the ‘tabular reports’ of library reading compiled by the Manchester Free Library and discussed in *Household Words*⁵² one month before; against the new regime of pupil-teachers who were even now issuing from the training colleges only recently established; and of course against those people in general ‘who see figures and averages’ only” (Ackroyd, 1990, p. 697). Both Gradgrind children who grow up through the novel are educated by “facts” and both of them suffer as adults because of this. Tom becomes an amoral criminal and Louisa is unable to feel any emotional connection to the world. Tom, Louisa, and Sissy’s teacher is Mister M’Choakumchild, an adherent to their father’s empirical system of pedagogy. The teacher’s comic name highlights the effect of his pedagogic system.

V ROGERS. I personally think that a lot of the power has gone from national to state. I don’t know if it’s sucking up this way or, I don’t know which direction...But I think a lot, we are not, um, autonomous. Is that the right word? You know what I’m saying? I used to be the queen of my kingdom. And I don’t mean that ugly. And I never tried to abuse it. But what I’m trying to say is when I was in my room, it was my room. You know, it was my...whatever I...

M LOY. I think a lot of professions feel like that.

V ROGERS. Whatever I wanted to teach, you know, I knew what I was expected to teach and I didn’t abuse that and we taught it. But, I mean, if, if one of my kids was really interested in something and we wanted to chase that rabbit a while, we did.

M LOY. Mmmhmm.

J FOX. Yeah.

V ROGERS. And everybody liked it and enjoyed it, and, you know, it was good...

M LOY. And the joy of teaching.

(Appendix 2, pp. 405-406)

⁵¹ The correct answer in Gradgrind’s classroom to the questions, “What is a horse?”: ““Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries sheds hoofs, too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth.”” (Dickens, 1854/2001, p. 3)

⁵² *Household Words* is a Dickens affiliated magazine. Title from Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, Crispin’s Day Speech, for those playing the Kristeva game.

Hard Times attacks efficiency and standardization; Dickens' criticism is echoed in the critique Maria Montessori performs in 1912 on the pedagogical trends in Italy in her 1912 essay "A Critical Consideration of the New Pedagogy in its Relation to Modern Science". Montessori's analysis of popular teaching methods is patently in favor of science but distinctly anti-scientism. Her line "We know only too well the sorry spectacle of the teacher who, in the ordinary school-room, must pour certain cut and dried facts into the head of the scholars" (1912, p. 28) follows precisely Dickens' complaint and presages Paulo Freire's condemnation of the "banking method" in education. The view that this chapter takes is that the debates about the theoretical and operational definitions of teaching haven't actually changed deeply over the years. The narratives of good and proper teaching, or good and proper education, for that matter, compress time much as our own consciousness does, linking specific dates and situations with broader, more universal ideas about epistemology and the acquisition of knowledge. Narrative is also the organizational framework for the separate matter of defining and controlling these educational processes.

Themes

This raises the methodological issue of themes. It would have been easier, I suppose, to subject the stories of the teachers to a thematic analysis by simply selecting a list of topics that arise and by counting the number of their frequency. At this point there is software that can perform this function. However, to do so would be to undermine the qualitative, novelistic aspects of our lives. The concept of a theme is a closed circle. They tell us explicitly what something is about---not the plot---but the deeper meaning. In a way, the use of themes is not so different from the rigid definitions of M'Choakumchild's classroom.

There is a strong academic history in the search for themes and, of course, this is the way many American students are exposed to literary analysis. Levi-Strauss, Propp⁵³, Thompson and Aarne, Jung---all have sought through various methods to categorize the elements of narrative by presenting categories that delineate and classify. There is no denying the utility of such process when one needs a shorthand way to discuss narrative, but it is contrary to Bakhtin's thinking to suggest that the borders of these categories are not fluid. I myself am generally impressed with the way narrative patterns are rejuvenated over time. My struggle with reconciling these patterns with Bakhtinian architectonics is, for lack of a better word, a "theme" of this dissertation. But there is a distinction between plot elements, which Bakhtin uses to categorize literary genres, and thematic elements which are first, cultural artifacts and second, subject to the vicissitudes of transmission. It must be remembered that he insists on an emphasis on "parole" rather than "langue". For Bakhtin, meaning begins not with the structuring system but at the point of the utterance.

Which doesn't mean pure relativity. What does tend to fix meaning is temporality. It is possible to think that the Oedipus myth meant something different prior to Freud's use of it but it is almost impossible to determine what that might be once one has been exposed to Freud. Themes are culturally constructed at a given time; they are points of agreement that people trained in a similar fashion agree upon. The question of triangulation in qualitative research is dependent on people with similar backgrounds and technical preparations coming to similar conclusions. Aren't those of us who are trained together likely to see the same things?

⁵³ The thing is, all of this is useful, just not exhaustive. Levi-Strass' paradigmatic approach provides insights into analysis as does Propp's syntagmatic approach. We live in a world of linear sequences and diachronic symbols. Both and...

The second aspect that applies to this research is the issue of teacher consensus. As the conversation (stories) move outward, sometimes at my instigation, the talk becomes less focused. The teachers generally tell stories about their immediate settings and as I point out elsewhere, this might be a product of the “Working Conditions” prompt limiting responses. This is a design flaw that I did not anticipate. However, it might be because their shared experiences are the most useful stories to tell during the events because they are all speaking the same language, so to speak. They are working with the same set of assumptions within the swirling vortex of heteroglossic history, policy, culture and politics. As they select responses from this heteroglossic stew, they tend to hew closely to their own lives. It is there that they find consistencies. Their views on broader policy issues (with the exception of pay) are widely varying and they pivot around issues to address the nuances that most apply to themselves. Issues like the Common Core and other state standards are primarily spoken of, if at all, in terms of the individual lesson plans that the teachers prepare daily for their own classrooms.

To search for common themes in their stories is to deny the point of the performance event. The point was to examine the ways that individuals brought their own authoring selves to light in the context of performed social exchange. Peter Ackroyd writes in his biography of Dickens that, “There are the usual ‘inconsistencies’, although the term should really be applied to a theorem and not to a novel, where the very paradoxes are part of the theme”. (Ackroyd, 1990, p. 704). As Dickens writes, his themes rise and fall in prominence. I found this to be the case with the teachers’ stories as well. Across a social audience, even one as small as those who participated in my research, the inconsistencies in interpretation are much more interesting than the places where the teachers agree (again, as in the case of teacher pay). Their relationship to the historical nature of their profession is one of the places where they contest the elision of

meaning. It is a space where they jockey for their own world view. Their stories, like Dickens' fable, incorporate their external circumstances, but these are translated in a variety of ways.

Unions

In *Hard Times*, the labor union that represents the mill workers is not presented in a particularly sympathetic manner. Dickens most affecting protagonist, Stephen Blackpool, is a mill worker who speaks against the union agitators at a meeting and accuses them of manipulating the workers. He is ostracized by the union members and faces complete isolation. He is neither a laborer, nor does he belong to the class of the employers: "Thus easily did Stephen Blackpool fall into the loneliest of lives, the life of solitude among a familiar crowd" (Dickens, 1854/2001, p. 108). Ackroyd (1990) notes that Dickens was himself ambivalent toward the cause of labor unions in Britain: he commiserated with the workers whom he thought were being abused, but he also disliked the threat of violence that organized protest might engender (p. 689ff.).

In the teachers' stories there are several instances where the issue of teacher unions is brought up. Not unlike in *Hard Times*, the situation is fluid and encompasses many different issues. Below, by way of example, are presented the three instances when the issue of a labor union arises in the first performance event. In the first case, the discussion begins with a personal story told by Mary Smith about Jim Fox's overcrowded classroom, mentoring and institutional teacher support:

M SMITH. But there's the technology, there's more information for the students. But there's no support. It took her a month so she could watch a teacher use it the right way, not the way I know how to.

So, I do agree with you. And the fact we used to have...mentoring was different, I know when I first started teaching because I literally did have to go watch other teachers, even if it was other grades, but other good teachers...teach, and you watched your mentor teacher teach. And if you

were struggling with something, if they were working on it, no matter what grade level, you would go see that. Um, I went to Jim's room one day 'cause he was having issues with a group of kids that we found out was a whole 'nother thing. But I walk into a hut and there's so many children that I was looking for desks to be hung from the ceiling. Which, you know, is just a population issue, and we should have scheduled the auditorium for his class instead of a hut. So, you know, that's just something that came from an all-around issue...

M GREEN. But that's also unique to North Carolina also. I was shocked when I interviewed at Midlands and they told me that I would have upwards of 40 students in my class.

M SMITH; Oh!

M LOY. Why is that shocking (to ZC)?

M GREEN. That...in...in other...in union states, if you go above a certain level, I mean, you can't. It's not allowed. Or...⁵⁴

(Everyone begins talking at once)

M LOY. Exactly. We don't have a union. That's what we need.

A KOBE. We don't have a back-up. And it's bad.

V ROGERS. You'd get fired if you tried to get a union.

M LOY. Oh my gosh, yeah. You're never going to get a union.

M GREEN. But that's why...it's so...the working conditions are so bad here...

M LOY. So why are you here for a job?

M GREEN. I told you: my husband's in the military.

M LOY. Right. So, when you could go anywhere else...right...could you get...right, right.

M GREEN. I would. I'm saying I would...

M LOY. Right.

M SMITH. She's living with her husband is what she's saying.

M LOY. So we get a good group of teachers because of the military, is what she's saying.

M SMITH. And there are some of us who don't want to go back to retail because we've got more sense than that. I worked ninety hours in retail, made great money but I never saw my children. So then when I discovered that I could teach...

M LOY. And school is less hours?

⁵⁴ NC Statute §115-301(c) Maximum Class Size for Kindergarten Through Third Grade. – “The average class size for kindergarten through third grade in a local school administrative unit shall at no time exceed the funded allotment ratio of teachers to students in kindergarten through third grade. At the end of the second school month and for the remainder of the school year, the size of an individual class in kindergarten through third grade shall not exceed the allotment ratio by more than three students. In grades four through 12, local school administrative units shall have the maximum flexibility to use allotted teacher positions to maximize student achievement”.

M SMITH. ...and I'm pretty good at it. No. But I'm at least where they are, so it's okay. So, you know, now...now it's like I enjoy it, I can't leave them. I don't care if I'm poor or not. I'll just get another job like Earles...

M LOY. It does that...it sucks you in.

M GREEN. I think teaching is a calling.

M SMITH. Yeah, it is.

M GREEN. And so I think that there are people out there who want to teach and who would be good teachers...and...but put it this way: think about your first year of teaching. It's so hard. Right?

(Laughter.)

M GREEN. It's so hard. And, so, even if that's your calling and you really enjoy it most of the time...

M LOY. You want to run away.

M GREEN. If...if you're not getting the support you need, you ARE going to leave. Teachers that could...could have become great teachers...

M SMITH. ...Great teachers...

M GREEN. ...and stayed their whole careers and worked with so many students and helped so many students but they don't because they're not getting the support that they need.

M SMITH. Right.

M GREEN. And I...I think the state a lot is to blame for that.

J FOX. Agreed.

M SMITH. Oh, without a doubt.

(Appendix 1, pp. 326-328)

As Mary completes her story about Jim's classroom she lays blame for the overcrowding situation on the school administration, saying that they should have scheduled his theater class in the auditorium instead of in the mobile unit where Jim holds his class. The comparison between North Carolina, which is a "right to work" state and other states that have teacher unions is introduced by Monica Green. She states that union states don't have the same problem---i.e.

classrooms filled beyond capacity and the implication is that unions have fought to affect statutory law.

This is different than what I perceive the purpose of unions to be in states where they are allowed. I would assume that most people would say that unions serve to protect financial interests for teachers---pay, pensions, and benefits---or that they protect teacher working conditions by limiting the work day, protecting against biased retributions, and so forth. Green here links the lack of organized labor to the overcrowding of classrooms which could be seen as an administrative issue rather than a labor issue. Here the unions could be seen as a force for improving the lives of teachers by also improving the lives of the students who endure classrooms that are filled to overflowing.

As soon as Green introduces the idea of unionizing North Carolina a general commotion begins. As the participants settle down, the next four lines follow:

M LOY. Exactly. We don't have a union. That's what we need.

A KOBE. We don't have a back-up. And it's bad.

V ROGERS. You'd get fired if you tried to get a union.

M LOY. Oh my gosh, yeah. You're never going to get a union.

M GREEN. But that's why...it's so...the working conditions are so bad here...

Myrna Loy begins by stating that the teachers of North Carolina need a union. Kobe redefines union, presumably, as “back-up”; perhaps the meaning is someone who will watch out for teachers’ best interests but “back-up” implies someone to provide necessary support. Rogers indicates the subversive nature of desiring a union with the professional ramifications that would result in a North Carolina teacher attempting to unionize, and she is seconded by Loy who now answers her own opening statement “We don’t have a union. That’s what we need” with

“You’re never going to get a union”. There is a dialogue with authority here: attempting to unionize would get a teacher “fired”, but it is with a monologic partner. The “firing” agency is an outside and hierarchized other that has power over teacher decision making. This acknowledgement of the state apparatus and its ability to punish subversion of state law quickly ends the brief flirtation with dialogue. Green brings the conversation back around to general working conditions---why they are “so bad” ---but doesn’t go into specifics about which conditions, beyond the overcrowded classrooms mentioned before, could be addressed.

After this exchange, the idea of unionizing is not mentioned again for a long while. The stories start to circle around North Carolina’s difficulty in retaining teachers. Green says that she is at Midlands because of her husband who is stationed at a military base nearby. The exchange then turns to teaching as a “calling” and eventually ends with another condemnation of the state but, I would argue, as with the comments that open the section, the teachers are not really advocating union organizations, per se, as much as they are looking for some kind of support. Some kind of help in the form of a partnership.

The lack of stability with quality teachers has created an environment that looks more and more like it is trying to drive teachers away. Teachers are a collective; a social force, and the passage indicates that they think of themselves as part of a whole. It also seems clear that they are arguing that the state, used somewhat generically here, is antagonistic to that collective. The legal strictures that are in place render the state non-responsive in a dialogic way. In this exchange the teachers very quickly rule out the possibility and move on to a collaborative story about the conditions in North Carolina that induce teachers to leave.

In the next passage the issue of unions arises again in the context of state to state comparison. It begins with the state, here represented by the district, being unable to adapt

quickly in the face of rapidly changing demographics. This is a challenge that Jim Fox refers to several times through the first performance event. In this case the critique is based on the fact that North Carolina's districts are too large and are not flexible enough to effectively deal with population growth.

J FOX. They're still working on a model...meanwhile...the population is growing exponentially to the point of, they can't do the county anymore, I don't think.

M GREEN. No.

J FOX. They can't, they're growing. And it's growing a lot. And they're running on such an old model and still...wanting to make it work at that...it...it can't work. Because, you're right, in Ohio the districts are so smaller and it's not the county.

M SMITH. Even in Pennsylvania, though. Pennsylvania. But it's also a union and it's not by county. You know, so those two things and I think that's where, a part of it is, those of us who have moved around and been other places, you know, when there's union and smaller districts, things are run differently. There's caps on...true caps on classroom size.

(Laughter.)

M LOY. I like that. "True caps". (Sarcastically:) Really, you think our caps are mobile?

(Laughter:)

M SMITH. Uh, I don't know. We have twenty chairs but there's thirty people in my classroom. Ummm. That would be mobile. But, you know, the cap in my classroom says twenty-five. I'd love to see you fit twenty-five children in my room and give them a knife. So, let me just throw that in there.

J FOX (Laughing). I know your kids, too.

M SMITH. Um, so there is a difference between union, non-union. And it does create a problem then when we go to teach. It does then create issues for our children and, and because of different things that happen like (VR is whispering to MG) ---it's 5:30—

V ROGERS. Thanks

M SMITH. Um, sure. It is...it is things like kids, you know, we want to talk to our kids and sometimes, with so much being thrown at them, we don't make the time to talk to our kids...

J FOX. Right.

(Appendix 1, p. 333)

Very quickly the mention of unions raises again the issue of overcrowded classrooms. This time, Mary Smith makes a direct link between overcrowding and the way that it effects teachers' ability to treat their students individually. The exchange here is congenial and the teachers are laughing and informal. The mention of unions is only incidental. The teachers are not activists and they resist the monologizing discourse of unions though their joking tone. It seems rather than professing a type of allegiance to political action, the teachers are instead seeking an alternate version of educational reality. Union states offer a contrasting narrative to the conditions under which they suffer. Consistently, the unions are talked about in the context of serving the students better: the passage ends with a link drawn between unions and the ability of the teachers to get to know their students more fully.

The lack of serious discussion about actually unionizing may be because it is simply not a pressing issue in a state that does not allow their teachers to unionize. As I pointed out above, the state is a monologic presence in this story and although its actions are implied to be antagonistic toward teachers, there is a sense of resignation. Instead of belaboring the utility of unions, the teachers treat them as a proxy simply for "something that is better".

In the final conversation where the issue of unions arises there is a marked difference. It begins with Monica Green talking about North Carolina's low pay---a frequent topic of conversation---and about her willingness to spend her own money for her students. She compares her expenditures to an unnamed "they", presumably administrators and policy-makers who are better paid but who do not have the immediate connection with the students. Again, there is the division between those who teach and those whose decisions impact them, often for the worse. This leads to Kobe redirecting the story towards the general disrespect that teachers feel. Unions are offered again as a solution. In one of the most telling moments of the

storytelling events, Monica Green leans in conspiratorially and whispers, “Let’s start one”. I, who have participated very little during this Event, speak the voice of authority: (It’s a right to work state).

M GREEN. Yeah. And then, so the pay is low. And then in the schools, all the resources are really low, so what do we all do? We all use our money...

A KOBE. Which is not enough.

M GREEN. ...to get our supplies for our classrooms. I added it up last year. I spent over a thousand dollars for my classroom.

A KOBE. See? Lucky you...

M GREEN. Did they? Did those people probably spend anywhere near that for their jobs? No, and they’re making much more. So, come on. But, like, when the materials are not there; when you run out of paper, and you still want to make copies, well, you go buy paper. Or if you want to have markers for your board, or if I wanted just a set of books we don’t have. I mean, and you just get it. I mean, I don’t know. But that’s not right.

A KOBE. Well, I don’t blame the students. I work with students; student doesn’t need to be perfect. But, THOSE in the administration or whatever they are. They need to know that teacher are teacher. And they don’t take teacher on the road to put them in the classroom. Those teachers, they deserve where they are. Respect them. Know that those are colleagues. Whoever can be whoever. And go by this. Period. It’s, uh, I like...our profession is good. I like it. But after all that, you know, we need to be a part of any decision in which we are concerned. Don’t just make a decision and say, “Okay, stop meeting this, you are going to do this, you have to do this.” No, we don’t have to. Let us discuss

M GREEN. Yeah.

A KOBE. What is good, you know, according to this, this, this. Okay, vote. Instead of...okay...

M LOY. But that would be a union again.

A KOBE. We need a union.

M GREEN. Exactly. We need a union.

A KOBE. We need a union.

M GREEN (softly) Let’s start one.

Z CROWDER. It’s a right to work state. It’s, it’s, it’s a law.

M LOY. Yeah. It’s a right to work.

M GREEN. But that seems so crazy.

A KOBE. Because it works. Enough. Union like that, IT works. You have to raise teacher idea. You have to. And it works. Here. It’s not just all about money...

M LOY. They do keep good teachers.

M GREEN. They have excellent teachers. And do you know how hard it is to get a job there?

M LOY. They wouldn't get...I was going to say...

M GREEN. You, as a new teacher, you cannot get a job there. That's why, you know what happens. This is what happens. All the people from up North come down here...

(Appendix 1, pp. 368-369)

The three times that unionization comes up each have to do with the relationship between teachers and students. From overcrowded classrooms to lack of supplies unions are offered as a solution to problems created by nameless, faceless others. The teachers believe that things can be done better; they point to other states who they believe have better working conditions. These working conditions are considered in light of how effective they allow the teachers to be. The teachers consistently relate their working conditions to the quality of service that they are able to provide for students. For the teachers, teachers and students are in the same boat. Dr. Kobe says that the students are not the problem. Unions are mentioned in the context of making conditions better for both parties. They are not, as they are often framed in policy debates, invoked to further teacher prerogatives that promote a further distancing from their classroom work.

The teachers here, and in very many of the stories, align themselves with the interests of children although they can also be critical of their students. Even in the conversations about the utmost professional organization, a union, circle around the teachers' abilities to serve the children in their classes. The daily, concrete, face-to-face interaction is contrasted with their relationships to those in power, at whatever level. "Those people" as Monica Green says or "THOSE in administration or whatever they are" in the words of Dr. Kobe---they are the ones who are aligned against both teachers and students and they hide behind institutional anonymity. The unions, if they play any role, seem to be a desired level of negotiator between the

student/teacher collective and the unaccountable bureaucracy that makes decisions based on a logic that the teachers do not have access to. Perhaps this is where unions serve an important function: to serve as an intermediary force between teachers and the forces they feel but lack the voice to address.

There is an ironic tension between the framing of the state as monologic when, in fact, it is a representative democracy. The teachers, however, don't seem to feel that they are represented and so, in a passing way, they turn to the possibility of a special interest group to help them achieve dialogue with the state. Another idea of furthering communications with the state is examined in Act V when Victoria Rogers proposes a plan for state representatives to share in the work of teaching. The struggle to be heard is a constant in American political life. And, as the next section will demonstrate, there have been contestations over the definitions of American education for over one hundred years. This is not an original observation. The relevance of this contestation in this dissertation is that these still unfinished debates are another setting in which the teachers find themselves. And this setting, as I continue to emphasize, is situated within the heteroglossia of local control.

Debate and Heteroglossia

Throughout the history of American public education, as is appropriate both to a pluralistic democracy and one which traditionally houses educational decision making under "local control", curricular and pedagogical designs have been highly contested. Manna (2006) makes an important distinction between definitions of "federalism" and "national interest". He writes, "...politicians sometimes distinguish between education as being in the 'national interest,' meaning all citizens and governments (federal, state, and local) should care about it, versus the degree to which it should be a federal responsibility for the government in Washington, DC"

(p.22). This distinction is important when examining arguments about education that date back to the time of Horace Mann and his advocacy for common schools.

When Mann wrote in 1840 that “the state, in its sovereign capacity, has the deepest interest in this matter” and that “it is a corollary from the axioms of its constitution, that every child, born within its borders, shall be enlightened. In its paternal character, the government is bound, even to those who can make no requital” (quoted in Glenn, 1988, p.79) he was directly stating a relationship between education and the governing bodies of the United States whose obligation it was to its citizens to provide basic instruction. The question that Mann leaves unanswered is how to establish “sovereign capacity” within a technologically advancing democracy where the idea of “enlightenment” is fluid.

This discourse, then as now, centers on the ideal of democracy and what such an ideal might realistically entail. Mann’s arguments for common public schools were premised on the notion that a democratic society must be governed by a free and educated constituency. As Cremin (1961) writes, “For Mann the essence of the moral act was free self-choice; and insofar as his ultimate purposes were moral, only in the arduous process of training children to self-discipline did he see the common school fulfilling its commitment to freedom” (p.11). Cremin also points out that Mann’s attention to curriculum was not substantially different from the conventions of the time or from the “mental discipline” arguments that William Torrey Harris and Charles W. Eliot advanced, but the notion that the democratic state, operating by consent of the people, controlled education was Mann's “genius”. Cremin writes, “Through state legislatures and local boards of education, popularly elected representatives rather than professional schoolmen would exercise ultimate oversight” (1961, p.10). For Mann, the “sovereign capacity” of the state lay in the hands of the people.

However, by the time the issue of “mental discipline” as a guiding principle in curriculum theory reached its zenith, professional schoolmen were establishing their authority. *The Committee of Ten*, commissioned in 1892 by the *National Education Association* was charged with recommending a curriculum that would assure that students were college ready. This is an interesting moment in the history of national curriculum and it exposes the assumptions underlying the arguments for classical training and “mental discipline”, but *The Committee of Ten* also sows the seeds for the changes to come. While Kliebard (1995) acknowledges the impact of Charles W. Eliot, the Committee’s chairman, in recognizing that students were different in their interests and in introducing the elective system in order to better accommodate this fact, but he also emphasizes Eliot and the Committee’s adherence to the doctrine of “mental discipline” (p. 10). Kliebard writes, “There would be no curricular distinction between those students who were preparing for college and those who were preparing for ‘life,’ a position entirely consistent with the doctrine of mental discipline...” (p. 10), and although the Committee was expressly interested in making universal the curriculum that would standardize college entrance preparation, their recommendations establish a position that is reflected in today’s curricular policy. While Eliot did not see a distinction in academic preparation for college or for “life”, the doctrine has echoes that reverberate today in policy dictating that public schools must make students “college or career ready.”

“College ready”, now a venerable plank in U.S. education policy, is a topic that appears several times in the teachers’ stories. The teachers think of their students’ futures as concrete, but they worry that the educational system in which they play an important role is preparing them for neither college or career:

M GREEN. We're enablers. And even the smart kids. Even the smart kids, they think they're smart and they know it all but look at their ACT scores.

M LOY. Yeah. Exactly. Reflects not active intelligence.

M GREEN. They're...they're terribly low. So these kids are not prepared for Duke or any other high level school because they might get in but once they get there they're...

M LOY. ...won't know what to do.

M GREEN. ...not going to make it.

M LOY. I told that to a student the other day. He came in looking for his ACT scores and 36 is the highest you can get and he had an 18. So he said, "I would like to go to UNCG or UNC Charlotte or whatever," and of course right there on the interpretation of his scores it says, "That based on that test score, you are very low ready for any college classes." So I said, "What do you see there?" you know and you have to lead them to it and it takes twice as long but you don't want to tell the kid...

M GREEN. Crush their dreams.

M LOY. You just might not...Cause you can't. You really can't. You cannot do that (clapping emphatically). So, and I won't do that. So he looks at it and he thinks to himself and he says, "Gee, I don't know...what..." So he looks at it and he thinks to himself, and then he says to me, "Well, I guess...I'm really not...I don't know that I don't know this..." So I said, "You're...you're right. There are things...now because the ACT is innate knowledge like an EOC, it's the active knowledge of 'o you know these facts', so to speak. And I don't think that if you went into a 100 level course, or an undergraduate lower level..., uh...beginning course, that you would make it." So, he's looking at me, "So why am I not ready then...why is this school...what, what is happening that I am not ready?" And I said, "Well what do you do? What do you put into, as far as your effort goes, on a daily basis? Because this is every day, day in, day out, doing that assignment, doing your best work, if you're tired, you know, all of that.

And he goes, "You know, I, I get what you're saying". And I said, "Well, good. As long as you GET what I'm saying. Now what we do...about that...because you still have time, because you're a junior, you still have time to fix it." So, that level of whoosh, epiphany, the teachable moment. And we don't know when we get those. And it's few and far between sometimes because we...you know, but...And then how long does it last? He goes back out there with his buddies...

M GREEN. Right, yeah.

M LOY. ...and they drag him back into crazy land.

M GREEN. Well but some of the kids, like, that kid, for example, that's maybe his fault that he's not ready, right?

M LOY. And he admits it.

(Appendix 1, pp. 340-341)

Throughout the stories the teachers seem ambivalent with respect to students' responsibility for their own life trajectories. The real focus of the story above, though, is the preparation of a student for college. For the guidance counselor, Myrna Loy, this is the common expectation that students have upon high school completion. Dating almost to the time of Dickens, other groups such as the *Committee on College-Entrance Requirements* followed Eliot's lead in the late 1890's and reinforced the criteria established by Eliot: "They wanted to hold fast to the principle enunciated by Eliot of not differentiating pupils' programs on the basis of their presumed educational destinations" (Krug, 1964, 140). Whereas Eliot had argued for parallel curricular paths that a student might choose, later committees established a core curriculum that allowed for several electives determined by the student. These policy recommendations became the backbone of the program of core classes which are still in force---and still debated---today. In fact, Kliebard (1995) bookends his study of American curriculum with this commitment to the status quo which he labels the "humanist position" and is characterized by the subject areas. In the teachers' stories, it is possible to track echoes of this position, characterized by support for traditional subjects, as well as variations of the other curricular perspectives detailed below.

Within the progressive movement, Kliebard (1995) argues, there were several positions on the subject of curriculum. He writes that after the *Committee of Ten* reinforced a baseline status quo, there were three other major progressive movements that followed for the next sixty years. Each of these movements scored victories in asserting their curricular philosophies and each overlapped intellectually with the others depending on the actual political circumstances. He identifies the major interest groups as the developmentalists represented by G. Stanley Hall originally, the social efficiency educators which included scientific management advocates

Frederick Winslow Taylor, John Franklin Bobbitt and psychologist Edward Thorndike, and the social meliorists represented by George S. Counts and Lester Frank Ward who opposed Herbert Spencer's ideas of Social Darwinism. Floating above all of these agendas, Kliebard (1995) situates John Dewey who he recognizes as the hugely influential educational actor of the Twentieth Century but whose work never is consolidated into a single camp. In Lagemann's (2000) view, however, the battle for the curriculum came down to Thorndike and Dewey, a battle which Thorndike won. (p.22)

At this pivotal point in American curricular history during which the NEA Committees were still exerting influence, it was the academic elites who were still determining the path of public education. This was to quickly change as the issues involved with rapid industrialization and the role of the populace within the context of such changes were to be considered. The decline of the apprenticeship system led the governor of Massachusetts to appoint a “Commission on Industrial and Technical Education in order to investigate the needs of the state in various industries” (Kliebard 1995, p. 86) and to determine whether schools were serving those needs. In response to the report, schools were developed that would better prepare students for their jobs in the future. Labor unions resisted these new schools and also resisted the same impulse which eventually brought about the federal governments foray into schooling with the Smith Hughes Act of 1917.

Although the Morrill Act of 1862 authorized federal dollars for the establishment of agricultural colleges, the *Smith Hughes Act for Vocational Education* of 1917 was to establish the national government's sphere of influence in the administration of public schools and curriculum design. The Smith Hughes Act provided federal funding specifically for the purpose of vocational education and forbade the use of allocated funds for general education purposes.

Under the act, individual states would establish a vocational board that would present a plan for the disbursement of federal dollars. One million dollars was allotted for teacher training and federal matching funds were provided for the purpose of supplementing salaries of vocational Ed. instructors. Kliebard (1999) writes, “In effect, the plans the states submitted under such guidelines would become legal contracts between them and the federal government, but these contracts allowed local officials to retain their basic educational structure (p. 135).

The American Federation of Labor was persuaded to back the Smith Hughes Act because they considered it the lesser of evils when compared with privately funded trade schools that had been established by industrial leaders. These trade schools were looked upon as “scab schools” by organized labor who worried also that a surplus of the population trained for industrial jobs would drive down wages across industry (Tyack, 1974; Kliebard, 1999). In a sign of things to come, businessmen were indeed active in philanthropic efforts to support their schooling agendas during this time. J.P. Morgan donated 500,000 dollars to the New York Trade Schools (Tyack, 1974). In 2009, J.P. Morgan Chase would be one of the many corporate philanthropic bodies who supported Achieve, Inc. in designing the Common Core State Standards.

The Smith Hughes Act was followed closely by the 1918 publication of the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education: A Report of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education* which was appointed by the NEA. The make-up of the members of the commission differed from previous NEA committees in that it was made up of “school people” rather than “university subject specialists” (Wraga, 1994, p.22). The idea of the comprehensive high school was established in the report and historians have disagreed over the implications. Wraga (1994) believes that the scant attention paid to the comprehensive model by traditional historians is a large oversight. The comprehensive model, he argues, combined a specializing

mission with a unifying mission which ideally would reflect the Deweyian ideal of mediating the interests of the individual with those of society at large. Students would have access to many curricula under one roof and could therefore follow their own interests while being immersed in the society of their different peers.

The stated intent of the *Cardinal Principles* was to restructure the public high school in order to reflect changes in society. The implication was that the schools were currently failing in their duties to the citizenry. In order to rectify the situation, the report recommended seven “objectives of education: 1. Health. 2. Command of fundamental processes. 3. Worthy home-membership. 4. Vocation. 5. Citizenship. 6. Worthy use of leisure. 7. Ethical character” (Cardinal Principles, 1918, p. 10-11). These objectives were not only theoretical but would be pursued in high schools across the country: “The comprehensive (sometimes called composite, or cosmopolitan) high school, embracing all curriculums in one unified organization, should remain the standard type of secondary school in the United States” (Cardinal Principles, 1918, p.24). While the ideals espoused in the report were meritorious, the result was a system of tracking and differentiated curriculum that sustained economic and racial disparities. “The net effect of federal legislation has been to enhance the specializing function largely at the expense of the unifying function. While the services offered and the constituents served by the comprehensive model have expanded under federal legislation, the extent to which the diverse students housed under a single roof have come to 'obtain those common ideas, common ideals, and common modes of thought, feeling, and action that make for cooperation, social cohesion, and social solidarity” has unfortunately fallen short of the standard set in the Cardinal Principles report” (Wraga, 1994, p.228).

MLOY. Do you think...

M SMITH. ...she needs someone to care.

M LOY. ...we have two groups of kids? I mean, and I know we have a huge transient population, with the military---and for other reasons: family issues, combined families, separated families, all of that. But I feel like there are two populations in the school. There is the population that is so needy that if you just, kind of, sort of, follow them, and work with them, and talk to them, and everybody's around them, right. That, that population would be okay. Then there's the other population that gets so much following and so much pushing and so much attention and so much (clapping like applause:) "You're so good! You're so wonderful!" And, and, all of that somehow doesn't work for them.

A KOBE. Yes.

V ROGERS. They develop an arrogance.

SEVERAL. Yeah. Yeah.

M LOY. Then they develop that, sort of, entitlement mentality.

V ROGERS. Right, an arrogance.

M LOY. So, it's not like we have a middle of the road population at all in there...

M SMITH. There's no middle of the road.

M LOY. We have to sides of ...of a... of a spectrum. So we have the kids---and obviously you have to tea-...re-...work with everybody differently---so you guys have, you know, 100, 120 whatever, every semester with your three classes and I've got 400 kids so every time somebody walks through my door, I'm assessing. Within (she claps her hands one time) 10 seconds, I have to assess, "What kind of kid is that? How am I going to talk and reach that kid?" Right? Now, given that we see them ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade, even though they transfer, they end up transferring back. They go out they come back, they go out, they come back...

(Laughter and nodding.)

(Appendix 1, p. 322)

The Cardinal Report articulates principles that are still being debated today. The question of varying student interests, abilities, and values within a cohesive system underlies a number of the teachers' stories. The teachers above link students' attitudes with varying value systems. Families treat their children in different ways. Some children are turned over to the schools who "follow them, and work with them, and talk to them" and some students have parents who shower praise on them regularly. As Shirley Brice Heath points out in the opening of this chapter, people have different ways of understanding not only the content of a story, but its form,

as well. The same could be said for values. The difficulty for teachers and for Myrna Loy, a guidance counselor, is to determine the set of needs, behaviors, and values of a student from a wide menu of possibilities.

The United States Supreme Court, since the 1954 ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* has consistently ruled that education is for the purpose of enculturation. Justice Powell, writing in 1973, declares, “It (education) is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment” (*San Antonio ISD v. Rodriguez*, 1973). In a 1986 free speech case, Chief Justice Burger states in his majority opinion, “The undoubted freedom to advocate unpopular and controversial views in schools and classrooms must be balanced against the society’s countervailing interest in teaching students the boundaries of socially appropriate behavior...schools must teach by example the shared values of a civilized social order” (*Bethel School District v. Fraser*, 1986). Further, in the *Bethel* case, Burger cites *Tinker v. Des Moines*, 1969: “Indeed, the ‘fundamental values necessary to the maintenance of a democratic political system’ disfavor the use of terms of debate highly offensive or highly threatening to others...The inculcation of these values is truly the ‘work of the schools’ (*Bethel SD v. Fraser*, 1986).

These legal decisions bring the issue of common values to the fore. In a pluralistic society, whose values become those “inculcated” within a publicly funded school system? E. D. Hirsch writes, “However laudable it (multiculturalism) is, it should not be the primary focus of national education. It should not be allowed to supplant or interfere with our schools’ responsibility to ensure our children’s mastery of American literate culture. The acculturative responsibility of the schools is primary and fundamental. To teach the ways of one’s own

community has always been and still remains the essence of the education of our children, who enter neither a narrow tribal culture nor a transcendent world culture but a national literate culture” (Hirsch, 1987, 18). When it comes to education, the definition of community has traditionally been left up to the individual states to determine. The Supreme Court’s ruling in the *Rodriguez* case emphasizes this: “Education, of course, is not among the rights afforded explicit protection under our Federal Constitution” (San Antonio ISD v. Rodriguez, 1973) and curricular decision making has typically been left at the state and local level.

And there is no question that the public schools are about reproducing the values of the society. When there are tensions between the values to be instilled, the teachers either choose, follow orders, or learn to mediate the tensions.

V ROGERS. I see it a lot in school. (Long pause.) From the bottom to the top. (Long Pause.) So where do we fit in to that? Where do I fit in to that? What do I do? How, you know? (Pause.) I have a student who won’t stand for the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

J FOX. Oh, I had one last year.

V ROGERS. Oh, well, I have had...very few. Last year Dr. Shackelford said they had no choice, they had to stand. This is a girl, not trying to push her buttons, not trying to be overly...You know, I talked to her twice privately and she told me she didn’t have to stand. So I asked an administrator and Mr. Franklin point blank told me if I wanted a lawsuit, pursue it. But she did not have to stand. You know, she doesn’t have to stand. So I haven’t said anything at all. We all, the rest of us, continue standing. I say the Pledge, they can or not. But, you know, that is inconceivable to me. That someone would not stand for their flag. I would expect a French person to stand for a French flag (gesturing towards AK), a British person to stand for a...

(Appendix 2, pp. 403-404)

The adoption and implementation of the *Common Core State Standards* marked a strong break with the traditional view of local curricular control. As early as *The Committee of Ten* in 1892 and the publication of the *Cardinal Principles* in 1918, perhaps even with Horace Mann’s advocacy for common schools, the notion of a national education policy is visible. The early

policy statements by committees appointed by the *National Education Association* are clear that their recommendations are meant to be enacted on a nationwide scale. I quote, again, the *Cardinal Principles*: “The comprehensive (sometimes called composite, or cosmopolitan) high school, embracing all curriculums in one unified organization, should remain the standard type of secondary school in the United States” (Cardinal Principles, 1918, p. 25). By 1989, the year of the Charlottesville education summit, the terms of the national school had changed somewhat. Finn (1989) states, “So national goals or norms ought to be developed by a consensus-seeking process... These norms should be voluntary for states and localities to adopt as they wish. I am well aware that this, nevertheless, portends a kind of national core curriculum, but I do not think that is so bad, as long as it is not the entire curriculum” (p.32).

Another way of talking about the issue is with reference to a “de facto” national curriculum. Finn (1989), again writes, “We already have a sort of de facto national curriculum. It is pretty shoddy; we backed into it. It is compounded of the products of the textbook companies; the testing industry; the TV industry; the popular culture; music, movies and magazines; the fast food companies; and the national publications. It is also compounded by the efforts of the professional education associations, of which there must be two trillion, and of their journals and meetings” (p. 33). Kliebard acknowledges that there was something like a de facto national curriculum as early as the mid 1800’s due to the widespread use of McGuffey readers and blueblack spellers (Kliebard, 1995, p. 2). Kliebard’s comments are echoed by Apple (1979/2004) when he says, “In the United States, even though there is no official rule that states this should be the case, the curriculum is the textbook in a large number of classes. Even though we don’t have a national curriculum in the United States, and we don’t have a national ministry

of education that says that all teachers must use textbooks, it is quite clear that whether we like it or not, most teachers use textbooks” (p.192).

A KOBE. I have one student, very quiet, very...no, the textbook got the basic stuff but sometimes you need to add some more, to adjust it but this boy cannot go away from his textbook. When he come, first thing in the morning: textbook.

M LOY. That's another thing, if it's...

A KOBE. Every day, he's the first to come. When I'm not there, he's next to the door, on the floor. And open textbook. "But this, Dr. Kobe, I don't see this in the textbook." For everything I...he need to find it...

(Laughter)

A KOBE. He need to find it. "No, John, I do not..."

M LOY. There are things that are subjective.

A KOBE. For him, NO...it got to be here... "I don't see..." Or sometimes I teach, two, three days later, but, "I remember you teach this but I did not see it in the textbook," and sometimes it's not in the textbook. So I need to find a way to show him that, okay, what but I have to show him this is part of the curriculum ...this is part of the course. Everything is not in the textbook. We've got to, you know, add stuff...this boy, finally I say, he's got the textbook, because we don't have enough, I keep it under the desks, I let him take it...take the textbook every time. So every time, I teach sometimes if I cannot find it in the textbook, I give him a referral and his parent buy it. They buy the book (snaps twice).

M LOY. Really?

A KOBE. Oui.

M GREEN. Where's he from?

A KOBE. He's a double China...

M GREEN. Ohhhh. I was going to say, "I know he's not American".

(Appendix 1, pp.355-356)

This passage is interesting because of the contrast it provides with Apple's comments (1974/2004). Dr. Kobe, himself an immigrant to the United States, does not expressly follow the textbook. Instead he uses supplemental materials when he finds that the textbook is lacking. The story ends with the revelation that the student who is committed to the textbook as the source of knowledge is himself an immigrant from China. It is stereotypical to say that Asian

students are more industrious than American students but Monica Green here utilizes this generalization. It is part of her experience, but it is also formed by frequent comparisons between American and Asian students on international achievement tests such as the *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA). It is also informed by discursive stream, exemplified in publications such as *A Nation at Risk* and the furor over the Sputnik launch, that stress the failure of American students to compete in a global marketplace. This stream is a primary catalyst in calls for school reform.

My perspective has been that Bakhtin is useful for analyzing the American educational experience because his insistence on an anti-system stance is analogous to the constantly morphing system that we have experienced since the time of Horace Mann. The vicissitudes of reform: progressivism, behaviorism, developmentalism, constructivism, and efficiency debates have created an incoherent patchwork of educational policies and theories. Teachers are caught in the centralizing and decentralizing forces of inconsistent policy implementation much as they are caught between federal, state, and local mandates.

Occasionally the teachers' stories express education through the metaphor of the pendulum and this will inform the analysis in Act V. Kliebard (1995) also uses this imagery: "curriculum fashions, it has long been noted, are subject to wide pendulum swings" (p. 178) but he goes on to reject this and propose a different, more organic metaphor. He writes,

"While that metaphor (the pendulum) conveys something of the shifting positions that are constantly occurring in the educational world, this phenomenon might best be seen as a stream with several currents, one stronger than the others. None ever completely dries up. When the weather and other conditions are right, a weak or insignificant current assumes more force and prominence only to decline when conditions particularly conducive to its newfound strength no longer prevail" (p. 178).

The metaphor of streams seems more in keeping with Bakhtinian thought, but I would add that Kliebard here is thinking primarily of curricular stream. That is, his focus is on the debates in the Twentieth Century that were explicitly related to issues involving schooling. These debates have been dialogic and have rendered a piecemeal national curriculum, pedagogy, educational philosophy and policy. All of these are ongoing and active situations. For all of the organizational, institutional and bureaucratic apparatus in place around public schooling in the United States, the history and traditions of America have created what could be called an anti-system. A heteroglossia.

I should be clear that I am not making a judgement about this here. It seems enough to call attention to the fact and, indeed, the premise of my dissertation proposal assumed that teachers were professionally active within a highly unstable setting filled with disparate influences. I felt that this was a microcosm of Bakhtin's heteroglossia; our condition of social living. From there my second assumption was that, again following Bakhtin, we ordered the array of influences and, staking out own ground, we make utterances that simultaneously generate ourselves and situate ourselves with respect to others. Pulling these two assumptions together I felt that teacher stories could provide insight into the ways that professionals, working in the field, made sense of the variety of streams, to return to Kliebard's image. From which and how deeply were they drinking?

What I did not consider then, but have had ample cause to think about over the course of the writing process, is the way in which I had artificially isolated educational issues from other cultural concerns. And this led me to Dickens as a model of a novel about education that actually is about life and the process of living---as an individual situated within society. The teachers don't mention any of the historical actors or the scholars included above in my potted

account of the journey of American education. They do not mention the names of any American political leaders with the exception of Ronald Reagan (Appendix 2, p. 382) and local school superintendents who are hired, not elected.

They do however mention 9/11 (Appendix 2, p. 402), Kent State (Appendix 2, p. 403), and Christine McCauliffe (Appendix 2, p. 403) in one brief storytelling flurry. In the case of each of these historical actors (and the following anecdote about Reagan) the focus is on how pivotal the moments were with respect to the consciousness of teachers and students. The bottom line is that, while the fluctuating currents of American education form the backdrop of the teachers' work, their acknowledgement of the past is more personal and more rooted in their daily lives within the setting of the larger cultural experience. Perhaps most importantly, the aspect of change that comes up repeatedly throughout the stories deals with human growth and development. It highlights an issue that gets little attention, but one that I have tried to address throughout this dissertation in a variety of ways. What is often overlooked is the fact that the teachers are, while immersed in the numerous changes brought on in education by policy, research, etc., intensely involved with the daily changes in their students.

The following excerpt was one of my favorites during the performances of the stories but it has remained one of my favorites throughout the transcription and writing process. It encompasses, I think, so many dynamics that it is impossible to delineate them all. But this, of course, is the case with all of the passages. It begins with a Victoria Rogers discussing, through the metaphor of growth, the maturation process and the necessity of addressing students' growing independence. The extended passage ends with Myrna Loy reflecting on American pedagogical practices but by the time she speaks, the subject of "growing" children has become

an indictment on American social values wherein children are privileged (“entitled” is a word that is used in several stories) and that this privilege is regrettable.

The pivot point is when Dr. Kobe begins a comparison between high school seniors in America and those in Europe. The passage treats child-rearing (“we’re protecting the younger”; identity (“these girls who are moms at home”); discipline (“you start out tough”); classroom management (“Now I don’t think it’s wrong to ask to go to the bathroom”); a critique of child-centered education (“we don’t live in a perfect world where these kids will just grow”); American privilege (“Who is going to call your parents?”); international competition (“you have one chance to pass a national exam... ‘But we are not in Europe, Dr. Kobe’”); high expectations (“And this work is hard”); curriculum (“English, French, P.E., History, Philosophie, Geographie, Latin”); high-stakes assessment (“You fail. You start over. Next year.”); teacher image and professionalism (“teachers are looked on as GODS”); land of opportunity (“They got, you know, so many opportunities here”); transportation policy (“buses are free”); graduation policy (“No one failed here”); policies about curricular materials (“you get book free”); equity policies (“And then you get lunch in between”); and the American institution of the prom (Who is going to a prom?). All told it represents a panorama of education:

V ROGERS. ...but, you know, I think, as a teacher, in my thousand years in teaching, you know, the smaller they are, the tighter your hedges. Even with our own personal children...

M LOY: The smaller they are...

V ROGERS. ...because we’re protecting the younger. That hedge around them is very, very tight. Very, very small. And then, as our children grow, whether we like it or not, that starts expanding out because they’re going to kick it out, you know, they’re wanting independence and growing. But the whole thing as a parent is that you’re trying to grow them, grow them, grow them, grow them.

Sometimes in school, I think we forget that. One of the things that I think, and we, we touched on this last time we did this, these girls who are moms at home, who not only have one child, some of them have two and three children. I think their life is such a...dichotomy. You know, you’re

at home, you're the parent, you're calling the shots, you got one, two, or three kids, whatever, you got to feed them, whatever. But you come to school and you sit there and you got to ask to go to the bathroom. Now I don't think it's wrong to ask to go to the bathroom, I'm just saying that's a lot to handle. You know what I'm saying?

And so, in our effort for control sometimes, as teachers...and I like control, I'll be the first one to admit it, I like a controlled classroom. But if I'm too rigid, I may have a controlled classroom but I won't necessarily have a growing student. You know. And so, to me, I think one of the hardest parts of education is that growing process. In the classroom and out of the classroom. And I think it's hard as the adult, whether you're the parent of the one growing or the teacher of the one growing. You know, when you start out the semester, remember how we tell young teachers, we tell new teachers, "Don't smile till Christmas."

J FOX. That's right.

V ROGERS. You know, you start out tough.

J FOX. The Hitchens method.

V ROGERS. You lay the law down.

J FOX. Hitchens method.

V ROGERS. But as, as they get to know you and you get to know them, then you can ease up a little bit. You know, it's the same principle. It's the same kind of principle. Unfortunately, we don't live in a perfect world where these kids will just grow and we can expand and everything will go well. I mean there's a lot of hitches and stuff along the way. But...

A KOBE. There's a smart kid come to me, say, "Why did they only make our make-up day? We should have more time for make-up." I say, "Okay, Judy, let me tell you something. You got so many opportunities and you don't think..."

M LOY. All along the semester.

(Throughout this next section AK becomes more and more animated. His enthusiasm is infectious and by the end, everyone is laughing but they are also much livelier in general.)

A KOBE. ...about what is going on around the world. Where I study, where I grow up, when you're a senior, you have one chance to pass a national exam---it's the same in German.

M LOY. It is. In fact...that's true in Europe.

A KOBE. You better have A, A, A, A all year. You fail. You start over. Next year. Everything from A to B.

M LOY. Yeah, that's true

A KOBE. There is no extensions, no...

M LOY. No excuses.

A KOBE. Excuse. That day, you are not there, it's done. No one is going to care about "Judy is not here. Let me call her parents. Come tomorrow, make-up..." No. You are done. Who is going to call your parents? Nope. She said, "But we are not in Europe, Dr. Kobe." But, you know, you think America that is the way it is but you don't want to study anywhere else than here. And this work is hard. It includes every...English, French, P.E., History, Philosophie, Geographie, Latin. It's stressful! I told them, "You laugh here, senior year. It's easier. In Europe, it is stressful. You don't laugh. You don't laugh. You don't laugh."

M RYAN. It's true.

A KOBE. "Because, even prom. No one know what is prom. Who is going to a prom?"

(Laughter.)

J FOX. Yeah.

A KOBE. "People are scared. You are here. Even those who are failing are going to prom."

M LOY. All academic.

M RYAN. Yes.

A KOBE. "You have to seat them at the...and...the graduation, if you fail, they make up Latin. You make up stuff..."

M LOY. And professors and teachers are looked on as GODS.

A KOBE. They are gone. No one failed here.

M RYAN. Yeah. And nobody, and nobody is there during the summer to tutor you, you know, extra.

A KOBE. Exactly.

M LOY. Make-up like credit recovery.

A KOBE. Who is going to do that? They got, you know, so many opportunities here. You got textbooks free. I even, three years ago, this is what I heard, is the bus are free. I thought they pay. They don't pay.

M LOY. No.

A KOBE. They say, "We don't pay." So you just stay home in the morning. You get out. The bus take you, bring you to school. You get book free. You stay after school, tutoring, free. And then the bus bring you, free.

M LOY. And then you get lunch in between.

A KOBE. You got lunch in between. I've never seen that in my life. My parents have to pay private gentlemen to stay after school for tutoring. No. It's done, it's done. And it's a year-long, you know. You got a teacher at the beginning, you have those teacher until JUNE.

M LOY. And you can't complain about them.

A KOBE. You cannot change your schedule.

(Laughter.)

M LOY. It's true.

A KOBE. You don't...you deal with it. Take it or leave it.

J FOX. That's right.

A KOBE. Take it or leave it. No what...NO! Here the first week, they got it, "I don't need this class," they change it. You don't have this.

M LOY. Or bring a parent in.

A KOBE. Bring a parent. Your parents come, "Blah, blah, blah." NO! At the beginning, you got your schedule made up already. You get it, stick with it from October to June.

M RYAN. Why is it that we have so much flexibility?

M LOY. Why?

A KOBE. You like the teacher, you don't like the teacher, you have to deal with it. It's, uh...

M LOY. Because it's, over time, that flexibility has generated results. You know, it's like anything else, if you have a child that you're trying to potty train...until it generates results, you know, until...it's like little puppies. 'Cause we...we talked about that again recently...this whole schedule change. This whole, "I want this. I want out of that. I want to change that. How 'bout can you look at this?"

(Appendix 2, pp. 388-391)

As I stated in the introductory sentence to this passage there are an enormous number of dynamics in this passage. On the video tape it transpires in six minutes and twenty-one seconds yet it covers such a range of topics that it would take a single dissertation to attempt an explication. The point, I think, is not that the teachers are not thinking about the curricular and pedagogical issues that the scholars above discuss, but rather that they are thinking about them within a multiplicity of frames.

For teachers their daily lives are filled with an overabundance of external forces. "Flexibility" as Loy says, has generated results. The United States educational traditions were

never established on European or Asian precepts. The teachers never mention comparative international testing like the PISA exams but it is clear that they think about education in a comparative fashion as demonstrated by Monica Green's comments above. Here, the United States tradition of flexibility, brought about as I have suggested by curricular debates that remain substantially unresolved and by a tradition of local control but also by the cultural nature of U.S. plurality and other democratic traditions have left them in a difficult spot.

Teacher Perspectives

A KOBE. But me, I don't blame the kids, Ms. Rogers. For me, it's not the kids. It's the system.

M RYAN. It's the state.

A KOBE. The kids grow up in the system, in this culture. It's not them. And in case, you know, to improve you have to start from kindergarten. To go up. Because now we cannot change it. If you change it, we are not going to make it. Take it the way it is and go by what is there. Because, you know, this is the way it is. They're born, you know, adjust it, add what we can add, adjust what we can but you cannot change it. This is what I think about it. It's, uh...

V ROGERS. It's pretty sad, isn't it? I mean, seriously---and I agree with you---but I think it's pretty sad. Because if we know we're broken...

M RYAN. What are we going to do to fix it?

V ROGERS. Yeah. And if it can't be fixed, are we just going to limp along broken? What are we going to do?

J FOX. Take back the root of education. You take it...you take it from what it's become, basically a buzzword for, for career politicians to get reelected. And they'll tell and say whatever they have to do to get it.

A KOBE. That's, uh...

J FOX. And we need to take that word back and make it as meaningful as we can. That's it.

V ROGERS. And I tell you, I have a plan...

J FOX. And how we do it, I have no idea.

V ROGERS. I have a plan...

M OY.: But it would have to start from the state.

J FOX. Exactly. Well, not really.

V ROGERS. I have a plan but it, and it's wonderful!

J FOX. When you're number forty-eight, when you're number forty-eight and you're still number forty-eight, there's going to have to come some point when everyone's going to say, "Okay. Enough. You guys have tried to maintain this, it's not working. We do need to take this over."

(Appendix 2, pp. 408-409)

At the inception of the project I had assumed that teachers, talking together and intentionally telling stories about their conditions, would reference broader recursive forces. In this chapter I have explored the possibility that the teachers' stories are merely retellings of stories that Dickens told in 1854, that Mann told around the same time and that the proponents of education have been debating for the last one hundred years. This reflects, I think, my early commitment to considering stories in a classical sense---the Aristotelian dependence on temporality and causal organization. What I discovered, however, is that, in the main, teachers described situations most closely related to their daily experiences without recourse to the broader associations with policy, research, and other institutional discourses that I had envisioned. But this is not to say that these larger discourses don't influence them.

In fact, I think that is the contrary. They do not mention policies such as the *Common Core State Standards (CCSS)*, for instance but it is clear from Dr. Kobe's comments above that they are thinking about the way the CCSS is built and needs to be phased in from kindergarten through high school. He says, "And in case, you know, to improve you have to start from kindergarten. To go up. Because now we cannot change it." The idea that the country implements an accumulative program that takes twelve years to complete but expects students who have been are in 11th grade to pass exams based on one year's exposure to the new curriculum and pedagogy is ludicrous. But this is what every secondary teacher in a CCSS

adopted state has been forced to confront. It is their job, however, and there is not a discourse available to them to complain about this new assignment.

Kobe's response is rare in that he does, albeit in a sideways manner, address a current policy issue with some, albeit without naming the policy, specificity. Is this due, I have wondered, to the fact that teachers perceive their working conditions and stories about them as something on the ground level and perceive the policy and research discourses to be too far removed from them to warrant any real examination or critique? Or, is there another reason why, in over five hours of taped dialogue, the teachers never mention *No Child Left Behind* or *Race to the Top* or any other number of federal education laws and initiatives? The assumption of this dissertation was that there would be a way to chart references to policies and, by so doing, to evaluate the value that teachers placed on them. The question is, then: are the teachers silenced from speaking about these policies that so strongly influence their lives? Or, do they simply not resonate with their lived experience? Or, are they talking about them in ways that are just harder to hear? And, finally, as a researcher, how do I differentiate between what they are saying and what I am inclined to hear?

The discourses around education and social justice have been around since Dickens time. Is a teacher who stresses an attention to facts implicated in the maintenance of the status quo? Probably. Because it's part of their job. Dewey links education and democracy, Counts with social change and a new world order. Is a teacher who does not think about model citizens or a collectivity but rather focuses on content colluding with the technologies of power? Maybe. Of course they don't mention Thorndike or Binet or Tyler, either. They mention the testing regime a few times. They mention standardized lesson plans a lot. Because they are an annoying and tedious part of their everyday work.

So the issue with which I am left to grapple is not how the teachers fall out on the BIG ISSUES IN EDUCATION but rather how these issues are imbued in their thinking about their work on a local level. Because I still believe that the teachers are making their utterances (stories) having drawn from heteroglossia and having ordered it. This is an ethical stance. They ferment other voices and distill their own. We all do. Heteroglossia is a situation that we all live in. Even in the most repressive state---although the limits to the utterances you can make are more finely drawn.

That being said, there are indications that the teachers are seeking definitional, institutional ways of thinking about their work. Monoglossia. They occasionally appeal to authority---often localized, like principals to maintain consistency and provide them with stability: *“As far as, when I came along, nobody ever told me in college that the Principal was second in line to God. Nobody ever said that but it was heavily implied”* (VR, 2nd Event, p. 21). But, they also complain about an arduous lesson plan template that would standardize the way everyone in the school thinks about curriculum and pedagogy. Near the end of the second gathering I joined in the story telling to relate a somewhat gossipy account of policy-making at the school level:

Z CROWDER. There’s not, but it’s just become this kind of discourse at every level. And so you can throw together...and this is me getting off the storytelling. Or maybe it is a story. When Dr. when our prior principal came in and he dictated the lesson plan and it was a cobbled together different sort of lesson plans that he sort of made intentionally, I think on some level, to be particularly arduous. The story I had heard, the story within a story, was that teachers were bothering him about, “What’s the lesson plans, what are we supposed, what are we...” He was like, “If they want a lesson plan, I’ll give them a lesson plan.” And so he just put together this eighteen-point thing that, like, the theory behind the different things that we had to fill in didn’t mesh. When I looked it I was like, “Well, this is from Marzano and this is from this book, or this is from....” And he’s just listing them.

M LOY. It was just the reform itself, not the product of...

Z CROWDER. And it's so, yeah, there was no...

A KOBE. Connection. No connection there.

Z CROWDER. ...educational philosophy behind why this would work. Or how...but it's a cover your ass part, partially, for him and for us. Here's the lesson plans that we're doing. But it was also a type of just, because you have to have something, people want a template, and for whatever reason he just got a bee in his bonnet and made it particularly hard by ultimately cobbling in a bunch of different educational philosophies. When I looked at it I thought this stuff doesn't even represent a logical, coherent philosophy across the board. So this whole notion of you just have to keep doing it differently and now it's becoming slightly arbitrary and random feeling. Does it feel like that to you?

(Appendix 2, p. 416)

Nor do they mention research although it is obvious that every educational topic is somehow related to some form of research. In the context of "educational research" there is one brief exchange:

V ROGERS. Well, I think it goes back to, and I know we don't like it, but if things are not mandated...

M SMITH. They won't happen.

V ROGERS. They will not happen. They will happen in isolated places, but, not across the board...

M GREEN. Well...and I think here's the problem. Um, like, this is just Midlands, for example. They...they do mandate stuff but it's so many different things. They need to, like, pick something and say, "This is what we are all going to do. We are all going to do this. Because, this is what the research says," or whatever.

MS; It's got to be research based.

M GREEN. No, but I mean, it's...it's research based for a reason. I mean, you can go observe this in other schools where...

M LOY. Do you think that's because of the turnover at the, at the county level? at the directorship level? Or do you think it's state?

M GREEN. I mean, possibly. I don't know

(Appendix 1, p. 330)

The research referred to first by Monica Green and then parodied through a type of double-speaking is practical, classroom-based research. Monica reiterates that the research that she is thinking about is about reproducible practice. Mostly, though, her opening situates “research” as a rhetorical claim that justifies whatever policies are employed. And that’s the only explicit mention of research throughout the whole of two events. Of course this type of empiricism, as I have been at pains to point out, is of dubious value. Symptomatic of structural linguistic analysis it ignores the context and the tone. And the tone, running throughout this exchange is parodic. And it is to parody that I turn in Act V.

ACT V. DEUS EX MACHINA --- THE CORRECTIVE OF LAUGHTER

“The novel’s spirit is the spirit of complexity. Every novel says to the reader: “Things are not as simple as you think.” That is the novel’s eternal truth, but it grows steadily harder to hear amid the din of easy, quick answers that come faster than the question and block it off. In the spirit of our time, it’s either Anna or Karenin who is right, and the ancient wisdom of Cervantes, telling us about the difficulty of knowing and the elusiveness of truth, seems cumbersome and useless.

The novel’s spirit is the spirit of continuity: each work is an answer to preceding ones, each work contains all the previous experience of the novel. But the spirit of our time is firmly focused on a present that is so expansive and profuse that it shoves the past off our horizon and reduces time to the present moment only. Within this system the novel is no longer a work (a thing made to last, to connect the past with the future) but one current event among many, a gesture with no tomorrow.”

---Milan Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*, “The Depreciated Legacy of Cervantes”, pp. 18–19

“The majority of literary scholars are most at home when dealing with canons, which is why Bakhtin said that literary theory is helpless to deal with the novel. Rather, ‘novel’ is the name Bakhtin gives to whatever force is at work within a given literary system to reveal the limits, the artificial constraints of that system. Literary systems are comprised of canons, and ‘novelization’ is fundamentally anticanonical. It will not permit generic monologue. Always it will insist on the dialogue between what a given system will admit as literature and those texts that are otherwise excluded from such a definition of literature.”

---Michael Holquist, Introduction to Bakhtin’s *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, 1981, p. xxxi

Acknowledgement

In Act V, I would like to draw together some of the strands that I have been working with throughout the previous four acts. This is something of a fool’s errand because the medium of language precludes the permanence of knotting. Like Penelope’s web, language, as Bakhtin

argues, is in permanent flux and the forces of unification and disunification are always simultaneously at work. This is his response to Saussurean linguistics that prioritize the system over the concrete expression. The threads that I have been interested in developing as an aesthetic component of this project are numerous and disjointed. They don't necessarily fit together to form a tapestry: an aesthetic whole, because language is always unravelling its foundations. This is a big part of the point, and my desire is that the disparate pieces of this dissertation, not unlike Frankenstein's creature, form a type of whole that troubles denotative definitions. Is the creature man, monster, angel?

I am interested in the practical experiences of classroom teachers within the multiple educational contexts through which they move. I am interested in their relationships to students, parents, administrators, policy-makers and other stakeholders. But this is not the limit of their contexts. Their community lives, their family lives, their multiple roles outside of the traditional borders of schooling are also of great import with respect to their understandings of the job that they do for a living.

I am interested in time and its relationship to the conditions of teaching. In semiotic terms I have tried to call attention to this by using imagery of the changing seasons, by invoking the importance of the school calendar, and by exploring the relationship between adulthood and youth. This in and of itself is a literary device and, as evidenced by Acts III and IV, I am interested in the ways our lives are imbued with literariness. Some of this is our dependence on narrative and narrative structures to order our lives. But some of this is a type of poetic understanding. This poetic understanding can be deeply personal, but it is also social in the sense that it depends on language and on cultural norms. Symbols, linguistic or otherwise, are meaningless without social participation. The narratives that the teachers share are all personal;

it is through them that they author themselves. But narrative research that stops here and insists on valorizing an individual teacher voice errs too far toward the individualistic and isolates the teacher from their immediate and historical environment. Bakhtin stresses that the things that we say are critical to our self-identities but he also makes clear that these identities are collaborative and multi-voiced. Our utterances fall into patterns and these patterns become us. The reason many people find Bakhtin liberating is that he also insists that these patterns are not immutable.

To break from these patterns, however, is not easy. Bakhtin never claims that this type of agency comes with no price, only that it is possible. As humans we understand our lives in the context of patterns, and the patterns of time, as Kant noted, are fundamental to our relationship with the external world. This is not an abstraction. It is something we must face. The teachers' lives are governed by their perceptions of these temporal aspects. In the case of the seasons they are recurring; cyclical. In other instances, we see them as directed toward a particular end. Teleological. This is also concrete. There exist beginnings and ends within recurrent cycles. For the teachers it means the end of the school year, graduation, entrance into adulthood, the passing of a class, the failing of a class, death and rebirth.

Bakhtin is also interested in both historical time and in the cyclical processes of human life. In his four essays included in *The Dialogic Imagination*, he notes a temporally linear progression in literary history towards the novel. It is important to remember, though, that for Bakhtin, the development of the novel does not follow a teleological arc except in the most simplistic sense. As I discuss below, he traces the roots of the novel through the genres of dialogue, satire, parody, and folk expression. These are all contemporaneous with other genres indicating a coexistence: a dialogic relationship between certain genres like lyric and epic and those that subsume their formal elements. The novel which blooms from this multifaceted

genesis is a type of the final result, true, but it is also the recognition that the end achieved is, in fact, a subversion of the whole concept of finality. The novel defies categorization because it is the amalgam of any and all of the speech genres of human life. There is a relationship between my use of Bakhtin's method, my writing performance, the stories of the teachers, and the performative nature of teaching itself. I have tried to demonstrate throughout this work that I see the boundaries of these relationships as indistinct. My goal has been to emphasize this multi-level aspect and to demonstrate how teacher working conditions also operate across conceptual borders.

I have labeled the four subdivisions of Act V with titles borrowed from the four-part movement of John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*. This is clearly not a work that is traditionally associated with literature although it is, I think, brilliant aesthetic expression of human heart, mind, and improvisational collaboration. Coltrane's album is about recovery, regeneration, rebirth; all preoccupations for Bakhtin, particularly with his book on carnival, and, in my view, an often unspoken preoccupation for education as well. The first day of school, the last day of school for the year, grade advancement and retention, success and failure on the classroom level, are all part of this process. *A Love Supreme* is about need and desperation. And it's about yearning and seeking. And it's about faith. And it's about coming to terms with our humanness. And it's about frailty. And it's about transcendence. And it's about celebration. When we ruminate on educational issues without consideration of all of these things and even more, I believe that we do so to our detriment.

The last of Coltrane's four movements is entitled "Psalm". There are obvious Biblical and religious connotations here in the English word but it is derived from the neuter Greek noun "psalma" which, according to the Oxford Greek-English Lexicon (Liddell & Scott, 1996)

originally meant a “tune played on a stringed instrument”, and over time came to be understood as referring to the incorporation of a human voice: “song sung to the harp” (p. 2018). These definitions are, of course, prior to the Old Testament flavored associations of the word today. This dissertation has been concerned with presenting the fault lines between denotation and connotation within the concrete sphere of human communication. It has also been concerned with the emergence of human voices on a variety of levels. It seems appropriate to me to end, then with a psalm---a tune voiceless given voice---as a type of recession⁵⁵.

The *Bildungsroman* itself is a novel of emergence, of liminality. It moves toward a telos of adulthood but this is not its focus. The focus is on the process of coming-to-be. It is a central foundation of this dissertation that this process never ends except within the parameters of aesthetic genre. Bakhtin says that we can never know our own end. Every novel ends but every character continues to live---in the mind of the reader and in the fabric of culture. Even if the character has died in the plot---Miles in *The Turn of the Screw*, Stephen Blackpool the martyr of *Hard Times*, Hamlet or Fyodor Karamazov---these characters still resonate vitally in our lives just as the teachers’ stories contain characters that resonate after graduation, after adulthood and even after death.

The seasons always recur but the movement is forward. They proceed temporally but also emotionally and aesthetically. Artists have always endowed the seasons with symbolic significance. Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter each represent stages in human live. They each represent emotional states as well. In Thomas Hardy’s “The Darkling Thrush” the poet is walking at dusk down a dreary winter lane. It is New Year’s Eve at the turn of a century. The

⁵⁵ As I write these lines the memory of the ice storm of Act III has receded into the past. It is a brilliant spring day and through the window I can see the clouds of pear blossoms that are ubiquitous in my locale. This has obviously informed my writing but now, even writing, I am not sure of the degree of this influence.

wind is a “death-lament”. The prospect is bleak: “The ancient pulse of germ and birth / Was shrunken hard and dry,” but suddenly from above the poet hears “a full-hearted evensong / Of joy illimited”. Upon looking into the bare branches of a tree overhead the poet sees that “An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small, / In blast-beruffled plume, / Had chosen thus to fling his soul / Upon the growing gloom”. The image of the solitary bird singing before the gathering darkness has always touched me. The poem is steeped in the passage of time---the melancholy somberness of winter, the death of an era, the “aged” thrush---but the song of the bird is a festival cry against all of these associations. Furthermore, it is a performance. Is the thrush performing for the poet persona, for Hardy’s readers, or for the impending gloom? All, simultaneously. The thrush performs not only his literal “full-hearted evensong” but also in his song is a performance of resistance. A performance of hope.

Education is a hopeful enterprise. It requires faith. But, as I tried to show, this faith, situated in heteroglossia, is directed toward many objects, often simultaneously. The history of American education demonstrates this multi-directionality of faith. Those who engage in education variously seek equality, liberation, justice, economic viability. We place our faith in education’s ability to enhance democracy, to instill values, to challenge values, to provide practical training, to enrich personal lives, and to provide a national competitive edge. We place faith in science and empiricism, in arts and expression, in vocational and skill training, in orderly conduct and in empowerment, self-determination, and in developing social skills within the American ethos of individualism.

The tensions between these priorities play out in our classrooms. Education pursues its aims in an environment of uncertainty and impermanence yet the teachers tell stories that show

their faith that their work matters. Nevertheless, the teachers are situated by narratives that stress their irrelevance:

A KOBE. And it's, uh...the kids are good...you like them...but for me, I think we need to place teachers at the right place. Sometimes I have the feeling that some people think, "Teachers are just stupid." I don't know...

M LOY. Babysitters...

A KOBE. We are not. We are not. We.... no.

M LOY. We are not.

(Appendix 1, p. 364)

Or, worse, their negative influence:

M GREEN. Yeah. It's always negative. It's like a witch hunt. They're like, "Find the bad teachers and put them on spotlight." They never highlight the good teachers.

A KOBE. Voila.

J FOX. Yeah. Yeah.

(Appendix 1, p. 365)

However, the teachers' stories about their working conditions testify to the fact that they believe that their work does some good. They tell numerous stories of their successes, and these are linked to the passage of time. Formal education, as a profession, has a finiteness to it that is contradictory to the ongoing process of both knowing and being:

V ROGERS. THAT'S what I think teaching is about. I agree it's about English and Math and Science. But it's about helping these kids grow up and cope---with a life. And, I... sometimes...I don't think we get that. I don't think we have time---we've talked about this a lot (indicates Myrna Loy).

M LOY. That's...

V ROGERS. Time is pushed out...

M LOY. You don't have time to do that. I get to enjoy that. As much of a challenge as it is. I get to enjoy that part, as hard as it is at times. But that IS my job.

V ROGERS. Right. But I think it's our job, too...

MLOY. It is.

J FOX. It is.

MLOY. Because you can't bring it to us, at a certain level, if you don't know. So, so you have to make the time for that in there somewhere. Just like we have to make the time for paperwork.

(Appendix 1, p. 319)

The teachers talk about their work in terms of immediacy, and this seems to be the fundamental condition of their relationship to their jobs. The daily, the mundane, the banal, and the concrete. But this mundane is not divested of the past and future. Both influence the conditions of the present. Every moment in the classroom carries with it the possibility of both the banal and the sublime. Just like every story. The lives encompassed in the teachers' stories, including their own, are situated within the constraints of time but they also overflow these boundaries in the act of telling. And the telling incorporates the legion of voices that participate in the process of the emerging. Heteroglossia.

But perhaps I am getting ahead of myself. The next section addresses some unfinished business of this dissertation which I originally tried to frame as an extension of Bakhtinian thought on literary genres. Using Bakhtin as a framework for understanding the complex dynamics of schooling could, I felt, provide an antidote for overly simplistic interpretations of educational experience. I proposed that the 'reform' movements in the United States had resorted to a type of monologic that demanded "change" not for improvement in any real sense but as a type of defensive rationale that demonstrated commitment. In the end, the theoretical framework I employed prior to listening to the teachers proved insufficient. Not because it is invalid or because it rested on invalid assumptions but because, contra Bakhtin, my framework was just that---a framework. And this, by its nature, limits the dialogic essence of life.

Resolution

Z CROWDER. Well, it's funny, one of the...as we talk about change, one of the ways I really framed the dissertation proposal was...that change, school reform and school improvement had become an almost just concretized notion and an end unto itself. Um, and so, that was sort of one of the arguments that I made that it had become the American epic in schooling and that there was no end to it except for just the reform. The change. The sort of the constant change.

V ROGERS. Change is a constant. You're right.

J FOX. Yeah.

Z CROWDER. That it is the only constant but that it seems...

M LOY. Or that that becomes the end?

Z CROWDER. That that becomes the end unto itself. That you just constantly have to say, "Well, our school improvement..." I was like, "What do really, really, really good schools' School Improvement Committees do?" Like talk about, maybe, some flowers? Some bedding flowers? For outside? Like if you were working at a school that has high achievement and doesn't have an achievement gap, probably because you're in a white suburb anyway, but like, what does that school's look like. I mean I'm sure that they have them. I've never worked at that school...

(Laughter.)

Z CROWDER. ...but they must have School Improvement Teams. But I mean, what do they talk about? Like, how to landscape the...improve the campus?

M LOY. Yeah, what do they, what does their reform look like?

(Appendix 1, pp. 415-416)

When I proposed this study nearly eighteen months prior to the writing of this sentence, I tried to develop a paradoxical notion that played with Bakhtin's categories of literary genres. American school reform, I argued, had assumed an "epic" quality. By this I utilized Bakhtin's schema of literary categories that describes epic is an ahistorical genre that valorizes the values of a mythical status quo and that instantiates hierarchical thinking. For him, the epic genre is an expression of one dominant set of values which does not allow for contradiction. As I puzzled about the things that teachers were allowed to say and the discourses which were available to

them, I struggled with a way to myself articulate the pressure of constant educational reform and the need to preserve some kind of stability---institutionally and for the actors immersed in the act of schooling. I was (and still am) convinced that education was a heteroglossic situation---that the reality of the school setting was overflowing with voices. This, I felt (and still feel) was something to be celebrated. By using Bakhtin---and by pushing his thinking outside of the limits of literary genre---I felt that I could devise a template that accounted for the regimen of change.

In my proposal I wrote (with original footnote):

A related problem is that institutional policies, put into place through the agency of, and as a response to, various reform movements, have created a paradoxical situation under which teachers' attempts at implementation through their various performative acts are consistently undermined by shifting normative levels. In recent years, from the crisis rhetoric of *At Nation at Risk* through the passage of *No Child Left Behind* and the subsequent initiation of *Race to the Top*, to the creation of the Common Core and the linked institution of value-added teacher evaluations, a master narrative has developed that, while emphasizing "change" as its central tenet, has ironically taken on many of the qualities and structural characteristics as the literary genre of epic as described by literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin.

For Bakhtin, a literary genre is a way in which language participates in the world, reflecting, responding and informing simultaneously. Of epic, he wrote, "...tradition isolates the world of the epic from personal experience, from any new insights, from any personal initiative in understanding and interpreting, from new points of view and evaluations. The epic world is an utterly finished thing..." (1981, p.17). Bakhtin's analysis is grounded in an ethical stance: he uses the literary genre of epic to indicate a hidebound tradition whose inscribed value system has become so valorized as to be unimpeachable. The hierarchized ethical systems of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* or of *Beowulf* are not contestable because, Bakhtin argued, these worlds are created by language that is monoglossic, single-voiced, and the epic genre particularly demonstrates the "centralizing tendencies in language" (1981, p. 67). The epic is purely univocal but this does not mean that different actors on the epic stage don't speak as their own characters nor does it mean that epics are not effective in their transmission of meaning or that they are not affective in their portrayal of human experience. It only means that each character speaks with a type of potted voice that cannot diverge from the monologic value system that simultaneously foregrounds and drives the narrative. The human experience presented in epic is limited to a single interpretive frame. Inside this frame, the characters don't change over the course of the epic. As Erich Auerbach put it, "Even Odysseus, in whose case the long

lapse of time and the many events which occurred offer so much opportunity for biographical development, shows almost nothing for it” (1093, 2003, p. 17). Epic serves as a metaphor for circumscribed action that disallows any depth to the characters and situations it presents.⁵⁶

As I thought about it, it seemed that if this stasis were the case, it presented a special conundrum for teachers whose professional practice centered around repetition both in terms of the work done in the classroom pedagogically and in the cyclical nature of the school year. Doesn't the definition of the word “practice” include notions of habit, custom and repetition? If “best practice”, a favorite focus of teacher professional development, didn't actually imply a behavior that remains stable, and if all of the discourses concerning education demand improvement: change, reform, and the like; then how were teachers to form a clear impression of the work that they do?

V ROGERS. But the problem, the problem with the change---and I agree with you—the problem in education, or at least what I've seen through my years, is, there's been change around since I graduated and started teaching, but it's kind of like a pendulum swinging. And, you know, you would like to be in the middle, kind of in the middle. But what happens, it swings one way or the other. But it'll keep swinging, swinging, swinging, swinging, swinging, swinging, until there's nowhere else to go that way. So then they'll start back and then you end up right where you were. And then it'll kind of go. And a good example of that, right now, is the fact that we're using graphic organizers.

J FOX. Yeah.

V ROGERS. No, I tell you fifteen years ago, we had all these massive workshops on graphic organizers. And those little red and white organizers that are up on my wall and a bunch of other people's walls were introduced then. They have not even been changed! They're the same color, it's the same posters! And yet it's the in-thing! And it was here fifteen years ago! So, you

⁵⁶ It is worth noting that my configuration of epic as monoglossic is certainly not the only possible view. In contrast to Bakhtin, Georg Lukacs viewed the epic as the highest form of human expression and viewed the novel as a type of debased epic. See Brandist (2002) for a full discussion of the opposing viewpoints, particularly pages 128-132. I reiterate that Bakhtin's framework usefully serves as a metaphor for the context that I desire to explore rather than as any sort of final word (impossible) on literary genres.

know, that change, it'll change, and then somebody has to change it and then somebody has to change it and somebody has to change it. But then it's going to come back. And daggone, you're where you were fifteen years ago. But that's okay, you won't stay there 'cause you're going to go this way for a while. (As VR speaks she uses her arms and hands to demonstrate the motion of the pendulum, swinging them back and forth.) But you'll run out of room and you'll come back. And I've seen it over and over and over and over. And I do agree with you, sometimes it's just change just because we're supposed to be changing.

But, to me, best practices are best practices. Period. And good teaching is good teaching. Period. You know? And you can calculate it a lot of ways. But it is either, or it's not. You know? You're either good at what you do, you work hard at it, you try, you give it 100%, or you don't. I mean, you know?

Now when she tells me, "Do this," I'm going to do it. Because her paygrade is higher than mine and I need my job. But you know what, next year when she says, "I know we did this, but this year we're going to do this," you know what I'm going to do? I might say, "I'd really like to..." but I'm going to do this. Because I like my job. And I need my job. Now, if I can bring any weight to it and try to, you know, be involved or whatever...But I'm still going to do it. I mean if it's not morally wrong, you know, and it keeps me employed, folks, I'm going to do it. I just am. I need a job

(Appendix 2, pp. 416-417)

Peter Taubman (2009), reflecting on the demands imposed by the logics of contemporary educational discourse wrote, "The focus on students, the belief that student success depends on teachers, and the valorization of self-sacrifice have, today, ironically contributed to the disappearance of teachers into an assemblage of 'best practices'" (p.146). Yet, the "best practices" were always in a kind of prescriptive flux. The "pendulum" metaphor, which I have mentioned in various contexts through this work was prominent in the stories of Victoria Rogers. This is one way of framing the flux. Of ordering it both practically and philosophically.

In his essay *Epic and Novel* Bakhtin (1981) wrote that "There is no place in the epic world for any openendedness, indecision, indeterminacy." (p.15). Again, the paradox: If indeterminacy is the prescriptive rule, doesn't "change", in and of itself, become the norm? As I understood the situation, every "change" or "reform" or "improvement" initiative that was

prescribed during my teaching tenure actually imposed limits and boundaries to the act of teaching. This is the disappearance that Taubman writes about. The teacher becomes defined by the activities that he or she performs. This performance is scripted by standardized lesson plans, curricula and even the rubrics by which teachers are evaluated when administrators show up at their door.

M GREEN. I mean they come sit in your class, 45 minutes, once every two months. And they're supposed to see all of these things that you're doing all the time.

(Appendix 1, p. 372)

The practice of teaching is about habit, but it is also, because of the ever-changing context of the classroom, highly improvisational. The call for “change”, with its prescriptive and formulaic demands, circumscribed my engagement with both pedagogy and curriculum, and yet the border was always under revision because the establishment of limits, boundaries, professional expectations, and the like was in actuality just a performance, at every level of the educational hierarchy, that demonstrated on-going accountability. The question for me was: how might one access the knowledge that runs underneath or even counter to the epic institutional master-discourse of “change” while embracing the complex relations that communication of such knowledge entails? The problem, I have now realized, is in forcing these complex relations into a categorical framework. The teachers’ stories resisted these definitional lines and pushed me to think further about “change” as a desire for institutional stability. The teachers’ stories don’t justify the assignment of particular discursive strands into distinct boxes. Doing so is antithetical to dialogism.

Gallagher (2011) stresses storytelling as method; a method that “puts research back together as a partial and intersubjective critical experience” (p.53). Drawing on Hannah

Arendt's storytelling orientation Gallagher further writes, "This orientation positions storytelling, as I have argued, as a place to begin inquiry rather than as a place on which to fix pre-existing categories and meanings" (p. 53). Looking back, I see that I needlessly manipulated Bakhtin's genre categories in order to try to express the phenomenon I wanted to explore. Perhaps I even created the phenomenon I wanted to explore. The novelistic presentation of this research is my attempt to rectify that. The truth is that I had no idea what the teachers would say when asked to tell stories about their working conditions. I had no idea if they would even tell stories. Often, in fact, I interject during the Events to reinforce the idea that they should tell stories that follow an Aristotelian model:

Z CROWDER. Can somebody tell a story of good teaching? Is there a story you can tell that epitomizes good teaching or that represents...like, is that, is that question specific enough?

(Appendix 2, p. 417)

And:

Z CROWDER. Um, so we're on an hour and forty minutes of me taping. Like, I'm cutting it off before two hours. Would...let's go...If you have...because my advisor's going to kill me if I don't just say, "Tell a story about the working conditions in education today. And so, I'm not going to force you to but if you have a story you can tell about teacher or counselor working conditions. It doesn't have to be representative of, like, everything.

(Appendix 2, p. 421)

My insistence on this model now appears foolish. In the excerpt immediately above, I resort to claims to authority to try to get the teachers to give me something linear, with a beginning, middle and end. I sound badgering and even threatening. I, as the researcher, am aggressive in my request that the teachers give me something that meets my definition of narrative. This is due to my own anxiety over the project and the projection of numerous forms of rejection and sanction: by my advisor, as I mention, but also by my dissertation committee,

and the research community at large. I, who have self-righteously taken on the burden of presenting teachers in their fullest humanity, want them to perform in a certain way.

The teachers gave me five hours of stories, but they were not linear. They circled back on themselves, revisiting topics and very seldom fleshing these topics out. Consecutive teachers would seize on one aspect of a previous story and spin it out into a new story that varied in nuance of focus. In general, they simply made them more complicated by adding additional viewpoints and voices. This made the issues richer. And paradoxically, more concrete, as they overflowed (a liquid metaphor) their categorical bounds. We do not like to think of research as improvisational, yet, when I asked the teachers to tell stories over an extended period of time, they did what comes naturally to all of us. They improvised. The ancient bards, it is said, repeated formulaic passages during epic recitations in order that they might prepare for the improvisational effort that was required as they continued their stories. It seems that, in a pedantically artificial adherence to Bakhtin's opposition between epic and novel, I had forgotten this.

What I had failed to realize was that Bakhtin's definition of "epic" is, itself, something of an abstraction. In fact, that's one of his complaints about it. The epic is a genre through which Bakhtin can demonstrate the heteroglossic nature of novel by comparison. The main point is this: epic is a lack of specificity. Time has no meaning in epic. There are codes that are not capable of being challenged by contextual situations. There are no alternate points of view because an alien perspective is simply impossible within the parameters of epic discourse. It is wholly monologic of the genre proposed by Orwell's Newspeak. What Bakhtin is arguing, though, is not that the epic is representative of the real world. On the contrary, he is arguing that this kind of containment is impossible in lived experience.

In education we often times seek to reduce degrees of specificity. These exist in the real world, in the actual classroom, but they are difficult to speak of in educational practice, research and policy. Particularities are---necessarily---homogenized. Public education is a collective activity. Where the epic tendency or the trend toward monologic is at play is not in the patterns, but in the strangely anonymized and somewhat amorphous cloud that speaks about education outside of its actual practice. The teachers resist their own collectivization as well as that of their students. The discourses of policies and research are an “alien word” that is monological in its lack of specificity. Where I had erred was in thinking that epic was monologic because of its narrow interpretation of the world, but that it is monologic because of its closed interpretation of the world, no matter how broad and multi-voiced. Bakhtin doesn’t say that the epic only has one character. He only says that every character is speaking the same language.

What I came to realize is that although I still believe that “change” and “reform” are the central monologic discourse (for all of their disparate voices) in education, this discourse is still but a small part of the novel of education as it plays out in lived experience. This then became the focus of my work: to explore how this monologic was both connected and disconnected to the work of teachers. In thinking about the teachers’ stories, I have become convinced that the key to negotiating the “grand” or “master” narrative of education for those who work under its auspices may be sought in the phenomenon of carnival laughter.

Pursuance

In the four essays collected in *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin maps the historical development of the novel. He contrasts the genre of the epic which he calls monoglossic with the novel, a genre that is born from polyglossia and which, importantly, has its roots in popular laughter. Beginning with “serio-comic” genres such as Socratic dialogue, Roman satire, and Menippean satire and passing through Greek romances and the chivalric romance to Cervantes and the rise of the Rabelaisian novel, Bakhtin charts the tradition of “parodic-travesty” literature that specializes in the double-voicedness of parody and the generative change of travesty. The key to all of this is dialogization: “Heteroglossia, as organized in these low genres...was a heteroglossia consciously opposed to this literary language. It was parodic, and aimed sharply and polemically against the official languages of its given time. It was heteroglossia that had been dialogized” (DN, 1981, p. 273). From Socrates to Rabelais, the common denominator of the forces that birth the novel is the impetus of disruption. The stability and assuredness which is imbedded into dogma, doctrine and accepted methodology are challenged and subverted through the genres of parody.

Bakhtin writes:

“In the prehistory of novelistic discourse one may observe many extremely heterogeneous factors at work. From our point of view, however, two of these factors prove to be of decisive importance: one of these is *laughter*, the other *polyglossia (mnogojazyčie)*. The most ancient forms for representing language were organized by laughter---these were originally nothing more than the ridiculing of another’s language and another’s direct discourse. Polyglossia and *the interanimation of languages* associated with it elevated these forms to a new artistic and ideological level, which made possible the genre of the novel” (PND, 1981, pp. 50-1, Bakhtin italics).

Prior to the novel proper comes the “comic novel” which, as its basis, uses the “common language”: “This ‘common language’---usually the average norm of spoken and written language

for a given social group---is taken by the author precisely as the *common view...as the going point of view and the going value*" (DN, 1981, pp. 301-2). The author, though, steps back and objectifies the common language, "forcing his own intentions to refract and diffuse themselves through the medium of this common view that has become embodied in language (a view that was always superficial and frequently hypocritical)" (p. 302). The comic novelist is always participating in a dance with the common language, sometimes pointing out these hypocrisies and sometimes endorsing the common view but always acknowledging it. It is then possible for language to take on "parodic-travesty" properties as part of the dynamics of numerous voices. In an essay entitled, *From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse*, Bakhtin argues that the genre of the novel (truly, for Bakhtin, a kind of anti-genre) grew out of this "parodic-travesty literature". He writes of this tradition: "It is our conviction that there never was a single strictly straightforward genre, no single type of direct discourse---artistic, rhetorical, philosophical, religious, ordinary everyday---that did not have its own parodying and travesty double, its own cosmic-ironic *contre-partie*" (PND, 1981. p.53).

Further, this doubling has a positive and generative function: "Parodic-travesty literature introduces the permanent corrective of laughter, of a critique on the one-sided seriousness of the lofty direct word, the corrective of reality that is always richer, more fundamental and most importantly too *contradictory and heteroglot* to be fit into a high and straightforward genre" (PND, 1981, p. 55, Bakhtin italics). The parodic-travesty form provides the platform for the novel because it is a space where contestations of intentions are made manifest. Undoubtedly the forms of parody and satire are imitative by nature and hence, participate with the dominant discourses of any given time. There are always varying forms of subversion. Satire and parody use the establishment's rules against it in order to critique

institutionalized assumptions. In some stories the teachers voice other members of the school community. These multiple voices then enable the corrective of mimicking and its result: laughter.

J FOX. This was when fourth block had to get their testing out of the way. And, um, and I'm watching this. And more and more people are trickling in and trickling through. And the subs are just sitting there watching all these kids coming in and there's more and more kids coming. And I know full well what's going on here, they're just texting kids and saying, "We're in the auditorium, why don't you just join us?" I finally go to the sub and I said, "Look you've got to start...if these kids don't have a pass in their hand, you are going to have to tell them, they have to leave."

A KOBE. Voila.

J FOX. I, I said, "You can't just let them come in." And Ms. Lazar was there with her kids and I already had had them in because I...there was an overflow problem the day before. And I, I knew that. But there were all these kids coming in, more and more and more. And I was trying to work both doors: the back door of the auditorium and the front door of the auditorium, trying to figure out who's not and who is.

And then, finally, Heep stormed in and said, "What's going on?" He said, "You've got these kids going out the back door." I said, "Look," I said, "I can only do so much." I said, "There are too many people in here." And he said, "Yeah, you're right!" He says, "I thought you were going to be the only person in here." And I said, "Yeah, I was." He said, "Well, I'm going to get this taken care of."

Here, Landry made an executive decision, didn't mention to Pruett that she was going to put these people in here, 'cause Pruett came in her and said, "Why are all these people in here?" And she started asking me. And I said, "Look, you're going to have to ask, you're going to have to ask, um, um Landry," I said, "Because she came in here and just told me I'm going to have more students in here." I said, "But I wasn't counting on this." She said, "Well I didn't hear anything about it. You need to clear this stuff through me." And I said, "Look," I said, "When an administrator comes to me and says, 'You're going to have more kids,' I'm not going to argue. You guys are supposed to..."

A KOBE. Get along. Communicate.

J FOX. I said...

A KOBE. You guys are supposed to get along. It's a mess.

J FOX. I said, "You guys are supposed to be communicating."

M RYAN. Something like that happened to me yesterday.

J FOX. Yeah. And I said, "You guys have to be communicating this stuff back and forth." I said, "Apparently she made an executive decision, didn't tell you." I said, "I'm taking my kids back to the hut because this has got trouble written all over it." And I did, and apparently there was some trouble down there after that. I...

M RYAN. Well...

J FOX. It's obvious, the upper administration has to communicate. They have to. Otherwise, that's going to happen. And even when they all sat through, when Pruett said, because Pruett made it very clear, "I'm not sending kids to the auditorium. It didn't work last year. We're not doing it." 'Cause remember during the faculty meeting, she said that.

M RYAN. But she sent an email out.

J FOX. Oh I know it, too. I know that. And even with that, it was ignored.

(Appendix 2, pp. 378-379)

The levels of communication in this example are numerous. Jim Fox quotes not only himself but also other teachers and administrators whom he encounters during the events of the story, as well as recollections from events prior to the day on which the story is set. Students are also included although they are only indirectly quoted ---"We're in the auditorium. Why don't you just join us?"--- this quote is something that Fox knows is going on but doesn't actually see someone texting. The dialogue is imagined. The past is invoked which complicates the dialogue because it implicates prior understandings and shadings---actions are determined by prior utterances.

In the passage quoted above, Fox not only speaks others' words in his story but his use of this strategy implies the intentions of the other characters. The dialogue, spoken by Fox in the context of the storytelling event, carries double meanings---both his and the person he quotes. Heep references the fact that Fox was, by earlier agreement, supposed to be alone in the auditorium, basing this, presumably, on a past email correspondence from the Assistant Principal Ms. Pruett. There are questions here not only of who is following the correct procedure but also

of larger dynamics within the school. There are miscommunications between administrators. The teachers in the story can see what is really going on in contrast to the structural plan devised by administration; a plan which has failed.

There are also several levels of comedic subversion here. The students are exploiting the disorganization of the faculty and administration in summoning their friends to the auditorium where there will be little supervision. The faculty, as we have seen before are, for the purposes of storytelling, mirroring the students and have similarly ignored the policies that the administration has written. “And even with that, it was ignored.” In a single story the students subvert the authority of the teachers, and the teachers subvert the authority of the administration. These are local acts, though. Who is in charge? If they are politics they are politics of the moment rather than any unified, pre-planned action. It is, of course, possible that the teachers have tacitly agreed to refuse administrative dicta but the verb that Fox chooses is “ignore” which doesn’t denote an active conspiracy. Rather, there is an impromptu feeling about the whole affair---the improvisation of the school-day---that is, in fact, a rebellion against the school-day.

The passage below (Appendix 1, pp. 351-356) could, in many ways, serve as the exemplar from both storytelling events. The teachers collaborate on a story both directing statements specifically to each other, and addressing their comments to various other non-present participants, especially those with decision making power. The sequence begins with the practical problem of placing transfer students in classes when the setting from which they have come is not compatible with the curriculum and course offerings of Midlands. Myrna Loy’s opening which references “county mandate” is a signal that begins a string of stories addressing the relations between their work in the classroom and the larger educational environment. The participants speak for themselves but they also speak a variety of other discourses with which

they may or may not agree. The passage ends with Dr. Kobe's story of a dedicated foreign student which locates the narratives at their broadest point; the global.

M LOY. You...we get kids who are on year-long schools and they come to us and we're on a semester. So, they're year long, they've had this much of year-long (indicating with her hands and spreading them wider to demonstrate her point), we're on a semester and at the end, so, they've had this much of English. So, you're supposed to put them in that English class? According to the county mandate, "Yeah, you're supposed to put them in that English class," because when it was an EOC you were supposed to put them in there. Well, that's ridiculous. You set that kid up for failure. There's this much of curriculum missing that he has yet to be taught. Or...any of the...you know, a foreign language, or whatever.

A KOBE. It's worse. A foreign language is worse...

(Everyone talking at once.)

J FOX. Oh yeah. Because it's like math. It's like math.

M LOY. Oh, it's horrible. It's horrible.

M GREEN. Sure.

A KOBE. They build it up. "Do you know this?" "No." "Did you know this?" "No."

M LOY. It's scaffolding. You miss all of that.

M GREEN. So then they can't get...it's hard for them to catch up.

J FOX. It's like building a house---foreign language.

M LOY. Where...if you were guidance and this kid, an eleventh grader came in...

A KOBE. ...she never knew the basics.

M LOY. But an eleventh grader comes in and they're in, let's say, Math 3, English 3, one elective that we don't offer at our school like. um...

J FOX. Pottery.

M LOY. Oh, whatever. Yeah. Exactly. Swimming or something ridiculous. And some other thing that they love to do that we also don't offer. So, now it's November...and that kid comes in. What four classes are you going to give him? Because he's coming from year-long, seven classes.

M GREEN. I don't know.

M LOY. Exactly.

M GREEN. I don't have a degree in that.

(Laughter.)

This excerpt begins with Myrna Loy presenting another administrative problem that she views as ridiculous. Transfer students, who are common at Midlands due to military-affiliated families, are, by state mandate, placed in classes for which they are ill-suited. The administrative agency is here at a higher level and an important piece of the problem is the state mandated test which will evaluate an unprepared student. It is also worth noting that there is a hierarchy to the courses that are offered. Frequently during the stories, the teachers specify particular classes and content areas as possessing particular characteristics that qualitatively separate them from others. In this case the tested subjects are compared to less valuable, and non-tested, courses like “pottery” and “swimming”. Loy’s criticism of systemic requirements could be boiled down to the fact that policies cannot be responsive to live situations.

M LOY. No, but my point is...even if you have a degree in that, it doesn't answer the question.

J FOX. No, but, you, you are also mandated in whatever they come in with...you are...you are mandated to put them in the courses...

A KOBE. You know how to play with it. You know how to play the game.

M LOY. I do know how to play with it. After a number of years, you learn. And, I just sent another email that said, “Do I have to put them in this EOC class because this is really ridiculous.” And, no you don't.

M GREEN. Are...are other schools...

M LOY. Going through the same thing?

M GREEN. ...are all the other schools in the state semester based?

J FOX. No.

M LOY. No.

J FOX. No...

M GREEN. Just our county? Or some counties...

J FOX. Well...no...it depends on schools. In James...

M LOY. James is on year round.

J FOX. In James you've got year round. Mt. High was a semester and went to an A/B schedule. I mean they're all different in James.

M LOY. So imagine if you come, and we...most of our kids come from Texas, Florida, Kansas, Seattle, Washington, uh...we...you know, from all over the place. Because they're military. And then you have a document called, "The Memorandum of Understanding" that says you have to give them certain things because they're military which means it's not their choice to move. Which means...

M GREEN. Don't talk to me. Talk to him (indicating JF).

M LOY. Yeah. But, and so we have to put them in those classes.

J FOX. But, it's apples and oranges. It's apples and oranges. Because in Human...in, in Communications you're dealing with triads and dyads and all this other stuff and ways of communicating and theater, you're doing stage theater stuff. It's totally different.

M LOY. It is different.

J FOX. It's completely different.

M LOY. But it's...it's not any closer to Math 3. You know, so I can't...

J FOX. We can't put him in Math 3.

M LOY. That's my point. No. Cause...Crowder used to say (pantomiming holding a phone to her ear and whispering) "What are you putting him in here for? Do you know where we are? What are we reading?" And that's from school to school even. What have they read?

(Everyone talking at once.)

As Dr. Kobe says, Myrna Loy, after years of experience, has learned how to "play the game". As I have noted before, the teachers consistently frame their conversations around trying to figure out what is best for the students. Thus aligned, they are playing the game against the larger system that would place students inappropriately. Teachers and students, at one end of the educational hierarchy, must try to subvert the system in order for educational needs to be properly served.

M LOY ...and I thought that's what this Common Core stuff was.

M LOY. I kind of agree with that. I think teachers should have freedom but it's helpful if there are certain things that are required...

M LOY. Common.

A KOBE. Common. Voila.

M GREEN. Even if, okay, let me put this out. In Brandt County, they still haven't updated our recommended reading list for Common Core.

J FOX. I know.

M GREEN. So the problem is, the Middle School is taking all of our books. And they're like, "Well, this is following Common Core because the rigor went up."

M LOY. Oh so it went down in grades...

M GREEN. So I emailed Agnes Clark and I said, "So, do we have a new one?" "No." Okay, so now we have nothing to teach.

M LOY. No wonder you're stuck.

M GREEN. I'm like, "What are we supposed to teach?" I mean so...

M LOY. Because there's nothing mandated...

M GREEN. Right. There's nothing mandated. People just do what they want. Like, wouldn't you agree?

J FOX. Oh yeah.

M GREEN. Which is nice to a degree to an extent. I mean, I'm not...I like teaching what I want. I know you liked teaching what you want when you were there (indicating ZC). But...

J FOX. I mean, I just ran into Gatsby...

M GREEN. But, but, but...you need to have...there needs to be like some common text that from year to year you can build on. Like I can say, "Remember last year when you read Romeo and Juliet? Well, this is kind of like that." Or whatever.

M LOY. Sure, sure.

M GREEN. If they haven't read it, they can say, "I never read it..."

The tension between institutional forms of learning and localized learning are present here but there is no clear position. On the one hand, *The Common Core State Standards* are supposed to streamline the curricular process. On the other hand, the officials at the district level who are nominally overseeing the implementation do not have any answers for teachers who are trying to comply. The pressure of compliance to mandates without clear guidance fuels Monica Green's frustration, but she also sees the inefficiency as promoting a *laissez faire* attitude among teachers. Green is seeking order; she like the idea of common texts across English classes. For her, the irony is that the *Common Core* has generated greater disorder. The *Common Core* itself has become a travestied version of its intended purpose. "Common Core stuff."

M LOY (Directed to AK:) Do you, do you have a lot of leeway in language?

A KOBE. Yes, I built my study guide on the pacing guidelines only a couple of years ago. But I went to a conference to see what I need to do to adjust it, build it and go back and what I feel like, at his level, they need to know. We've got the textbooks. And some other...

M LOY. Do you get to use the textbooks?

A KOBE. Sometimes.

M LOY. So many...

A KOBE. Sometimes.

M LOY. So many classrooms don't. And I know that...I don't know if that bothers me or doesn't bother me. Because textbooks were something that I thought were really valuable. Because I had to see it. And I...

A KOBE. Some students need it.

M LOY. Yeah. And I don't think...

A KOBE. They want to go by it. But it doesn't help a lot. They need to add more.

M GREEN. Well, here's the problem with that...here's the problem with that: If they're not giving us funding for textbooks...

M LOY. Right.

M GREEN. ...and you don't have technology in your classroom that means you're allowed to be making copies. And you're only rationed a certain amount of paper and copies...

J FOX. That's right. That's right.

M GREEN. ...and so...

M LOY. That's another issue.

M GREEN....and also...it seems wasteful, too, like a textbook you purchase and it's going to last you, what, however many years...

M LOY. The papers are going to end up on the floor, in the book bag...

M GREEN. In the trash. Exactly. It's wasteful. So that's my issue with that. I mean, I have a one to one classroom so for me it's not a big deal unless something's not working.

J FOX. Well, here's...

M LOY. The whole textbook thing bothers me.

The textbook as de facto curriculum has been discussed in Act IV. Here, the teachers have varying opinions regarding textbooks. Dr. Kobe feels that the textbooks that the county

provides him with are not sufficient. Myrna Loy feels that textbooks are essential for student learning and Monica Green has practical complaints about the solutions which are provided to teachers but which are lacking resources for implementation.

J FOX. Let me tell you this real quick one. Let me tell you this quick story. This actually happened at a certain high school in James County. Um, I told you this story. I told you, you may...you (indicating AK) don't.

A KOBE. No.

J FOX. This is what happened. Ah, they thought, the school was thinking, "We can save the County thousands of dollars..."

M GREEN. Oh, you told me this.

J Fox. "We can save them thousands of dollars. All we need to do is when the last teacher leaves the school, let's turn the air conditioner off, close everything up and then go away. Just, just like we usually do. But turn the air conditioning off". Hello? North Carolina? The humidity?

M LOY. Oh, huge humidity.

J FOX. They came back, everything was molded over. They saved the bill on the air conditioning but they had to get a HAZMAT team to come in, to clean all the walls, to clean...take all this mold out, throw all these books out that were molded over. They...they created another problem, you know...and you get these bright eyes...

M GREEN. For trying to save a few pennies.

J FOX. ...who can go back to their constituency and say, "My...my..."

M LOY (in a country accent:) We saved...

J FOX (picking up the country accent) "We saved this amount of money." Meanwhile they don't say, (in normal voice) "Yeah, but you also spent this amount of money because of the problem you compounded. (Silence.) Sorry, but...(claps).

M GREEN. No, but they do. They try...they're trying to save money in ways that are not...

J FOX. And I get it! But it's asinine! And then you don't have books...for English.

M LOY. Whenever I think about it...

J FOX. It's insane! It's insane!

The excerpt above is one of the clearest examples of parody throughout the storytelling events. Fox adopts a country accent that presents county officials as buffoons. His story emphasizes the poor decision making of administrative officials and directly relates these

mistakes to budgetary constraints. Several times in the passages above the teachers point to waste, as in the case of the molded books, as representative of the lack of perspective at the higher levels.

M LOY. ...it breaks my heart. And then I wonder if I'm old fashioned, you know, because...I need a textbook. I need to know what the table of contents says so that I can look at where we're going, where we've been. Especially as a language major...I feel like... (hand gestures) anything.

A KOBE. I have one student, very quiet, very...no, the textbook got the basic stuff but sometimes you need to add some more, to adjust it but this boy cannot go away from his textbook. When he come, first thing in the morning: textbook.

M LOY. That's another thing, if it's...

A KOBE. Every day, he's the first to come. When I'm not there, he's next to the door, on the floor. And open textbook. "But this, Dr. Kobe, I don't see this in the textbook." For everything I...he need to find it...

(Laughter)

A KOBE. He need to find it. "No, John, I do not..."

M LOY. There are things that are subjective.

A KOBE. For him, NO...it got to be here... "I don't see..." Or sometimes I teach, two, three days later, but, "I remember you teach this but I did not see it in the textbook," and sometimes it's not in the textbook. So I need to find a way to show him that, okay, what but I have to show him this is part of the curriculum ...this is part of the course. Everything is not in the textbook. We've got to, you know, add stuff...this boy, finally I say, he's got the textbook, because we don't have enough, I keep it under the desks, I let him take it...take the textbook every time. So every time, I teach sometimes if I cannot find it in the textbook, I give him a referral and his parent buy it. They buy the book (snaps twice).

M LOY. Really?

A KOBE. Oui.

M GREEN. Where's he from?

A KOBE. He's a double China...

M GREEN. Ohhhh. I was going to say, "I know he's not American".

A KOBE. So far for the semester, I think they bought at least five textbooks, not textbooks but French...

M LOY. I know who that student is. He did the same to me.

A KOBE. Every time I give a title, two weeks, he got it. Two weeks he got it. So, you know, some kids, they really need something to go by.

J FOX. Yeah.

A KOBE. A picture...It looks like it doesn't...when you explain it and he doesn't see it in the textbook, I say, "I know French, John. This is what I know..."

M LOY. This is what I know.

(Laughter.)

A KOBE. "French is what I know." One time I said, "Please, John, trust me."

(Laughter.)

M LOY. It's true.

A KOBE. They laughed, they laughed, they laughed. And they, "Why won't he do it?" They said, "Yeah, yeah, Dr. Kobe have a seat while we explain this. "Trust me, John, I know what I am teaching..."

M LOY. I'm a brilliant man.

A KOBE. I know it. Oh no, it is...(laughing).

(Brief silent pause.)

(Appendix 1, pp. 351-356)

The passage contains direct speech, indirect speech, reported speech, parodied speech, attributed speech and unattributed speech. It was one of the most animated sequences of either event and sometimes takes on the air of absurdist comedy. The discussion begins with commentary on the lack of consistency in American education scheduling and quickly addresses LEA mandates, Federal military regulations for affiliated students, the *Common Core State Standards*, the implications of the standards on local schools, canonical reading lists, the curriculum in the form of textbooks, teacher control over the curriculum, varieties of pedagogy across content areas, the idiocy of bureaucracy (distinctly located in North Carolina and represented in a "bumpkin" accent, budgetary pressures, the superiority of non-American students, the value of parental resources, and the mistrust of teachers. A novel of education enacted therein. And, the entire episode ends in laughter.

It also ends with Dr. Kobe joking with a student that he knows French, even if the content that he is teaching is not in the textbook. The laughter surrounding this reported exchange between Kobe and the student, John, is generated because of the mutual understanding between the participants that teachers are often thought unqualified. Their judgement is questioned, and often times their opinions are not valued. Educational decisions are “above their paygrade”. This sequence of stories positions the teachers, individually and collectively, as wise fools. The stories are critical of administrators and policy makers, while showing teachers trying to compensate for the poor decisions made by those above them.

The laughter is not just mocking. It is also generative. It enables the type of subversion that is natural. The “Darkling Thrush” sings in the face of all-consuming crisis. Human beings have the ability to laugh. It is in Bakhtin’s book on Rabelais that this is made most explicit. It is also where he makes very clear that the system is constituted necessarily by its anti-system compliment. In *Rabelais and his World*, Bakhtin (1968/1984) described how medieval festivals, as spontaneous processes of life, encouraged the disruption of the hierarchized, stratified layers of language and symbol that otherwise governed daily life. For the teachers every aspect of the above exchange is about daily life. And it all flows together. Further, their investment, even in the absurdity, the “ridiculousness”, is real.

Unlike other social theorists, Bakhtin **requires** that resistance is always at play against institutional discourses---what he calls “the direct word”.⁵⁷ This idea was foundational for me as I built this study because, quite honestly, it reflected my own experience with teachers and high-

⁵⁷ Interestingly, as I have briefly mentioned, Bakhtin traces this parodying tradition in the literary West back to the Socratic dialogues. Socrates, of course, was executed under charges of corrupting the youth of Athens through his teaching. It is a question worth asking why the teacher-as-antagonist rhetoric of Socrates’ prosecutors has been widely adopted in America.

school staff. Teachers had methods and means for parodying the sanctioned discourses---the laughter was just not available for public performance. Howsoever much institutional discourse and the demand for improvement ruled our professional lives and our public personae at Midlands, there was a consistent pushback among educators, not on any public level---the great irony given the public nature of the profession---but on deeply personal and intimate levels as teachers gathered by twos and threes in the hallway. Not only was there spoken resistance to many of the policies of the day, but there was also something akin to secret delight, often expressed through laughter and parody, with the life-embracing profession that we shared.

I believe that, buffeted by the imperative for “change”, teachers depend not only on the discursive systems that define them in a fixed, institutional way, but they also resort to more intimate personal narratives that draw on experience from other aspects of their lives---their communities, their families, their faiths and their collegial friendships. To the outside observer the conditions of teaching are knowable through the institutional discourses, but teachers integrate these discursive systems into the rest of their lives in a way that is simultaneously being written by educational policy language and responding to it, sometimes in spiritedly rebellious ways. *In Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin wrote:

However, medieval laughter is not a subjective, individual and biological consciousness of the uninterrupted flow of time. It is the social consciousness of all the people. Man experiences this flow of time in the festive marketplace, in the carnival crowd, as he comes into contact with other bodies of varying age and social caste. He is aware of being a member of a continually growing and renewed people. This is why festive folk laughter presents a victory not only over supernatural awe, over the sacred, over death: it also means the defeat of power, of earthly kings, of the earthly upper classes, of all that oppresses and restricts (RW, 1984, p.92).

Laughter is a regenerating force that destroys the social order of the world in order to rebuild it.

It is traditionally associated with the low genres of literature “showing the life of private

individuals and the inferior social levels,” (RW, 1984, p. 67) but it is universal in its reach. Bakhtin ascribes three characteristics to medieval laughter: “Besides universalism and freedom, the third important trait of laughter was its relation to the people’s unofficial truth” (RW, 1984, p. 90). Speaking of the universality of this laughter he continued, “The universal character of laughter was most clearly and consistently brought out in the carnival rituals and spectacles and in parodies they presented” (RW, 1984, p.88).

But it is still more than that. Bakhtin uses the setting of the festival as a place of “communal performance” where carnival proclaims its “joyful relativity”. As a predecessor to the genre of novel, the comedic parody of festival provides an early exemplar of heteroglossia which Bakhtin described in an oft-quoted passage:

At any given moment of its becoming, language is stratified not only into linguistic dialects in the strict sense of the word (according to formal linguistic markers, especially phonetic), but, and this is fundamental for us, into socio-ideological languages: languages of social groups, ‘professional’ languages, ‘generic’ languages, languages of generations and so on. (DN, 1981, pp. 271-2)

Education, in its ground-level processes, is a novel. The forces that generate the larger discourses are monologic. They are the “direct word”. The universality of the *North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey* is a pretense to specificity that actually depends on the generality of its categories. The results may be useful but they can never get at the underlying “unofficial truth”. The teachers talk about their work in a variety of ways that incorporate the personalities and the life actions of the people they interact with. This can’t be done from above. They construct the reality where they know best. This is their ethical stance.

M RYAN. It’s the state.

A KOBE. The kids grow up in the system, in this culture. It’s not them. And in case, you know, to improve you have to start from kindergarten. To go up. Because now we cannot change it. If

you change it, we are not going to make it. Take it the way it is and go by what is there. Because, you know, this is the way it is. They're born, you know, adjust it, add what we can add, adjust what we can but you cannot change it. This is what I think about it. It's, uh...

V ROGERS. It's pretty sad, isn't it. I mean, seriously---and I agree with you---but I think it's pretty sad. Because if we know we're broken...

M RYAN. What are we going to do to fix it?

V ROGERS. Yeah. And if it can't be fixed, are we just going to limp along broken? What are we going to do?

J FOX. Take back the root of education. You take it...you take it from what it's become, basically a buzzword for, for career politicians to get reelected. And they'll tell and say whatever they have to do to get it.

A KOBE. That's, uh...

J FOX. And we need to take that word back and make it as meaningful as we can. That's it.

“We need to take that word back and make it as meaningful as we can”. The struggle here is in a sense over semantic sense. But it's larger than that. The teachers, influenced by crisis discourses around them that demand constant reappraisals of their work, and informed by their day to day experiences, feel that the system is “broken”. Their stories address the ways that the system is broken and many educational stakeholders are complicit. They tell stories of students, parents, administrators, politicians, and policy makers. The stories, improvisational and collaborative, provide them to take a stance on educational issues both collectively --- “We need to take that word back...” --- and individually --- “I have a plan”.

V ROGERS. And I tell you, I have a plan...

J FOX. And how we do it, I have no idea.

V ROGERS. I have a plan...

M LOY. But it would have to start from the state.

J FOX. Exactly. Well, not really.

V ROGERS. I have a plan but it, and it's wonderful!

J FOX. When you're number forty-eight, when you're number forty-eight and you're still number forty-eight, there's going to have to come some point when everyone's going to say, "Okay. Enough. You guys have tried to maintain this, it's not working. We do need to take this over."

V ROGERS. Y'all listen to the plan. See what you think of my plan. It...I don't have...

(Laughter.)

V ROGERS. But it's true. I've thought about this so much.

J FOX. But it's true. Number forty-eight. Out of fifty.

At the time of the performance events, North Carolina teachers were the forty-eighth lowest paid group of educators in the United States. This informed their identity formation, certainly, but it is not simply about them desiring more money. The dollar amount that they are compensated reflects their value to the society at large. It reflects the value placed on their work. It is a condition of their work and it reflects poorly on them. They understand that society does not value them, their students, or their work. In the sense of Bakhtin's Rabelais book, they are the peasants. As Bakhtin points out, parody is a liberating and empowering form.

V ROGERS. I think everyone from the principal up, meaning your local administrators, your county administrators, your state. That far. That's what I'm talking about...

M LOY. Should not be paid.

(Laughter.)

J FOX. Testify.

V ROGERS. No. I truly believe that education would change if they would do this. I, if they were mandated...

M LOY. To teach.

V ROGERS. ...for one week a year, one week, with no special privileges or anything and they showed up to school; they were randomly assigned but you couldn't go back to the same school twice, and you were randomly assigned and you had to come in for one week. You had to show up when we show up, do what we do, no special consideration, nobody would know who you are. You know, I mean, just be in there. Do all our duties and everything else. Just one week. I guarantee you the laws would be changed. In this state. I promise you they would. And if they would...

M LOY. Well our principal has been in the classroom. Most teachers...most principals...

V ROGERS. No, they go in as a principal. I'm saying, you take...

M LOY. No but she was...most principals have been teachers. Most.

V ROGERS. Yes.

J FOX. Right.

V ROGERS. But. Her job, whether we like it or not, her job has got just as much stricture...structure on it, and restrictions on it as yours does as mine does.

Those who have moved outside of the lower boundaries of teaching cannot achieve a perfect correspondence with the lived experience of teachers. Once an individual has changed educational stations, they lose the ability to empathize. Throughout the performance events, I am myself aware of the uncomfortable shifting boundaries of my own status. For the teachers, the solution is a reversal of fortunes. Vitoria Rogers does not ask for this reversal to be complete. She does not ask for a Boxing Day where she becomes the boss. She wants those in power to descend and share her stories through immediate experience.

M LOY. Yes, I'm saying that. But I'm saying that I don't know that that, what you're saying, would make a difference.

V ROGERS. Oh I think so. Oh, yes sir. I, I really believe that with all my heart. That if they went in and had to do it. Every state administrator and every lawmaker and to go in there and walk the walk...

M LOY. They will tell you they won't do it.

J FOX. Well, yeah.

M LOY. They will tell you...

V ROGERS. Well, don't pay them.

(Laughter.)

V ROGERS. Don't pay them. Tell them to go home. Say this is a requirement of your job.

J FOX. Well, once every five years, have them go back...how about that? Once every five years they must go...

M LOY. Visit the classroom.

J FOX. No. For one year, teach. Every five years that they are an administrator they have to spend one year in the classroom.

A KOBE. In a classroom.

M RYAN. That's a good idea.

A KOBE. That's a good idea.

To be a tourist is not enough. Not "Visit the classroom". Rather, "For one year, teach". The high become low in order to experience life from a different vantage point. This is a process of rebirth. Victoria Rogers recognizes that administrators and managers have jobs with different "strictures". Throughout the storytelling events she discusses the ways views of education differ depending on one's place in the employment chain. What she is asking for here is that those who make decisions that affect the classroom actually experience the classroom on a regular basis. Timeliness is an important factor in this. The dynamics of education require repeated rebirth because the job changes. The demographics and institutional mandates of education are constantly fluid.

J FOX. Because after one year you start to see the trends...

V ROGERS. But what about your lawmakers? They have more power than your administrators. Your lawmakers are the ones who need to come in.

J FOX. They also do, too. Make them cafeteria folk. They'll really get to know those kids. They'll really taste...

M RYAN. Oh, wow.

Jim Fox goes too far here in the playful banter. His comment disparages those lower in the hierarchy than teachers. His comments indicate a punishment rather and a reversal of fortune that is vengeful instead of generative. Revenge and the trappings of tragedy rather than comedy. He quickly withdraws his statement.

M LOY. I know what it is to cook for a lot of people. I'm not having it.

J FOX. No, no, but no. I was joking. That was a joke. But, but once every five years, have them...mandate it, have them go back in the classroom. Because, the changes---you said it---how much has this thing changed over the years? I had one teacher, believe this or not, I had a

college professor that was teaching me education---this was in 2008---she hasn't been in a classroom, a regular high school classroom, since 1969.

M LOY. (Laughing.)

M RYAN. Wow.

J FOX. And she's teaching us principles that are long gone. And, she's still teaching. But they can't get rid of her because of tenure. But that's another story, I don't even want to go into that.

M LOY. But that's part of what's happening, too.

The comedic reversal of fortune which brings about rebirth and regeneration is applied to those in teacher education, as well. The academic community is complicit in not sharing in the teachers' experience. Are there precepts of education that are timeless? Do educational philosophies and pedagogical strategies come with due dates? The development of the stories here would suggest that they do. Because the situation is always changing. The situation on the ground requires particular acts that are not knowable from a distance.

J FOX. Yeah. But, I think that the administrators should. Every five years. 'Cause then they get to see the changes in society...in, that are happening with the kids. They can get a feel for the kids. They can get an understanding that this isn't the same ball of wax that they dealt with when they were standing in front of these kids.

V ROGERS. I agree with that but I want it to carry over into the lawmakers.

J FOX. I agree.

V ROGERS. And the pencil pushers in Raleigh who've never been in a classroom but there's a lot of things....

J FOX. But they'll pick up that pen and write a law.

V ROGERS. There are a lot of things that sound good in theory. I don't know if I told you this story or not...

(ML decides to get another drink. Followed by ZC. They get up from the table while VR continues her story.)

(Appendix 2, pp. 408-411)

The extended passage above shows the interplay between different levels of the educational hierarchy and originally I read it as an attempt to exchange places, high for low. In my notes on the transcripts I wrote to myself: “---*Bakhtin here and carnivalesque. High trading places with low. Parodic speech. The cafeteria workers are the lowest caste, associated with the body. Although that seems too easy. They are not asking for a reversal of fortunes but rather a shared experience. They don't want to trade places; they want the higher ups to share their viewpoint.*”

The last observation is, I think, correct. Victoria Rogers is not asking to be placed at the top of the educational order. What she is suggesting is that those in that position be forced to experience the educational world from the ground floor. Only by doing so can they hear her stories in a way that is meaningful. The key point for me is the need for immediacy. Victoria is asking that policy leaders share her immediate point of view which takes into account the minutiae of the school-day. Within this shared context the stories be shared in a dialogic way as opposed to the monologic of a survey:

A KOBE. They don't ask the right questions.

J FOX. Yeah.

M LOY. That's another thing. Good point.

A KOBE. They don't ask the question we want to answer.

M LOY. That's valuable.

A KOBE. Voila. They ask the question they want us to say something to go by what we say. We...I never find what I want to say.

M GREEN (Laughing) No.

J FOX. Yeah, yeah.

A KOBE. No, I have some answer I want to tell them...to write it...

M LOY. Give me an open space (writing gesture), right?

A KOBE. Voila. Let them ask this question, I will answer it, but they just, “Blah, blah, blah.” They just...this is not what we want.

(Appendix 1, p. 357)

Throughout Kobe’s critique of the Working Conditions Survey which I have quoted several times, he uses the oppositional “we” and “they/them”. The borders are clearly drawn between those doing the work in the classroom and those who are at a different level of the hierarchy. The “they” is anonymous here; there is no indication whether Kobe is talking about the survey developers, the Department of Education bureaucrats who have adopted it, or the administration level leaders who are forcing teachers to comply. That is because it doesn’t really matter. They are all speaking a language that is outside of that spoken by teachers: “We...I never find what I want to say”. The monologic “direct word” does not participate in the dialogue.

V ROGERS. Yeah. I have something to add to that. Um, I was in a meeting. I used to a teaching coach, a literacy coach for three and a half years---to do that---and then our county...well, the job went away so we do like we do now. But I was in a meeting with a bunch of colleagues and there was a problem we were seeing in all of our schools. I mean across the board in the county. And, because of our position of going from room to room, we try to solve this problem and you know how you’re discussing...and came up with what seemed to be this really good solution to this, just this one specific thing. And so our, um, county supervisor came into the meeting and, you know, somebody spoke---I was so glad it wasn’t me---you know, it’s one of those times you’re glad it wasn’t you that spoke, you know, just brought up the subject that we had all been discussing and how that it was common to all of our schools and it was really an issue. And our take was, you know, speaking like, because...the group had spoken, that this would be an easy fix, you know, and blah, blah, blah, and gave an idea.

Well, when she responded, I became so offended. At first, I mean it really offended me the way she responded. I didn’t say anything but it offended me. But I have never forgotten that now...I have told you this (gesturing toward ZC or ML) and you’ll probably remember it but it has helped guide my career and some other things since then. Then the lady spoke up and said, “Well, I’m going to tell you what I heard Dan Hill tell some, um, principals in a principal meeting: ‘That’s above your pay grade’”. And it offended me. For that...I mean it really did. Because there was no malice meant, there was no anything, you know, when we were...it was a problem and we were...but you know, and I went away from that and I just could not...But then I understood. And I really did understand. And I think I do understand. I am a classroom teacher. There are some things that are NOT in my power. They are NOT my paygrade. And no

matter how I want to...change them, I can offer opinion or whatever...I can ask for change but it is not my POWER to change at that level. But daggone it, everything that is in my power, I can change, and I can effect and I can do. And when they walked in that door, "Welcome to your world". And you can be just as daggone professional and do what you need to do. And you have that right. It IS your paygrade to do that. And if the kids say, "I got a C", well, "Heck, you better be glad you got a C. You'd better be celebrating that. If you want a B, let's see what you can do." But that has taken pressure off of me. Because sometimes I see you've got issues and you've got issues and you've...and I'm wanting to solve all of them. And I want you happy (putting her hand on AK's shoulder and patting him)...

M GREEN. He does, too.

A KOBE. I want to be happy.

(Laughter.)

V ROGERS. I want the world to be good for you. Yes. But sometimes it's just not in my paygrade. And I don't...

M Loy. Wow!

V ROGERS. ...care how much I want to change it, it's not there. And so, I say, "Dr. Kobe, this too shall pass. We will get through this together. And if there's anything I can do to help you, I will." I can live with me, I've helped him, I've been true to my professionalism. What else can I do?

M GREEN. I'm not that Zen.

J FOX. Me, either

(Laughter.)

M GREEN. I'm like mmmmmm (Raising her fists).

J FOX. Me either. I've still got the pluck, you know. We've still got pluck. We're plucky.

M LOY. Big egos. I've got to do this...

M GREEN. I'm thinking, "I've got to change this!"

(Appendix 1, pp. 342-343)

This is clearly a way of silencing teachers at the ground level. It doesn't have to do with their political agency or their engagement with the larger world. It is the hierarchical world of the institutional education system that delegates duties and responsibilities. Victoria has made her peace with this structure. In this story, at least, she assumes the title of "classroom teacher" and acknowledges that there are institutional decisions that are out of her control. The

administrator in the story cannot hear her and her teaching colleagues. In asking for a reversal of fortune to befall administrators and policy makers, Rogers is inviting them to share in the world that her voice announces. Bakhtin argues that a fundamental condition of humanity is “responsivity”. This is the dynamic to respond and to consider possible responses as part of the communicative process. The silencing of teachers is due to the fact that there is no response to their statements. Even a survey designed to elicit their responses fails to give them a voice because it supplies the institutional language in which they must speak.

Parody is the root of dialogue. It is a way of being heard because it does participate in dominant discourses. It rearranges the priorities of these dominant positions and shows them in a new light. As such, the parodic-travesty strategy employed by the teacher has an important role to play in a novel of education. It reminds us of the distance between ways of experiencing the world of education and it suggests that, if we want to stop silencing teachers, we could begin by listening to their stories.

Psalm

There are a number of practical reasons for asking teachers to complete a yearly survey on their working conditions. Some of them, I would suggest, are genuine (“we care about improving your working conditions”) and some of them are disingenuous (“we want you to think that we care about your working conditions”). The work of this dissertation has never been about evaluating the motives of anyone in the education field. What I would like to point out again, here at the end, is that it is impossible for any survey (or story for that matter) to capture the immediate, specific moments that occur during a teacher’s day---much less over a year. Our reality is novelistic. A recognition of this is an acknowledgement that we live in a sea of stories from which we choose our own bits and pieces to craft our place in the world.

Once we have done this, however, there is no guarantee that this place will remain fixed. A survey question that asks about school safety might be answered differently on the day of a fight or on the day after a school shooting somewhere else in the country. We take our stand, Bakhtin argues, every time we speak. When we do this we are not only speaking ourselves. We are speaking our conditions, our cultural influences, our perception of others and our perception of others' reception of us. And, all of this can be undone and/or undermined because of the centrifugal force of language.

This is not about relativity and, as I have pointed out, Bakhtin is highly skeptical of relative viewpoints. Earlier in this chapter I wrote about my commitment to a definition of story that drew on classical models. My own "direct word". When I entered this project I assumed that stories have beginnings and middles and ends. The teachers were incredibly gracious as they listened to me assert and reassert this. They tried to give me what I wanted and many of the stories were crafted with this type of causal structure. But there were many other times when the novelistic nature of what we were doing simply overwhelmed the strictures of plot.

After almost five hours of "storytelling", I tried once more to get someone to tell a story that would fit into my framework. I discuss my own performance of authority and anxiety above. What I don't provide until now is the way the teachers reply to my performance. Their response is to parody my request. To overturn it. Below are the teachers' responses. Their reaction to my commitment to a theoretical framework after generously giving me five hours of footage may be the best anti-story of them all. The teachers, at long last, satirize me. I who am no longer of them in the sense that I do not share the day to day labor of the classroom. I am a researcher and a tourist. Their final response to the conditions of teaching is a parody of an

institutionalized story. This seems just. Myrna Loy's request for a window? This seems poetic justice.

Z CROWDER. Um, so we're on an hour and forty minutes of me taping. Like, I'm cutting it off before two hours. Would...let's go...If you have...because my advisor's going to kill me if I don't just say, "Tell a story about the working conditions in education today. And so, I'm not going to force you to but if you have a story you can tell about teacher or counselor working conditions. It doesn't have to be representative of, like, everything.

M LOY. I would like a window.

V ROGERS. Me, too. I've not had one in this school...

J FOX. I'd like insulation.

M RYAN. You have a window.

V ROGERS. It's in the hall.

(Laughter.)

M LOY. Ten years of a room as big as this table.

J FOX. Insulation and a room. Not a trailer.

M LOY. You see the size of this table? That's the size of my office. Okay? And, and I make it really nice. And I have pictures. And...but I have overwhelming...I'm trying to get away from holding on to paper. But my point in there is that I would love a window. It would really give me...strength.

V ROGERS. I agree with that.

M RYAN. To look forward to where she's going.

M LOY. I spend twelve, ten, eleven hours a day in that room...

J FOX. In a cave.

M LOY. ...and there are so many times that we make a joke about, "I just going to pound through to the gym." Right? "Over there. Just so I have something."

V ROGERS. Well, since you can't have a window, why don't you have Flanders and his students do you a mural?

M LOY. No, no, and more NO! I don't want a picture. I want a window. I want what every classroom teacher has.

V ROGERS. I don't have one. I have one out to the hall.

M RYAN. But you have a window.

V ROGERS. (Mock-whining.) I want a window.

J FOX. Well, then take my hut.

M LOY. In ten years...

Z CROWDER. That's your ten year, long range plan?

(Laughter.)

M LOY. That is my long range plan. Thank you.

(Appendix 2, pp. 421-422)

Curtain.

APPENDIX 1: TRANSCRIPT OF FIRST PERFORMANCE EVENT

12/19/2014

Meeting Room, Microtel Hotel, Lillington North Carolina

Dramatis Personae

Victoria Rogers---Educational Jack of All Trades, Servant Leader, Teacher

Dr. Arsene Kobe---French Teacher, Chair World Languages Department

Myrna Loy---Guidance Counselor

Jim Fox---Theater Arts & ELA Teacher

Monica Green---ELA Teacher, Chair English Department

Mary Smith---Culinary Arts Teacher

Zan Crowder. Researcher & former Latin/ELA teacher

The meeting room is sparsely furnished, utilitarian and the walls are uncovered. There are two windows looking out on the hotel parking lot with partially closed venetian blinds. Several tables are set up for a presentation with chairs behind them facing the front of the room. A number of tables have been pulled together near the front and covered with a white tablecloth. A separate table serves as a drink station. It is not covered. On it stand three two-liter bottles of soda, a roll of paper towels, a stack of plastic cups and a bucket filled with ice.

On the banquet table there is an assortment of food platters, several plates containing cookies and a roll cake. The plates are secular, winter-holiday design: snowmen, snowflakes, candy, and there is one tray shaped like an evergreen with chocolates stacked on it. There are red and white paper plates and matching napkins. From left to right, facing camera #1 are seated Arsene Kobe, Victoria Rogers and Monica Green. Across from them, from left to right, facing camera #2 are Mary Smith, Jim Fox and Zan Crowder. Myrna Loy is not present at the start of the event. When she joins, she sits to the right of ZC.

ZC starts the cameras and takes a seat next to Jim Fox. He eats a sandwich while the performers sign IRB Consent forms and pass them to him for his own signature. Throughout this process he explains the Consent and the guarantees of privacy. Once the forms have been collected, ZC presents a brief explanation of the research project.

Z CROWDER. In the School of Ed. there's this, kind of, constant tension between qualitative research which is sort of ethnography, um, that focuses on real rich capturing of a like, local type of context where you're embedded and you do some interviews and observations and write that up and then the quantitative, statistical stuff which is really where it seems like everything's going. Um, and what I wanted to do was to sort of side step both of those kind of issues. And so what we came up with was this idea of storytelling. And for me storytelling was, um, fundamentally contextual, it comes out your own personal experiences and stories the way you just kind of order your experiences and we put kind of cause and effect to it, um, just as humans. I had wanted a group of teachers from one central location so they were all speaking to people with a type of common knowledge, um, and so, this brings you all together to share this kind of setting. But I also think that stories when we put structure on the things that happen in life we do so that it communicates sort of in a more universal way. We tell stories and they have universal characteristics. So I also think that while we'll tell specific stories maybe about MHS, or whatever you all choose to tell, that some of the things that we'll say would apply to somebody in California, or New York, right, that have been in the classroom and that are dealing with educ...contemporary educational issues. Um, and so that's sort of where story came from. And what I'm going to do with stories---I'm not collecting any demographics from you although I'll email you if something comes up in a story and I want to ask some kind of a background question. But, having been trained as a kind of a literary critic, for me it's the text, once I transcribe these, looking at them as kind of a literary type of text and seeing what common themes there are and what particular language is getting used by teachers that filters down from above or however we kind of come to understand what we do. I think there's a huge gap, as I said in the email, between the people that I work with in the School of Ed. and policy makers that I've had the opportunity to come in contact with and with what really goes on in the schools.

(General murmur. Everyone is sitting at the table in formal postures...Most have hands folded on the table in front of them. There is a slight attitude of tense expectations.)

So, all of these things have kind of led me to this. Along with this performance aspect because storytelling, I think, I mean I could interview you or I could get you to write stories but I think you get something different when you have an audience and hopefully, um, this isn't a formal type of thing that we can just, I mean, I'm hoping to get something that looks like stories but I think a lot of it will look like conversation, you know, and that's cool. Um, I came up with the prompt because last year when we all did the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey. I sort of felt like they didn't ask the right questions. Um, and I wanted to respond to that too, this sort of quantitative, five possible answer, Likert scale type of thing that somehow was supposed to capture out working conditions when we don't ever actually get to use words, you know, except for agree or disagree or whatever. So, um, the prompt came as sort of a response to that to actually try to get at something that resembles the conditions of what it feels like to be the teacher. Um, and, there was one other thing about that, so that's anyway, that's how I came up with that, oh, I liked it because it was broad enough, the conditions of teaching could really mean anything, I mean, what part of our outside lives come into this, what, you know, aspects of, I mean, it could really mean anything. So, that's the whole thing. If anybody has any question at any time please stop me and ask me. We'll video tape it until we're kind of ready to not

(Laughter) And then you know, I'll go home and transcribe it---not this whole spiel, probably---but, um, anything else that gets said. There's tons of food and there's drink, like I said, so, um, the restrooms are right outside and around the corner, you might be able to get to them through right out that door, too. And I can't thank you all enough for being here and doing this. There's no, there's nothing that I'm expecting to hear, you know what I mean, I mean I just want to make clear...

V ROGERS. We can tell you're a teacher.

M Smith. Just try...

(Laughter.)

Z CROWDER. No, no, I think that, yeah, I just want to hear stories that you all have to tell about the conditions of teaching...and that's really...

M SMITH. Are there conditions?

(Laughter.)

Z CROWDER *(laughing.)* Yeah, well, I don't know. What does that even mean? Maybe. Um, so I, you know, this is now kind of formal and I want to sort of get back out of that again. Um, Victoria, I know you're pressed for time.

V ROGERS. *(Silent.)*

Z CROWDER. So you're okay with...I don't know if you want to go first, or...so, does anybody have a story? It could be about what happened today or ...whatever y'all want.

V ROGERS. In what context to you want these stories? About what?

Z CROWDER. It doesn't matt... A teaching story. Anything about the conditions of teaching. It could literally be about something that happened today, again, I think we've been having this conversation for like thirty minutes. Or something that's you've witnessed over...especially someone who's had such a long career and seen so much...

V ROGERS *(speaking with her hands in front of her on the table, open palms facing each other as in a position of praying, fingers upward. She speaks slowly and deliberately.)* Well, I think that teaching is like a pendulum. In education what I've seen through my years, this is my, I think my teacher's licensure says thirty-three years, but it's actually been longer than that. But it seems like it swings, you know, it would be nice if it stayed in the middle, but it seems like we go from one extreme to the other. And, when you're...when the pendulum is shifting, it's uncomfortable. People don't like it. Even if...even if it's a good shift, it's just uncomfortable. Because it's change. And in our particular position at the school we're at, unfortunately, not only do we have the change from North Carolina, which is a big change right now, but, in our local area...we...so we have like a wheel within a wheel, you know, so we have our change, compounded by county change, compounded by state change, compounded, you know, and it's just out more and more and more.

But, I know when I'm working with the younger teachers and they're just so upset, so frustrated. You know, one of the first things I..." This'll pass, this'll pass." You know, "We'll work on it together, we'll get through it together." It really doesn't even matter what the situation is. Any situation. That is so major at that moment... you know, at that time. And it's just like ...we were talking earlier about...here we are kind of at the end of the semester and how many changes are going to be in our faculty...

M SMITH. That's what I was thinking when I was leaving here...because...or leaving school and driving here, I was actually...had time to think. And with the changes in the teachers, because so many teachers retired today, let alone Ms. Tompkins leaving, Ms. Wilson going to the back, Ms. Hoskins coming up front, Ms. Ingalls having to move up front---beware y'all---um, and then all the stuff that will go on with the children because of all those changes. And then, I mean, I've had students very scared about---"what about testing?"---'cause we're testing one day after we come back. They're really concerned about that, not to mention the freshmen but the other ones, too.

(Laughter.)

J FOX. Those that have been there...

M SMITH. But that is, a horr...not a more horrible thought, but, you know, what's going to happen? They were so off the chain today, the ones that were there, and what's going to happen when they come back?

V ROGERS. You know, if we can be calm. That's, that's one of the things...it's so funny at our last teacher...our little mini-teacher meeting, not the last big thing...the one where Sam got up and explained about the little yellow cards.

M SMITH. Oh yeah.

V ROGERS. I walked out of there and I thought, "Boy, everybody needs blood pressure medicine".

(Laughter.)

V ROGERS. And that's just a card. It's just a little thing. And I think what it is in education...you know, we don't know of any doctor being given these 120 or ever how many students you have and you know you have them 30 or 40 at a time...and you have to do everything and you know, so, but we consider ourselves every much as... a professional as they are...

M SMITH. Mmhmm.

V ROGERS. But our conditions are so drastic that after a while if we're not careful, everything is panic mode.

M SMITH. Yeah.

V ROGERS. Every single thing is panic mode. There's never, like, you know, this is just a card, guys. This is just a card. Okay, just hand it out and let 'em fill it out and bring it back. It's just a card. But it...you know, it's just gets crisis.

M GREEN. But I think that's what frustrates people. Like, it's just a card, but it's supposed to have a bigger meaning behind it; it's supposed to have purpose. But it feels like a lot of things that we're given to do from the higher ups, at whatever level, it's just things to do.

V ROGERS. But if we don't...

M GREEN. Whereas we know what we need to do to actually help the students. You know what I mean. But then it's all these other things for show.

V ROGERS. But we have...if there never was a card, then there never will be the second step.

M SMITH. For some teachers. And that's the thing. But there's another part to that card, because I'm on that SIT...

M GREEN. Right

M SMITH....SIT team. That card is to help people who wouldn't do it if someone wasn't saying, "Well, are you helping them? Are you making, and I, are they helping themselves?" But, um, it shows, whoever those people are, the...the accreditation team, it shows proof that yes we did follow up with the kids. So, yes it is for somebody else and it does have a bigger picture but I can almost guarantee you that Sam did not explain that that's why we did the card. And for those of us who have been around a long time we need to know why we are we doing the card. For people who haven't been around so long, they're just like, "Oh, another thing to do." But just approach it calmly. You only have to do thirty. You don't have to do, you know, all nine-hundred of your children. Just thirty. Takes two seconds. And you have anyone that's failing, you pull it out, you computerize it and off you go. You don't have to do anything unless they're your student and you are following up with them in effect. But you're right, there's so much that...

V ROGERS. But, I think...

M SMITH....we pile on top of each other.

V ROGERS. And I'm just like everybody else, I get discouraged, too and I get tired, too. But I also...sometimes worry about our professionalism. It's like people are offended because you asked them to fill this card out. Why? I mean, when I worked in business, I mean I've been a teacher forever, and I've always had two or three other jobs because, you know, you just have to do...

M SMITH. Yeah. (*Laughing.*)

(*Laughter.*)

V ROGERS. But you know, I've never huffed and puffed and I might not have wanted to do what they said to do but I realized if I wanted to work for them, I needed to do that. But

sometimes it seems like because we're educators, we think it's okay to spew all this (*spewing sound*) stuff out, you know, and it, it's like it's toxic, you know...

J FOX. Yeah, yeah...

V ROGERS. ...and it, and it, seeps down the hallway. And I tell my, I tell my new teachers, I work with the BT1's this year, particularly, and before then I worked with everybody. But, you know, I tell them, "Watch who you stand in the hall with," because it wipes off on you.

J FOX. It does.

V ROGERS. I mean it just jumps right over on you. You know. And that is one thing as far as, as a teacher, I think that concerns me...I mean, I think that I should have your back and I think you should have my back.

M GREEN. Mmmhmm.

V ROGERS (*placing her hand on Green's shoulder.*) Do you know what I'm saying?

M GREEN. Yeah.

V ROGERS. And I think if you're upset you should be able to come to me and if you need to just explode, be able to do that in every confidence that I'm not going straight to her (*indicating MS*) and tell her...

M SMITH. Yeah

V ROGERS....about you exploding. You know...

M SMITH. ...And that you're mad at me, I am so sorry. (*Laughing.*)

(*Laughter.*)

V ROGERS. But you know...

M SMITH. But...but that is a problem. And I've worked at how many schools in Smith County? It seems like forever. Because I am a K-12 teacher so I work at all the schools: big schools, little schools, you know, the alternative school, um...and...our school isn't different but it is, um. Sheer size alone makes us different, but, the transient population because of the military does add a...a special twist and the, um, the transient teachers because of being military spouses or what have you. But, um, something that shouldn't be different than it is, is what you're talking about a lot of that, you know, "Have your back". Because I've been at elementary schools where, you may not...I may not like Jim, but I'm not gonna go, "Hey, I really hate you so I'm not going to help you out...". Where, sometimes it seems that our school...I'm just not going to show up, I don't care if you need me or not...

J FOX. There's a lot of personal stuff, I think...

M SMITH. ...and that, that shouldn't be, because we're all there for the kids. That's generally what I thought I came to school for. Which I'm probably one of the few teachers that will talk to

everybody in the school, I don't care what you had, I don't care who you like or don't like. If you're having a bad day, I'm going to make you smile at me or at least talk to me. I do that to my own children, I do that to my students, I'm certainly going to do that to the grumpiest teacher in the building. But, most teachers don't have that and they don't want to take the time to do it. I love to torture people.

(Laughter.)

M SMITH. One teacher told me last year, she goes, "If you're not smiling, it's a bad day." I was like, "Oh, I'm so sorry." So, you know. I make an effort to do that and it does help with some of my kids 'cause, you know, they give me the bright and shining stars so, I have to deal with them all day and smile and then, I give them a knife.

(Laughter.)

M SMITH. So, you know, I have to be a little careful. So being calm is definitely one thing. And, um, non-educationally-wise, sometimes we're counsellors because I had the whole family of the last death that we've had. And eight of my children were out, out of the twenty in my fourth period class because they all lived in the same neighborhood. Um, that's part of scheduling that we've had at our school but, you know, those kids really took that hard and there wasn't a whole lot of interaction from guidance once that first day was over and these kids really needed it. Today, the two siblings that are still with us were both in my room.

(At this point Jim Fox leans over and whispers to ZC who gets up to greet Myrna Loy)

M SMITH. Now they had other teachers in there with me to make sure nothing happened or what have you, but, it was, um, it was very interesting to see how they were dealing with it because some days it's like nothing happened and some days it's like, "Somebody's going to get hurt today." But, you know, I can't...I think we need to handle things better, 'cause it has nothing to do with teaching because I think we all know how to teach....

V ROGERS. Well, most of us do.

M GREEN. Well, it's a learning curve...

(The gathering here breaks into several conversations as Myrna Loy finishes her paperwork and ZC helps to get her refreshments. She sits next to ZC. Victoria Rogers redirects the gathering once Loy is settled and asks ZC if the preceding is what he wants.)

V ROGERS. I don't even know if this is what you want or not but we're just running with it.

Z CROWDER. I'm interested...I'd like to hear the things that you all are talking about, like a story that illustrates that because since I'm not there anymore, there's like a specific sort of like "what happened" or, you know, like in a kind of a narrative form. But that said, yeah, this is great. Loy, what happened to you today?

M LOY. Oh! It's a great story! A great story from Midlands!

M SMITH. Bring it on, Loy!

M LOY. At the very last minute, I told Mrs. Ansley, who's the principal now, right, I said, um, "You know what we haven't done this year and, it's because we're always stuck doing everything else, but we didn't do anything for our really needy students." And she said, "Oh my gosh, you're right." Um, so, I said, "Let me put together a list and we'll come up with something." And then I called the Hightown Women's Club, and they were willing to donate... first she said "How about 4 seventy-five-dollar gift cards from Walmart?" and I said "How about 6 fifty-dollar... cause we can get more kids that way. We can cover more ground, right?" So she said, "Okay, good." She does our scholarships out there and she's a wonderful... they're a wonderful group.

So, then, I went to Ansley and said, "Hey, we've got some donations," and she said, "Well, I'll put in a thousand dollars of, um... that would be 20 fifty dollar cards from the school."

M SMITH. Wow.

M LOY. Yeah, no kidding. So then we had to compile the list. So then everybody's arguing about "Who... What is really needy? Um, will we hurt anybody or offend anybody if we put them on the list and we send something? What do we do? Don't, you know, don't do this, don't do that. What... what's right?" I call the social worker. I must've called about fifteen different people, ran that list through about twenty people there. And it's the same day that Sara is retiring, right. So everybody's in the office. Her last check that she cut was the check to go run over to Food Lion to get the gift cards. We come back and Ansley says, "Okay, I'll address half of them, you address half of them." Now, this is, we, everybody's gone, they're trying to say goodbye to her, this is the day... we were going on Christmas break. And we were sitting there in her office, she's writing her pack of cards, I'm writing my pack and we put them all together and she goes, "I'm really glad we're doing this," and I said, "You know what, I'm really glad we're doing this." And we did, we came up with, we had one student that had a fire, two on the list that were homeless, we... you name it, I mean, that was the way to end before Christmas break. So, far as I'm concerned, we're doing it right. I mean what else is there? Right? That's what we do things for and even if it's last minute, or even if it, it just... it just felt really good. And I know that every kid on that list, that, that kid belonged on that list... to get something.

M SMITH. That's awesome.

M LOY. So...

Z CROWDER. How many were on the list?

M LOY. Twenty-five. So, yeah, we did good.

M SMITH. That's twenty-five kids who didn't even think they were going to eat.

M LOY. Yeah, there's a lot of that. So, I had a flyer and I put that in there with it, from the foodbank to say when the foodbank was open but here's kids, they don't even know how they're going to get to the foodbank. Because you know how they talk about, "We don't have no money for no gas. My daddy came all the way up here, and we don't got no money for gas." You know that kind of...

(Loy hands ZC a bottle of red wine)

M LOY. Here, finish that. I cut my finger two days ago on one of these. The foil. So now I'm really careful.

(ZC opens the bottle of wine)

M LOY. So that's my story today. Good story?

Z CROWDER. That's a lovely story.

M LOY. It goes into the whole holiday season.

Z CROWDER. It fits into the Christmas thing.

M GREEN. You know, no one wants to follow you.

J FOX. How do you top that?

(Everyone talks at once. Laughter.)

M LOY. Oh, I'm sorry. Were you negative? You can be, hey, I can be negative. I can find the negative.

M SMITH. Well, this is the group that tries to be positive but somehow we got waylaid by...

M LOY. This is a good group because you have a lot of subjects in here.

Z CROWDER. That's what I said. A perfect group...and experiences...and I went through the whole spiel about why we're actually telling stories as we try to communicate with each other...

M LOY. *(Pouring a plastic cup full of wine.)* It's got to breathe.

Z CROWDER. Yeah, let it breathe...uh, but negative stories. Does anybody have a negative story?

M GREEN. Can anyone brave to it?

(Laughter.)

M LOY. C'mon Mary, you have a couple...that would make you wonder why...

J FOX. Well, well. You know, coming from Ohio. *(Laughter.)* Well, this is, this is really interesting, because, back around 9/11, they were hoping that...they were trying, Cleveland was trying to attract the businesses that had lost their businesses in the World's Trade Center and they said, "Well, why not here to Cleveland?" They stopped because of the education. Because Cleveland City Schools is broken. And they are trying desperately to fix it. Well, then I come to North Carolina. And it's not broken, it's, it's...

M SMITH *(laughing.)*

J FOX. ...but they're kind of in the same boat in the fact that...and I did my homework...there is a huge group of populace that's coming to this area. And I don't think that, they really---they

heard it---but I don't think they thought it was going to happen. I don't know. But it's a huge flux of population coming. They're having the problem that Cleveland should have had. Which is good, I think, because it's bringing more people to the area. But then, you know, I see...I was at James for a little bit and, for instance, the first day in I said, "Where's the template?" And they said, "What template?" And I said, "For the lesson plan," and they said, "What are you talking about?" And I said, "Wait a minute. Do you need...how do you do lesson plans?" And they said, "You just write them. You just write them however you want." And then, I come to Brandt, and I've never seen someone so self-obsessed with making something look so pretty. And that's what it is! It's making it look pretty! And...and so...so...I, I don't know. And so that's my little quandary.

M SMITH. The lesson plan, though, is...is the biggest question, and we can't fight it because as long as Dr. Jones wants it, we're going to have it.

J FOX. I can understand that.

M SMITH. But, it is funny because I've heard more than one teacher say, "Well, I put out the pretty ones for them to come look at but I teach from this set." Which, they're just saying, they're just written differently. And, from my perspective, what we've had to change to, is exactly what CTE gives us because we're given, not a lesson plan, but it's a pacing guide with all the details. So we don't have to do anything but plug things in. So we've already had every template they've thrown at it, we just pull it from different spots of what we already have. So, for us, it's easier I guess because it's right there; we just have to move it around. But, for you guys, bless you. (*Laughing.*) Because I know like for English you still have to pick your book and write it and "Well, how do I do the opening?" and "What graphic organizer do I use?" They actually give us that with CTE. Which is wonderful. Whether we use it or how we use it is different. 'Cause the way I teach is not the way Chef Bolton teaches but our lesson plans have to look the same. Something about that makes no sense, but makes good sense because we do have a lot of kids that transfer from our school to Center and back again. It hasn't happened as much as it has in the past...but, you know, I see where they want the consistency but working so hard for a lesson plan, I'd rather see a good lesson than a good lesson plan. Because if you have a good lesson, then somebody learns something. If you have a good lesson plan, that means you can write crap down on a piece of paper well. (*Laughing.*)

V ROGERS. But I will tell you what my year one people...

M SMITH. They need something...

V ROGERS. Well, first of all, the lesson plan is much easier this year...

J FOX. Yeah, yeah.

MS; It's better than a six-point lesson plan, let's just be honest.

V ROGERS. So, so many...like...one of our departments downstairs on the C Hall...everybody in the department is a year one, or like a year one and a couple of months from last year...

M SMITH. Yeah!

V ROGERS. And they're every one lateral entry. Every one of them.

M SMITH. Oh yeah.

V ROGERS. So these people...you can't say graphic organizer and they don't even know what a graphic organizer is. So you have to teach it to them. You know, so I see a lot of benefits...

M SMITH. I do, too

V ROGERS. Because as we go over it they learn a little something and then, you know, we'll go over it again, and they learn something else, and we'll go over it again and they learn something else, and after a while, you know, it's just easier.

But I DID have a story which has nothing to do with this but it was kind of piggy backing...piggy backing off hers. One is a Midlands story and one is another story and that're probably all my stories.

(Laughter. Throughout the following story VR keeps a napkin in her hands. She alternately folds and unfolds it and then twists it. The audience sits silently, hands on the table in front of them.)

This are not lies, kids are stories. A couple of years ago, we had a student at Midlands that I never had in a class. He was always in trouble. AL-WAYS. Every, single, solitary day. He ripped, he rared, he cussed, he snorted. I mean, every day. So I sort of...make him my target. And every day I'd find him out in the hall before school even started and I would talk to him and if he was already ramped up I would just sort of, pull him in toward my room, you know like, and just kind of...he wasn't my student at all. But, every day. And so after I had been doing this for over a semester, one day he...he had started talking to me. And his mother had died of an overdose---a year before. And, when it got near the time of the anniversary, he shared with me--he had a lot of guilt---she, it happened a lot at his house. And usually what happened is either the kids would go to the aunt's or she would go to the aunt's, you know they would separate 'em, and, then things would be better. And the particular day that she died when he came in, she was on the couch. And she didn't rouse or anything but that was not anything unusual, you know, it was nothing unusual, so he went off to school and when he came home from school she had actually overdosed and died.

And so he felt all this guilt, as a kid, that, you know, he should have realized that this time it was different from the other times and he should have done something. So he had already shared all that to me. And so then the closer it got, you know, he'd say, "You know, it's so many days or it's so many days, or it's so many days." And so the DAY that was the anniversary, I was waiting for him. And so as soon as he hit the upstairs I went and got him and pulled him into my room. And I talked to him and I said, "Now son, today is a bad day for you". I said, "I mean, it just is. It's a bad day. And you know it's a bad day, and I know it's a bad day," I said, "But everybody else doesn't know that. And today when they push---because a lot of people would set him off, you know---it's like they enjoyed, cause, just set him off to see what would happen--I said, "But, you know, today, don't let people push your button, just realize that it is a bad day, but you're going to live through it. You know, you're going to live through it. And I hugged his neck. And he went on, he didn't say anything. But his name was not called all day, 'cause I listened, 'cause he always got called over the intercom. He was not called all day. So the next

day, I was standing at my door and for the first time, and I had been doing this almost a year, he came to me---I didn't go to him---and he took ME in my room and he said, Ms. Rogers, I love you." And he put his arms around me and he hugged me. And see, he didn't get in trouble. THAT'S what I think teaching is about. I agree it's about English and Math and Science. But it's about helping these kids grow up and cope---with a life. And, I... sometimes...I don't think we get that. I don't think we have time---we've talked about this a lot (*indicates Myrna Loy*).

M LOY. That's...

V ROGERS. Time is pushed out...

M LOY. You don't have time to do that. I get to enjoy that. As much of a challenge as it is. I get to enjoy that part, as hard as it is at times. But that IS my job.

V ROGERS. Right. But I think it's our job, too...

M LOY. It is.

J FOX. It is.

M LOY. Because you can't bring it to us, at a certain level, if you don't know. So, so you have to make the time for that in there somewhere. Just like we have to make the time for paperwork.

V ROGERS. Right.

M LOY. You know. So.

J FOX. In your, in your, in your corner this time. Um, I was...it was just by sheer happenstance, Steven Ailes was asked to go over to the junior high, or the, excuse me Middle School, to listen to the choir because they said they sounded awful and their concert was like the next week and if it sounded that bad they were going to...because there was a huge change; one choir director left and then they automatically hired a new one and she inherited a mess. That kind of thing. And so he went over there and I said, "Mind if I tag along?" And he said, "Sure, go ahead, come on, let's go."

So we went over and it was interesting because...they did sound bad at first. But then he said, "Wait a minute. I know you guys have voices. I heard you talking out here. Bring that into the music."

And they started doing that. And he said to them, "That is 100 times better. You guys can sing. Where was this...why, why didn't you?" And he said...and then he said, "Didn't Ms. so-and-so ever tell you that you actually sound good?" And they said, "No." And he said, "Well I'm here to tell you there's something here." And the whole chorus changed. The whole demeanor changed. They all of a sudden came to the table and worked. And it, it, from when we walked in and overheard it to the minute that Steve got in front of them...ten times better.

And I, 'cause I went to Mike Heep afterwards and he was like, "What did you...?" cause I got to Mike first before Steve because I had to make sure I was in for second block. He says, "So how did it go over there?" And I said, "Well," I said, "You know, it's kind of like the Charlie Brown tree; you know, everyone thought it was such a bad tree," I said, "But Linus said, 'I never thought it was such a bad tree. Maybe it just needs a little love.'" And I said, I said, "Once he started to care and to show them that he really cared about it, the whole thing changed." And I

told the choir director, I said, “Look,” I says, “You need to tell them...” because, because I picked it out immediately as soon as I saw what Steve was doing and it was true. (*To Victoria:*) You are absolutely right. You know. It’s, it’s telling them. And sometimes having to, “Come here! (*Grasping with his hands as one would take someone by the collar:*) Listen to me!” You know?

V ROGERS. Well, he did graduate.

M LOY. You see! Yeah. It is! It’s huge!

M SMITH. Well, we have a student at school right now. I got her sister and her sister’s boyfriend graduated a couple of years ago. And last year I had this child in my first period class. She would not come to class on time, would always come through my back door. I said, “You’re still tardy, child!” And I called her out on why she was late, something most teachers can’t do, so I went a little past the boundaries but, I’m like, “I know why you’re late; you can’t be doing that and get to my class. I’m not giving you a knife if you’re going to do this.”

(*Laughter*)

M SMITH. Well, I called her out. And I kept watching her, even after she left for the semester. I said, “I’m going to watch you.”

“What do you mean, Ms. S?”

I said, “You are going to graduate if it kills me.” She rolled her eyes. She’s still great for rolling her eyes. Well, because I work in guidance in the summer, I saw her final grades. And I’m like, “You know, I’m going to get her.” Her final grades were actually really good. I took a minute, got a dollar card (*mimicking writing*) wrote her a note, mailed it to her.

Do you know the first day of school, she came in, “Hey, Ms. S!”

“Yes, Darlin’?”

“I got it thanks. I never expected that.” I said, “I told you I was going make sure you graduate.”

Leaving today, she had cupcakes, and I put my arm around her. She goes, “Hey!”

I said, “Where’s the report card?” Because I told her I was going to ask her. It wasn’t good. I said, “Tell me there’s no F.” She...she tried to get away. I said, “Uh-uh.” She goes, “I didn’t do so good.” I said, “We’re going to fight, ‘cause you are going to graduate. I told you.” And I said, “And you’re in my class again next semester.” She tried to get away again. I said, “Ah, you’re not going anywhere. I’m going to keep an eye on you. You’re going to graduate.” Which she is. But I want her to graduate better than she thinks she can. And she knows that I’m watching. Even though I haven’t had her. She knows I’m watching. And, I keep tracking her and keep...I know where she is. I’ll ask her teachers. I...I’m like the stalker. But I’m going to tell you what, it has made a difference in her other classes, ‘cause she’s in ROTC and um, I’ve asked Colonel and Sergeant Major about her and it has helped...

M LOY. The whole child.

M SMITH. Yeah. And she's not one of our stellar children. She is still one of our problem children. And she still does crazy stuff. But, she's doing better; part of it is she's getting a little older. But...

M LOY. She is, as they mature...

M SMITH. Yeah. And she doesn't realize that she's better than what she is. And she, she doesn't think she can do what she's doing. And I'm like, "Really?" So I just push it along. Not as, not as well (*to Victoria*) as you do. I, I'm a newbie at pushing like that but...

M LOY. Do you think...

M SMITH. ...she needs someone to care.

M LOY. ...we have two groups of kids? I mean, and I know we have a huge transient population, with the military---and for other reasons: family issues, combined families, separated families, all of that. But I feel like there are two populations in the school. There is the population that is so needy that if you just, kind of, sort of, follow them, and work with them, and talk to them, and everybody's around them, right. That, that population would be okay. Then there's the other population that gets so much following and so much pushing and so much attention and so much (*clapping like applause*:) "You're so good! You're so wonderful!" And, and, all of that somehow doesn't work for them.

A KOBE. Yes.

V ROGERS. They develop an arrogance.

SEVERAL. Yeah. Yeah.

M LOY. Then they develop that, sort of, entitlement mentality.

V ROGERS. Right, an arrogance.

M LOY. So, it's not like we have a middle of the road population at all in there...

M SMITH. There's no middle of the road.

M LOY. We have to sides of...of a...of a spectrum. So we have the kids---and obviously you have to tea...re...work with everybody differently---so you guys have, you know, 100, 120, whatever, every semester with your three classes and I've got 400 kids so every time somebody walks through my door, I'm assessing. Within (*she claps her hands one time*) 10 seconds, I have to assess, "What kind of kid is that? How am I going to talk and reach that kid?" Right? Now, given that we see them ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade, even though they transfer, they end up transferring back. They go out they come back, they go out, they come back...

(*Laughter and nodding.*)

M LOY. You kind of get to know them anyway. Or you know the brothers and sisters, so you kind of know the family situation. Because I've been there now. And that's my gift. That I've been there for ten years so I know the families, I've had them and...a lot of the new people haven't. So, I like that. Yeah. I like that. It carries with it other things but I like that it does that. So, this...this two-pronged, sort of, what do we do with those kids. Constantly staying

abreast of them and knowing that just a little bit of some sort of attention, some sort of gift, some sort of...you know every kid that walks out of my office...

(Eerie music plays in the background)

M LOY ...I make sure to say...That's my phone...I make sure to say, "You..."

Z CROWDER. We're haunted

M LOY. "...You did well by coming in here. It was a really good idea. You know, I'm glad you came in." Whether it was for a scholarship whether it was just, just to say, "What's, what's my class next semester? How am I, you know, what, you know..." Whatever it might be...

M SMITH. Kids always come back and tell me that you've said that. Which is real funny...

M LOY. You're...see...yeah, I think that is invaluable because it says, "You did a good thing". I want to see that kid come back when he has a real issues, or she has a real issue, to be able to feel like, "Well, I know she's not going to judge me." And...that's the most important thing, I think, for any human being. That you're not judged based on what you understand, or what you don't understand. So, for us to be able to do that, makes a kid. Or...or, subsequently breaks a child if, if they feel like they can't go to somebody...

M SMITH. But you know what's so funny, too? Like you were talking about the two separate spectrums. I...a lot of times I think in school we put the military and everybody else. But, it's not...

M LOY. It isn't that...

M SMITH. It's not. Because...in...my...I have one class

M LOY. Because the military can be any mixture of those characteristics.

M SMITH. Well, and that's the thing. Because I have one class with several military kids that have everything, and want for nothing, and are entitled. And I have several kids who...they wouldn't be in any of my clubs and going to competitions, and getting scholarships if somebody, i.e., me or Ms. Tompkins, didn't pay their registration fees. So, they're military kids, but, for some reason, their parents don't have what they should, or, they're...

M LOY. Well...

M SMITH. ...Just not budgeting well.

M LOY. Well, I was going to say, probably, you know, they're split families, there's five kids, or there's...

M SMITH. Yeah, there's a lot of that.

M LOY. You know, somebody over there and somebody over there and nobody has any money and they live in base housing and it still isn't a lot of money. I mean, you're not paid a whole heck of a lot as an enlisted. You know?

M SMITH. Well, and two of my kids live in one of the nicer neighborhoods. Which is fine. So you pay a bazillion dollars for your house but you can't buy groceries?

M LOY. That's another issue that parents don't... There's that keeping up with... And you must have an interesting group, too, (*addressing AK:*) with the foreign language base. I don't know what kinds of kids you would get...

A KOBE. Um, mine is a mixture. Mixture that... military...

M LOY. And they choose French?

A KOBE. So, they choose...

M LOY. So, they have to take a language. Those are the ones who want to go to college...

A KOBE. Not all of them. Sometimes you put them there. Guidance. (*Laughs.*)

(*Laughter.*)

M LOY. Yes we do. We do.

A KOBE. But, in general, I think more than half of the kids, they decide to take French. Which is, you know, when they decide to take it, it's good. But if they don't decide...

M LOY. Very seldom anymore are we placing them if they haven't picked French. In other words, if they've picked another language---and that was the thing with Latin, boy (*addressing ZC:*) you... we lost... these kids were desperate. They wanted Latin.

A KOBE. We could not replace it. We tried. It was hard, really hard...

M LOY. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to bring that up...

Z CROWDER. No, I know...

M LOY. That was... that was such a gift... And we tell them that: "This may not be here. Animal Science or Biotechnology. Or if it goes with the teacher. It... you, you may not... If we lose another French teacher, then we have half as much ability, half as many classes. So, we get that.

M GREEN. And that's what... that's what happens when you live in a place like North Carolina where there's nothing attracting teachers.

J FOX. Yeah.

M GREEN. Look at how many vacancies we have in our school. That is atrocious. So many of our students, for their core classes, don't have real teachers... (*ML speaking at the same time:* We have no technology classes. No technology!)

M LOY. Exactly. And that's another thing...

M SMITH. And we're not the only school. We have the biggest issue but, I know, I was reading through... um...

V ROGERS. The vacancies.

M SMITH. The vacancies. We're... we have the most issues for a high school but there's a lot of elementary schools that can't even get basic teachers.

J FOX. Yeah.

V ROGERS. Yeah.

M LOY. That's a good point.

M SMITH. And that's scary.

M GREEN. And it's not just in our area, though. In the beginning of the school year they were saying that it was, like, even up in the Raleigh/Durham area, it was down in Carter County, Southtown...it's everywhere. And it's because there's no support coming from any...

M LOY. What brought you here?

M GREEN. The military.

M LOY. Oh yeah, that's right.

M GREEN. I wouldn't even be here if it wasn't for the military. I mean, I enjoy working at Midlands, but compared to previous schools I worked at in Tennessee and Ohio, it has been a struggle. I almost quit after my first semester at Midlands.

M LOY. Why? Because why?

V ROGERS. It's a shock your first semester.

(Laughter. Everyone talking at once.)

J FOX *(Over the din:)* She's not alone on that. She's not alone. The only reason I was there, remained there is because of him *(indicating ZC)* and Lane and her *(indicating MS)*.

M GREEN. There's no...There are... There are, um, very good teachers at our school.

M LOY. Yes!

J FOX. Yes!

M GREEN. But! There is also a lot of lack in support from administrators, from other people, you know, that should be mentoring you. I mean we have a lack of mentor teachers because we have all young teachers.

M LOY. How would you like to be mentored? Because I would love to mentor someone. I mean, I always have counselors in, you know, and I'm interning interns that are coming through and all that. But I was a teacher once, too. So, how would you like to be mentored? Because I would...always say young teachers don't have a clue. But I don't know what to tell you...

M GREEN. Well personally for me, I learned from observing other excellent teachers. And, and we don't really make the time for that, at least in our school, I don't think. And we're also not all on the same page---I mean we have a huge school so it's hard but---other schools I was in, it was also a large school, they were all on the same page. There were certain things that were implemented and required, I know there's a lot of hubbub about that...

M LOY. Was it about curriculum or what was different?

M GREEN. Yeah, like different, yeah, curriculum things that would be not only across departments, like a single department across the English department but across the school. Like

different ways in which you would teach writing, for instance, like we always encourage that, right? That's part of the curriculum. We say, "We need literacy in the other classes besides English." But no one ever teaches you how do you do that. And I think that, um, that's a problem in North Carolina. That here's no one encouraging or allowing us to further our education. Like we should be furthering our education and learning from each other. Going to other schools and seeing successful schools and how they do it. Um, going to workshops or furthering your education. Like, there's no financing for that?

J FOX. Yeah.

M SMITH. You have to jump through hoops...and...about going to other schools. Ms. Rowan, it took her over a month to get to go to East---for the day---to watch this woman teach apparel and to use the embroidery machine.

M GREEN. Mmmhmm.

M SMITH. And I know that sounds crazy but the embroidery machine is part of the curriculum for the new Apparel Two. The only person at Midlands High School who knows how to work the embroidery machine well is the Culinary teacher. Anyone see a problem there? Yes. It's her curriculum. She should be doing it. But we got it. Now we are raising money for FCCLA, which is a club that is sponsored by myself and Ms. Rowan, but most of the work is still done by me because she doesn't know how to work it, the students don't know how to work it, the piece of equipment cost ten thousand dollars.

M LOY. That's a really good point.

M SMITH. But there's the technology, there's more information for the students. But there's no support. It took her a month so she could watch a teacher use it the right way, not the way I know how to.

So, I do agree with you. And the fact we used to have...mentoring was different, I know when I first started teaching because I literally did have to go watch other teachers, even if it was other grades, but other good teachers...teach, and you watched your mentor teacher teach. And if you were struggling with something, if they were working on it, no matter what grade level, you would go see that. Um, I went to Jim's room one day 'cause he was having issues with a group of kids that we found out was a whole 'nother thing. But I walk into a hut and there's so many children that I was looking for desks to be hung from the ceiling. Which, you know, is just a population issue, and we should have scheduled the auditorium for his class instead of a hut. So, you know, that's just something that came from an all-around issue...

M GREEN. But that's also unique to North Carolina also. I was shocked when I interviewed at Midlands and they told me that I would have upwards of 40 students in my class.

MS; Oh!

M LOY. Why is that shocking (*sarcastically, to ZC*)?

M GREEN. That...in...in other...in union states, if you go above a certain level, I mean, you can't. It's not allowed. Or...

(Everyone begins talking at once)

M LOY. Exactly. We don't have a union. That's what we need.

A KOBE. We don't have a back-up. And it's bad.

V ROGERS. You'd get fired if you tried to get a union.

M LOY. Oh my gosh, yeah. You're never going to get a union.

M GREEN. But that's why...it's so...the working conditions are so bad here...

M LOY. So why are you here for a job?

M GREEN. I told you: my husband's in the military.

M LOY. Right. So, when you could go anywhere else...right...could you get...right, right.

M GREEN. I would. I'm saying I would...

M LOY. Right.

M SMITH. She's living with her husband is what she's saying.

M LOY. So we get a good group of teachers because of the military, is what she's saying.

M SMITH. And there are some of us who don't want to go back to retail because we've got more sense than that. I worked ninety hours in retail, made great money but I never saw my children. So then when I discovered that I could teach...

M LOY. And school is less hours?

M SMITH. ...and I'm pretty good at it. No. But I'm at least where they are, so it's okay. So, you know, now...now it's like I enjoy it, I can't leave them. I don't care if I'm poor or not. I'll just get another job like Earles...

M LOY. It does that...it sucks you in.

M GREEN. I think teaching is a calling.

M SMITH. Yeah, it is.

M GREEN. And so I think that there are people out there who want to teach and who would be good teachers...and...but put it this way: think about your first year of teaching. It's so hard. Right?

(Laughter.)

M GREEN. It's so hard. And, so, even if that's your calling and you really enjoy it most of the time...

M LOY. You want to run away.

M GREEN. If...if you're not getting the support you need, you ARE going to leave. Teachers that could...could have become great teachers...

M SMITH. ...Great teachers...

M GREEN. ...and stayed their whole careers and worked with so many students and helped so many students but they don't because they're not getting the support that they need.

M SMITH. Right.

M GREEN. And I...I think the state a lot is to blame for that.

J FOX. Agreed.

M SMITH. Oh, without a doubt.

J FOX. I think the licensure thing is crazy. I...Ohio. I have a temporary license in Ohio. Do you know what I have to do to re-up my license in Ohio?

M GREEN. Take classes.

J FOX. One college course. There's none of this SEAS (Ed.---Officially the SEA System. This is the Brandt County Schools Professional Development System, customized by the NC Dept. of Instruction to allow teachers to register for and track hours of required professional development sessions) stuff, of hour here, hour there. You have to have ten hours here in order to get to the next level. There's none of that. You just...you have a temporary license. You have it for two years. You re-up it. You take one college credit...one college course. Once you get your five year...your five year, uh, license, I think it's three courses but it's over the course of that five years, THAT'S IT! There's none of this stuff with having to take...you know, having to go with the whole SEAS system. Which I think is hooey. Because I went in...I went to James and I said, "So how do I get in the SEAS system?" And they said, "What?" So it's a Brandt thing.

(Laughter.)

J FOX. And, again, they're so obsessed with making things look pretty and difficult.

M GREEN. Yes. And look at the stuff, that for example, look what we put in for professional development---PowerSchool training. (Ed.---PowerSchool is the Pearson Education produced system which integrates attendance and grading.) I'm not really learning anything about incorporating technology into my classroom but that's how they put it into the system and that's what it's looking like: my professional development. Whereas, what I really should be doing is going to a REAL professional development or going...taking another college course where I can learn really useful tools for my classroom.

M LOY. That's a really good point.

J FOX. But, what...

V ROGERS. You know, why they're doing this, it's all money based. Because there used to be more of the going. There was more conferences and there was more available---to not, um, just specialized people---but across the board. And that has been cut back so severely and it all has to do with money. It's been dealing with getting qualified people to come in and be subs and things of that nature. And Brandt County has run the gamut. And, you know, now they're really putting it on the individual schools. For, you know, Midlands High School is supposed to provide the bulk of the professional development for Midlands High School's teachers.

M LOY. Well, if you're in a program that the county wants to sponsor, they'll pay for your...

M GREEN. A lot of money. A lot.

M LOY. Right. Example: AVID. (Ed.---Advancement Via Individual Determination; a program to improve college readiness.)

M GREEN. Oh yes!

M SMITH. Right.

V ROGERS. Oh my goodness.

M LOY. Tons of money put to AVID.

V ROGERS. Right.

M LOY. So, if you volunteer to be the AVID...

M GREEN. I went to the training.

M LOY. I believe it.

M GREEN. They flew us...

M LOY. Oh yeah. Big time.

M GREEN. ...out of state. They paid for us to stay in a pretty nice hotel. All of our meals, everything was covered. The actual training itself, you know, was very expensive. I think it's an excellent program but that's an example of something that, they get these ideas of things they want to do...

M LOY. Exactly. And it may be temporary. It may never may be...

M GREEN. ...it never gets fully implemented. It's like with the pendulum swinging and things changing but...

M LOY. The other part of that is that there's no accountability at the end of it to say, "How...how good was this program..."

M GREEN. Right.

M LOY. ...and how effective?" (To ZC:) Yeah. Right? We talked about this...

Z CROWDER. (To Loy:) I know. I'm trying to be quiet.

MG; Stuff does change but...I mean, of course time does...we need to own those changes...

J FOX. Find something and stick with it. And follow the course. If it works, it works and if it doesn't, okay after x amount of years. I agree with you. Yes.

(During this exchange ML and AK are passing and pouring a bottle of wine.)

M SMITH. Well, and I don't mind being a test school for AVID. The only thing that I have seen work well with AVID is the, um, the Cornell Notes, 'cause I haven't seen how the whole program works. 'Cause my AVID kids...I don't even know who...

M GREEN. Well, to be honest, for me...

M LOY. (*Standing.*) Do you remember when we did Freshman Seminar? Do you know how long I tried to in...instill Cornell Notes? Within Freshman Seminar when I first got there in 2006, and then seven, and then eight, every year I tried that, but until the county decided it was a good idea or AVID decided it was a good idea...

M SMITH. See, the...

M LOY. The same with Socratic Method, the same with all of the things that help kids learn.

M SMITH. Cornell Notes are great. And, I'm going to tell you when I was...

M LOY. But, I'm talking about in general. About how we teach. (*She moves around the table to get a plate of food. ZC gets up to assist her while the dialogue continues.*)

M SMITH. Well, and, but, we all need to be on the same page. Even though, like you (*indicating MG*) went to the AVID workshop, which is wonderful, and it is helping children. I have seen some kids who would have otherwise been struggling or even given up this year. AVID has helped them. But I know when I was going to, um, Winston and getting my Master's, um, I had a professor who loved Cornell Notes and they had started it in Evan County like fifteen years ago. And they use it heavily. And they start it in seventh and eighth grade, like we do, but they made it across the board. More specifically and for the AVID kids, like we do, but all the teachers used it. They all were trained on it. Okay...well, we need to tell our kids to use it in Culinary but I...I can't remember how to do it, but I think they're great when you do use it.

V ROGERS. Well, I think it goes back to, and I know we don't like it, but if things are not mandated...

M SMITH. They won't happen.

V ROGERS. They will not happen. They will happen in isolated places, but, not across the board...

M GREEN. Well...and I think here's the problem. Um, like, this is just Midlands, for example. They...they do mandate stuff but it's so many different things. They need to, like, pick something and say, "This is what we are all going to do. We are all going to do this. Because, this is what the research says," or whatever.

M SMITH. (*Sarcastically.*) It's got to be research based.

M GREEN. No, but I mean, it's...it's research based for a reason. I mean, you can go observe this in other schools where...

M LOY. Do you think that's because of the turnover at the, at the county level? At the directorship level? Or do you think it's state?

M GREEN. I mean, possibly. I don't know

V ROGERS. I think, it's just like, have you, have you noticed the changes at Winston University?

M LOY. Oh yeah, right. Curriculum...

V ROGERS. Right. So he had, whether you like him or not, and I know he's on his way out...the president of Winston, he had a five-year plan, he had a ten-year plan, he had a fifteen-year plan, he had a twenty...he had like a plan out for like thirty years. I'm not joking.

M LOY. Yeah he did.

V ROGERS. And when he started with that, it was like a bulldozer. You know what I'm saying? They plowed to five. And if they made five before five, they kept plowing...I mean, it was like the sacred script...

(Everyone talks at once.)

V ROGERS. But as a school system, as a county, we, we don't have that flagship. I mean, we don't have that.

M SMITH. Our road's kind of wobbly with some side roads.

J FOX. You think?

V ROGERS. It depends on, you know, maybe there's too many Indian chiefs and not enough Indians. Or, maybe the Indians have folded and don't pay attention to the Indian chiefs...

(Laughter.)

M LOY. The board of education and the county commissioners make decisions that affect the teaching in the county. And...

M GREEN. And they're not educated about what's happening in the schools. As evidenced by our new...

J FOX. ...by the new...

M GREEN. ...member.

J FOX. Yeah. That really...rocked my world.

M GREEN *(To ML:)* Did you talk to him?

M LOY. I didn't need to.

M GREEN. I did...

M SMITH. Was...was that the man in the hat and the black shirt?

M GREEN. I was shocked.

J FOX. Oh my god.

M LOY. I don't know if it's the individual or not.

J FOX. "I only want to hear good things."

M LOY. The point of that, in general, is there is so much that comes down on account of that, um, and I had an example and I just forgot it...

M SMITH. Well the board and the county commissioners are kind of like James County on a smaller scale. They haven't gotten along for a while. Um, and they don't like particular things that happen on our side of the river, as they say. Um, and I agree---that's part of our problem.

V ROGERS. Well I agree, that is the truth. Because I'm from Ashton and FOREVER, ever, since I first came back, you know, I did my first four years out of Brandt County but then, ever since then, it was always talked about "this side of the river" and "that side of the river". ALL my teaching career. It has...and that is the truth. Because on this side of the county, there is very little change. There are teachers that go there when they're twenty-two and they graduate---thirty years---you know, to retirement.

M SMITH. They don't eve go to your classroom but twice, maybe.

V ROGERS. Before Soddy and Ashton middle schools, maybe Inland...

M LOY. But that's not the demographic of Midlands.

V ROGERS. I know, but I'm just saying that that has been an overriding mentality and then they see this over here as, "These people over here are just really different..." Nothing we do is right...

M GREEN. Well I think that is part of the problem of, um, in other...some other states they don't have school districts that are an entire county school district.

M SMITH. Yeah, that's a North Carolina thing.

J FOX. Yeas, it is.

M GREEN. That's crazy. I couldn't believe that. Like, in Ohio---'cause you were in Ohio (*addressing JF*).

J FOX. In Ohio. Districts.

M GREEN. It's like each city...

J FOX. Districts.

MG; ...city has its own district and it might have a couple of high schools and, like, some more elementaries and middle schools, but, it's easier to have...

V ROGERS. The problem with Brandt county is it's so rural. That it's just always been...Listen, I never heard the word "micropolitan" even associated with this county until last year. And this county is known as the "Inland micropolitan".

J FOX. But, but it's going to have to happen because...it's...they're gonna have to...start...

M LOY. Do you really mean "micropolitan"?

V ROGERS. MICRO-politan. It's not big enough to be a "metropolitan" area. Nowhere in Brandt County, so we've...

M LOY. I haven't heard that at all.

J FOX. They're still working on a model...meanwhile...the population is growing exponentially to the point of, they can't do the county anymore, I don't think.

M GREEN. No.

J FOX. They can't, they're growing. And it's growing a lot. And they're running on such an old model and still...wanting to make it work at that...it...it can't work. Because, you're right, in Ohio the districts are so smaller and it's not the county.

M SMITH. Even in Pennsylvania, though. Pennsylvania. But it's also a union and it's not by county. You know, so those two things and I think that's where, a part of it is, those of us who have moved around and been other places, you know, when there's union and smaller districts, things are run differently. There's caps on...true caps on classroom size.

(Laughter.)

M LOY. I like that. "True caps". *(Sarcastically:)* Really, you think our caps are mobile?

(Laughter:)

M SMITH. Uh, I don't know. We have twenty chairs but there's thirty people in my classroom. Ummm. That would be mobile. But, you know, the cap in my classroom says twenty-five. I'd love to see you fit twenty-five children in my room and give them a knife. So, let me just throw that in there.

J FOX *(Laughing)*. I know your kids, too.

M SMITH. Um, so there is a difference between union, non-union. And it does create a problem then when we go to teach. It does then create issues for our children and, and because of different things that happen like *(VR is whispering to MG: It's 5:30.)*

V ROGERS. Thanks

M SMITH. Um, sure. It is...it is things like kids, you know, we want to talk to our kids and sometimes, with so much being thrown at them, we don't make the time to talk to our kids...

J FOX. Right.

M SMITH. Or, our kids want to talk to us and we're like we'll just sit down a minute and say, "Tell me what you need to," and try to multitask and get the class started while you listen to this child's drama. You know, and we have married students this year and that throws me for a loop, too. So, you know, and (indistinguishable) is coming out of the woodwork too.

V ROGERS. Well, you know, I know we're talking about a zillion different things here all wrapped in together in a bunch of conversations but I think, historically, North Carolina has been considered, you know, we're the South, maybe not the Deep South, but we are the South and it has been historically a different mentality than the North or the West. And the system has been handled differently...

J FOX. It had to be, I think.

V ROGERS. ...from, you know, way back, I mean, from the beginning. And so most of our districts are countywide districts throughout this whole state. Unless you have areas like the

Charlotte city, because it's a huge city, or Raleigh because it's a big city. But, historically...now, we probably all agree it needs to change, but even in Brandt County---thank god this is anonymous and all this stuff---I mean, the good ol' boy system has been the way Brandt county has always been run.

J FOX. That's...that's part of it

(Everyone talking at once. Mostly establishing where folks are from in order to establish local credibility.)

V ROGERS. But, now, some of you guys were not here then but we had, two or three superintendents back, we had our first in my memory, out of county, truly out of county...

M LOY. And he was truly out of his mind.

V ROGERS. ...superintendent come in. But he did not survive. He did not last very long at all. So, I mean, you are running...

M LOY. I never thought I'd see a woman as a high school principal in my lifetime. Never.

V ROGERS. See, he didn't realize that she's the first one in Brandt County *(gestures toward ZC and referencing a conversation prior to taping)*.

(Talking at once.) M LOY. She is the first one...

M GREEN. Who?

M LOY. Ms. Ansley.

M GREEN. What???

M LOY. She is the first...I was amazed, amazed that we even saw that happen. But then I found out why, which is not a good idea for right here, but...

M GREEN. Yeah.

M LOY. Still...the first one in Brandt County. And I cannot imagine what that is like...

V ROGERS. ...for her high school...

M LOY. ...for her high school...sitting in meetings with all...ever, ever...that's huge...of the biggest high school.

V ROGERS. But, let me, just to put that in perspective for you, that sounds amazing but do you realize the first woman physician for Brandt County is still alive. And she was the only female physician for twenty-five years in this county. Now that should give you some perspective...

(Talking at once.)

J FOX. Oh, I understand, I understand...Change is slow to happen. Even in Ohio it's like ridiculously slow on things.

V ROGERS. You know we're talking...

J FOX. But, right, right, right, right, right. Now, like I said, with this new population, and this explosion of population, they're gonna have to change...

V ROGERS. Yes...

J FOX. ...and there's going to be a lot of turmoil, that's the other part. There's gonna be...

M SMITH. But it's going to have to go through all the vote. It's going to have to start from outside the county, go to the bo...go to the commissioners, and then slowly get into the school board.

J FOX. Yeah. That's right.

M GREEN. But, I mean, this is all inside our county but, I mean, there are other areas of the state that you would think would be much more progressive but they're really not that much more progressive. And I don't understand, we have all these, we have all these institutions of higher learning that are famous throughout the country...

J FOX. James...James...yeah keep going.

M GREEN. Right. And yet, and yet, we don't support, um, education at the lower levels in this state...

J FOX. Right.

M GREEN. I don't understand that. How do these...If I was a, well I'm not a parent, but if I was a parent I would not stand for my kids being in some of these schools.

M LOY (*talking over MG:*) Money making institutions. It's a business versus the elementary schools are not a business...

M GREEN. Yeah, but I'm saying, if, like, okay, if you're trying to attract...let's say you want to grow the economy of the state...

M LOY. Why don't we attract...

M GREEN. ...we want to attract businesses. If I was a business owner, a CEO...

M LOY. ...but partially we don't want to attract...

M GREEN. ...I would say, "Look how terrible their schools are. I'm not bringing my kids there."

M LOY. Brandt County doesn't. If you talk to the board of commissioners, they like it just the way it is.

V ROGERS. Listen, when I was a little girl, school didn't start in the fall until after tobacco was harvested. Because kids were needed at home...

(Uproarious laughter spurred by exchange between ML and AK as they pass the bottle of wine.)

V ROGERS. ...to harvest the, the crops...and they, they postponed school at the start because kids stayed out anyhow. Because they were needed. All right. So now, even though...then we went through the wave when we had regular migrant workers, which you don't see many migrant

workers at all because they moved and stayed here. But for about ten or fifteen years there we really had migrant workers...

M SMITH. They migrate between the same five farms now...

V ROGERS. But even after the need for those kids being home, that mentality was still there and it effected how the schools were run. And it still effects, even today. And it's not so much a farmer mentality anymore as it's considered a Southern mentality.

M SMITH. So they just changed the, the word in the last fourteen years.

M LOY. My husband and I moved here in Nineteen...well, we bought the prop...we bought property in Folsom in 1987...

J FOX (*pointing:*) I remember you telling me this. Where are you going with this?

M LOY. ...in 1993 we moved into our house in Folsom. And, I have a teaching background but I also came from a military background, so, at the time, I was home with the kids. And I went...and I didn't know the process of what was going on and all...and I started volunteering in the school system with four kids and knowing that that would be a good idea. Because I want to see what the teachers look like, I want to see what the system looks like. All of that. So I'm in the, um, primary school, one of the primary schools, and I see all of these Mexican, um, migrant worker children who come and go, come and go---that sort of thing. And, I'm thinking, "There is no, sort of, what is now ESL program, but there is no program for those kids at all." And being a language major, and coming from a house where I learned English after, it was my second language, I thought, "This is really hard for these kids and I don't see that this is a really good idea."

So I went to the principal of that school and I said, "I would like to work with the Spanish speaking students. Um, I lived three years in Spain, I've..., you know, it's one of the languages and I really would like to work with them and do that ES... sort of an English program for them." And she said, "We don't have anything like that. Why do we want to do that?" And this is a principal in very good standing, right? And I said, "I'm not asking for any money. I will volunteer to read and work with those kids." And she said, "Oh, okay, that's fine."

You know, so we started that in that primary school. And within three or four years they finally actually established an ESL full-time program. And that took...that would have been 1997, 98. How...how...that wasn't that long ago...

All: No, no...

M LOY. And when you think of these kids struggling with a second language...right...Dr. Kobe? Um, I didn't understand how could this take so long. But then you think back, there's no financing in this county, there's nothing, no industry...

A KOBE. But if they want something, they can finance...

V ROGERS. That is true...

M LOY. Oh, but there's another good point...So, if they want it... AVID program...

A KOBE. If they want it they can finance...

V ROGERS. But I will tell you, in Brandt County we were primarily a black/white county.

M LOY. Well that was part, too, of that issue...

V ROGERS. There were...there were very few Hispanics until, my children who are now, like, my son just turned forty and my daughter is thirty-eight...When they were in, like, middle school they had one or two Hispanic kids in their class...in their grade...

M LOY. See, half of the kids in my kids'...

V ROGERS. ...in their grade...

M LOY. So it was another generation...

V ROGERS. That's what I'm saying. So, when that other group, because I worked for eleven years for ESL every summer, and did summer over at Brandt Central---that's where I first met Mrs. Tompkins, we worked together...

M SMITH. A couple of years ago...

(Laughter.)

V ROGERS. ...so, then, because, we had never, we just had never had that in Brandt County. Then suddenly...

M Loy. And what to do with it?

V ROGERS. ...we started having these kids and they would leave Florida and work their way up. They'd work in Georgia a while. They'd come to North Carolina a while. They'd leave and go to West Virginia...

M LOY. Right. Their parents would move with the crops.

V ROGERS. Well, you know I would...

M LOY. Isn't that amazing?

V ROGERS. I would see kids two or three years in a row because every year about the same time they'd come back. Because they were on the circuit.

M LOY. Right. Right.

V ROGERS. Well those kids were horrifically poor. They were the ones that when we started getting the dentist to come...and we would get shoes...

M LOY. And they still have those programs.

M SMITH. Yeah they do.

V ROGERS. All that stuff...

M LOY. The dental van...

V ROGERS. Well, that's when it started...

M LOY. Immunizations...

V ROGERS. Well, then, what happened is, lo and behold these guys came, and suddenly the, um, area nurseries started saying, “Hey, they’re good workers,” and they started offering them...

M LOY. Or tobacco. Or soybeans.

V ROGERS. So suddenly my kids, that I’d see them for, um, a growing season and say, “I’ll see you next year.” They always come up to tell you and say, “See you next year,” suddenly they weren’t leaving. And so within the space of ten years, you know, or fifteen at the most, we’d gone from one or two Hispanic kids in a grade, to...migrant zip-throughs, to now they’re staying. And, you know, I never...almost never have a migrant kid that’s labelled a migrant kid.

M LOY. For sure. Not labelled.

M SMITH. “Transient”, perhaps.

V ROGERS. But, I mean, before they were labelled, you know?

M LOY. Exactly. It was...

V ROGERS. It was their life. So, you know, now they stay. Well, unfortunately now they’re more like our kids...and...having problems.

M GREEN. So.... I mean...So, I don’t know all the history like you do but, like...so do you...that’s what you think the cause is? Like you think that schools have...in North Carolina have lower expectations of their students because of the population of students they had previously catered to?

V ROGERS. No, I think it’s history. I, I mean I really do...I think that...

M LOY. And what’s the difference between Brandt County and the kids that go to Duke?

V ROGERS. That’s right. Because none of our kids go to Duke...it’s...I don’t...

M GREEN. No, but...Do you think, like a lot of our kids are prepared for Duke?

V ROGERS. Well we might...

M LOY. My daughter went to Duke.

M GREEN. No, I believe you...

M LOY. But what I’m saying is...

M GREEN. First of all...first of all...

M LOY. ...where in North Carolina....

M GREEN. First of all, she had you as her mother...

J FOX. You go Mommy Dearest. Joan Crawford...

M LOY. That’s really not it. I’m not...I’m not...

M GREEN. Let’s be honest, right. I mean, you just told us a story about seeing a need in children and...

M SMITH. ...going for it.

M GREEN. ...going and serving, so clearly, she's not just being served in a school, right, but she has a parent who cared too

M SMITH. She had a parent who cared a lot. A lot. Which is something we don't have a lot of times.

M LOY. That's a good point. That you bring up.... because we look at the parents and what are they providing for their kids. That's a good point.

M SMITH. Because we have a lot of kids at our school whose...well, we have one girl who I've had her at several different schools who's now fourth generation "oops" at, what, thirteen or fourteen.

M LOY. Yes, yes.

M SMITH. Her grandmother is younger than me. And I had her in sixth grade and she's still in the ninth grade now. So, and I've had her that many times, and I've been at our school for a long time. But we do have, um, lots of parents who don't parent. I'll call home and go, "What do you mean we have report cards?" "Yeah, three times now, but thanks, you know...or two times." But then we have other parents and you can't get them to leave you alone and their child has a 92.

M LOY. And that's where you spend your time.

M SMITH. But, yeah, it's those, and they go with that... they, they're an intermix in between that high ratio and the low ratio; the ones who want it all and the ones who, whose parents don't even buy groceries. But some of those parents who don't buy groceries want their kids to go to Duke but they don't know how to parent because they don't have the skills. And some of these other kids who think that they deserve it all and want to go to Duke but they won't apply themselves but their parents are going, "You're gonna go to Duke. You're gonna go there," (*poking JF*).

V ROGERS. But they can't spell "Duke".

M SMITH. And they come in to me...They'll come in a go, "Ms. S, how come I only have a 77?" "Well, because you can't write "knife". You know, things like that...

(*Laughter.*)

M LOY. That was really well put. That's a great story!

M SMITH. And it's truly that. Because I do, I literally have this class, they, I could divide them down the middle: haves and have-nots, or wants and want-nots, or don't know they don't have. And, it literally could divide that class. And the kids who think they deserve it all, their parents will not leave me alone. I've had them so many times and they will not, just go away. And these kids over here that really need me that I spend time with and won't go home at night because they want more help, which is why I'm always at school for twelve or fourteen hours...

V ROGERS. Yeah, you are.

M SMITH. These are the ones I want to help but their parents don't know how to help them. And I'm like (*hands to face groaning*). And there's only so much I can do without going, "All right, here's what you need to do, honey". I mean, you want them to learn it on their own and, and not...inductive reasoning? Deductive reasoning? All that. You know, outside the box thinking. I, I can't just spell it out for you. I, I want you to be able to think when you grow up. So, it's really hard...

M GREEN. But they're already halfway grown up. The problem is, I think, we...up to that point when they get to you.

M SMITH. Yeah.

M GREEN. I think a lot of our teachers...I mean, I think...

M SMITH. We spoon-feed.

M GREEN. I think...yes. We're enablers. No, it's true.

J FOX. Yeah, yeah.

M GREEN. We're enablers. And even the smart kids. Even the smart kids, they think they're smart and they know it all but look at their ACT scores.

M LOY. Yeah. Exactly. Reflects not active intelligence.

M GREEN. They're...they're terribly low. So these kids are not prepared for Duke or any other high level school because they might get in but once they get there they're...

M LOY. ...won't know what to do.

M GREEN. ...not going to make it.

M LOY. I told that to a student the other day. He came in looking for his ACT scores and 36 is the highest you can get and he had an 18. So he said, "I would like to go to UNCG, or UNC Charlotte, or whatever," and of course right there on the interpretation of his scores it says, "That based on that test score, you are very low ready for any college classes." So I said, "What do you see there?" you know and you have to lead them to it and it takes twice as long but you don't want to tell the kid...

M GREEN. Crush their dreams.

M LOY. You just might not...Cause you can't. You really can't. You cannot do that (*clapping emphatically*). So, and I won't do that. So he looks at it and he thinks to himself and he says, "Gee, I don't know...what..." So he looks at it and he thinks to himself, and then he says to me, "Well, I guess...I'm really not...I don't know that I don't know this..." So I said, "You're...you're right. There are things...now because the ACT is innate knowledge like an EOC, it's the active knowledge of 'do you know these facts,' so to speak. And I don't think that if you went into a 100 level course, or an undergraduate lower level...uh...beginning course, that you would make it." So, he's looking at me, "So why am I not ready then...why is this school...what, what is happening that I am not ready?" And I said, "Well what do you do? What do you put into, as far as your effort goes, on a daily basis? Because this is every day, day in, day out, doing that assignment, doing your best work, if you're tired, you know, all of that."

And he goes, “You know, I, I get what you’re saying”. And I said, “Well, good. As long as you GET what I’m saying. Now what we do...about that...because you still have time, because you’re a junior, you still have time to fix it.” So, that level of whoosh, epiphany, the teachable moment. And we don’t know when we get those. And it’s few and far between sometimes because we...you know, but...And then how long does it last? He goes back out there with his buddies...

M GREEN. Right, yeah.

M LOY. ...and they drag him back into crazy land.

M GREEN. Well but some of the kids, like, that kid, for example, that’s maybe his fault that he’s not ready, right?

M LOY. And he admits it.

M GREEN. He hasn’t applied himself. But, some of the kids, and I’ll give you an example: This semester I’m teaching Honors English IV. Guess what class all of these students were in last year? You’re a counselor, you should know.

M LOY. Honors English III. Or AP English III.

M GREEN. Honors English III. And guess who their teacher was? Ms. Darcy. Who left.

M LOY. Who left.

M GREEN. And so the rest of the year was a substitute who...didn’t know...

M LOY. Who didn’t teach.

M GREEN. ...know proper English, first of all.

M LOY. Right, right

M GREEN. And didn’t teach. And so all these kids...it’s so funny...

(During this story, MS is preparing to leave and there is some side conversation between her and ZC about the next even, etc. ZC gets up and MS eventually gets up while MG continues story.)

M GREEN. ...when we...when they came to my class, I had them do this activity, because they’re seniors. I said when you go and ask someone for a college recommendation letter, you have to give them like a resume. Right? Like we need to know what you do that we should be writing about. And one of the things is, “Write what you’re most proud of in high school.” Do you know how many of those kids wrote, “I earned an A in Honors English III”? I mean, they’re so...

M LOY. I earned an A.

M SMITH. They what?

M GREEN. They earned a...They put, “I earned an A in Honors English III”.

M LOY. It’s about the grade...

M GREEN. And like they were...they're proud of themselves. "I earned an A in Honors English III." And then the first six weeks in my class, they're making a C, and they're saying, "What's going on?" Well...

M SMITH. Because they have to work in your class.

M GREEN. I'm actually asking you to record some quality writing, and analyze some texts, and to do these skills that...if you're really planning on going to XYZ college that you listed that you want to go to, then you're going to have to go to do this and actually at a higher level. So, in that sense, we're failing them. Like, yes, there's some kids who fail themselves, or the parents are failing them, but then there's some kids who...these are...these are good kids, these are good kids that are ...doing the right thing. They signed up for Honors English III...

M Loy. And thinking they're getting an Honors level course...

M GREEN. They're working...they're doing all the work. And we're failing them.

VRL You know...

M SMITH. But we are if we're not pushing them hard enough.

V ROGERS. Yeah. I have something to add to that. Um, I was in a meeting. I used to be a teaching coach, a literacy coach for three and a half years---to do that---and then our county...well, the job went away so we (indistinguishable) like we do now. But I was in a meeting with a bunch of colleagues and there was a problem we were seeing in all of our schools. I mean across the board in the county. And, because of our position of going from room to room, we try to solve this problem and you know how you're discussing...and came up with what seemed to be this really good solution to this, just this one specific thing. And so our, um, county supervisor came into the meeting and, you know, somebody spoke---I was so glad it wasn't me---you know, it's one of those times you're glad it wasn't you that spoke, you know, just brought up the subject that we had all been discussing and how that it was common to all of our schools and it was really an issue. And our take was, you know, speaking like, because...the group had spoken, that this would be an easy fix, you know, and blah, blah, blah, and gave an idea.

Well, when she responded, I became so offended. At first, I mean it really offended me the way she responded. I didn't say anything but it offended me. But I have never forgotten that now...I have told you this (*gesturing toward ZC or ML*) and you'll probably remember it but it has helped guide my career and some other things since then. Then the lady spoke up and said, "Well, I'm going to tell you what I heard Dan Hill tell some, um, principals in a principal meeting: 'That's above your pay grade.'" And it offended me. For that...I mean it really did. Because there was no malice meant, there was no anything, you know, when we were...it was a problem and we were...but you know, and I went away from that and I just could not...But then I understood. And I really did understand. And I think I do understand. I am a classroom teacher. There are some things that are NOT in my power. They are NOT my paygrade. And no matter how I want to...change them, I can offer opinion or whatever...I can ask for change but it is not my POWER to change at that level. But daggone it, everything that is in my power, I can change, and I can effect and I can do. And when they walked in that door, "Welcome to your world." And you can be just as daggone professional and do what you need to do. And you have that right. It IS your paygrade to do that. And if the kids say, "I got a C," well, "Heck, you

better be glad you got a C. You'd better be celebrating that. If you want a B, let's see what you can do." But that has taken pressure off of me. Because sometimes I see you've got issues and you've got issues and you've...and I'm wanting to solve all of them. And I want you happy (*putting her hand on AK's shoulder and patting him*) ...

M GREEN. He does, too.

A KOBE. I want to be happy.

(*Laughter.*)

V ROGERS. I want the world to be good for you. Yes. But sometimes it's just not in my paygrade. And I don't...

M LOY. Wow!

V ROGERS. ...care how much I want to change it, it's not there. And so, I say, "Dr. Kobe, this too shall pass. We will get through this together. And if there's anything I can do to help you, I will." I can live with me, I've helped him, I've been true to my professionalism. What else can I do?

M GREEN. I'm not that Zen.

J FOX. Me, either

(*Laughter.*)

M GREEN. I'm like mmmmmm (*Raising her fists*).

J FOX. Me either. I've still got the pluck, you know. We've still got pluck. We're plucky.

M LOY. Big egos. I've got to do this...

M GREEN. I'm thinking, "I've got to change this!"

V ROGERS. When I was in a school with three teachers in the hospital at the same time all on heart, um, monitors, I wasn't...

M GREEN. Yeah, I know. I'm talking about...

M LOY. It's a story...

M GREEN. No, I know...(*laughing*).

V ROGERS. You've got to be true to yourself.

M GREEN. Yeah.

V ROGERS. But you've got to be the best you can be. And there's nothing wrong with asking questions and pulling for what you think is right. But, at the end of the day, you've got to be true to yourself, but not drive yourself crazy.

M GREEN. I'm going to follow in Zan's footsteps and get my doctorate and I'm going to change it.

(*Laughter.*)

V ROGERS. There you go.

M GREEN. One of my students today actually...

V ROGERS. You can hire me.

M GREEN. ...gave me a gift, a Christmas gift....

(Everyone talking at once in several conversations. ZC gets up and moves off camera. The bottle of wine has passed around. MG is relating a story about a student giving her a journal for Christmas.)

M LOY. This wine is very good.

M GREEN....She bought me this journal, this really beautiful journal and she wrote "This is to help you go from misses to doctor." I thought, "That's so sweet."

A KOBE. It's very European...

M LOY. It is European to enjoy...

V ROGERS. No, and I don't mean to oversimplify but the truth is...

J FOX. No but you are...

M LOY. But you come from a place of knowledge, you come from a place of experience that says, "This is the sanity factor," and that's helpful...

J FOX. Exactly.

M GREEN. That's true. You've survived for MANY years...

V ROGERS. MANY??

M GREEN. Many years. No, but, I mean, right? There's a lot of people who leave the profession. A lot. So...she's shown us how you can be successful and stay in.

J FOX. Yeah.

VR; Or be insane.

M LOY. Yeah, you can't, you can't allow it... And I guess that's a good way to put it: "Be true to yourself. Don't let it make you crazy," but...

V ROGERS. Well, you know, my thing is, I mean, I have a pacing guide and I have this and I have that. I always have had that. And I really try to do, whatever my boss tells me, I try to do it. But, I also have my moral compass and my professional compass and my, you know...I'm going to be true to that, too. I mean, I'm going to be a good employee. I'm not going to stand out in the hall and throw darts at people and I'm not going to knife people in the back and I'm not going to say one thing and then go out and...I'm just not going to do that, because that's not who I am. But, also, I am a teacher. And I know I'm a teacher. So whatever it takes to teach, that's what I'm going to do. Cause that's what I am. But I'm also a caring human being and you can tell me that it don't matter, whatever just happens, whatever is in your class, put blinders on, and I can't do that because I can't function that way. Cause if you come in with a blue streak in

your hair, I'm going to notice it and if you got a haircut, I'm going to notice it, and if you've got on a new shirt, I'm going to notice it. And it makes them...humans.

M LOY. Yeah, it brings relevance.

A KOBE. That's true...

M GREEN. Wouldn't you agree that it's so much harder to have that kind of connection with the students when you have such big classes.

M LOY. Yeah...gosh.

J FOX. It is.

M LOY. You know, I do, I feel terrible when I put that many kids in your class.

M GREEN. Well, like you can...you can read...you can connect to like, so many of them, then, at the end of the semester, like right now, at this point, I just keep thinking like, "I don't really know anything about that kid over there."

A KOBE. Yeah.

J FOX. Yeah, I get to that...I got to that point last year, too...I'm like, "Oh god" ...

M GREEN. Like he's been sitting in my class for months and I don't even know him...

A KOBE. You don't know them. And some of them, they don't have you to get...to get to know you...

M GREEN. Well, right, right. Some students are just naturally shy. And yeah, they, they don't want attention. But...it still makes you feel bad.

V ROGERS. Yeah.

M GREEN. You know?

V ROGERS. I do agree that...but, you know, a couple of years ago, two or three years ago, you know, when they have kids comments and, um, something like, "Who's your favorite teacher?" or whatever. Some kid that I did not even know, had never even taught or anything, put my name and you know why she said? She said because I said "Hello" every morning. I mean it was in the, like the yearbook.

M GREEN. That's so nice yet so sad.

V ROGERS. It is.

M GREEN. Could no one else say "hello" to this girl? Or boy or whoever.

J FOX. Two stories. This is the one that happened with, with...Price (*groan*). She called me into her office and she said, "Um, I'm going to have to put another stu...", this is two weeks ago.

M LOY. Of course at the end of the semester.

J FOX. "I'm going to have to put another student in your theater class." And I said...

A KOBE. That's what she did to me last week.

J FOX. And I said, “You are now putting forty kids in a hut!”

M LOY. Forty kids in a hut. That’s crazy.

J FOX. And she said, “I knew you were going to be this way.” I said...

ML What?

J FOX. I said, “Tell you what.” I said, “You can bring the kid,” and I said, “I’m going to give you the hammer and nails and you’re put...nailing the desk to the ceiling.” I said, “I can’t put any more desks anywhere.”

She says, “You know, I knew you were going to be this way.” I said, “Look.” I said...And then she says this...then she says this, she says, “Well, he didn’t really have a theater class.” And I said, “Then why are you putting him in there?” I said, “Because usually...”---I’ve been told that they try to mirror what they had at another school...

M GREEN. Right.

(Laughter is rolling around the table throughout the story.)

J FOX. She said, “But he did have a communications class but he’s failing it.” I said, “Wait. Stop. I said, “You are going to put him...he’s already failing...he’s got two weeks left...” I said, “The kids are already working on their final project.” I said, “You want him in my class. He’s already failing.” And I said...

M LOY. See your first mistake was that you don’t have an EOC.

(At this point, VR begins to leave. JF’s story is consistently interrupted until she departs.)

J FOX *(groans)*.

M LOY. I am so sorry.

J FOX. She, I, I, and she said, “I knew you were going to be this way.” I said, “What way were you expecting?” What, what...I...

M LOY. She could have said that a little differently...

J FOX. And I said, I said, “Have you lost your mind?”

Z CROWDER *(to VR:)* You want to take some candy or some cookies with you or something?

J FOX. I said...I said...

V ROGERS. You’ve got family at home.

J FOX. I said, “You’re setting him up for failure” ...

M GREEN. You know you love your chocolate.

Z CROWDER. Will you write me down a fake name?

J FOX. I said...

V ROGERS. Do you need first and last name?

M GREEN. Can I deceive them by using, like, a very....

Z CROWDER. Yes. Because I'll use "Ms." Depending on how you've been using...

V ROGERS. Do I have to use a serious name?

Z CROWDER. You can't use...Smith's name...You can't use "Mary Smith" because...

M LOY. Oh, she did not.

J FOX. How original.

M GREEN. Can I deceive your audience by putting something that people would typically equate with, like a different gender or ethnicity...?

Z CROWDER. You know what...

M GREEN. Right? Right.

M LOY. I'm sorry, Jim. Should I explain this to you and it's still miserable and won't help you.

J FOX. She was going to try to put the communications grade for theater.

M LOY. We have to.

J FOX. Which is crazy.

M LOY. We have to.

J FOX. Because, what if, some strange reason, he turns it around in two weeks...

M LOY. Like I'll take a PE grade...

J FOX. ...that's not fair to the kids that have been with me for sixteen weeks and have put in all the time...

M LOY. But it's not fair to the kid who has to transfer because he's military, or has to transfer because his parents moved...

J FOX. He's failing! It's called credit recovery!

M LOY. I know.

J FOX. You put him in credit recovery. Do not put him in a class. It's asinine. You're setting him up for failure. This is what we're talking about.

M LOY. I know, I know.

J FOX. I mean, it was stupid. And she said, "I'll talk to Ms. Ansley on this." And I said, "Please do. I'll go in with you if you want."

M LOY. You have a point. You do.

M GREEN. I agree with you. I think...I think there's...I think there's so much conflict in our school. Like, so many people like hate guidance and so many people hate the administrators and it's like...

J FOX (*to ML:*) I have a lovely relationship with you guys...

M GREEN. But, you know what I mean? Like...like...people...people like blame other people for these things and everyone's just trying to do their job. Like, we need to work together.

J FOX. I know it. I know it.

M LOY. I'll tell you what, I never blame teachers. I fully recognize...

J FOX. But I have no room!

(Laughter.)

J FOX. I...I can't fit another desk in there!

A KOBE. I have 37 students and just last week I got one more. He's 38. 38.

M GREEN. When I was first here, I had 43...

V ROGERS. Mr. Ailes has...

M GREEN. Mr. Ailes has more than the three of us put together.

V ROGERS. Doesn't Mr. Ailes have 53?

J FOX. Well he's got 70 in his fourth block!

M LOY. Is 40, is 38, is 42, is that Guidance's fault? Whose fault...

A KOBE. No...

M GREEN. No...no...what...what I'm saying is that people blame guidance. They come...they should not...However...

J FOX. I agree...

M GREEN. That's who they...People tend to fall back on blaming.

M LOY. I pick up the phone and I go hide.... I'm like, "Oh, crap."

(Uproarious laughter.)

M LOY. First of all, why did they even answer? Right? Just leave me a message.

J FOX. James Kahn won't call me 'cause he's like "Mr. Fox?" I'm like, "WHAT!" He won't even call me anymore...

M LOY. It's true. Don't even...I'm calling from an...an unknown number. 'Cause it is, it's a horrible feeling.

J FOX. But that's setting the kid up for failure. It's setting... 'cause he's already failing. You have no business taking a communications discipline and putting it into a theater.

M LOY. Right. If they're already failing I'm gonna throw him out of there. I will. I will do that.

J FOX. No. But, no...you can't...look, I have a degree in communications...

V ROGERS. Please don't throw him out, just send him to me. (*Laughing.*)

M LOY. Yeah (*laughing*). That's true. As a 2T. I called you: (*in a soft voice*) "Um, um, Ms. Rogers...can I, um, have this student..." It is true but...What else? You know, at least if he's in there as a 2T...

M GREEN. Ms. Rogers, can I ask you before you go, like, what are the requirements for them to get into peer tutoring?

M LOY. 3.3.

V ROGERS. Well, that's not that...it's not true.

M GREEN. Not...not...I mean not students in terms of grades but I mean like, not coming when they're supposed to be coming.

V ROGERS. Oh yeah.

M GREEN. Ever.

J FOX. Let me tell you, all my kids that have been...

V ROGERS. I know (*to MG*).

J FOX. All the kids you've sent me with regards to peer tutoring have been top notch.

V ROGERS. Thank you.

J FOX. And that's...that's a good thing.

M GREEN. Third period in peer tutoring is not a good idea.

V ROGERS. Yeah. I don't think it...

M GREEN. They just go to lunch.

V ROGERS (*still standing, prepared to leave*) Can I say this? The first time I was, um, out of the classroom as a classroom teacher, I had been twenty-six non-stop years in the classroom. And so, I became a teacher coach working primarily with the teachers who were my focus. I really thought, I don't think I thought it consciously but subconsciously, I thought...I thought everybody did what I did. I mean, I went in in the morning and when the bell rang, I closed my door. And we worked...

M LOY. Bell to bell.

V ROGERS. ...and when the bell rang, I opened the door. You know. It amazed me. When I was out in the hall and around the building, I'd pass these two or three teachers talking and I'd be gone twenty or thirty minutes and I'd come back through and they'd still be talking. Hadn't moved. And I'd...you know, and I thought, "Gee, I didn't know people did that kind of stuff." So, it gave me a different perspective. But I also never realized that I always looked at every situation that went on in school through the filter of the classroom teacher. But then, when I was no longer the classroom teacher, I looked... through another filter. And people, who had always, we had seen eye to eye, because I was in the same school, suddenly I was seeing it through a different filter. And so that has made me try...when I disagree with guidance, or I disagree with

administration, or I disagree with whoever, I realize that they're probably looking at it through the filter of what theirs is. And sometimes it's really...almost diametrically opposite. You know?

J FOX. Right, right.

V ROGERS. And the guy with the highest paygrade is going to be the one calling the shots. I mean, it's just a fact of life. If, if you work for an industry it's the truth. The CEO's got more power than the guy down on the floor in the business. And so your decision is: "Do I want to be a part of this great business? Or do I need to move on?" And we got some people that need to move on. I mean we all know that we do. But we got a lot of good people...

M GREEN. Yeah.

J FOX. And we do. Yes.

V ROGERS. ...that need to hang around. And, you know, if we could help each other, help 'em hang around...you know, it would help a lot. I'm out of here. Bye, y'all.

Z CROWDER. Thank you very much.

M LOY. Nicely put.

V ROGERS (*leaving*) I'll see y'all.

J FOX. I just want to finish this up...

Z CROWDER. Have a good holiday.

J FOX (*speaking directly to ML:*) I have a dual degree. I have a double major. I have theater. I have communications. I never had one communications degree in my theater degree. And I never had one...theater...theater class in my communications degree. They're totally different. It's like apples and oranges. So, I, I just think that was...it would be setting him up for failure, that's all.

M LOY. But then everybody looks at theater as, "It's just theater." Put him in there. He just has to act. He has to stand there. So...

J FOX. That's not fair.

M LOY. It's not fair. I'm telling you how it's perceived. And the world is the world...of perception...so you feel this...

J FOX. But you shouldn't do that.

M LOY. No. One shouldn't do that. It's true. I'm not going to...

M GREEN. (*Laughing.*) I like how she phrased that...very carefully.

M LOY. Yeah.

J FOX. Yes. You phrased it nice.

M GREEN. "You shouldn't do that." "But one must..."

M LOY. It...it's...

J FOX. But, at, you know, at, by that reckoning, you could basically take a creative writing and put him into an English Honors. There you go...

M LOY. Only if it's an Honors level. We have to start with...but I, I know...

J FOX. Okay. Or creative writing into an English because it's totally two different things.

M LOY. I have done that depending on whether it's an EOC.

J FOX (*muttering under his breath*).

M LOY. You...we get kids who are on year-long schools and they come to us and we're on a semester. So, they're year long, they've had this much of year-long (*indicating with her hands and spreading them wider to demonstrate her point*), we're on a semester and at the end, so, they've had this much of English. So, you're supposed to put them in that English class? According to the county mandate, "Yeah, you're supposed to put them in that English class," because when it was an EOC you were supposed to put them in there. Well, that's ridiculous. You set that kid up for failure. There's this much of curriculum missing that he has yet to be taught. Or...any of the...you know, a foreign language, or whatever.

A KOBE. It's worse. A foreign language is worse...

(*Everyone talking at once.*)

J FOX. Oh yeah. Because it's like math. It's like math.

M LOY. Oh, it's horrible. It's horrible.

M GREEN. Sure.

A KOBE. They build it up. "Do you know this?" "No." "Did you know this?" "No."

M LOY. It's scaffolding. You miss all of that.

M GREEN. So then they can't get...it's hard for them to catch up.

J FOX. It's like building a house---foreign language.

M LOY. Where...if you were guidance and this kid, an eleventh grader came in...

A KOBE. ...she never knew the basics.

M LOY. But an eleventh grader comes in and they're in, let's say, Math 3, English 3, one elective that we don't offer at our school like. um...

J FOX. Pottery.

M LOY. Oh, whatever. Yeah. Exactly. Swimming or something ridiculous. And some other thing that they love to do that we also don't offer. So, now it's November...and that kid comes in. What four classes are you going to give him? Because he's coming from year-long, seven classes.

M GREEN. I don't know.

M LOY. Exactly.

M GREEN. I don't have a degree in that.

(Laughter.)

M LOY. No, but my point is...even if you have a degree in that, it doesn't answer the question.

J FOX. No, but, you, you are also mandated in whatever they come in with...you are...you are mandated to put them in the courses...

A KOBE. You know how to play with it. You know how to play the game.

M LOY. I do know how to play with it. After a number of years you learn. And, I just sent another email that said, "Do I have to put them in this EOC class because this is really ridiculous." And, no you don't.

M GREEN. Are...are other schools...

M LOY. Going through the same thing?

M GREEN. ...are all the other schools in the state semester based?

J FOX. No.

M LOY. No.

J FOX. No...

M GREEN. Just our county? Or some counties...

J FOX. Well...no...it depends on schools. In James...

M LOY. James is on year round.

J FOX. In James you've got year round. Mt. High was a semester and went to an A/B schedule. I mean they're all different in James.

M LOY. So imagine if you come, and we...most of our kids come from Texas, Florida, Kansas, Seattle, Washington, uh...we...you know, from all over the place. Because they're military. And then you have a document called, "The Memorandum of Understanding" that says you have to give them certain things because they're military which means it's not their choice to move. Which means...

M GREEN. Don't talk to me. Talk to him *(indicating JF)*.

M LOY. Yeah. But, and so we have to put them in those classes.

J FOX. But, it's apples and oranges. It's apples and oranges. Because in Human...in, in Communications you're dealing with triads and dyads and all this other stuff and ways of communicating and theater, you're doing stage theater stuff. It's totally different.

M LOY. It is different.

J FOX. It's completely different.

M LOY. But it's...it's not any closer to Math 3. You know, so I can't...

J FOX. We can't put him in Math 3.

M LOY. That's my point. No. Cause...Crowder used to say (*pantomiming holding a phone to her ear and whispering*) "What are you putting him in here for? Do you know where we are? What are we reading?" And that's from school to school even. What have they read?

(*Everyone talking at once.*)

M LOY ...and I thought that's what this Common Core stuff was.

M LOY. I kind of agree with that. I think teachers should have freedom but it's helpful if there are certain things that are required...

M LOY. Common.

A KOBE. Common. Voila.

M GREEN. Even if, okay, let me put this out. In Brandt County, they still haven't updated our recommended reading list for Common Core.

J FOX. I know.

M GREEN. So the problem is, the Middle School is taking all of our books. And they're like, "Well, this is following Common Core because the rigor went up."

M LOY. Oh so it went down in grades...

M GREEN. So I emailed Agnes Clark and I said, "So, do we have a new one?" "No." Okay, so now we have nothing to teach.

M LOY. No wonder you're stuck.

M GREEN. I'm like, "What are we supposed to teach?" I mean so...

M LOY. Because there's nothing mandated...

M GREEN. Right. There's nothing mandated. People just do what they want. Like, wouldn't you agree?

J FOX. Oh yeah.

M GREEN. Which is nice to a degree to an extent. I mean, I'm not...I like teaching what I want. I know you liked teaching what you want when you were there (*indicating ZC*). But...

J FOX. I mean, I just ran into Gatsby...

M GREEN. But, but, but...you need to have...there needs to be like some common text that from year to year you can build on. Like I can say, "Remember last year when you read *Romeo and Juliet*? Well, this is kind of like that." Or whatever.

M LOY. Sure, sure.

M GREEN. if they haven't read it, they can say, "I never read it..."

M LOY (*Directed to AK.*) Do you, do you have a lot of leeway in language?

A KOBE. Yes, I built my study guide on the pacing guidelines only a couple of years ago. But I went to a conference to see what I need to do to adjust it, build it and go back and what I feel like, at his level, they need to know. We've got the textbooks. And some other...

M LOY. Do you get to use the textbooks?

A KOBE. Sometimes.

M LOY. So many...

A KOBE. Sometimes.

M LOY. So many classrooms don't. And I know that...I don't know if that bothers me or doesn't bother me. Because textbooks were something that I thought were really valuable. Because I had to see it. And I...

A KOBE. Some students need it.

M LOY. Yeah. And I don't think...

A KOBE. They want to go by it. But it doesn't help a lot. They need to add more.

M GREEN. Well, here's the problem with that...here's the problem with that: If they're not giving us funding for textbooks...

M LOY. Right.

M GREEN. ...and you don't have technology in your classroom that means you're allowed to be making copies. And you're only rationed a certain amount of paper and copies...

J FOX. That's right. That's right.

M GREEN. ...and so...

M LOY. That's another issue.

M GREEN....and also...it seems wasteful, too, like a textbook you purchase and it's going to last you, what, however many years...

M LOY. The papers are going to end up on the floor, in the book bag...

M GREEN. In the trash. Exactly. It's wasteful. So that's my issue with that. I mean, I have a one to one classroom so for me it's not a big deal unless something's not working.

J FOX. Well, here's...

M LOY. The whole textbook thing bothers me.

J FOX. Let me tell you this real quick one. Let me tell you this quick story. This actually happened at a certain high school in James County. Um, I told you this story. I told you, you may...you (*indicating AK*) don't.

A KOBE. No.

J FOX. This is what happened. Ah, they thought, the school was thinking, “We can save the County thousands of dollars...”

M GREEN. Oh, you told me this.

J FOX. “We can save them thousands of dollars. All we need to do is when the last teacher leaves the school, let’s turn the air conditioner off, close everything up and then go away. Just, just like we usually do. But turn the air conditioning off.” Hello? North Carolina? The humidity?

M LOY. Oh, huge humidity.

J FOX. They came back, everything was molded over. They saved the bill on the air conditioning but they had to get a HAZMAT team to come in, to clean all the walls, to clean...take all this mold out, throw all these books out that were molded over. They...they created another problem, you know...and you get these bright eyes...

M GREEN. For trying to save a few pennies.

J FOX. ...who can go back to their constituency and say, “My...my...”

M LOY (*in a country accent*:) “We saved...”

J FOX (*picking up the country accent*) “We saved this amount of money.” Meanwhile they don’t say, (*in normal voice*) “Yeah, but you also spent this amount of money because of the problem you compounded.” (*Silence.*) Sorry, but...(*claps*).

M GREEN. No, but they do. They try...they’re trying to save money in ways that are not...

J FOX. And I get it! But it’s asinine! And then you don’t have books...for English.

M LOY. Whenever I think about it...

J FOX. It’s insane! It’s insane!

M LOY. ...it breaks my heart. And then I wonder if I’m old fashioned, you know, because...I need a textbook. I need to know what the table of contents says so that I can look at where we’re going, where we’ve been. Especially as a language major...I feel like... (*hand gestures*) anything.

A KOBE. I have one student, very quiet, very...no, the textbook got the basic stuff but sometimes you need to add some more, to adjust it but this boy cannot go away from his textbook. When he come, first thing in the morning: textbook.

M LOY. That’s another thing, if it’s...

A KOBE. Every day, he’s the first to come. When I’m not there, he’s next to the door, on the floor. And open textbook. “But this, Dr. Kobe, I don’t see this in the textbook.” For everything I...he need to find it...

(*Laughter*)

A KOBE. He need to find it. “No, John, I do not...”

M LOY. There are things that are subjective.

A KOBE. For him, NO...it got to be here...“I don’t see...” Or sometimes I teach, two, three days later, but, “I remember you teach this but I did not see it in the textbook,” and sometimes it’s not in the textbook. So I need to find a way to show him that, okay, what but I have to show him this is part of the curriculum ...this is part of the course. Everything is not in the textbook. We’ve got to, you know, add stuff...this boy, finally I say, he’s got the textbook, because we don’t have enough, I keep it under the desks, I let him take it...take the textbook every time. So every time, I teach sometimes if I cannot find it in the textbook, I give him a referral and his parent buy it. They buy the book (*snaps twice*).

M LOY. Really?

A KOBE. Oui.

M GREEN. Where’s he from?

A KOBE. He’s a double China...

M GREEN. Ohhhh. I was going to say, “I know he’s not American”.

A KOBE. So far for the semester, I think they bought at least five textbooks, not textbooks but French...

M LOY. I know who that student is. He did the same to me.

A KOBE. Every time I give a title, two weeks, he got it. Two weeks he got it. So, you know, some kids, they really need something to go by.

J FOX. Yeah.

A KOBE. A picture...it looks like it doesn’t...when you explain it and he doesn’t see it in the textbook, I say, “I know French, John. This is what I know...”

M LOY. “This is what I know.”

(*Laughter.*)

A KOBE. “French is what I know.” One time I said, “Please, John, trust me.”

(*Laughter.*)

M LOY. It’s true.

A KOBE. They laughed, they laughed, they laughed. And they, “Why won’t he do it?” They said, “Yeah, yeah, Dr. Kobe have a seat while we explain this. “Trust me, John, I know what I am teaching...”

M LOY. I’m a brilliant man.

A KOBE. I know it. Oh no, it is...(laughing).

(*Brief silent pause.*)

A KOBE. Yeah, when it comes to... I didn’t really like when we said in the exam, when they do survey, like Teacher’s Working Conditions...

M LOY. Yes

A KOBE. They don't ask the right questions.

J FOX. Yeah.

M LOY. That's another thing. Good point.

A KOBE. They don't ask the question we want to answer.

M LOY. That's valuable.

A KOBE. Voila. They ask the question they want us to say something to go by what we say. We...I never find what I want to say.

M GREEN (*Laughing*) No.

J FOX. Yeah, yeah.

A KOBE. No, I have some answer I want to tell them...to write it...

M LOY. Give me an open space (*writing gesture*), right?

A KOBE. Voila. Let them ask this question, I will answer it, but they just, "Blah, blah, blah." They just...this is not what we want.

M GREEN. Well, do you...

A KOBE. Honestly.

M GREEN. Do you...

M LOY. "Are you scared of working in your school?" "No. But give me some books."

M GREEN. Do you guys feel, like, conflicted, too? I feel conflicted when I fill that thing out because I don't want to make my school sound bad. 'Cause it's not a bad place. I love coming to work every day. But, do you know what I mean? It's like, you want to give a critique but you don't want to make Midlands sound that bad...

J FOX. Yeah, yeah.

M GREEN. ...because you don't want them to be, to say, "Wow, what's going on over there that it's that bad."

M LOY. And it isn't sometimes.

M GREEN. And it's not, it's not that bad.

A KOBE. Midlands is not bad.

M GREEN. Like there are things that need to be fixed...

M LOY. "Cause it may be all over...in every high school.

Z CROWDER. And that's...I mean that was the...and I'm trying not to talk much...

M LOY. No... please do.

Z CROWDER. ...but, I think, I mean for me...it was that it doesn't...it's complex. Like all of this is so complex. And it's complex on a different day.

M LOY. The layers upon layers upon layers.

J FOX. Yeah.

A KOBE. Yeah.

Z CROWDER. It's different on every day. So, for me...it just...I'm not opposed to...like, if those are useful to get to some responses, you know, that could maybe make change---which, again, I'm not entirely convinced of---but, um, it just doesn't come close...so, this to me is complex. You know what I mean? I mean, it's...it covers every condition of teaching and they all go together in all kinds of weird and interesting ways. But...

M LOY. Tentacles upon...

Z CROWDER. It just...yeah...and you know, and even your feelings about stuff change when you listen to other people. I mean to me, the world is complex. You hear a story and it changes your mind...sometimes, you know, so that's what I was shooting for and this has been amazing. Because this has sort of captured that...but that was my problem, is that you can't simplify it to just...

A KOBE. No.

J FOX. No. You can't. And I think that's part of the problem. I think part...that, that the powers that be are trying to simplify it and that you can't. And I think they're wasting time doing that, too. I think they're spinning tires trying to simplify something and you can't.

A KOBE. We...we do this survey for since I've been here. Every year we do it...

M LOY. And we always wonder what it does or what...

A KOBE. Every year we do it. And we never see any change.

M GREEN (Laughing) Yeah.

J FOX. Yeah.

A KOBE. Why? And, that...okay, (*assuming position of administration and snapping*) "Teachers, you're very good at planning. Do it. We need one other person. We do one other person."

M GREEN. Do you remember last year when we even had to do the practice one?

(*Laughter.*)

J FOX. Yes.

A KOBE. Zan...

M GREEN. I mean that one was actually maybe more useful than that real one in the end. Because, right? Because they were kind of trying to change things so our answers would change by the end.

A KOBE. It, uh...

M GREEN. That was the intention, of course.

A KOBE. If we do a survey, we need to see a change...

M GREEN. That's what I think.

A KOBE. This is...this influences us, you know, to keep dre... but we do it and there is no change. And, uh, as a teacher, I think we know what we are doing. Honestly. We are all professional. We know the content. We mastered what we are doing. We know it. We talk about lesson plan a long time ago. Lesson plan doesn't mean anything. Lesson plan is a paper. The way we teach, like me, the way I teach, this lesson plan doesn't affect the way I teach. At all.

J FOX. Yeah.

A KOBE. I teach the way I am used to teach...even though I go by the instruction, template, blah, blah, blah. I work, I work for Brandt County. If you want me to do something, I do it. But my style, my strategy of teaching, still the same.

M LOY. And that's personal.

A KOBE. It's personal. And it works. For me, it works.

M GREEN. See and I think...I think...

M LOY. Well it works for your students, too, because it reflects that.

A KOBE. Exactly...

M GREEN. So you've been...how long have you been teaching, Dr. Kobe? How long have you been teaching?

A KOBE. This is my tenth year.

M GREEN. Tenth year. So ten years. So you probably do have a style figured out. I think sometimes, well, I...I don't...I don't think I use the lesson plan, really. But, but that stuff that we learned in order to prepare us to do the lesson plan, I think I've tried to incorporate some of that...

A KOBE. Some of that, yeah.

M GREEN. And some of the stuff I like, some I don't. You know? I think it's help...I think...I don't know. It has the right intentions, you know what I mean. I think it's helpful for younger teachers...

J FOX. Right

A KOBE. Exactly. Still trying to find a style, which one is good, blah, blah, blah.

M GREEN. ...who are still figuring out...yeah, trying to figure out what works.

M LOY. What gives them options.

M GREEN. Yeah. I think it's good. Maybe, so maybe the key is we should have different, different levels of teachers. Like beginning teachers, yes, maybe you need more structure.

M LOY. This...

M GREEN. Maybe experienced teachers, you don't need so much structure. You know it.

M LOY. Let me think.

M GREEN. Yeah.

M LOY. Yeah. Let me use my own thoughts.

A KOBE. It's, uh, I think they need to consider me, we, I think where we work is not bad. I like where I'm working. Honestly. If you compare it to other school.

(Pause.)

Mr. Shavira...you know Mr. Shavira? Mr. Shavira resigned.

M LOY. Exactly.

A KOBE. Now, we had a conversation, he's basically agreed to, he's coming back next year.

M LOY. Oh he is?

A KOBE. He's coming back next year...

M LOY. See he was at...I thought he was at an early college, but he wants to come back?

A KOBE. Yeah. He is good there. He knows he can get paid a little bit more, when it comes to supplemental of the staff. But, the kids...he's at some school he don't know the kids...

M Loy. Really?

A KOBE. We talked....

M LOY. 'Cause this is a harder level to teach than a high school.

A KOBE. Yeah, yeah. So, we talked to him, he said, "No," he's, he's coming back.

M LOY. Thank you, thank you.

A KOBE. He wanted to come back next semester but they said no.

M LOY. Next year.

A KOBE. That's going to be back for another school but next year, Shavira will be back. In August, Shavira will be back...

M LOY. Thank you. So the math department is coming back...

A KOBE. The school is not bad. We got bad kids, we got good kids, too. We got, in each class we got kids who really want to learn. And this make a balance, you know. Some of them cuss, use bad words.

M LOY. Well, I think we're easy...

A KOBE. Some of them come and say, “Sorry about what...” you say, “No,” it make you feel like at least...

M LOY. They care.

A KOBE. ...they care.

M LOY. Enough to want...

A KOBE. They always surprise...this year I got a bag of card, thank you Dr. Kobe, blah, blah, blah. I even got a gift card.

M LOY. Yay!

(Laughter)

A KOBE. I have a gift card. I said, “Ooo, this will help me get some gas.”

(Laughter.)

A KOBE. You know, at least you see that. Even though some of them figure, so this or that. You have some student who take advantage of what you do. You know? Yesterday I have this kid who come, I think I teach her six years ago.

M LOY. Came to visit?

A KOBE. Came to visit. And she’s in the army. This was a student I cannot believe she can be who she is now. She’s always sleeping...smoking...a female student. When she comes, you know, you can see that she, she’s smoke, but you cannot do anything. She saw me in the mall, a few weeks ago, she’s coming from military training, they train her and she got to come on base, you know?

M LOY. Mmmhmm.

A KOBE. Said, “Can I come in your room?” Said, “You are more than welcome to come, it’s fine.” She was scared, she think I was going to say “No” because she was among the students I really don’t like.

(Laughter.)

M LOY. Because she slept through your class.

A KOBE. Honestly. And she know that I don’t really like her. Because she smoke...she’s disresp...she could say anything in class when she’s mad. She can say anything. So I said, “No, you can come...” I thought she was just kidding. She showed up. With three colleagues, all of them in uniform. She came, got this sticker downstairs, “Visitor.” Said, “Oh...here is she.” I was scared because, you know, you don’t know what she can say at any time.

M LOY. How many years ago did she graduate?

A KOBE. She graduated in 2008. Yeah, 2008.

M LOY. Wow. So she’s grown up, okay.

A KOBE. So she's grown up. She...so they come, I say, "Okay, I need to make sure she doesn't say everything she wants to say." Because this girl can...she...put...she doesn't have a (*making a rolling motion with his fingers*). So, yeah, "This is my teacher." She wanted to show her desk. Because it hasn't moved from the row in ten years. This is the same room I've been in ten years now...

M LOY. You're lucky.

A KOBE. So she went there, said, "Yeah, I was sitting here. Dr. Kobe was picking on me every time. You don't like me, Dr. Kobe." She said that in class. I said, "No, you cannot say that now." "Honestly, I don't think you like me when I was in class, you know." Just, you know, you talk, the experience, she started talking, talking. And you know what, she's making extra three hundred every month because she speak some French.

M GREEN. Wow.

A KOBE. I didn't know that...

M GREEN. Yeah.

A KOBE. ...in the Army they pay you extra for a foreign language.

M LOY. Well, if you test in a certain level, you may be able to use it.

A KOBE. I cannot believe that. She said that in class yesterday. She said, "I need to confess. I'm getting extra three hundred every month..." just because she knows French and it...

M LOY. So more of it must have sunk in...

A KOBE. Voila. She comes, she talks, all of those times...about training, "It's hard, I was going to quit," blah, blah, blah. "But I think about my kids..." by the time she was about eighteen, she was pregnant. She was pregnant. They got married. They divorced then...

M LOY. A whole lifetime since 2008 (*laughing*).

A KOBE. But, this was like, uh, a big experience...she talked a lot. She's responsible, she's civil, she's a...the training was the worst part. For, you know, after the training, now she's fine. She has her own life. So, once when she left I said, yeah, you cannot know when you be nice to someone, you don't know what someone can...I cannot believe Janelle is at this level. Once she left, I said, "Whoa. Really." She was like, I figured I'd pass her...

M LOY. At the bottom...

A KOBE. Yeah. I just passed her. Because, you know, as a person, she causes you lots of stuff but she's...she's a good, you know, good girl...can sometimes if she wants can do some stuff.

M LOY. That's amazing.

A KOBE. Yeah, just let her pass French 2, 'cause she need to graduate to go on. It's okay. Just 70. Go. And she come and, "Feel free...Can I give you my phone number?" I said, "Okay." She give me the phone number, "Call me anytime if you want me to come and talk to your students and show them that you can do something in this life." I said, "Whoa."

M LOY. It's the ones you never think.

A KOBE. Yeah. And, so, that was my day yesterday and I said, “Hmmm.” And she’s on duty, she’s a Seal, you know.

M LOY. Yeah.

J FOX. The ones you don’t think.

M LOY. That is the ones.

J FOX. This has just happened to me. Um, we did this little thing where we do a...we do a...I have them write a monolog. And it’s very personal. And...there was this one student that was very...very quiet, to themselves, and...and kind of removed and all that stuff. You know, I...you can always fish them out and...I, I know ‘em. You know. And I said something to her during...’cause I critique them all right there. And I said, “For as quiet as you are,” I said, “I think you just...” this was the critique, I said, “I think you may have just found your voice.” And I think something happened. Because, then, fast...that was...that was September, fast forward to today, I got this Christmas card from that student...I didn’t, it wasn’t even...it was on my desk. I didn’t even know who did it. And I opened it up and inside it said, “You helped me find my voice.” And it was the one you never thought.

A KOBE. Yeah, so...

J FOX. It was the one you didn’t think. And I was so floored by it. It made my day. It really changed me.

M LOY. It is the ones you don’t think.

J FOX. Yeah. I’ve got a short list, I’ve got a little long list of them now, of the ones you just don’t think and then all of a sudden, something clicks on and then (*snaps*).

M LOY. I had a senior come in, you know we had the two deaths this year...

J FOX. Yeah.

M LOY. ...one from suicide and...which may or may not be valid, but and another one, so one was a senior and one was a freshman. And a friend of the senior’s that had passed came in---’cause I had a bunch of kids in my office and they were all sitting on chairs and some were on the floor and it’s a small room---so the one sitting right next to me looked at me and...he, for some reason, was helping...talk through to the other students in there about what was going on. And he looked up at me and he said, “So, Ms. Stubbs, do you remember me?” And I’m thinking, “Oh my God, ten years. Which one are you?” I cannot remember. And, you know, so you try and say innocent, “Okay, Jonathon. Tell me. What it is...what is it I’m supposed to know? Refresh my memory.” And I always use the, “...cause I’m old. Okay, just tell me.” And he said, “You know, four years ago my Dad committed suicide. And you were the first one I came to that next day. I came in and we talked about it.” And I said, “You know, Jonathan, I’m sorry, I don’t remember that exactly. I don’t. But I do remember...” And then he started talking and I said, “Yes,” he gave me the details and the details were pretty gruesome and that of course was when it hit me. So, I said---he was in the process of helping everybody else in that room---he said, “You know, all the things I’m saying are the things you said to me when we were talking through that at this point.” And he said, “And, you know what, I’m thinking I want to be a therapist.” He said, “because I’ve lived through some of these things and...” And what he was

saying was good. I mean it was good stuff. It wasn't...it was solid, it was healthy, it was positive. Um, he said, "I know how long this takes. I get the idea of what grief is. I know, you know, my Dad and all that. And I've never...I never really knew my Dad and, you know, he had all kinds of other things going on in his life..." So, it says to me, "It's the ones you don't expect." I, I, I just...

J FOX. Yeah.

M LOY. ...just sitting there, and I...I'll never, I looked down and I said, "Jonathon, I don't remember. I'm sorry. Right?" And, "Yeah, Ms. Loy. You're the one...I came to." So, who knows? You don't know when you do it. Which is why...and you know that (*indicating ZC*) when...when you just have to be positive. And you have to keep that...that thing going that says, "You're valuable and you're valuable. And you're important." And...and never let that be the thing that makes them any less of a person, you know, or less important. Because they do...they're, they're so hungry. You know?

A KOBE. Teaching is...I think teaching is a good job, you know? Sometimes, you see...they grow up...sometimes as soon as you see them, they're three times myself. They change, they've got the family, and sometimes, "...But you didn't change, Dr. Kobe. You are still like you were eight years ago."

M LOY. Why do they think we change? Right?

A KOBE. No, they expect me to change.

M LOY. We're grown-ups. We started out grown-ups, we're going to probably...

A KOBE. And it's, uh...the kids are good...you like them...but for me, I think we need to place teachers at the right place. Sometimes I have the feeling that some people think, "Teachers are just stupid." I don't know...

M LOY. Babysitters...

A KOBE. We are not. We are not. We...no.

M LOY. We are not.

A KOBE. You know, some stuff, okay, "Do this, and do this". No! We need to be professionals. Especially those who are at the top...or whoever. Anyone can be anything. Anyone who decides can be a principal, can be, that's the same thing.

M LOY. That's a good point.

A KOBE. But a teacher needs to be placed at...you know, where they are supposed to be. We have to make a decision about what English teacher involved in. We need to be a part of any decision in which we are concerned. Don't just make a decision and, poof, because you don't have a voice.

(*Silence.*)

M GREEN. Right.

(*Silence.*)

A KOBE. We don't have a voice. We are among the best teachers, I think, in this county. North Carolina has got so many good teachers. But, here it looks like we don't have a backup. They can fire you anytime you want, they want. We cannot do anything even though, you know this is your career. This is your...we need a back-up. And we need for our profession to be respected like any other profession. But we don't feel it at all. We don't feel it. This needs to be...

M GREEN. No, it's always negative attention.

A KOBE. Voila. And, everything, uh, look at, like...

M LOY. When something goes wrong...

M GREEN. Yeah. It's always negative. It's like a witch hunt. They're like, "Find the bad teachers and put them on spotlight." They never highlight the good teachers.

A KOBE. Voila.

J FOX. Yeah. Yeah.

A KOBE. We do much. You know, at least find a way, a policy to keep teachers. The need to find the best way to keep teachers instead of letting them go away. A few years ago, I don't know last year, there was another state that was coming here to get teachers from North Carolina. I don't know if you...

M LOY. Oh yeah, remember...

J FOX. Texas.

M LOY. Yeah, Texas.

A KOBE. Why? Why do they do that? Because they know...

J FOX. They had a talent raid.

A KOBE. Voila. They know. And here, we, you know, we do more than any, many teachers in the state. I went, I don't know if I told you, Zan, you remember you make a recommendation for NEH. National Endowment of Humanities. Last year.

Z CROWDER. Maybe.

A KOBE. Yeah, in philosophy.

Z CROWDER. Yeah. Okay.

A KOBE. I went to a...I got the grant. It's a government grant, scholarship. Not scholarship. They pick every year, five...fifteen to sixteen teachers. Nationwide. This is the second time I go there. It's very competitive. Because if you get it they pay for ticket.

M LOY. We didn't know you got a grant...like that. That's amazing.

A KOBE. It's like...I don't know if I can consider it...but they pay for everything. Give you a little bit of money, they pay...I went one month in Boston. This summer.

M LOY. That's amazing. I never even knew that.

A KOBE. Its, uh, with, how do you call it in English...like a, like a program letter to language or...

Z CROWDER. That was the paper you wrote about World War II?

A KOBE. Voila. Voila, voila, voila, voila, voila.

M GREEN. Like the humanities?

A KOBE. The Humanities. Voila. So I did it. And you, I asked her, she, he wrote that...I was accepted so I went in Boston for a month. This is the time I write that, North Carolina is, you know we got teachers, but the state, for me, the state doesn't recognize it. By the office of teacher has. Honestly. Because when we talk, we discuss, we discuss about similar stuff, I get the chance to see a French teacher, who has been there twenty years so we shared. You cannot compare it. And when they see our pay...

M LOY. Oh, I'm sure.

A KOBE. No.

M GREEN. No, I know.

A KOBE. No. You cannot...No, no, no, no. They see what...I say, "This is what I'm making." And, uh, they don't even know, you know, this pacing guide stuff. "I've never used that. That is the first time I hear about that." Someone who teach for almost twenty-six years. "I heard about it in one of my conferences in, blah, blah, blah." I say, "This is what we do there." We need to be recognized. We need to be something valuable. They need to know that. You know, as a teacher, we got a lesson, give us the place we deserve. Okay. This is what I always expect to see in those survey stuff. We never see that. And even to raise teachers' money, you know how long they fight?

M GREEN. I know.

A KOBE. How long they fight just to...and even this raise, it doesn't make a difference. Ms. Rogers, I think she gets paid less now...

(Laughter.)

A KOBE. ...than before. She gets paid a little bit less...

M LOY. All I know is that I'm making what I made in 1989.

A KOBE. You see.

M LOY. Yeah. It's horrible.

A KOBE. And with that, they want us to do a survey. Zan, they want us to do a survey. For what? I don't think I'm going to do a survey this year. No, you do a survey seriously. Think about your teachers who are there...

M LOY. Let me ask the questions, right?

(Silence.)

Z CROWDER. There's...there's also an interesting question about the validity about such a survey when it's mandatory.

J FOX. Yeah.

Z CROWDER. Because that becomes...

M LOY. A survey...?

Z CROWDER. That's compulsory. I mean, "We want 100 percent completion" And then, sure enough, there was 100 percent. And so, the, you know.... And then there's a question about how, sort of, you know, valid the results would be when you force everyone. But that's a, kind of a whole other issue.

M LOY. But it isn't.

Z CROWDER. But...because it doesn't really matter. You, know, we want 100 percent...

M LOY. We don't care about what you say.

Z CROWDER. And we don't care about the validity. That that sort of skews the response because people just go take it.

M LOY. The whole statistics of the survey become invalid.

A KOBE. It's, um.... they need to review, as a policy, a lot of stuff, and just not with anyone, but those policy maker, or however you call them, news maker, whoever, who are there. I don't know how to call them...

M GREEN. Policy makers?

A KOBE. Police maker...

M LOY. I like police maker.

A KOBE. They do it and know that teacher, daily teacher, everyone go by that...

(ML and ZC get up and move around the table talking briefly about the food, obscuring AK's talking.)

A KOBE. I remember, there is, a sign. And on it, it says, "If you can read what I wrote, a teacher impact your life." On a, you know, a sign. Which makes sense. But, you know, put teachers...

M GREEN. I wonder that...I think, "Do these people forget..." Like, they all had to go through school once.

A KOBE. Of course.

M GREEN. And really they must have had teachers that influenced them in a positive way for them to get where they are. But they forget about that apparently. They're probably too arrogant...it's all them and themselves.

A KOBE. To discuss a raise...and in five, six years we didn't get a new raise and just to raise a little bit it was a big...They say "this", they say "that"...

M GREEN. Well, it's not just that. But, I mean...so, the pay is really low. And they don't give you any kind of money for other things. Like, in Ohio, many school districts will finance your education...to go back to school because they want their teachers to continue their education and keep learning.

A KOBE. Even here they, they try not to pay your Master's degree...

M GREEN. Oh yeah, that too.

A KOBE. They just make you...

M GREEN. Of course. They don't...and so they're not going to pay for advanced degrees. Which means that teachers are not being encouraged to do that. They're being told that's not important.

JF" Yeah.

M GREEN. When I think that's very important. I'm doing my Master's right now and I think I've learned, you learn so much.

A KOBE. Of course.

M LOY. Exactly.

A KOBE. Go ask a teacher to improve their degree. Get their degree...

M GREEN. Yes, of course.

M LOY. In fact that's where to acknowledge it. It really is.

M GREEN. Yeah. And then, so the pay is low. And then in the schools, all the resources are really low, so what do we all do? We all use our money...

A KOBE. Which is not enough.

M GREEN. ...to get our supplies for our classrooms. I added it up last year. I spent over a thousand dollars for my classroom.

A KOBE. See? Lucky you...

M GREEN. Did they? Did those people probably spend anywhere near that for their jobs? No, and they're making much more. So, come on. But, like, when the materials are not there; when you run out of paper, and you still want to make copies, well, you go buy paper. Or if you want to have markers for your board, or if I wanted just a set of books we don't have. I mean, and you just get it. I mean, I don't know. But that's not right.

A KOBE. Well, I don't blame the students. I work with students; student doesn't need to be perfect. But, THOSE in the administration or whatever they are. They need to know that teacher are teacher. And they don't take teacher on the road to put them in the classroom. Those teachers, they deserve where they are. Respect them. Know that those are colleagues. Whoever can be whoever. And go by this. Period. It's, uh, I like...our profession is good. I like it. But after all that, you know, we need to be a part of any decision in which we are concerned. Don't just make a decision and say, "Okay, stop meeting this, you are going to do this, you have to do this." No, we don't have to. Let us discuss

M GREEN. Yeah.

A KOBE. What is good, you know, according to this, this, this. Okay, vote. Instead of...okay...

M LOY. But that would be a union again.

A KOBE. We need a union.

M GREEN. Exactly. We need a union.

A KOBE. We need a union.

M GREEN (*softly*) Let's start one.

Z CROWDER. It's a right to work state. It's, it's, it's a law.

M LOY. Yeah. It's a right to work.

M GREEN. But that seems so crazy.

A KOBE. Because it works. Enough. Union like that, IT works. You have to raise teacher idea. You have to. And it works. Here. It's not just all about money...

M LOY. They do keep good teachers.

M GREEN. They have excellent teachers. And do you know how hard it is to get a job there?

M LOY. They wouldn't get...I was going to say...

M GREEN. You, as a new teacher, you cannot get a job there. That's why, you know what happens. This is what happens. All the people from up North come down here...

A KOBE. They don't go anywhere.

M LOY. Right, to start...

M GREEN. ...to get their first couple of years. They get their experience...

M LOY. They leave, and then they take it...

M GREEN. ...then "see ya, going back up there." And then you get more new teachers. And not that new teachers aren't good. But they're, they're never going to be as good as experienced teachers.

J FOX. But, but...

M GREEN. I mean you get better each year.

J FOX. Well, with...with...with the theater, because I had a lot of stuff with regards to my predecessor. And, you, you know...the...the thing that I, I, I understood very quickly...this is what I'm trying to tie in with that is, I understood very quickly that the reason the kids were angry was because of the fact that that teacher was not there. So I made it...come hell or high water, I was going to be in front of that class. I didn't care whether I was green or purple. I hacked and coughed a couple of times and I gobbled down tea to get me through it. But I wanted to make sure that my kids knew that I wasn't going to leave that position for that year, at least. You know? And then, one of my students came back---he's in my Advanced---and he said,

“One of the things that I, the reason I came back,” he says, “was because I knew when I walked through that door, you were going to be standing there waiting for us.”

And that’s true. I think that’s part of it, too, that there is such a high turnover that these kids have gotten so cynical.

M GREEN. Oh yes.

J FOX. Ours are very cynical...

M GREEN. Very, very.

J FOX. ...about that. “So how long is this one going to last?” You know?

M GREEN. I know. Think about you own---I mean, I don’t know where all you all grew up---but when I think of my high school’s experience, there was very few new teachers.

M LOY. Right, right. You knew who you’d get.

J FOX. Right. Yeah.

Z CROWDER. If your siblings had a teacher, you were going to get that teacher...

M GREEN. Yes. You knew...like I knew, sophomore year, I was going to take history with...you knew.

M LOY. Exactly.

JF Exactly.

M LOY. Ms. Lane taught all of my kids. You know? She did: Chemistry.

J FOX. Yeah, and you know, I think that’s part of it. You know, those, those kids have to...and I...still, I, I, I...that MRI that I had.

M LOY. And they don’t get the continuity at home either, so they’re looking for it someplace.

J FOX. Exactly. I know, and I get that, too. And like I said, that...that bothered me like crazy. Because I was going...and after that was over, I was coming back because of the fact I needed to be in front of that class. I was texting what I thought was Tompkins but here it was her home number, I was still so looped with stuff. And my fraternity brother said, “You’re not going anywhere. You’re going home. You’re not doing it.” But the, the thing is, is, it bothers me because I know that a lot of times, I think that us is a constant...and sometimes the only constant...

M LOY. That’s...Exactly.

J FOX. And it, it, it should drive us crazy. ‘Cause it does me. I don’t like being away from them. I don’t. I just don’t. And it drives me crazy. And I think that’s part of it: the turnover.

M GREEN. Yeah...I think, yeah, obviously it’s very harmful for the kids.

J FOX. Yeah.

M GREEN. It’s harmful for us as a school overall.

J FOX. It is, too.

M GREEN. Because...

J FOX. There's no continuity.

M GREEN. There's...within, within a single department, you can't even build the kind of unity and continuity you want. Like, as Department Chair, I can do...I can do backflips to try to get us all to be on the same page but it doesn't matter because next semester we're going to have new people and we're going to have to start all over again. It's so frustrating!

A KOBE. It's basically about the system because, like, in the North they keep experienced teachers. And that's why, you know, it's hard for a new teacher to get a position. Here, they're planning on letting the experienced teachers go away.

M GREEN. Because they cost less.

A KOBE. And...because they cost less. You hire a new teacher even if you are not competent, you are new, we pay you less. Let experienced teacher go.

M GREEN. And...

M LOY. How do we measure what that experienced and committed teacher brings? How do we get to measure that?

A KOBE. Someone like Ms. Rogers. Someone like that, we push the experienced teacher to leave, to retire. Which is not something that is happening enough. They get good, they get their money...we don't want to bring them to work. You see a teacher...

M LOY. So how do you measure? We...we have to measure differently.

A KOBE. It's, uh

M GREEN. Well, I don't think the testing they have is perfect, but I do think that that's one form. Experienced teachers are probably...well, the good teachers are probably going to have better scores than the ones that are inexperienced.

M LOY. Okay.

M GREEN. Don't you, I mean don't you agree?

M GREEN. I don't think it's perfect...

M LOY. Maybe not. It depends on what you give them. Look at Ms. Miller. She's got Algebra 1. How hard...Algebra 1 is the worst always to keep those. And she's been teaching for how many years and she's the department head. But she chooses to take that difficult task in Algebra 1. It is easier, I think, because you're creating...to teach the Algebra 2's or the Geometries, because from middle school, you don't know what you're getting. And a lot of those kids don't have those basic skills when they come into Algebra 1 in ninth grade. And that's just an example.

M GREEN. Yeah

M LOY. So, I...don't know. I don't know.

M GREEN. Well that's why they're measuring growth. Instead of proficiency.

M LOY. Right...

M GREEN. So...

M LOY. ...but what do you measure subjectively, what she gets in that class, to get a kid started?

M GREEN. No, I understand that...

M LOY. I know, I know.

M GREEN. Yeah, that cannot be measured. Well, that's supposed to be measured when they get to their evaluations. But, those are...whatever...

A KOBE. Lot of test...

M GREEN. I mean they come sit in your class, 45 minutes, once every two months. And they're supposed to see all of these things that you're doing all the time.

M LOY. And yet, whenever I go look for an administrator, they're always in an observation. Always observing, because we have so many teachers. So they're stuck...in all the junk that they have to do, too...

M GREEN. Well, you guys have a lot of junk, too.

M LOY. Oh! Too much junk!

M GREEN. So many times a kid needs a counselor and I call and I'm like, "Sorry, they're not answering."

M LOY. I...I feel terrible.

M GREEN. "I don't know what to do..."

M LOY. Or we're some place stuck with a kid...or, we're...

M GREEN. Well if you're with a kid, that's okay. That's what you're supposed to be doing.

M LOY. Well a lot of times I won't answer the phone because...

M GREEN. You have a lot of other tasks.

M LOY. We do, we do. But I won't answer the phone if I'm in there with a student...

M GREEN. Yes

M LOY. ...that I can't...

(Brief pause. JF prepares to leave.)

Z CROWDER. So Jim's leaving. I...is there any other story that anybody wants to tell before we wrap it up. I'm...

M LOY. You're done.

Z CROWDER. I'm starting to...

M GREEN. He's like, "Oh my gosh, it's going to take me..."

Z CROWDER. I'm starting to think about the transcription...

(Laughter.)

M LOY. It's good. Hey, you can discount anything. That's the good thing. As long as you have too much.

(Everyone talking at once.)

Z CROWDER. Yeah, it was fantastic. I have to figure out...It's funny...so the story I thought about telling...

M LOY. Yeah, what story do you want?

Z CROWDER. No, it's not a story that I want but it's something, when I...when I first started...was thinking about this, about teaching and teachers. Like, when I first started, I had the first...we moved from New Orleans, we had...it was me and my wife, we had a one-year-old child, and we moved to a strange town, Salisbury, North Carolina. And, um, because I had gotten hired by a guy who hired me basically as a lateral entry but I could teach Latin and English and he wanted that. And so, uh, the first couple of weeks were about like you expect. I went to the ten days of training and then, here you go, here's three classes and you're overloaded and so...

But, but, the...two weeks in, maybe a week and a half. Ten school days and you just feel like you're going to kill yourself. I had the coach across the hall, who was a football coach, um, offer me furniture, uh, I mean this is like a strange story. So his father-in-law had died and I followed him, in this new place, out into the middle of nowhere, um, to this double-wide, up on this hill. And we drove down this gravel thing...but he let me go in and pick out...and we had moved in literally one of those small U-Hauls that you tow behind...

M LOY. Yes, yes.

Z CROWDER. And that was all we had. And he just said, "Pick out whatever, you know, anything, you want." And the electricity had already been shut off. It was sort of this goldy-brown, dusty, kind of inside. And, so, I...but I got, like a dresser with a vanity mirror. I still remember it was this sort of mahogany red, cherry type of thing.

M LOY. I have that. I have that same piece. I think I got it after you sold it.

Z CROWDER. We sort of picked...and he helped me load it into my pick-up truck and I drove all this stuff home and we carried it around with us for a couple of other moves. And, within another couple of days the basketball coach came and he said, "You know, I'm redoing my basement and I have this pull-out sofa and sleeper and, um, do you want to come get it?" And it was the heaviest piece of furniture that we ever moved. Time after time...you know, it was this metal frame...

M LOY. Yes, and you stick with it for some reason...

Z CROWDER. ...and the mattress itself was so heavy that you could barely carry it much less the rest of the stuff. And, we did, we needed it. And we used it for guests and we...so, like...these people, within two weeks of being in a new...this new...but they were teachers. And they...that was, for me, what probably kept me in the field. You know, it wasn't...like, there's a...I think now a lot about academics and achievement and the achievement gap and the different political issues, but, for me, like, I grew to love it by staying in it and by becoming better at it. But what kept me in it was the community of teachers that I went into. And I mean, even at Midlands, where there's a lot of, sort of, um...tensions at times, between teacher factions, and with the last administration, there was kind of sides and stuff---I don't know what it's like now---but, um, it was still just the relationships and the way that teachers...there is a kind of community spirit. So that's sort of had a bearing on everything that I've done. Because, I...and it echoes a lot of what Dr. Kobe said, that, that we're not given our due, but we're treated as almost this subhuman, kind of, like babysitters. Or like I had this sociology professor who just called schools "warehouses for kids." And that's a...and a lot of times you feel like that, you're like, "Is that what I'm doing?" But it was the relationships that I forged with other teachers that really has always kept me in the field. And keeps me, when I could sort of go into higher ed. and do other things, still real interested in remaining in touch with, with doing what I like and where I feel more at home than anywhere else. So, sort of, that's my story. It didn't really, it doesn't have anything to do with academics so much as it has to do with...

M LOY. Emotion.

Z CROWDER. ...community. And, and you guys being here tonight...this is...I mean...teachers never fail me. You know what I mean?

(Laughter.)

Z CROWDER. They never fail me.

J FOX. Guidance counselors do.

M LOY. Yeah, that's true. Counselors always let you down.

Z CROWDER. People in high schools...

A KOBE. Especially this time.

M LOY. Exactly. Every time.

J FOX. We've got to talk to the bartender.

M LOY. I get it. You didn't bring enough wine, that's all I have to say.

(Laughter.)

Z CROWDER. It's very kind of personal to me, you know. This field, this whole job, this endeavor. And it's about the kids and it's about...partly it's about what it fulfills in me. It gives me a place. You know? So that's always...part of the way I think about it, too. But, so that's another way for me to say, "Thank you, guys."

M LOY. That's very poetic.

J FOX. Our pleasure.

As ZC moves to turn off the cameras the participants talk about the logistics for the next event. Everyone continues to eat and drink and there is a general buzz as the cameras switch off.

APPENDIX 2: TRANSCRIPT OF SECOND PERFORMANCE EVENT

1/16/2015

Banquet Room, The Meeting Place Restaurant, County Seat, NC

Dramatis Personae

Myrna Loy---Guidance Counselor

Dr. Arsene Kobe---French Teacher, Chair World Languages Department

Victoria Rogers---Educational Jack of All Trades, Servant Leader, Teacher

Jim Fox---Theater Arts & ELA Teacher

Marjorie Ryan---Spanish Teacher

Zan Crowder---Researcher and former Latin/ELA Teacher

The banquet room at the Meeting Place has been prepared for twelve people but only six are seated. There are two sets of doors, each with frosted glass panes. One door exits into a small hallway that leads to the kitchen and the other doorway, filled by a pair of French doors, leads into the dining room of the restaurant.

The square table is covered by a dark blue table cloth and set with numerous baskets of food resting on checkered paper. The fare includes standard pub food---appetizers, chicken wings, fried onions, etc. as well as a large bowl of Caesar's salad, bread, and two cheesecakes. The participants have already served themselves, family style and are in the process of eating when the taping begins. Each participant has an opaque plastic glass of ice water and each has ordered another beverage. Ryan, Loy, and Kobe each have a glass of red wine and the half emptied bottle stands between Loy and Kobe on the table. Zan has a glass of beer, Rogers has a glass of soda and Fox has iced tea.

Zan Crowder is seated at the corner of the table closest to the kitchen exit door. To his right, with their backs to the dining room doors sit Loy and Kobe. Opposite Zan sits Rogers with Ryan to her right and Fox at the farthest right. The side opposite Kobe and Loy is empty and there are two stacks of papers there---the consent forms; extras and those that have been completed by the participants. Extra plates, saucers and coffee cups are also on the empty side.

The room is pleasant, the lights slightly low but the walls are close to the table which occupies nearly the whole of the space of the room. The participants have room to push back from the table comfortably but there is then little room for the participants to pass behind the chairs.

As the event starts everyone is still eating and food is being passed occasionally throughout the event. Occasionally the participants speak while they are in the process of chewing or pause during speaking to swallow.

Z CROWDER. So thank you all again for being here. This is probably the last event of its kind, for this dissertation. Although, like I said, eventually what I would like to do...the idea originated with another scholar who said that in her hometown they actually just have people come to, kind of, there's a little stage in this town square and it's called "The Tell". And they just say, "It has to be eight minutes. It has to have a beginning, a middle, and an end." And you just sort of sign up and then you go and you just kind of tell. But, like on Saturday afternoon, people all go downtown and just sort of listen to each other's stories. And that was, kind of, the original idea but that was just...

(Eerie music is heard.)

Z CROWDER ...more than I could pull off, you know, so...

(In the background, Loy answers her phone and can be heard whispering, "Can I call you back?")

Z CROWDER ...um, hopefully this idea will just kind of move along. But anyway, so Jim, what were you saying?

J FOX *(clearing his throat.)* Well, I was just saying that, I was in the, um, I was...I gave my final theater final at the very end. It was third block. And I spoke to Pruett and said, "Look I need the theater for...to give the exam because they're all doing scenes and I can't do it in my hut for obvious reasons. It's too small. And she said, "Great. You're the only one in there." And I was like, "Good. Golden time." So, they're producing their scenes and they're putting these scenes on and I'm in the middle of, you know, rubrics in one hand and hand-held in the other, making notes as I can. And all of a sudden, the door opens...the...the front door opens, and there's Landry. And she says, "How many people are in this room?" And I said, "Uh, I'm, uh, finishing up a final." And she said, "Well, you're going to get people in here." I said, "I thought there wasn't..." She said, "Well, there's going to be people in here." I said, "Oh, okay, fine."

So, then, the sub kept coming in like every five minutes, interrupting me while I'm trying to get my final. And I said, "Look, you're going to have to leave until I can...I'm trying to watch them...I can't...just wait until I'm done." So finally at around 11 o'clock hit and I let them in and Brannagh, originally, Ms. Brannagh, she was subbing, I think, for Mr. Ailes, and it was...she had that large fourth block, you know, that big fourth block. And I, she's like, "Listen, that room is so small..." And I said, "Sure, come on in." And because it was just two...I know Ailes's kids, 'cause they all take theater.

M LOY. And she had them all day.

J FOX. I know. And I said...

M LOY. Which is another issue.

J FOX. And I said...

A KOBE. That was today, right?

J FOX. No. This was on...this was on Tuesday. Before it was...was it...was fourth block on Tuesday? Yeah.

M LOY. Fourth block was today.

J FOX. No. fourth block...no, no, we just had everybody fourth block while they made-up.

M LOY. Okay

J FOX. This was when fourth block had to get their testing out of the way. And, um, and I'm watching this. And more and more people are trickling in and trickling through. And the subs are just sitting there watching all these kids coming in and there's more and more kids coming. And I know full well what's going on here, they're just texting kids and saying, "We're in the auditorium, why don't you just join us?" I finally go to the sub and I said, "Look you've got to start...if these kids don't have a pass in their hand, you are going to have to tell them, they have to leave."

A KOBE. Voila.

J FOX. I, I said, "You can't just let them come in." And Ms. Lazar was there with her kids and I already had had them in because I...there was an overflow problem the day before. And I, I knew that. But there were all these kids coming in, more and more and more. And I was trying to work both doors: the back door of the auditorium and the front door of the auditorium, trying to figure out who's not and who is.

And then, finally, Heep stormed in and said, "What's going on?" He said, "You've got these kids going out the back door." I said, "Look," I said, "I can only do so much." I said, "There are too many people in here." And he said, "Yeah, you're right!" He says, "I thought you were going to be the only person in here." And I said, "Yeah, I was." He said, "Well, I'm going to get this taken care of."

Here, Landry made an executive decision, didn't mention to Pruett that she was going to put these people in here, 'cause Pruett came in and said, "Why are all these people in here?" And she started asking me. And I said, "Look, you're going to have to ask, you're going to have to ask, um, um Landry," I said, "Because she came in here and just told me I'm going to have more students in here." I said, "But I wasn't counting on this." She said, "Well I didn't hear anything about it. You need to clear this stuff through me." And I said, "Look," I said, "When an administrator comes to me and says, 'You're going to have more kids,' I'm not going to argue. You guys are supposed to..."

A KOBE. Get along. Communicate.

J FOX. I said...

A KOBE. You guys are supposed to get along. It's a mess.

J FOX. I said, "You guys are supposed to be communicating."

M RYAN. Something like that happened to me yesterday.

J FOX. Yeah. And I said, "You guys have to be communicating this stuff back and forth." I said, "Apparently she made an executive decision, didn't tell you." I said, "I'm taking my kids back to the hut because this has got trouble written all over it." And I did, and apparently there was some trouble down there after that. I...

M RYAN. Well...

J FOX. It's obvious, the upper administration has to communicate. They have to. Otherwise, that's going to happen. And even when they all sat through, when Pruett said, because Pruett made it very clear, "I'm not sending kids to the auditorium. It didn't work last year. We're not doing it." 'Cause remember during the faculty meeting, she said that.

M RYAN. But she sent an email out.

J FOX. Oh, I know it, too. I know that. And even with that, it was ignored.

A KOBE. It's kind of, uh...and not only that, you know, when it comes to, like of discipline referral...

(A loud trumpet blast plays. Everyone laughs.)

J FOX. That's my phone. *(Springing from his seat to reach in his bag.)*

M LOY. We liked it.

M RYAN. Discipline

J FOX. That's a friend of mine. *(He turns his phone off and puts it away.)*

A KOBE. If I get a chance, I will suggest that there is like, what do you call it, a barrier. Because sometimes you write, like, two students up, because of some stuff they did. One of them might go to ISS, one of them doesn't get anything. Sometime, even the one who did the worse thing, he doesn't go to ISS, the other one to ISS. It's, it's not, you know, balanced, it's not equitable for me. I think they need to, like, "Okay, you do this, this is the consequence. You do this, this is the consequence." And all of the AP got the same rule, going by it. Sometimes a kid doesn't do much, they are suspended. And sometimes they did worse, nothing happens.

M LOY. Isn't that supposed to be a part of EVAAS...the what they call the EVAAS data. That everybody has the same consequences for the same...

A KOBE. Voila. But, I don't feel that.

M LOY. ...infraction or something.

A KOBE. Yeah, it doesn't...

M LOY. I don't know but I've seen that...

V ROGERS. The problem is you have personalities involved.

M LOY. That's a good point.

V ROGERS. And once person can tolerate more. Or more is more acceptable to them. Or...

M LOY. Or we know what works with a certain student.

V ROGERS. Or they have, you know, you've got a hundred things going and these fifty take more of your energy so even though these fifty are significant, you just, you know...

M LOY. That's a good point.

J FOX. But I've noticed, the discipline, if I write a kid up that has Pruett, that the kids don't even want to go to her. They're terrified of her. But, then, I send someone to Landry, Landry sends the kid back...

A KOBE. Sends them back.

J FOX. ...and says, "You didn't do any kind of, kind of, pre- anything." And I said...

A KOBE. Exactly.

J FOX. "Look, I gave him a detention." 'Cause I went after her afterwards and I said, "Look, I gave you a... I gave, I gave him a consequence." I said, "He was supposed to serve a detention, he didn't do it." She said, "Well, I needed to know that." I said, "Well, I wouldn't have referred him, otherwise." You know?

A KOBE. You don't have a choice. You go by his name. It goes by name, you know? You have to send some of them to her...

M LOY. Right, as far as that administrator.

A KOBE. Yeah, you send them sometimes, nothing happens.

V ROGERS. Well, I think, part of, you know how they assign them certain letters of the alphabet, just like you guys do (*indicating ML*). I think the philosophy behind that is, you will see the same students over and over and you will get to know them...

A KOBE. To know them...

V ROGERS. ...and, if, even, no matter what teacher they're from, if they keep coming to the same administrator, they're... But the reality is, administrator X, who is supposed to handle these, is at the County, or is here, or is tied up there. So somebody else handles them. So you still have a lot of...

M LOY. Overlap.

V ROGERS. Yeah.

M LOY. Well, and they took all of Ms. Pruett's discipline during this whole testing thing so that she could do testing. So all of those kids. And, did anybody get to them? I mean, that puts an awful lot more on each of the other administrators. You know, because that's one thing I noticed.

A KOBE. You know, discipline really help teacher. If it's straight it's well, you know, for all of the stuff. Sometime, don't feel like writing anything because you write...

J FOX. You know, you feel defeated in a way.

A KOBE. Yeah. You just, you try to deal with it until...

M RYAN. This one hasn't happened to me but I've heard...where, you know, someone wrote up a...a student and the administrator comes back to the classroom to ask the student, "Okay, tell me what happened?" And then, it's basically they believe the student and the student could come back to class. And they don't do anything about it. So then you look like a fool. So why even bother doing it?

M LOY. They actually bring them back in that ninety-minute block?

V ROGERS. Oh yeah. Sometimes very quickly.

J FOX. Or even worse, I took a stud...

M RYAN. And they say, "Okay we want to know what happened?"

M LOY. Is that in front of all the kids?

M RYAN. No. Outside.

M LOY. Okay.

M RYAN. But still, you know, it's like, it's your word against mine, so then why do I even bother telling you if you're going to turn around and believe the student...

A KOBE. The student.

M RYAN. ...and say, "Okay, come in." And...

M LOY. Well let me play devil's advocate. Just, just because...So, is it, do you honestly think it's believing the student or is it just to the point of, "On a scale of one to ten, I'm only going to take the eight, nine and tens and do something about it. The sevens...ones through sevens are going to stay in the classroom because the point is to keep a kid in the classroom."

M RYAN. But if it's done over and over and over again, what are we teaching the student?

J FOX. Yeah.

M RYAN. They can do whatever they want. Because seven is not important.

J FOX. I've got a couple of kids on the football team.

A KOBE. Football team.

J FOX. I've got a couple of kids on the football team that think they can do whatever they want in my room. I've written them up and nothing happens. We've already tried that, too, and look what happened. We got no response...

M LOY. We did. Went to the coach.

J FOX. ...from Reese. No response.

A KOBE. One of these kids, football, you know sometimes, I don't know. We need to go by the rule. You know, you play baseball, there is something you really need to have in order to stay with this kid.

M LOY. Well what's written is passing: three out of four.

A KOBE. But, now it's messed up. Because those kids, some of them all are in my class. They don't pass, they still play. And in addition to that...

M LOY. The thing about that is, they're passing the other three of the...and your class is the fourth class. So they don't need that as a core...

A KOBE. So they can...

M LOY. Sadly. So they feel like that one can...they don't have to worry about it.

A KOBE. Now I wrote the kid like two times...

M LOY. But here's what they don't understand about that: Just because they don't need a foreign language to graduate anymore, they need that to go to college. And they all think they're going to play college football, wherever they go. So, in order to get in, they've got to have that foreign language.

J FOX. Yeah.

M LOY. So that needs to be made clear to them. You know, if that's what you're after...not that we've had anybody, I'm trying to think, in how many years, that actually went and played college ball, whether it's D-2 or D-3...

A KOBE. It's selective. It's very selective. You need to at least...

M LOY. Because of what they're competing against is at such a high level with great grades and everything else. But my point is that the students don't understand that.

A KOBE. I have to call parents. The parent doesn't show up. Guidance help a little bit. Missed you all. "Okay, do good, okay?" And then I went to the coach. I tell the coach. The coach talked to him. And, I refused to, you know, to approve him for those JROTC stuff. I say, "No, you don't deserve...no, no approval. I refuse." This is a time the kid change.

M RYAN. Yeah.

A KOBE. After, you know, everyone...

M LOY. The consequences.

A KOBE. I say, "No, I'm not going to promote you. I need to have a reason to promote you. And this reason, I don't have it." Emilio was promoted and Coach Reese told him that the next time I go there and complained, he's out of the game. He changed because of it, you know, football.

V ROGERS. Well, you have to find out what's important to someone...

M LOY. And you drew the line.

V ROGERS. You have to find out what's important. 'Cause you can take a lot of things and they don't really care.

A KOBE. No, they don't care.

V ROGERS. It's kind of like kids being sent to their room at home, if they have a t.v. and a iPod and a computer and, you know, a door that closes then they don't have a problem with that. So you have to find what's important. But I want to say it's not only sports kids and it's not only, um, lower level students. Because in peer tutoring and also in distance learning, but more so in peer tutoring because they have more freedom moving around. They don't even want...some of them don't even take their little badge, and I'll say, "You know, you have to have that with you in case you get stopped." And they say, "Oh, I'm never stopped."

J FOX. Yeah.

V ROGERS. "I never get in trouble." So, yet, you know, and that's just as wrong as the other thing to me. You know, and the attitude is they're above, like, they don't care if I give you rules as long as it doesn't apply to them. You know what I'm saying? And they're the upper level kids. But...as much as I hate to say it, we have that in our own staff. You know, we have staff members who don't care what Ms. Ansley says or any assistant principal and we cannot...they can tell us all these things to do, as long as it's not them. So, what are we teaching the...it's not just kids.

J FOX. Mmmhmm.

V ROGERS. You know, somebody told me one day and...I don't want to say... Anyhow, now but I'm going to tell you the truth. I'm always cold. Everybody knows that.

M LOY. She's always cold.

V ROGERS. I wear multiple, multiple, multiple layers. And, um, one of the teachers said, "Ms. Rogers, why don't you bring a heater?" And I said, "Because we were told not to."

M LOY. That was a couple of years ago.

V ROGERS. I said, in fact, I said, "You know, I had a microwave and a refrigerator and they told us to take them home, and I did." And, we were, told not...and I never had a heater here but

I really thought about it. I did bring a heating pad in one time. And sat on it. But anyhow, she said, “Ms. Rogers, why don’t you just bring a heater and put it under your desk?” And I said, “Because they told us not to.” And she said, “Ms. Rogers, everybody knows you follow the rules. Nobody would believe it. Just do it.” Now, if she told me that...I’m just saying, that’s not right.

J FOX. Yeah.

V ROGERS. Even though I’m cold, that’s not right. You know? So, in other words, I can have my heater but you can’t have yours.

M LOY. Yeah, which is what...

V ROGERS. I mean, and kids feel the same way.

J FOX. And it trickles down.

V ROGERS. They can cut class. They can go to the bathroom, they can get out with their friends...they can, you know.

M LOY. Yeah, I can do that but nobody else can.

A KOBE. Every...everything.

V ROGERS. Let me tell you something. One of the girls we tested today, tested right by herself because she didn’t make it in time. So, she had to be tested separately. She was texting her friend before it started. I mean we hadn’t taken up the phone, we had just gotten in there, just getting our sign up and all. And she looked at me and she said, “What time do we have lunch?” And I said, “Well, that’ll depend on when you finish,” I said, “Because we’ll have to ask Mrs. Pruett.” Let me tell you what, she finished that test BEFORE the first break. Finished. Done. Over with. Closed the lid on that computer. And now the first words after I read all my stuff and we were done...

M LOY. “Can we go to lunch?” Yeah.

V ROGERS. I said, “When does your friend have lunch?” That was my thought. You know, she was just...It’s just an attitude but it’s a pervasive attitude. Which has absolutely nothing to do with what we were talking about...

J FOX. Nothing. But still...

M LOY. No, it really it does.

M RYAN. It does...

J FOX. But, it does. Because the...you’re right, it does...it starts at the top. And if you’ve got the faculty doing that, it’s going to trickle on down, all the way down. “Cause they...you know...performance studies...there’s a writer named, um, Stephen Sondheim who wrote, “Children will listen. And, careful what you say because children are listening.”

M LOY. Yeah. That's a good...

J FOX. And it's true.

M LOY. Well, how many learn to curse? They only hear it once. But, boy, they can say that word as fast as we all know it.

J FOX. Uh-huh.

M LOY. I actually had a student today, in response to what you're saying. And I think this is the hard part. Um, he isn't...number one in the junior class. Number one.

J FOX. Oh.

M LOY. And I introduced him to you because you happened to be there.

J FOX. Uh-huh.

M LOY. But he came in and he said, "Can we look at my schedule again?" And he had an opening. And he said, "I just want to take as many AP classes as I can."

Z CROWDER. Oh, heavens.

M LOY. And I said, "Okay, that'll be fine." And, the one block that was open was not the block that had the last AP course that he could've taken. So, I thought, "I will go to the teacher and I'll see if he can do this on his own in another block and I'll recode it and get permission, et cetera, et cetera." You know, to...because this kid is advanced and I'm going to do what I can do for this upper level tier of student.

So, we go up to the teacher and she says, "God knows, I really don't want to do that. It's not a great idea. There's a lot of reading. That be two AP History classes in one semester. Et cetera, et cetera." And I brought him back down to the office and I said, "Okay, what do you want to do? Because I know, if I don't put you in something that's challenging..." and I wanted to say, "You're gonna...you know..." And I said, "You'll play around. I know you. You will do the amount of required to whatever challenge I set for you. And if not, you'll go into some class and you won't care." And I said...and he looked at me...and the point of what I'm getting at is: he realized, after I said it and he understood it, "I'm only going to do what's required of me. Even though I'm number one in the class. And I've taken seven out of the eight AP classes. And I'm a junior. I still don't want to work that hard." And so I told him, and I said, "You're going to be competing with a level of student in the next two, three, four, five years...plus yourself. Yourself. Don't you want to be that...?" And he said, "Yes, you know what Ms. Loy? You're right. I...I really do just want to...I don't want to...I don't want to have to get up. I don't want to have to do this. I don't want to have to..." And then he said to me, "So, you know what? Maybe I should take that online Bio class first block instead of fourth block. And then I can do something fourth block that would require me to do something." And I said, "Well that's what I want to hear." So to get them to the point where...And most kids, at either end of that spectrum, don't...they will...they will rise to whatever we expect them to rise to. So if I bring it up...and the only reason I knew how to deal with him, because his dad and I have talked before. And I

know this kid. And I'm not about to let...but any other counselor or any other teacher doesn't necessarily know the kid's background, or know the conversation, or know what he's capable of, you know? And they're not going to set that expectation.

(Brief silence.)

And what about all of the other kids that need that? Where we say, "Yeah. Don't tell me...don't feed me that." You know, that's...at that upper echelon, as opposed to... And then what about the middle of the road kids? If we don't push them just enough to... And how much is enough?

And that's not even including all the...all the discipline issues that go on. And how much time we spend. With attendance. I spent all day on attendance issues for early grads. All day. Because these seniors think, "Shhh...I didn't have to do it." And now they're...*(panting as though panicked)*.

M RYAN. See, the thing is, that they, they have so many opportunities to redo this.

A KOBE. And they don't...

M RYAN. See, there's too many opportunities, you know, so, so...

M LOY. Right, if there's just one...

A KOBE. Just one, they would go by it.

M LOY. Saturday academy.

M RYAN. Yeah, Saturday. So there's Saturday academy. It's till five o'clock. Now, you know, they have all these make-up times. And it's wrong.

M LOY. The school and the principal looks bad...

M RYAN. I think it's wrong.

A KOBE. Yeah...

M LOY. ...if we don't give them, if we don't have a graduation rate.

M RYAN. But then what are we teaching these kids?

M LOY. I...I'm with you. What are we teaching? We're promoting...

M RYAN. We're preparing them for the future...

M LOY. ...mediocrity.

M RYAN. ...to do what?

M LOY. To make excuses.

J FOX. And then when they hit...and then when they hit college, and then when they try that game at college, they're going to be in for a rude awakening.

A KOBE. Yeah.

J FOX. They will.

M LOY. Well, it's...it's one thing we can do, but it takes time. And who has that? When we talk to a student. It takes time to be able to tell them...

A KOBE. They need more that we teach. We can do whatever we want...

M LOY. We try to grow them...

A KOBE. They need to grow...

M LOY. We really do try to grow them, but it... Is that what it comes back to? I guess that is what it comes back to that.

Z CROWDER. I don't know. Aren't they immature just by definition?

M RYAN. Yeah.

M LOY. Yes. Because that part of that brain is just not ready to say...

Z CROWDER. I mean, yeah, I...

M LOY. So we have to just accept that?

Z CROWDER. Yeah, I mean, that...

M LOY. That we have to grow slowly?

Z CROWDER. ...has to figure into that equation, I guess. That's the question...I don't know. For me.

(Silence in the room. Laughter and talking can be heard from the main dining room.)

(Two separate conversations begin after a few moments. MR receives a phone call and turns to VR to explain. "From home...my adult...." She turns to JF to respond to a comment he has made which is inaudible. "They don't...they just go to school and we're a mom, dad, teacher, counselor, everything.")

A KOBE *(To ML.)* I was telling, uh, my...my student, one of my---I don't know if you know her---very smart. This is a lady, the student I skipped...I don't know if it was you or Ms. Price...I have her in French 1. I skipped French 2, went straight to French 3.

M LOY. She was that...

A KOBE. Yeah.

M LOY. But then don't you have a lot of grammar and conjugation...

A KOBE. Yeah, a lot.

M LOY. ...and, in French 2, how did she...

A KOBE. She did it...she, she does well. And even among the best in the country. And she studied at home, too. She work, you know, and we start and she go in advanced, everything...

V ROGERS. But she has something that a lot of people do not have. She has that, self-compass, that self-directing type of thing.

A KOBE. Voila. She's organized...

M LOY. She's driven.

A KOBE. She go...

V ROGERS. But see, not everyone...and some of that is maturity, I think...

A KOBE. She's so mature.

V ROGERS. ...but, you know, I think, as a teacher, in my thousand years in teaching, you know, the smaller they are, the tighter your hedges. Even with our own personal children...

M LOY. (quizzically.) The smaller they are...

V ROGERS. ...because we're protecting the younger. That hedge around them is very, very tight. Very, very small. And then, as our children grow, whether we like it or not, that starts expanding out because they're going to kick it out, you know, they're wanting independence and growing. But the whole thing as a parent is that you're trying to grow them, grow them, grow them, grow them.

Sometimes in school, I think we forget that. One of the things that I think, and we, we touched on this last time we did this, these girls who are moms at home, who not only have one child, some of them have two and three children. I think their life is such a...dichotomy. You know, you're at home, you're the parent, you're calling the shots, you got one, two, or three kids, whatever, you got to feed them, whatever. But you come to school and you sit there and you got to ask to go to the bathroom. Now I don't think it's wrong to ask to go to the bathroom, I'm just saying that's a lot to handle. You know what I'm saying?

And so, in our effort for control sometimes, as teachers...and I like control, I'll be the first one to admit it, I like a controlled classroom. But if I'm too rigid, I may have a controlled classroom but I won't necessarily have a growing student. You know. And so, to me, I think one of the hardest parts of education is that growing process. In the classroom and out of the classroom. And I think it's hard as the adult, whether you're the parent of the one growing or the teacher of the one growing. You know, when you start out the semester, remember how we tell young teachers, we tell new teachers, "Don't smile till Christmas."

J FOX. That's right.

V ROGERS. You know, you start out tough.

J FOX. The Hitchens method.

V ROGERS. You lay the law down.

J FOX. Hitchens method.

V ROGERS. But as, as they get to know you and you get to know them, then you can ease up a little bit. You know, it's the same principle. It's the same kind of principle. Unfortunately, we don't live in a perfect world where these kids will just grow and we can expand and everything will go well. I mean there's a lot of hitches and stuff along the way. But...

A KOBE. There's a smart kids come to me, say, "Why did they only make our make-up day? We should have more time for make-up." I say, "Okay, Judy, let me tell you something. You got so many opportunities and you don't think..."

M LOY. All along the semester.

(Throughout this next section AK becomes more and more animated. His enthusiasm is infectious and by the end, everyone is laughing and much livelier in general.)

A KOBE. ...about what is going on around the world. Where I study, where I grow up, when you're a senior, you have one chance to pass a national exam---it's the same in German.

M LOY. It is. In fact...that's true in Europe.

A KOBE. You better have A, A, A, A, all year. You fail. You start over. Next year. Everything from A to B.

M LOY. Yeah, that's true

A KOBE. There is no extensions, no...

M LOY. No excuses.

A KOBE. Excuse. They day, you are not there, it's done. No one is going to care about "Judy is not here. Let me call her parents. Come tomorrow, make-up..." No. You are done. Who is going to call your parents? Nope. She said, "But we are not in Europe, Dr. Kobe." But, you know, you think America that is the way it is but you don't want to study anywhere else than here. And this work is hard. It includes every...: English, French P.E., History, Philosophie, Geographie, Latin. It's stressful! I told them, "You laugh here, senior year. It's easier. In Europe, it is stressful. You don't laugh. You don't laugh. You don't laugh."

M RYAN. It's true.

A KOBE. "Because, even prom. No one know what is prom. Who is going to a prom?"

(Laughter.)

J FOX. Yeah.

A KOBE. People are scared. You are here. Even those who are failing are going to prom.

M LOY. All academic.

M RYAN. Yes.

A KOBE. “You have to seat them at the...and...the graduation, if you fail, they make up Latin. You make up stuff...

M LOY. And professors and teachers are looked on as GODS.

A KOBE. They are gone. No one failed here.

M RYAN. Yeah. And nobody, and nobody is there during the summer to tutor you, you know, extra.

A KOBE. Exactly.

M LOY. Make-up like credit recovery.

A KOBE. Who is going to do that? They got, you know, so many opportunities here. You got textbooks free. I even, three years ago, this is what I heard, is the bus are free. I thought they pay. They don't pay.

M LOY. No.

A KOBE. They say, “We don't pay.” So you just stay home in the morning. You get out. The bus take you, bring you to school. You get book free. You stay after school, tutoring, free. And then the bus bring you, free.

M LOY. And then you get lunch in between.

A KOBE. You got lunch in between. I've never seen that in my life. My parents have to pay private gentlemen to stay after school for tutoring. No. It's done, it's done. And it's a year-long, you know. You got a teacher at the beginning, you have those teacher until JUNE.

M LOY. And you can't complain about them.

A KOBE. You cannot change your schedule.

(Laughter.)

M LOY. It's true.

A KOBE. You don't...you deal with it. Take it or leave it.

J FOX. That's right.

A KOBE. Take it or leave it. No what...NO! Here the first week, they got it, “I don't need this class,” they change it. You don't have this.

M LOY. Or bring a parent in.

A KOBE. Bring a parent. Your parents come, “Blah, blah, blah.” NO! At the beginning, you got your schedule made up already. You get it, stick with it from October to June.

M RYAN. Why is it that we have so much flexibility?

M LOY. Why?

A KOBE. You like the teacher, you don't like the teacher, you have to deal with it. It's, uh...

M LOY. Because it's, over time, that flexibility has generated results. You know, it's like anything else, if you have a child that you're trying to potty train...until it generates results, you know, until...it's like little puppies. 'Cause we...we talked about that again recently...this whole schedule change. This whole, "I want this. I want out of that. I want to change that. How 'bout can you look at this?"

Z CROWDER. So here's a story that sort of feeds off that but, sort of, like, pivots the focus a little bit. I'm teaching this curriculum class at the University. It's in a new Master's in International Ed.. So they've brought in, um, international students who are studying for a year, year and a half in the States and then they're going back to their home countries to start schools or work for NGO's, or whatever. And I've only, I've had two classes but this...so the first one was kind of introductory. Uh, yesterday I taught in the morning, it was three hours. And I have 37, 38 Chinese students out of 45, about. And, so we, they're talking curriculum. I mean, right? That's the purpose of the class. They're going into C&I and write curriculum and start schools and stuff like that. And so, uh, they know I come out of secondary and that's what I think about mostly. And so we're talking, and they're...for them, they have University exams at the end---we're talking about teaching to the test versus, I mean, sort of all those kinds of things, the curricul---and they're like, "It's incredibly boring. And we hate it." And...because we're also talking about how you make the curriculum more exciting. And they're like, "But it is what you do. It is what it is. This is the expectation. The teachers teach you the stuff that you need to know. Across China they use a couple of different textbooks but, by and large, it's all the same content in the classes. "And this is what we do to pass our University exams. And that is the goal." And as they're, you know, telling me this stuff, we're having different conversations about different aspects of it. But I started thinking...I mean, also then going back and forth at Midlands, proctoring...these standardized exams. But it's little bit different, the engagement, or...the level of, um, willingness to just go, "This is what I have to do, I mean..."

M LOY. And why do you think that is?

Z CROWDER. I mean, I guess that's the question, I mean, so, what's the story in America versus this is the story in China, you know?

M LOY. I think I can tell you. First of all, they are taught from the age of one...

A KOBE. One.

M LOY. ...that the level of competition, when they get to a place where there are so many people out there and the population is so enormous for a handful of jobs, to do that, you...in order to get that job, you have to be the best at it.

A KOBE. Yeah.

M LOY. So, naturally, they're going to be on a lot more anxiety medication than we can ever imagine.

(Laughter.)

M LOY. You know, and that's my theory.

J FOX. Keep the vineyards going.

M LOY. Exactly. But, now I don't know about that in China but I do know...well, we hear about more suicides, more, you know...the whole...

V ROGERS. Especially Japan.

M LOY. It, and well, you're looking at China. That's so...to me, that's one thing: that level of competition is completely ingrained. Secondly, they also know that, I would imagine, and I'm just guessing on this, I'm not sure...But, we have so many mixed families, where parents are two and three kids from here, or one kid from there. Then that one goes away and that goes to that family and that kid is now moving to that family, or changing places, or, I, I honestly believe fifty percent of my kids or more probably do this. And that's just my alphabet. So, what that is, is a message...I don't think that happens as much in China because kids are revered a little bit more. I think it's the kids, because they're only allowed, correct me if I'm wrong, to have two kids or something, right? I'm not sure if that's...

Z CROWDER. It was one for a while but now I think they're loosening some of the restrictions.

M LOY. I think it's one for...so, the...the children, the priority is there. In our country, the priority is not kids. It's working, getting money, we are a capitalist society. We are a society that generates jobs, work, doing, you know, Bill Gates kinds of things. So, we have a different mentality. If we put our kids first...but we're a very selfish people. We don't want to put kids first. "I want what I want first," you know. And if you have four kids, boy, and...and, you send them all to college, it's not nothing you did, it just happens to be, "Oh, well, that was pretty lucky." You know? No, it was not lucky. I gave up, quote unquote. We...we worked together. We...you know, all those things you give up in a lifetime. So I, I think that influences a lot in a very big picture. In a society picture, in a macro sort of way.

Z CROWDER. Yeah, I mean, yeah, I'm just getting insights from these guys. Like, I don't have any experience, I mean, I don't do international ed., it's just a curriculum course...

M LOY. Well, I...

Z CROWDER. But, like, I'm learning so, so, and I'm starting to think about...because one of the other things that we talk about is, you know, how to engage students and make, and make learning...

M LOY. We think we have to here. They don't think that.

Z CROWDER. Okay, yeah. That's maybe what I'm kind of getting at. It's a different...

M LOY. Yeah. Are you kidding?

Z CROWDER. Although they complain about it. But they've done it. And these are all...these are all graduate students, so they've already been through University.

M LOY. Exactly. And they've been through it. And they say...no. Do you think they think about that in Europe or somewhere else? Engaging a student in a South African village with a dirt floor. ENGAGING a student!? Are you...? You know, and I think about that...my daughter taught in Russia, in Novo Sibersk, in Siberia. She was going to engage? She said, "I had kids in there from the age of five to maybe fifteen. And then I had some adults." She said, "Engaging was, shhh, forget it. I didn't have props. I barely had...every once in a while we might have a computer. Every once in a while..." So we are the luckiest society...

A KOBE. We are the luckiest.

M LOY. We are the educationally proficient and prominent and really wonderful. You know, we have all the props that go with it. And we feel like, because as teachers, that we've been told we have to, um, be the, um, actor and actress in front of the room to engage them. Well, yeah. I remember how many, thirty years ago going through saying, "I don't want to dress up like a mannequin to teach German holidays..."

J FOX. There's nothing wrong with that.

(Laughter.)

M LOY. You know, but...but it, you know, you think about it, and we all have done it because we want to engage the kids, and it's fun...

J FOX. I dress up like a pirate. Does that count?

M LOY. Yeah. But they don't do that anywhere else because they don't have the money for that kind of...

(Brief silence. AK begins speaking softly.)

A KOBE. There are kids that...

Z CROWDER. I'm sorry, what did you say, Dr. Kobe?

A KOBE. I was talking about those kids who were complaining because they don't have enough days, she said, "We deserve more days for make-up."

M RYAN. They don't "deserve" them...

A KOBE. They are unhappy with everything in the school system and we make it so easy for them. You leave here and go to another high school, somewhere, you're going to die.

M LOY. You wouldn't know how to deal with it.

A KOBE. No.

M LOY. I have a question for teachers because I deal with this ongoing. I have always asked, the first question when a teacher calls me is... "I have tried to get a hold of this student, I have tried to work with this student, I have... Every day, they come in and they're either sleeping or they're this or they're that or there's some discipline, or some infraction of some kind..." And

the first question I ask is, "Have you tried to call the parent?" And nine times out of ten, I get, "No." So then I wonder, "What is it that a teacher expects me to do, if you have not called the parent to engage that parent?" And, honestly, I go through this at least once or twice a day and it makes me crazy. Because I know that, from experience, at least five or six out of ten, that parent will say, "I'm so glad you called. I'm going to look into this." Because most of that block of kids, eighty percent of those kids, a parent will respond to that. And I keep asking, and you know it, because you've dealt with me, "Have you talked to the parent?" And it's not you guys, I mean, it's general, because I have sixty-five teachers.

J FOX (excitedly.) I can add to that! I can add to that!

M LOY. So, what should I say? Or how do I...

J FOX. In my training, when I was at John Carroll, they constantly were drilling into us, "You take care of this in house before you go out and contact anybody." And so, it's drilled into me, "Okay, let's see what we can do before we have to extend out," because I do, I, I like to be able to solve my problems within house before I get everybody else involved. I come to you guys sometimes just to bounce off...

M LOY. Right. I know you do. And I love that.

J FOX. 'Cause I do. I need little bits of information 'cause sometimes they tell you stuff that they won't tell me.

M LOY. Or sometimes they tell you stuff.

J FOX. Exactly. And we've compared notes and we've solved some issues.

M LOY. Right. Exactly. I like that.

J FOX. But, but, it's drilled into my teaching and I mean, it's hard to call...go out to that parent because of that training. Because I do. I like to solve my problems in house.

M LOY. Well that's good to know. And that's why I'm asking.

J FOX. And that's why...I like to solve my problems in house.

M LOY. And, you know what, Jim, you personally are one of the few that comes down to my office. I probably have thirty teachers that have never stepped once in my office.

J FOX. Well, it's important. Why wouldn't I. They will tell you things that they don't...that they will never say to me. Of course I would.

M LOY. Right. But why wouldn't a teacher want to call a parent? What are some other reasons? You know, why...how can I look at that person and say, "I would love to help you?" You have to start with something.

M RYAN. Well, for instance, I do what he does. I first try to solve it with the student. If it doesn't work, then I go to the parent. If it doesn't work, then I go to you.

M LOY. Right.

M RYAN. Because it's like, you know...

M LOY. You I don't ask any more if you've call the parents. I know you have. I'm talking about teachers that don't. That don't feel...is it because they're not comfortable doing that?

Z CROWDER. Well, does anyone have a "calling the parent" story. Like, what happens when...

(VR returns to the table.)

J FOX. Well, look how teachers have been put in that light...

M LOY. Victoria, we're talking about calling a parent and stories about calling a parent.

J FOX. You know, I'm just trying to...I'm trying to put myself in that... Look how teachers have been painted and sometimes, you know, we really do have such a bad reputation that...I think there's of fear, "Well, if I say this, they're going to come back on me and say it's me." I'm not...I'm just guessing. I'm just guessing. Because, you know, between...between the legislation and everything else, teachers get painted into a really bad light over here, you know. And they are, you are right, they are revered over in Europe. You know, you are really revered as a teacher. It doesn't happen over here. And I've still, I've been struggling to find out the reason why some of these parents go after teachers. Because, I don't know whether they had such a bad experience with them while growing up. I don't know whether they were listening to the media...

M LOY. I think they become defensive on their own families. To, to feel this need to defend.

J FOX *(Sounding put out.)* Well, okay then...

Z CROWDER. Protection of your children.

J FOX. Well, I don't think it's just that, though.

V ROGERS. I don't either.

J FOX. I don't. Because, you know, I think that there's more there because we have...we have one...well, it was all on the student because we were led to believe that the parents weren't even in the country. We tried calling. We then found out...we then found out, Ellis and I, we then found out that the number that they gave us was one of the student's cell phones---his brother and sister. And they said, "Well, our family is out and this is the person we're with," and that was it. Well, here all along, the parent was in, had not PCS'd, is that the term?

M LOY. Mmmhmm.

J FOX. Had not PCS'd and...when we did catch up with them, they were really ticked.

M LOY. They were right on it. And livid. Yeah, I'm sure.

J FOX. They were hotter than...

V ROGERS. It's very warm in here.

M LOY. You're warm, too?

(Laughter.)

M LOY. I thought it was the wine. I was thinking...oh, okay, yeah, we have no air.

J FOX. I, I kind of pondered on that, too. I pondered on that whole thing, too.

V ROGERS. Actually I think it goes back to that sense of entitlement that is so prevalent. Um, I don't know necessarily that it's...so much the mama bear protecting the baby cub. I think that's some of it. But I think it's just this sense of...you know we went through that time ten years ago or so when it was all about "Low self-esteem, low self-esteem". If heard that one time, I hear it twenty thousand times.

M LOY. You're right, Victoria. You're right.

V ROGERS. Well, now it seems like we've moved beyond "low self-esteem" and you don't hear that so much anymore. But it's all about this entitlement. "I'm entitled to. Just because. I mean there doesn't have to be any reason. I just am."

M LOY. So low self-esteem led to "Well, I deserve this."

V ROGERS. Massive, massive amount of entitlement. I think you see it across the board, across age groups...

M LOY. Well where do you think education is going then?

V ROGERS. Well, I will tell you this: I can pinpoint it in my career to the early Nineties. And I've really been thinking about doing some research, late Eighties, early nineties. My last...there...I know people talk about the Hippies and all that stuff, but the generation and the people that are alive now, I would say between fifteen and twenty years ago. My children are 40 and 38. And I would say that when my daughter was in the eighth grade, that age group right there, that was the last of normalcy. And then what started happening, I don't know, I would love to know what happened...I mean I don't know what triggered it. I would, I would have to go back and do some research to see what was going on then. But I noticed that it was a downward trend but not a gradual downward trend. It was like a spiral down. And then the next year it was another spiral. It wasn't in little bits. It was just like massive. And we have never recovered. I mean, the whole atmosphere of school changed since then. You know, there was a time when...

M LOY. Was that the whole Students with Disabilities? I forget what, you know, that was '79 or something. '80.

V ROGERS. I don't know but I think if, you know, I, you know, but it...I have really seen a decline. I have seen a decline in teachers. As far as, when I came along, nobody ever told me in college that the Principal was second in line to God.

(Laughter.)

V ROGERS. Nobody ever actually said that. But it was heavily implied. You know what I'm saying? Never in my career---and I've been teaching thirty-three, thirty-four years, whatever it is, a long time---never have I one time, ever, refused to do something I was told. Refused to do an assignment, looked in a Principal's face and told him or her that I would not do it. That I wasn't paid to do it. No matter what it was. Never. And that was not because I was so great. That was standard. I mean, we were all like that. But the teachers now...it's that same entitlement thing. They'll tell you in a heartbeat that they're not going to do something. That they're not paid to do that. That or this, that, whatever. And so, my thing is, whatever has triggered this, has triggered it throughout society. Not just school. But it certainly is in school. And I, I have seen it. With my own...I have lived it with my own eyes. Never would I have had the caliber of students that I have now that would have the lackadaisical attitude. Or would try to talk down. Or...

J FOX. Or the indifference.

V ROGERS. Yeah.

M RYAN. And I've been teaching less than you but I've seen it in the last seventeen years. When my kids went to school, that's when I started teaching, and there was no disrespect like now.

J FOX. Oh my god, no.

M RYAN. You know, everyone was focused to learn. Now, they don't care. They don't care what they're doing. It's like my kids, come back and I talk to them about my day and they're so shocked that, "When we were in school, we couldn't do this..." and she's only twenty-eight. You know. So it's like...it's so different. It is so different. And comparing to, like, another country, it's definitely different. You know, I couldn't get away with any of this.

V ROGERS. So obviously a part of this is American culture.

M RYAN. Yes.

J FOX. Yes, it is. Yes, it is.

A KOBE. Yeah.

M LOY. It's very different. It's very different.

Z CROWDER. It's interesting, though, so, I showed...I don't know, do any of you guys know who Sir Ken Robinson is? He does TedTalks.

M LOY. Yeah, yeah.

Z CROWDER. He's a British...and now he's in California, but he's an academic who does a lot on education and I showed a ten minute...he has one that was like animated with those, you know on YouTube, where they do the drawing...

M LOY. Yeah. Yeah.

Z CROWDER. ... I don't know what they're called. But, I showed it yesterday in this class. And one of his points is that, um, there used to be a story, the narrative was that you went to school, and then you went to college, and then you got a good job, and then you had the security. And, and one of the arguments he makes is that is now a myth. That...

M LOY. Totally.

Z CROWDER. That statistically you still have a better shot at getting a kind of a better job if you go to college but there's no guarantee. That it used to be the guarantee.

M LOY. There's also that the pay is not...is not...

M RYAN. Is not good.

M LOY. Whether you go to college or don't, the pay is indifferent to whether that's the issue, the boundary.

J FOX. Right.

Z CROWDER. So, I mean, that seems like a big story that we used to tell in America about, "Go to college and you're pretty much guaranteed upward mobility, or, at least, you know, if you're from the middle class that you can maintain." And I'm wondering whether students know that...

M LOY. Through what, intuition?

Z CROWDER. That this is now...well, or just that they are aware. Because it's been sort of generational. It's not just this, this group of teenagers. That they're seeing generations of older siblings or even parents who have gone on to higher ed. and who are still struggling or who it hasn't paid off for, I mean, I don't know. I guess I'm just sort of throwing that out there. I wonder how much of it is kind of...the market, and the job market, and the way that industry has changed in America, and there's a lot of these different, um, things that are gone that, um, used to exist so if you got a college degree, then that was the job you would get.

M LOY. Or you were pretty much assured...

V ROGERS. Well...

Z CROWDER. So, I mean, the question that I'm asking is, has the story for them changed to where they don't buy in to our program anymore because they don't see the rewards and that on some level they actually might be right?

M LOY. I think the short answer is, "Yes."

M RYAN. Yes.

V ROGERS. Do you? And I think the answer is, "No."

Z CROWDER. Do you?

M RYAN. Why?

M LOY. Really? You think they buy into it?

V ROGERS. No, I, I...not that.

Z CROWDER. Not “no” to that.

M LOY. Okay.

V ROGERS. I think that...I think our kids, it’s just like every teenager alive, I think...I am convinced, in their heart of hearts, even though they don’t say it out loud, that they think they’re immortal. That nothing bad will happen to them. You know what I’m saying? That, no matter what the risks they run, or if they, whatever, it’s going to be okay. It’ll always come out okay in the end. Um, when I sit and talk with my advanced students, they don’t discuss that. I mean you’ve got a kid that can’t spell “cat” but wants...going to be a doctor. Can’t spell “cat” but they’re going to be a doctor. And they really believe they are. You know, if they even think about it. Because it’s just going to work out. Because it always has worked out.

Um, maybe there are those kids out there who are so intellectually advanced and so mature that they’re looking at it as you say but I don’t buy that the vast majority of them are. I really don’t.

M LOY. I think that what he’s saying has a point. And there’s two different things going on here. I think the kids are so drawn in by media that they get sucked into, “Yeah, it’ll work out. It’ll be fine. And, and if it doesn’t, it’s only short-lived anyway because then something else will come along.” And, and I’m thinking my own kids are thirty, twenty-seven, and twenty-five. So, I’m thinking they were raised under the philosophy of, you know: “You...you work hard, you’ll earn a reward for it. You go to college, you’ll be promoted, you’ll have a better chance.” We’re still spewing that...”You’ll make more money or whatever.” But society is not telling kids that. Society is telling kids, “Hell, you can go be a pole dancer and make a thousand dollars a night.” You know, and you don’t need a damn degree for that. I mean...and so I’m thinking to myself, “You know, they’ve got a point. Like, what am I doing here?”

J FOX. Yeah, you’re right. I’ve got a...

M LOY. So, they’re hearing that it’s so much easier to make money easier as opposed to working really hard because, “What’s that going to get me anyway? I’ve watch you every day. You look tired, Ms. Loy. You look awful.” “Yeah? No kidding.”

M RYAN. “Why do you want to do this? Why are you here?” Do you ever get that?

M LOY. Yeah. Really. So you wonder, “What do they think about?” So I know my own kids have changed jobs numerous times. And each time, gotten a raise. Done really well. It amazes me. So, why...yeah. And it’s not in their psyche the same as it was with me. “You don’t have to work that hard, Mom. I don’t understand.” And they’re doing much better than I am, if you...quote, unquote “Doing” than I am.”

(Long silence. This is the longest silence of either event. It’s as though ML has gotten to an existential core issue. The silence is not uncomfortable. Just full and charged.)

V ROGERS. Well, it's just like, how many juniors to you know that haven't even given any thought to what college they want to go to.

M LOY. Oh, I can tell you, Mr. Number One, I asked him three times today. "Where have you thought about going?"

A KOBE. Even Seniors. Even Seniors. Lots of seniors say, "I don't know..."

V ROGERS. Well, I had a senior today...

M LOY. With a 4.4 weighted GPA.

M RYAN. And he doesn't know...

M LOY. He can do Calculus standing on his head.

V ROGERS. Well, I had a girl today who's graduating early and I said, "Well, what are you going to do?" and she says, "I'm going to State." She hadn't even applied yet.

J FOX. This is me just playing critic but if he's taking four AP courses, he has no time to think of anything else other than getting through...

M LOY. Oh, please. He has plenty of time. Plenty of time.

J FOX. Look, I just had a friend of who mine who basically told his daughter, "You're not taking four AP courses." She ended up in the hospital.

M LOY. He has plenty of time.

J FOX. She ended up in the hospital.

M LOY. Do you know, I just told him, I said, "What are you going to do over the next five days?" 'Cause we have off the next five days...they do. He said, "I don't know." You know, this guy's pretty laid back.

J FOX. But you're also talking about the upper tier. I got a...had a student that begged me to put her in AP...

M LOY. Begged (*sarcastically*).

J FOX. One of your colleagues begged me to write the letter, to which I said, "Well, I don't...I'm not too sure on this..."

M LOY. Well, that's again to know the student. That's a different situation.

J FOX. Well, I went on and wrote the letter and then I rescinded it and then found out that they went ahead and put her in there anyways. She's failing it, last time I found out. She's failing it this...and so, I...

M LOY (*whispering*.) It's because they don't know kids like we know kids.

J FOX. Well, no, I don't think it's that.

V ROGERS. Failing isn't always because of ability.

J FOX. I don't think it's that. It's that same mentality of, "Well, you know, I'll do it unless, you know, I'll do it until something else comes along. You know, and if it doesn't work out I'll find something else." But...

(Brief pause. ML gets up to get more food. Everyone starts passing food while JF begins the next story.)

J FOX. But also, too. One of the things I do, usually around the first day of school is...some of you have seen me wear it... I have a Rolex watch. I don't bring that thing out just for anybody. I wear it on the first week or so of classes. Someone always usually notices it. I saved...you have no idea how long it took me to save for that...and the reason I bring it out is I say, "Look. If you work hard at something. And see it through. And you really work hard, this is the kind of stuff you can get. But you've got to be able to apply yourself. And don't just give me half. And don't just give me what you need to give me. You know, give it, it all."

M LOY. What do they say to that?

J FOX. Well, they said, "Where did you get it?" I said, well, I said, "Well, I've got to tell you, I loaded a lot of Samsonite into a lot of cars for that." And I did. You have...I was a bell captain, a concierge. That was that whole hotel thing. And I socked that money away. Everything. And they said, "Well, why didn't you stick with it? That paid a lot of money." And I said, "Well, let me tell you what, it's called aging out."

M LOY. *(Laughs.)*

J FOX. And I said, "Your body can only haul Samsonite for so long before it's time to call it quits and, you know..." But what I, but then I say, "Look, I saw it through and then I had the reward at the end. This is my reward." And...

M LOY. That goes back to what you said, Victoria...

J FOX. Exactly.

M LOY. ...I don't think they think that they'll ever get older. And it is all the here and now.

J FOX. It is. It is all the here and now. And they can't see no more than two...about a foot in front of themselves. They, they're only focused on the here and now but then again, I was that age and I think I was, too. I don't think that's changed that much, from Gen X until now.

M LOY. But then, the whole thing we were just talking about, I don't think parents have that same, um, conversation with their kids about, "What, where are you going to be in ten years..."

J FOX. Exactly. *(Excitedly.)* Okay, okay.

M LOY. ...and the whole, "Why is education important?" And you've, what you said, "You work hard, you get a job, have a family, stay with the job..." Whatever. You know, it's not that reinforcement.

J FOX. But here's...I heard this, this nun lecture. Her name is Anne Bryant Small. She's, she's a psychiatrist. She's...Humor and Creativity concert...she's, uh, Humor and Creativity Conference. And she speaks there almost every year. And she talks about, she says, "The society has changed." She said, "When I was growing up in the Nineteen-Fifties," she said, "It was an authoritarian society. The, the, the employee told the student...the employee told the employer...the employer told the employee what to do. The parent told the child what to do." She said, "And then the Nineteen-Sixties happened," and she said, "and then everybody had to have a choice."

M LOY (*in a loudly whispered aside.*) Husband told the wife what to do.

J FOX. "Everybody had to have a choice." And she said, "And then it started getting out of hand because instead of giving a choice of two, like, 'What do you want for dinner tonight, a hot dog or a hamburger?' You, you...they would ask the kid, 'Well, like what do you want for di...what do you want for dinner?' and the kid would say, 'I don't know.' You know, instead of focusing in on two things. She said, "And then it's just...then it's really...and then it just started getting more crazy." You know?

M LOY (*with full mouth.*) It's true.

J FOX. But, she's right. But...I wish I could get a hold of her. She was...she goes to businesses and talks about how the generations in a workplace all work together. And how each and every one of them, how certain generations will never be able to work well with others. For instance, Gen Xers have an affinity for the pre-war generation. And hold them in such high esteem. And it's true, the more I thought about it. You know, everyone I knew, everyone's grandparents were just through the, through the ceiling. But then, how did she say it, the Baby Boomers just will never get along with...what was it...it was the...it was the, the, the Gen Ys. I mean, and she had this whole thing of their personalities. Of what a Gen Y was versus what was a Baby Boomer. And how the Baby Boomers mistrust everybody. And, you know...

M LOY (*Laughs.*)

J FOX. And...you know, but it's true when you look at the dynamics about how people work together. It's a generational thing. I really do think that.

(*Silence.*)

J FOX (*changing the subject.*) I'm dying to find out what the data is on the post 9/11's. We're teaching them now.

(*Silence.*)

V ROGERS. You know, it's not, as far as 9/11, it was so incredibly impactful. When it happened and the next year or so, it was impactful in my classes.

J FOX. Oh yeah, everything changed.

V ROGERS. But these kids today, it's just like another story in the history book for a lot of them. You know? Um...

J FOX. Well, I think it was kind of like, for, for my generation, why December 7th was a big deal. In Ohio, my generation was like, “Why are we...why are we even observing this holiday...why are we observing this day for these kids who got killed at Kent State?” It’s the same thing, I think. You know? “Why are we doing this?”

V ROGERS. Well, because we’re such a country of immediacy. You know the whole point of history, I’m a history teacher, at my core, I guess. One of my many things. You know, And I always explain it to kids in the beginning, you know, like “his story” and “her story”; it’s all these individual stories and then we have this history collective, too. But if it doesn’t impact them immediately, and their circle and their friends, and their today, it’s dead. Now you have the...you have those kids that like it...

J FOX. Oh, yeah.

V ROGERS. But, like, you know, I mean generally, generally speaking. There’s not an understanding, you say, well, you know, well, it’s like they say about math, “When will I ever use this?” You know, they don’t want to learn it, “When will I ever use this?” Well they’re sort of that way about history. You know? I’ll never forget, I was teaching middle school the day that, um, Christine McAuliffe, you know that teacher or whatever...

J FOX. Yeah. Oh, God.

M LOY. Yeah.

V ROGERS. When were in school when that happened. And we were in the cafeteria; my class was in the cafeteria, when someone told me about what had happened. And there was a kid standing there and, you know, I don’t remember if it was an announcement or whatever. And I turned to this kid---and I really didn’t know him---but, you know it was just the immediacy and the pain of, you know, that happening. And I. I turned to him and says, “Isn’t that terrible, you know, this teacher and all this crew...” And he looked at me just as dead serious and he said, “I don’t care. What’s it to me?” I mean, really, and he wasn’t being rude deliberately...but he, it wasn’t his life.

J FOX. But then there’s those kids that have no social...they have a bad social disconnect.

V ROGERS. But I see this attitude, maybe cleaned up a little bit, maybe not as bluntly spoken as he said. But I see it a lot...

J FOX. It’s still there...

V ROGERS. I see it a lot in school. (*Long pause.*) From the bottom to the top. (*Long Pause.*) So where do we fit in to that? Where do I fit in to that? What do I do? How, you know? (*Pause.*) I have a student who won’t stand for the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

J FOX. Oh, I had one last year.

V ROGERS. Oh, well, I have had...very few. Last year Dr. Shackleford said they had no choice, they had to stand. This is a girl, not trying to push her buttons, not trying to be overly...you know, I talked to her twice privately and she told me she didn’t have to stand. So I

asked an administrator and Mr. Franklin point blank told me if I wanted a lawsuit, pursue it. But she did not have to stand. You know, she doesn't have to stand. So I haven't said anything at all. We all, the rest of us, continue standing. I say the Pledge, they can or not. But, you know, that is inconceivable to me. That someone would not stand for their flag. I would expect a French person to stand for a French flag (*gesturing towards AK*), a British person to stand for a...

J FOX. In all fairness, in all fairness, this was 1980...it was 1980, we had a Native American Indian in our...in my classroom. We went to school, fifth, this was fifth grade...never did. And there was no argument with it. There was none...

V ROGERS. But that's what I'm saying...

J FOX. But I didn't understand it...

V ROGERS. But you're talking about generational differences, that's a real generational difference...

J FOX. Exactly. But I didn't understand it, either. I didn't understand it, either. And...until, until, learning history, and then I figured...then the light went on and said, "Oh, that's why. Silly me." You know?

M LOY. So it brought it back to you, though...

J FOX. Oh, definitely.

M LOY. You were able to connect those dots...

J FOX. Exactly.

M LOY. I wonder how many of our kids will connect those dots?

J FOX. Well, the one young lady I had last year, boy, she was adamant on why she wouldn't. And I understood it. And I said, "Well, that's not what I would want you to do but if that's how you want to express your freedom of speech, you may do that." You know. It...so, but it made sense.

It kind of reminds me of a friend of mine, a friend of mine worked in the Ronald Reagan White House. And his name was Walter Price. And he point blank told the President, because Ronald Reagan wanted to do something with regards to...this would enforce some kind of religious something...he literally yelled at Ronald Reagan and said, "I'm going to tell you one thing: freedom of religion also means freedom from it." And walked out the Oval Office door, slammed the door, and left Reagan in there. Reagan then told him he was absolutely right.

V ROGERS. But was that respectful? Even though he was right?

J FOX. But...I...to this day...

A KOBE (*something inaudible.*)

V ROGERS. I'm just asking.

J FOX. But, to this day. 'Cause I agree, "Would it be respectful?" But, sometimes, and I think we have...somehow, you know, 'cause if you look at the history of the United States, oh that was always that one person that went and did whatever it was, to get that point across. I mean we're known for it. Go all the way back to the 1700's. At least one in every bunch.

V ROGERS. Sooo, if I disagree with Ms. Ansley, it's okay for me to point my finger at her, yell, and slam her door and walk out?

J FOX. Well, not necessarily...

V ROGERS. I'm just asking.

A KOBE. It depends on the circumstance, huh?

J FOX. Exactly. But also, too, with that right...and this is the other part...and I don't think they bring this home, we really don't, is, "Yeah, you have that right, but with that right comes a responsibility. And the wisdom to know when to exercise it."

V ROGERS. Right.

J FOX. And I think that's where we fall short. I think that's where we fall short.

(Pause.)

Z CROWDER. Well then what's the position of a principal? I mean, I think that's exactly what you all are...using Victoria's example, like, is the responsibility to recognize the fact that you might be fired. And then you're willing to take a stand for something you believe in that would still make you ineligible to be a civil servant.

V ROGERS. Right.

J FOX. Right.

Z CROWDER. And so, where does that put the now principal in the whole...because maybe that role was different when you were a younger teacher than...

V ROGERS. Oh, definitely.

Z CROWDER. So, why...where has that kind of power gone?

V ROGERS. I personally think that a lot of the power has gone from national to state. I don't know if it's sucking up this way or, I don't know which direction...But I think a lot, we are not, um, autonomous. Is that the right word? You know what I'm saying? I used to be the queen of my kingdom. And I don't mean that ugly. And I never tried to abuse it. But what I'm trying to say is when I was in my room, it was my room. You know, it was my...whatever I...

M LOY. I think a lot of professions feel like that.

V ROGERS. Whatever I wanted to teach, you know, I knew what I was expected to teach and I didn't abuse that and we taught it. But, I mean, if, if one of my kids was really interested in something and we wanted to chase that rabbit a while, we did.

M LOY. Mmmhmm.

J FOX. Yeah.

V ROGERS. And everybody liked it and enjoyed it, and, you know, it was good...

M LOY. And the joy of teaching.

V ROGERS. Right. It was there. And there was this, you know... and we were...at Ashton, I had every kid in Ashton if they went to public school unless they were special ed. and then I had, I had a lot of them in my homeroom. So their mama and dad, by the time I had...they had...you know, I'd had the second child or whatever, you know, and they'd try to go home and tell tales or whatever, they'd say, "Hmm. We know Ms. Rogers." You know, it didn't work.

But, but there was no police force enforcing because I knew what was right to do and I did it. But I have lost that power over the years. You know, the county...

M LOY. Yeah.

V ROGERS. ...the state, the national government, they all have their piece and they are all orchestrating what should be. You know, we have our pacing guide, we have our this, we have our that. Where if...at one school I was at, if we were all teaching English 3, for example, then, and in fact I think I've heard this at Midlands, a version of it, you know, if you were teaching the same thing as me, they should be able to leave my room and go to your room and go to your room and we'd be, you know, right there.

A KOBE (*Inaudible.*)

V ROGERS. But, you know, I have different kids than you've got. What if I've got the kids who are C, D+ kids and you've got the A+ kids? Do you hold the A+ kids back?

M LOY. No, you're supposed to take those D kids, and push them separately to bring them up to...

V ROGERS. But do you see what I'm saying?

J FOX. Yeah. Yeah.

V ROGERS. And so, we're so...we've lost a lot. Our profession has lost a lot. And some of it, I'm going to tell you quite frankly, some of it we gave away. It wasn't taken from us. Some of it we gave away. (*Pause.*) And now we can't get it back.

(*Very long pause.*)

A KOBE. Um...

V ROGERS. Now, Dr. Kobe, did you teach in another country? Did you teach in your home country?

A KOBE. Yeah.

V ROGERS. How long did you teach...?

A KOBE. Not that long. I teach one year before I come here in France. I teach in the Gold Coast. It was a fee. I teach as US (*Indistinguishable.*) Don't know if you are familiar with US (*Indistinguishable.*).

V ROGERS. Yeah.

A KOBE. And, uh, I teach mostly here. I teach at the University, too. University, like French 1, or 4, 1 or 2. I start there and then when they open the school they called me here. Because there I didn't have the benefit of residency. You know you need to be like a full time teacher who works on contract. When they got extra students taking French, I got the job. If there is not enough students, I don't have the job and I don't have the benefit.

V ROGERS. Right.

A KOBE. So...

V ROGERS. So do you think this culture has molded your teaching style? Or, or that one year, or the way you were raised? What has influenced you most?

A KOBE. No. If I teach the way I was raised, kids are not going to stay in my class.

M LOY (*laughing.*)

M RYAN. Yeah.

A KOBE. That isn't done. No.

M RYAN. See, I didn't teach but I went to school in a different country.

M LOY. Yeah, I did, too.

A KOBE. You cannot teach the way they teach outside. Because you know, you have to adjust your teaching style to what is supposed to be taught here.

V ROGERS. Do you not think that's why Ms. Calabrese...I know I'm probably not pronouncing...

A KOBE. Yeah. You see...

V ROGERS. Remember when I first started teaching her at the end of the year?

A KOBE. Yes. Have time to adjust himself. You see. Now you get it. She's had to do a lot of...to adjust herself into the culture of the system, into the strategies here.

M LOY. Is this a VLF?

M RYAN. VIF

M LOY. VIF. Thank you.

A KOBE. Voila. It's not easy.

V ROGERS. And my point of saying this...

A KOBE. And I told her.

V ROGERS. Yes. My point is that every one of us has readjusted and readjusted and readjusted.

A KOBE. The culture...Even the teaching is not, you know, the same. As a whole, the strategy, you cannot compare it AT ALL. And for me, if I was to compare it, I don't think the system leads the kids to be competitive. NO!

V ROGERS. But haven't you readjusted since you've been in the United States...

A KOBE. Yeah.

V ROGERS. ...from what you were doing ten years ago?

AL: Well, I adjusted, you know, I keep, you know, I have sometimes...I have rules to go by. Do this, do this, do this. And, I think after going back and teaching in some places, the kids would love me better. Since I got here.

(Laughter.)

V ROGERS. Who...who's determined the standard of excellence, though.

A KOBE. It's uh...

V ROGERS. It's not really us...anymore. Seriously.

M LOY. You know, I think it's dictated. I think you're right. For us.

A KOBE. But me, I don't blame the kids, Ms. Rogers. For me, it's not the kids. It's the system.

M RYAN. It's the state.

A KOBE. The kids grow up in the system, in this culture. It's not them. And in case, you know, to improve you have to start from kindergarten. To go up. Because now we cannot change it. If you change it, we are not going to make it. Take it the way it is and go by what is there. Because, you know, this is the way it is. They're born, you know, adjust it, add what we can add, adjust what we can but you cannot change it. This is what I think about it. It's, uh...

V ROGERS. It's pretty sad, isn't it. I mean, seriously---and I agree with you---but I think it's pretty sad. Because if we know we're broken...

M RYAN. What are we going to do to fix it?

V ROGERS. Yeah. And if it can't be fixed, are we just going to limp along broken? What are we going to do?

J FOX. Take back the root of education. You take it...you take it from what it's become, basically a buzzword for, for career politicians to get reelected. And they'll tell and say whatever they have to do to get it.

A KOBE. That's, uh...

J FOX. And we need to take that word back and make it as meaningful as we can. That's it.

V ROGERS. And I tell you, I have a plan...

J FOX. And how we do it, I have no idea.

V ROGERS. I have a plan...

M LOY. But it would have to start from the state.

J FOX. Exactly. Well, not really.

V ROGERS. I have a plan but it, and it's wonderful!

J FOX. When you're number forty-eight, when you're number forty-eight and you're still number forty-eight, there's going to have to come some point when everyone's going to say, "Okay. Enough. You guys have tried to maintain this, it's not working. We do need to take this over."

V ROGERS. Y'all listen to the plan. See what you think of my plan. It...I don't have...

(Laughter.)

V ROGERS. But it's true. I've thought about this so much.

J FOX. But it's true. Number forty-eight. Out of fifty.

V ROGERS. I think everyone from the principal up, meaning your local administrators, your county administrators, your state. That far. That's what I'm talking about...

M LOY. Should not be paid.

(Laughter.)

J FOX. Testify.

V ROGERS. No. I truly believe that education would change if they would do this. I, if they were mandated...

M LOY. To teach.

V ROGERS. ...for one week a year, one week, with no special privileges or anything and they showed up to school; they were randomly assigned but you couldn't go back to the same school twice, and you were randomly assigned and you had to come in for one week. You had to show up when we show up, do what we do, no special consideration, nobody would know who you are. You know, I mean, just be in there. Do all our duties and everything else. Just one week. I

guarantee you the laws would be changed. In this state. I promise you they would. And if they would...

M LOY. Well our principal has been in the classroom. Most teachers...most principals...

V ROGERS. No, they go in as a principal. I'm saying, you take...

M LOY. No but she was...most principals have been teachers. Most.

V ROGERS. Yes.

J FOX. Right.

V ROGERS. But. Her job, whether we like it or not, her job has got just as much stricture...structure on it, and restrictions on it as yours does as mine does.

M LOY. Yes, I'm saying that. But I'm saying that I don't know that that, what you're saying, would make a difference.

V ROGERS. Oh I think so. Oh, yes sir. I, I really believe that with all my heart. That if they went in and had to do it. Every state administrator and every lawmaker and to go in there and walk the walk...

M LOY. They will tell you they won't do it.

J FOX. Well, yeah.

M LOY. They will tell you...

V ROGERS. Well, don't pay them.

(Laughter.)

V ROGERS. Don't pay them. Tell them to go home. Say this is a requirement of your job.

J FOX. Well, once every five years, have them go back...how about that? Once every five years they must go...

M LOY. Visit the classroom.

J FOX. No. For one year, teach. Every five years that they are an administrator they have to spend one year in the classroom.

A KOBE. In a classroom.

M RYAN. That's a good idea.

A KOBE. That's a good idea.

J FOX. Because after one year you start to see the trends...

V ROGERS. But what about your lawmakers? They have more power than your administrators. Your lawmakers are the ones who need to come in.

J FOX. They also do, too. Make them cafeteria folk. They'll really get to know those kids. They'll really taste...

M RYAN. Oh, wow.

M LOY. I know what it is to cook for a lot of people. I'm not having it.

J FOX. No, no, but no. I was joking. That was a joke. But, but once every five years, have them...mandate it, have them go back in the classroom. Because, the changes---you said it---how much has this thing changed over the years? I had one teacher, believe this or not, I had a college professor that was teaching me education---this was in 2008---she hasn't been in a classroom, a regular high school classroom, since 1969.

M LOY. *(Laughing.)*

M RYAN. Wow.

J FOX. And she's teaching us principles that are long gone. And, she's still teaching. But they can't get rid of her because of tenure. But that's another story, I don't even want to go into that.

M LOY. But that's part of what's happening, too.

J FOX. Yeah. But, I think that the administrators should. Every five years. 'Cause then they get to see the changes in society...in, that are happening with the kids. They can get a feel for the kids. They can get an understanding that this isn't the same ball of wax that they dealt with when they were standing in front of these kids.

V ROGERS. I agree with that but I want it to carry over into the lawmakers.

J FOX. I agree.

V ROGERS. And the pencil pushers in Raleigh who've never been in a classroom but there's a lot of things....

J FOX. But they'll pick up that pen and write a law.

V ROGERS. There are a lot of things that sound good in theory. I don't know if I told you this story or not...

(ML decides to get another drink. Followed by ZC. They get up from the table while VR continues her story.)

A KOBE. *(Inaudible.)*

M LOY. So do I. *(To ZC:)* Can we do that?

Z CROWDER. Yeah, yeah, yeah. We're done. I'm going to grab another beer. *(To JF:)* Do you want one?

J FOX. No. I don't want any beer. No, no.

(Now VR, JF and MR are in the room, seated along the same side of the table with AK seated at the corner of the next side close to MR.)

V ROGERS. I used to work for these people in business and we were on this youth trip---I might've told y'all this the last time, I don't know---but anyhow, they...they carried a large sum of money in case we ever had a problem, 'cause, you know, you're off with thirty, forty kids.

J FOX. Right, right, right.

V ROGERS. And, um, one day we were going somewhere and this lady that was a real good friend of mine, she just handed me an envelope, she said, "Victoria, will you throw this in your pocketbook. I'm not taking mine." I didn't give it another thought. I did not give it a thought. And I just threw it in my purse. We just went on, and we were in Tennessee, all this, this, this. So, you know, when we got back from our trip, I was back at school...the first day I was back at school---and I was looking through my pocketbook for something and I saw this envelope and didn't remember what it was. You know, it didn't have anything on it. And I opened it up and like to have passed out. I mean, it was full of money. More money than I had ever seen at one time in my own possession, you know, just to have money. And I almost...I thought, "Oh, my Lord, what if somebody knocks me over the head?" You know, all these things. And as soon as school was over I went to the business, I said, "Do not ever, ever do that to me again." I said, 'Do you realize when I opened this up and saw what was in it...' I mean because I put my pocketbook down, I'd walk off, you know, that whole trip that money was in my pocketbook. What if somebody stole my pocketbook?

J FOX. My God.

(ML reenters here.)

V ROGERS. And, you know, they acted like...Now I'm telling you that that was enough money that I could have done a lot of good with that money, in my own life and somebody else's...

(Laughter.)

V ROGERS. ...But my thing is they just acted like it was, like it was nothing.

J FOX. Nothing.

V ROGERS. And sometimes I think lawmakers don't see the humanity. They see marks on a piece of paper.

J FOX. Past the pen. They don't see past that pen.

V ROGERS. They see numbers. 2,000 kids or 20,000 kids but there's no humanity to it. And they understand we're having problems and they understand that we're having crowding but if they were in a room with 56 kids for two hours...

J FOX. Exactly.

V ROGERS. Or four hours.

M LOY. For five hours. During testing.

M RYAN. Or for one day.

V ROGERS. It would change their mind.

J FOX. Really.

V ROGERS. And I really think...I can't convince anybody to do it...I just really think.

J FOX. You're right.

A KOBE. It was just funny one day; they were talking about this fake raise. People were fighting, like, I don't know, politics or message makers, "Give this to the teacher." "No, this." It was like a long... (*slaps his fist into his hand twice.*) Why? I don't know if you follow...you follow it right?

V ROGERS. Yes.

A KOBE. This one, this, this...I just ask myself, "What is the value of being a teacher?" Everything goes by us. Even those...

M RYAN. Those people.

A KOBE. Those people, yeah.

M LOY. What is the value of being a teacher? It really does come back to that kid that...I, I had one today. He and his sister have been in, like, every day, scheduling, where do they want to go...these are really academically sound students, you know. And I thought, "Oh my God, he's back again. I really don't have time for this." And you're, you're just into whatever you're doing. And he sat down and he looked at me and he does his usual searching through his book bag thing, you know, and he's trying to find his stuff and he's like, asking all these questions and all of a sudden he pulls out a box of Godiva chocolates. Just a small box of Godiva chocolates. He says, "Thank you very much...I really...you've really worked hard with me the last month or so."

A KOBE. At least they know.

M LOY. Oh my gosh!

V ROGERS. That's like a major prize.

M LOY. It was like, somebody said, you know, this is the good things...somebody thought about you other than in that chair, you know, or wherever you are.

M RYAN. Yeah.

V ROGERS. Or somebody...

M LOY. And I think it just speaks to those moments. And you relish them with your own kids. You relish them...so...yeah. Those are the moments...And I don't need a prize. I just

need...and I will remind them, by the way, I will say as they're walking out the door, "Thank you, Ms. Loy." "Oh, yeah, thanks." You know, this, this is the right thing to do. I'm not yelling at you, I'm not screaming. But I am going to let you know the expectation is that you treat me like a professional. And I think when we have that exchange, demanding that back and forth in a nice way...and I demand it with my own kids. Why shouldn't I demand it from somebody that I'm going out of my way for?

M RYAN. Right.

M LOY. You know, to say...So to me, that's the story. And I don't let him get away with it either. And I said, "Thank you very much." As opposed to, "Yeah, it's okay if you say things that aren't necess..." You know. Being polite. Being gracious. I think that's my, my 2015 concept: How to be gracious.

V ROGERS. Well, I think we do have to live an example. You know. I do. And I know dress code is a, is a touchy subject. But when we don't live it, how can we expect them to live it. I mean, seriously.

A KOBE. I agree with you.

V ROGERS. You know...and, it's sex code, I mean, it's sex code...it's not a...what was I going to say?

(Laughter and general uproar. Everyone talking at once.)

J FOX. Well, well, well.

M LOY. I've been there, too. Very good.

A KOBE *(referring to VR's slip of the tongue and the transcription.)* Can we change it? When we go back. From Ms. Rogers.

M LOY. What was she trying to say?

V ROGERS. But, you know, our men, as far as dress code goes, I think our women are more obvious offenders. Our men are maybe not professional looking but they're usually dressed okay. You know. Our women sometimes are a little iffy. On that. That's just a little thing. That's just a little thing. But when I talk with our new teachers, that's something that I stress. It's just like everybody...poor old Cyril, he looks like a little boy. Now when he's sixty, he's going to be so excited that he still has that youthful look. But right now it's a real detriment for him.

M LOY. But he wears a suit every day.

V ROGERS. Exactly. That's exactly right.

M LOY. Exactly.

V ROGERS. He wears his coat and his tie. Every day. To make that separation. You know, so he's really trying. So, you know...

M LOY. Crowder, you've got that same trouble, don't you?

Z CROWDER. Ummhmm. I've always...

M LOY. I've never seen Dr. Kobe in anything but a tie.

A KOBE. Yeah, and a suit. Sometimes when it's cold. Last week I put a suit. But I, uh...

M LOY. That's what I mean.

V ROGERS. But it sets a tone.

M LOY. Fox, I don't know that I've ever seen you in a tie.

J FOX. I always, I usually always wear a tie. On Fridays I haven't...

M LOY. Oh, on Friday.

J FOX. Or when we're in the middle of a production or something because I'm building set or something.

M LOY. Yes. I'm just kidding.

V ROGERS. Remember when, remember when Dr. Shackelford came and he said men had to wear ties? I'll never forget Ned Flanders was so upset: "I will not..." You know. And he was just adamant. But he did and he looked really nice. I mean, he looked...

M LOY. Yeah, every day.

V ROGERS. I mean he did. He wore a shirt...you know, a dress shirt and a tie. And it probably wasn't as heart rending as he thought it would be, you know, once he did it. And...I don't even know what the point of this conversation is except that: there are some things we can't change and some things we can change and I think we should do the things we can and not look for excuse to slack off.

M LOY. I'm trying to think of other stories.

Z CROWDER. Well, it's funny, one of the...as we talk about change, one of the ways I really framed the dissertation proposal was...that change, school reform and school improvement had become an almost just concretized notion and an end unto itself. Um, and so, that was sort of one of the arguments that I made that it had become the American epic in schooling and that there was no end to it except for just the reform. The change. The sort of the constant change.

V ROGERS. Change is a constant. You're right.

J FOX. Yeah.

Z CROWDER. That it is the only constant but that it seems...

M LOY. Or that that becomes the end?

Z CROWDER. That that becomes the end unto itself. That you just constantly have to say, “Well, our school improvement...” I was like, “What do really, really, really good schools’ School Improvement Committees do?” Like talk about, maybe, some flowers? Some bedding flowers? For outside? Like if you were working at a school that has high achievement and doesn’t have an achievement gap, probably because you’re in a white suburb anyway, but like, what does that school’s look like. I mean I’m sure that they have them. I’ve never worked at that school...

(Laughter.)

Z CROWDER. ...but they must have School Improvement Teams. But I mean, what do they talk about? Like, how to landscape the...improve the campus?

M LOY. Yeah, what do they, what does their reform look like?

Z CROWDER. There’s not, but it’s just become this kind of discourse at every level. And so you can throw together...and this is me getting off the storytelling. Or maybe it is a story. When Doctor...when our prior principal came in and he dictated the lesson plan and it was a cobbled together different sort of lesson plans that he sort of made intentionally, I think on some level, to be particularly arduous. The story I had heard, the story within a story, was that teachers were bothering him about, “What’s the lesson plans, what are we supposed, what are we...?” He was like, “If they want a lesson plan, I’ll give them a lesson plan.” And so he just put together this eighteen-point thing that, like, the theory behind the different things that we had to fill in didn’t mesh. When I looked it I was like, “Well, this is from Marzano and this is from this book, or this is from...” And he’s just listing them.

M LOY. It was just the reform itself, not the product of...

Z CROWDER. And it’s so, yeah, there was no...

A KOBE. Connection. No connection there.

Z CROWDER. ...educational philosophy behind why this would work. Or how...but it’s a cover your ass part, partially, for him and for us. Here’s the lesson plans that we’re doing. But it was also a type of just, because you have to have something, people want a template, and for whatever reason he just got a bee in his bonnet and made it particularly hard by ultimately cobbling in a bunch of different educational philosophies. When I looked at it I thought this stuff doesn’t even represent a logical, coherent philosophy across the board. So this whole notion of you just have to keep doing it differently and now it’s becoming slightly arbitrary and random feeling. Does it feel like that to you?

V ROGERS. But the problem, the problem with the change---and I agree with you---the problem in education, or at least what I’ve seen through my years, is, there’s been change around since I graduated and started teaching, but it’s kind of like a pendulum swinging. And, you know, you would like to be in the middle, kind of in the middle. But what happens, it swings one way or the other. But it’ll keep swinging, swinging, swinging, swinging, swinging, swinging, until there’s nowhere else to go that way. So then they’ll start back and then you end up right where

you were. And then it'll kind of go. And a good example of that, right now, is the fact that we're using graphic organizers.

J FOX. Yeah.

V ROGERS. No, I tell you fifteen years ago, we had all these massive workshops on graphic organizers. And those little red and white organizers that are up on my wall and a bunch of other people's walls were introduced then. They have not even been changed! They're the same color, it's the same posters! And yet it's the in-thing! And it was here fifteen years ago! So, you know, that change, it'll change, and then somebody has to change it and then somebody has to change it and somebody has to change it. But then it's going to come back. And daggone, you're where you were fifteen years ago. But that's okay, you won't stay there 'cause you're going to go this way for a while. (*As VR speaks she uses her arms and hands to demonstrate the motion of the pendulum, swinging them back and forth.*) But you'll run out of room and you'll come back. And I've seen it over and over and over and over. And I do agree with you, sometimes it's just change just because we're supposed to be changing.

But, to me, best practices are best practices. Period. And good teaching is good teaching. Period. You know? And you can calculate it a lot of ways. But it is either, or it's not. You know? You're either good at what you do, you work hard at it, you try, you give it 100%, or you don't. I mean, you know?

Now when she tells me, "Do this," I'm going to do it. Because her paygrade is higher than mine and I need my job. But you know what, next year when she says, "I know we did this, but this year we're going to do this," you know what I'm going to do? I might say, "I'd really like to..." but I'm going to do this. Because I like my job. And I need my job. Now, if I can bring any weight to it and try to, you know, be involved or whatever...But I'm still going to do it. I mean if it's not morally wrong, you know, and it keeps me employed, folks, I'm going to do it. I just am. I need a job

Z CROWDER. Can somebody tell a story of...

V ROGERS. I'm not independently wealthy.

Z CROWDER. Can somebody tell a story of good teaching? Is there a story you can tell that epitomizes good teaching or that represents...like, is that, is that question specific enough?

M LOY. No, that's good. That's really good.

Z CROWDER. Personal or observational. I mean, as we sort of draw to the end of this, I'm thinking, I mean we've touched on so much different stuff? I mean it's certainly contextual depending on if you're in...

J FOX. It's, it's something, a lot of times, I've noticed, it's the things you don't even notice you've done. And they...

Z CROWDER (*insistently.*) But what's a story?

J FOX. And they drift back to you. And when they...it's... 'cause I've likened education now and what I'm doing to Lincoln's Beach. And they're going out there but somehow, someway, it's, something's going to drift back. And I'm going to hear word somehow.

Well, here it is: I taught theater in a small little town in Ohio. Erie, Ohio. And, I barely even remember the young lady. Barely remember her. She was in eighth grade.

M LOY. It's funny but that's always the way. It's the ones you barely remember that...yeah...

J FOX. But I went home this summer and I was in a store. I was actually in Drugmart I think it was. And, I wasn't paying no mind and this older gentleman came up to me and he said, "Are you Arthur Funni?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Um, this probably...it's so long ago that you probably won't remember it. You had my daughter Ellen. Well she was so introverted and we were so worried about her. Well, now she's a prosecuting attorney." And I still don't remember where...what I did, 'cause I want to bottle it. And, um, and so, that's good teaching. It comes back to you on that shore. It comes back like a message in a bottle.

M LOY. Wonderful.

M RYAN. I like that.

V ROGERS. I love that story.

J FOX. She became a prosecuting attorney. I don't even remember.

M LOY. I was afraid when he said, "Prosss..." Were we all wondering?

(Laughter and repetitions of Prosss..., drawn out.)

M LOY. Sorry, I had to bring it up.

J FOX. And this was the better thing. He said, "She didn't realize she had a voice until she hit your class. And that's when it started." She said, then...

M LOY. It's where the right time meets the right place. It is. That teachable moment.

J FOX. He said then, he said, "She's constantly...she's getting more and more involved in theater and doing these more gregarious things which she would have never done. But you gave her that shot. And I'm thinking, "Okay, who is she?"

(Laughter.)

M LOY. When do you recognize and you see that in their eyes...

J FOX. And, you know...and even so, that's another one. Good education. When you see that lightbulb come on.

Z CROWDER. So what's a story of seeing that lightbulb come on?

J FOX. When you're explaining something and it's three or four times...

(Laughter.)

J FOX. ...and then finally, all of a sudden, I go for the...after three or four times of explaining something, I always go for the most craziest thing to explain it and for some reason, it always hits. It sticks.

V ROGERS. That reminds me of one time I was teaching eighth grade literature. And I don't remember the name of the book but it was a higher level book. It was like a high school level book. But we were doing it with a regular class. And we had a class set. And we were reading it out loud because it was quite difficult and the language was not what they were used to, you know, the vocabulary. And we would read a page and I would ask and nobody ever knew what it meant. So I would explain it. I had to explain that book page by page. And we got over to like page 131, I'll never forget that, 131, and we had read it and I explained it and this kid says, "That's what I thought it meant! I was right!" (*raises her hands over head, Rocky-style*) And I was like, "One hundred and thirty-one pages!"

M LOY. That's a great story!

V ROGERS. But he got it! And that was exciting.

M LOY. That's a great story.

J FOX. Good education, too, I think, is taking your time with it.

M LOY. To stick with it.

J FOX. Yeah. Taking your time with it. 'Cause when I taught *Great Gatsby*, a lot of that stuff they didn't understand. But, I understood enough of the Twenties and I know enough about the Twenties that I can literally explain why and how these people are doing what they're doing. And I treat...I learned to treat my English classes more like, you know, if you're involved with a circle of friends that meet at a coffee shop and sit and talk about the book that they're reading.

M LOY. Coffee shop?

J FOX. Well...well, you know what I mean.

M LOY. They had those?

J FOX. It's Starbucks.

M LOY. Now it's a Starbucks.

J FOX. But that's where...but that, I think it's also creativity. Because I had more kids hoping and praying to God that I was going to teach English 4. Because, they even said that, "Look, I look forward to your class because I didn't feel like I was going to class. I felt like I was going just to talk about a book we're all reading." And so I made up my mind, "Okay so that's where I'm going to go from now on with all of this." Maybe I'll bring coffee. I don't know.

M LOY. That's good.

J FOX. But, but it's all, it's a lot of trial and error too, good education. I'm always...that old Vaudeville line, "Well the liked it in Poughkeepsie but that doesn't mean they're going to like it

in Chotocquaw.” You know? And it’s all trial and error and you’ve really got to learn how to get a feel for your kids very quickly. And I’m desperately trying to learn that. Because once you can get the vibe, you know, ‘cause then, that’s where the, that’s where the fun can actually happen.

V ROGERS. Yeah, I have the philosophy that being a teacher is like being a servant leader. I really...to be a good teacher, I think you have to be a leader. You have to have leadership qualities and you have to have leadership capabilities but I think that leadership has to be tempered by the desire to serve. I had a mother from my church call me before Christmas. An eighth grade teacher here in Brandt County made their term paper, first term paper these kids have ever done with footnotes, the whole thing. MLA style. Due three days after they got back from Christmas vacation. And he told them that they just had to work their butts off over Christmas. And the amount of instruction they were getting was not a lot. In the classroom. They were getting it, but it just, this was their first time ever, you know, doing this. And one of the girls came home and she was crying, one of the eighth graders, and begging her Mama to take her out of this school here in Brandt County and put her in Lake Wood Christian Academy. I mean, she really, she was really upset. And so her Mama calls me. And I, I said, “Put her on the phone.” And I called her by name and I said, “You know, I have written and read and graded and taught more papers than any person here alive should ever have to do. And we’ll get through this together.” And so, she and another kid who goes to my church, we spent between thirty and thirty-five hours together over Christmas and wrote their papers. And I...that’s nothing except to say this: If you really are a teacher, it don’t matter where you are...

M LOY. You can’t help yourself.

V ROGERS. You can’t.

J FOX. You can’t.

V ROGERS. It just comes out. I can’t talk on the phone to a little kid crying, who’s thirteen years old, who has been told that if this paper isn’t good enough it’s not going in her high school port---fo---lio (*drawing the word out in obvious parody*) and all this stuff. You know what I ‘m saying? I...how can I? And I have the ability. You know, so when I say, “Suck it up, kid. Do the best you can.” It’s just...you can’t do that.

M LOY. It’s like a doctor, when somebody’s sick you can’t walk away. Right?

V ROGERS. Yeah. And so you help...you know...the kid. And then they’re so sweet. And there, it’s eleven o’clock at night and you’re thinking, “I’ve got to get up at nine o’clock in the morning...” You know, because we started before Christmas. We worked up to December twenty-third. And I told the girls, I said, “Not even for your teacher are we working Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. We’re not doing it.” And so then they went off and...

M LOY. Why do kids feel I like it has to be perfect every time they hand it...well, not this...some kids...

A KOBE. Some kids.

V ROGERS. Well, these kids didn't even know what...they knew no terminology, so you had to teach...

M LOY. So what was everybody in that class going to do?

V ROGERS (*emphatically*.) Well I know what TWO of them did. And I think some of the others found people to help them, too. And I don't know what everybody else did.

M LOY. Maybe that was part of the lesson.

V ROGERS. But, my thing is, if you're a teacher, if you're really a teacher, you don't just have the leadership part, you've got the servant part, too.

J FOX. Yeah.

V ROGERS. And I don't care what type of servant you are, if you don't have the leadership part, you're not going to be effective. You've got to have both to be effective in the classroom. You have to.

M LOY. That's pretty profound.

(*Long pause.*)

Z CROWDER. Nobody ever wants to follow Victoria's stories.

J FOX. No one. That's a hard act to follow.

Z CROWDER. Um, so we're on an hour and forty minutes of me taping. Like, I'm cutting it off before two hours. Would...let's go...if you have...because my advisor's going to kill me if I don't just say, "Tell a story about the working conditions in education today. And so, I'm not going to force you to but if you have a story you can tell about teacher or counselor working conditions. It doesn't have to be representative of, like, everything.

M LOY. I would like a window.

V ROGERS. Me, too. I've not had one in this school...

J FOX. I'd like insulation.

M RYAN. You have a window.

V ROGERS. It's in the hall.

(*Laughter.*)

M LOY. Ten years of a room as big as this table.

J FOX. Insulation and a room. Not a trailer.

M LOY. You see the size of this table? That's the size of my office. Okay? And, and I make it really nice. And I have pictures. And...but I have overwhelming...I'm trying to get away from

holding on to paper. But my point in there is that I would love a window. It would really give me...strength.

V ROGERS. I agree with that.

M RYAN. To look forward to where she's going.

M LOY. I spend twelve, ten, eleven hours a day in that room...

J FOX. In a cave.

M LOY. ...and there are so many times that we make a joke about, "I'm just going to pound through to the gym." Right? "Over there. Just so I have something."

V ROGERS. Well, since you can't have a window, why don't you have Flanders and his students do you a mural?

M LOY. No, no, and more NO! I don't want a picture. I want a window. I want what every classroom teacher has.

V ROGERS. I don't have one. I have one out to the hall.

M RYAN. But you have a window.

V ROGERS. (*Mock-whining.*) I want a window.

J FOX. Well, then take my hut.

M LOY. In ten years...

Z CROWDER. That's your ten year, long-range plan?

(*Laughter.*)

M LOY. That is my long-range plan. Thank you.

M RYAN. I would like to have computers for my students. Individual, little lap-tops. How is it that every other department has it, but the foreign language...

M LOY. I don't know. How is it?

M RYAN. But the foreign language department doesn't? Why is that?

J FOX. Whoa, whoa, whoa. Theater. The Arts doesn't.

V ROGERS. They wrote a grant for it, didn't they?

(*Laughter.*)

Z CROWDER. I had laptops. Because we didn't have enough textbooks. We used online textbooks. That was my excuse.

J FOX. I can't have computers, one, because I 'm in a hut.

M LOY. Materials again. We're getting into...

A KOBE. Media. We can ask but they don't grant it.

V ROGERS. They wrote grant for those carts.

M RYAN. No, we've tried. But we can't because somebody else has it in another department and it's only two days, so we can't have it if...

M LOY. That day. Or the other, the next day. So you book it for the other day and what happens?

M RYAN. So why not have a group of computers for...for the department?

M LOY. Now the math classes have it. Right?

M RYAN. ...and we divide it, divide it.

Z CROWDER. Okay so this is interesting. So, nobody in the World Languages had a computer cart except for whitebread Latin?

M RYAN. No we don't. That's right

Z CROWDER. Is that right?

A KOBE. We don't have them.

J FOX. I never did.

Z CROWDER. Well, the first year...so this is a great story. The first year, I did not want them. And the Principal made Ms. Reynolds, against her will, and Ms. Malloy, give me them. And as soon as one got broken, the screen was...

M LOY. Broken.

Z CROWDER. I...all...everything hit the fan and they got jerked from me. Right? The whole, and I was like, "That's..." I mean, it was like we pulled it out and some kid's like, "This isn't working Mr. Crowder." Take it to Ms. Reynolds. There was a crack in the screen. She went crazy. And they ended up pulling them away. There was a lot of animosity towards me because of out last principal, especially in the first year.

And then the second year, I actually started an online textbook subscription. That I funded, mostly.

M LOY. Really.

Z CROWDER. So that our students could access it---the Cambridge Latin Textbook Course---online. You know it's still up and running because I paid for a year of twenty-five subscriptions for any...I was piloting it. I was really doing it out of...I pitched it to our Principal and he says, "That sounds fine, we'll help out" and they cut me a small check and I covered the rest. It wasn't very expensive, I don't know, like two or three dollars a kid

M LOY. That's amazing.

Z CROWDER. And so...so, but then they gave them to me again for that. And so, but, 'cause they opened up two Latin 1 courses. That was what necessitated it. We hadn't bought enough books. And so, um, when they opened up two Latin 1 courses that second time, I was like, "I've got to..." And twenty-five kids volunteered to essentially to pilot it. And they didn't get hard copies they just got the online subscriptions where they would log in to the textbook from home, from any computer...

M LOY. And how did it work?

Z CROWDER. It worked great. It was fantastic. It was fan...I mean, I never...

M LOY. Did you use that as your curriculum or did you just...?

Z CROWDER. Yeah, 'cause it was the same exact Latin curriculum as the textbook. It was just the textbook online.

M RYAN. That would be so much easier.

Z CROWDER. It was freakin'...it was glorious.

M LOY. I imagine it was.

Z CROWDER. And, infinitely cheaper than...

M RYAN. Than paper.

Z CROWDER. I mean, I pitched all of this. I wrote up a whole proposal and, so: cheaper, you had no degradation basically because...I mean I would lose, attrition, what do you call it, I would lose five or six book a semester,

M LOY. Yeah, just to...

Z CROWDER. As students who just...

M LOY. Left with, yeah...the books disappeared.

Z CROWDER. Left in the middle of the year, moved. The books got lost. Whatever. I mean I kept pretty close track of them but you had students who just transferred and you just never saw them again. They were gone, you know? And, so, um, I got a cart that time for that. And it worked great. I don't know if any of the textbooks y'all use it, but they would just go to Unit 1, Chapter 1 and it would just be all the same stuff. I could put it on the Smartboard. Right? The textbook on the Smartboard. It was great.

But I want to go back to the...why don't the World Languages not get carts and every other department...?

A KOBE. We don't have carts. I tried one time, they say, "If we are...they are mostly other people got it." Normally there should be a cart and we can borrow it for a couple time. There is always someone.

M LOY. You've got to be creative. That's what we have to do.

V ROGERS. You might have to write a "Big Idea Grant" thing. "Bright Idea Grant."

M LOY. That's not a bad thought.

Z CROWDER. I mean, all it required was them just giving me the cart and then the three dollars per kid. But that was for a year.

M LOY. And it was called what again?

Z CROWDER. My thing...I used...well, when I came in they bought me the textbooks for the Cambridge Latin course. And, as I explored the resources they had online, they had the textbooks online.

M LOY. And it was three dollars a kid?

Z CROWDER. So what that meant was, we could go through one block semester and then I could clear them all and see how I could reassign them the next semester.

M LOY. So do they have the Cambridge Spanish and the Cambridge French...?

Z CROWDER. No. It's just Cambridge Latin. But I'm assuming that...

M LOY. There's got to be something equitable, uh, yeah.

Z CROWDER. And the only reason I came to Cambridge is because I started teaching at a school and those were the ones they had.

M LOY. See if you can find something. Maybe there's something available.

M RYAN. It would be so much easier.

M LOY. And even just talking with them, having the conversation...

Z CROWDER. And you had to have hard copies for the students who didn't have online access.

V ROGERS. Well, I got to go and this has been wonderful. But I do want to tell you what mine is for me.

Z CROWDER. Oh good. Please.

V ROGERS. Being the most mature---that's a nice way of saying it---I would love to have job security. I worry about being pushed out. Not necessarily from the local, but from the state, too. There are people pushed out everywhere. At the hospital where I work, people are being pushed out. And the older, the more experience you have, the quicker they're wanting to get rid of you. So instead of valuing me for my experience, my years and loyalty, for being a loyal employee, being loyal back to me. But, gee, I worry about having a job. Maybe you guys don't but I do. I certainly do. Because I see that it is a trend in our state. To, to, you know, to, because, you know they can hire two...first year teachers or one and a half or one and a point or whatever.

You know, instead of me. You would think that at this point of my career I would feel pretty secure. Pretty secure. I do not. And every year it's worse.

A KOBE. That's true. But if you see the raise. The more experienced you are the less you get.

V ROGERS. Oh yeah. I got a dollar and fifty-three cents less.

A KOBE. This doesn't make sense. It doesn't make sense at all. And sometimes the majority doesn't want anything.

V ROGERS. Yeah. So, you know, for me, working conditions, that would be one thing. To be valued for...

A KOBE. ...years of experience, you know.

V ROGERS. I mean, when they take your longevity away and that probably affected everyone here. But, so that doesn't make you feel valued. And...you know. There's just a lot of things that doesn't make you feel valued as an employee. Or feel like, that you've got a job.

M RYAN. For sure.

A KOBE. They took the longevity?

M RYAN. Where were you?

V ROGERS. A year ago.

A KOBE. I didn't know that.

M LOY. When they decided about whether you got a pay raise or not get a pay raise. Remember? That was about a year ago.

V ROGERS. But now you got your longevity check this year only because they didn't finalize it until after some people already had theirs. So everybody got theirs this year but you won't get one next year. So, I'm just saying what benefits you have...

J FOX. Well, I got to be honest, and we kind of brought this up last time, this is what makes states like Texas come in and do a talent raid. That's it. This is what does it.

V ROGERS. Yeah.

J FOX: And what's so interesting, is if you...I watch 'cause I wanted to see what the opinions were...there was nothing, no one had any opinion of it from, from, you know, the local legislature or anything. It was just like...

M LOY. It's a cloud. It just sort of floats over and....

V ROGERS. But this week...

J FOX. But you wait. It's going to happen again.

V ROGERS. You know, this week *News Record* had an article on the front page that said Brandt County had trouble, you know, keeping quality teachers...

M LOY. Hell. Counselors with ten years in Evan and James Counties are making sixty-one thousand dollars and I'm making twenty thousand dollars less than that. That's the next county, for God's sake. Like (*gesture, palms up*), I don't have to go to Texas.

V ROGERS. Chris Brewer, Chris Brewer was quoted in *News Record*, he's the Principal at East, that he lost one of his teachers to James County who got an eight thousand dollar raise just for going to James County.

M LOY. That's what I'm saying. Twenty thousand more than I'm making.

V ROGERS. That's a significant raise.

M LOY. Right now.

V ROGERS. I sure did enjoy talking with you guys tonight.

A KOBE. Thank you. Thank you.

Z CROWDER. I loved that you were here. Thank you.

V ROGERS. I'll have to be sure to read the transcripts after I leave every night to see what y'all say.

(*Laughter.*)

Z CROWDER. I'm going to...I'm telling you that when that thing hits two hours, I am...that's my...

The event ends here with great bustle and discussion as the participants fill out forms with "fake names" and talk all at once and in various aggregations. They congenially make fun of each other's chosen pseudonyms, "Myrna...Fox...Marjorie Ryan". There is much laughter which continues until the cameras are shut off.

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