Electronic Theses and Dissertations   Graduate Studies

11-1-2009

Exploring the First Year of Teaching Through Focus Group Discussions, Ethno-Mimesis, A/r/tography, and Performance Ethnography

Marilyn F. Cullen-Reavill
University of Denver

EXPLORING THE FIRST YEAR OF TEACHING THROUGH FOCUS GROUP

DISCUSSIONS, ETHNO-MIMESIS, A/R/TOGRAPHY, AND PERFORMANCE

ETHNOGRAPHY

_____

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Morgridge College of Education

University of Denver

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

_____

by

Marilyn F. Cullen-Reavill

November, 2009

Advisor: Dr. Nicholas Cutforth

Title: EXPLORING THE FIRST YEAR OF TEACHING THROUGH FOCUS GROUP
DISCUSSIONS, ETHNO-MIMESIS, A/R/TOGRAPHY, AND PERFORMANCE
ETHNOGRAPHY
Advisor: Nicholas Cutforth, Ph. D.
Degree Date: November, 2009

ABSTRACT

The United States is focusing on the important and worthy goal of *no child being left behind* and in order to accomplish this goal, we must ensure that no teacher, including the first-year teacher, is left behind. This study explores, on a monthly basis, the experiences of three first-year teachers and uncover the successes, challenges, supports, and needs that they encounter.

Five research questions guided this study: 1. What are the experiences of a group of first-year teachers and in what ways were these experiences challenging, supportive, or detrimental? 2. What are the benefits for the first-year teachers in meeting monthly with other first-year teachers in a non-evaluative seminar setting to reflect upon and describe their experiences? 3. What is the value in using a descriptive feedback process (Rodger's 2006) in focus group discussions with first-year teachers and what effect does the process have on the reflective practices of the first-year teachers? 4. What effect does the process of creating visual have on the first year teacher's ability to reflect upon and express their experiences in meaningful ways? 5. What are the implications of this study for teacher education programs, schools, districts, and induction and mentoring programs? Focus group discussions, ethno-mimesis, a/r/tography, and performance ethnography are used to explore the first-year teachers' experiences. Findings from the study demonstrated that the first-year teachers endured a significant transition from

student teaching to teaching and encountered unexpected situations over which they had minimal control. They faced challenges with student behaviors and stressful events such as classroom parties. They encountered varying levels of support from teammates, colleagues, principals, and parents. This study's monthly seminar meetings in a non-evaluative setting were beneficial to the first-year teachers and provided them with the opportunity to focus on the development of reflective practice. This study also demonstrated that a descriptive feedback process (Rodger's 2006) was detrimental rather than beneficial in conducting focus groups, but proved useful during data analysis. This study's use of art as a process of discovery led the first-year teachers to take more risks and teach more creatively than they would have otherwise.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Table of Contents

x

Tables

Figures

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

0n January, 8th, 2002, U. S. President Bush signed The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) which ties assessments to a state's curriculum. Important decisions, such as the allocation of federal funding, are made based on students' performance on the assessments. Schools that do not make sufficient progress undergo public embarrassment and important sanctions. They are now listed as failing schools in newspapers and on Internet sites. Funding from the federal government will be withheld if progress is not made. Schools that do not make sufficient progress after three years are often restructured, which means that teachers and administrators are replaced and new plans for improvement are developed (Popham, 2004). In many schools, especially high-need schools, teacher turnover rates have increased and teacher morale has been negatively affected (Cawelti, 2006; Darling-Hammond & Berry, 2006). Our nation is focusing on the important and worthy goal of *no child being left behind*. However, in order to accomplish this goal, we must ensure that no teacher, including the beginning teacher, is left behind. Darling-Hammond and Berry (2006) state that, "A great unfinished task in U.S. education is to create conditions to better support new teachers" (p. 18).

While all teachers feel tired at the end of their first year, many possess a sense of accomplishment, pride, and excitement for teaching. However, a significant number of teachers leave the profession never to return. Teacher attrition is currently a big problem for schools and school districts. At least 22,000 teachers in the United States quit each

1

year with 30% of teachers leaving the profession within the first three years and more than 45% leaving after five years (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Graziano, 2005; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Johnson & Donaldson, 2004).

The National Center for Educational Statistics conducts a national survey entitled: Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), and a supplemental survey entitled: Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS). These surveys provide the largest and most comprehensible data source on teacher attrition as well as other staffing, occupational, and organizational aspects of schools (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). This survey, as well as others, categorizes new teachers as having 1-3 years of service.

In one of their many studies using the data from the SASS and the TFS, Ingersoll and Smith (2003) focused on teachers who left the profession after their first year. While they did not publish the exact number, they found that 42% of the first-year teachers who left the profession did so because of personal reasons or situations such as moving, child rearing, or health problems. Terminations and cutbacks were responsible for 19% leaving after their first year. Reasons for attrition such as these are natural and unavoidable, and occur in any profession (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

Ingersoll and Smith's study (2003) also determined that 29% of first-year teachers left due to dissatisfaction with their careers. A low salary was one reason for their dissatisfaction, but other reasons included lack of administrative support, student discipline problems, poor student motivation, and minimum control over or ability to participate in decision making.

Terminations, cutbacks, and personal reasons for first-year teachers leaving cannot be prevented or minimized. However, nearly one-third of all first-year teachers leave the

2

profession because they are dissatisfied with it. Of the factors contributing to teacher

dissatisfaction, low salaries is the only one that induction and mentoring programs have little,

if any, control over. Improving student discipline and motivation, obtaining administrative

support, and increasing the involvement of first-year teachers in decision making processes

should be addressed in order to lower the high attrition rates of beginning teachers (Ingersoll &

Smith, 2003).

This study explored the concerns, successes, and overall experiences of three first-year

teachers on a monthly basis throughout the year. Just knowing the reasons that first-year

teachers might decide to leave the profession is not enough; this study was conducted in order

to determine what would make it desirable for them to stay in the profession. Two

methodologies were used to explore the experiences of the first-year teachers as they

developed: Focus group discussions utilizing topics decided upon by participants rather than

questions predetermined by the researcher and Ethno-mimesis--a research methodology

blending participatory arts-based research, ethnography, and participatory action research. This

study has uncovered the discrepancies between the first-year teachers' expectations going into

the profession and the realities that they faced. These discrepancies, as well as other subtle but

significant factors that affected the first-year teachers, were captured in visual art and prose.

This has been accomplished through two methodological approaches: a/r/tography--an arts-

based research methodology utilizing aesthetic and artistic processes as means of inquiry into

educational phenomenon and performance ethnography--an aesthetic representation or

performance of one's research that employs the critical imaginations of both researcher(s) and

audience (Denzin, 2003).

Rationale

The four main purposes of my research were:

1. To obtain information from the perspective of the first-year teacher not obtained in previous studies;

2. To create a structured, supportive venue/seminar where first-year teachers can discuss their experiences with other first-year teachers in a non-evaluative setting;

3. To explore the potential of focus group discussions utilizing descriptive feedback (Rodgers 2006), ethno-mimesis, and a/r/tography as vehicles for enabling first-year teachers to think reflectively and critically in order to improve their practice; and

4. To provide a positive and effective venue for participants/co-researchers to share their experiences through performance ethnography.

This study was unique in that it blended several new research techniques and methodologies which have not been widely used in educational research. First, the concept of descriptive feedback (Rodgers, 2006) was employed in monthly focus group discussions involving the three participants and facilitated by the researcher. For the purposes of this study, I define focus group discussions as focus groups utilizing topics determined by participants rather than questions predetermined by the researcher. The focus group discussions were reflexive conversations during which the first-year teachers described their experiences and discussed ways of improving their own practice. Rodgers' (2006) four steps of reflection - presence in experience, description of

experience, analysis of experience and experimentation - were implemented to varying

degrees in order to keep the conversations focused.

Second, ethnomimesis (O'Neil & Tobolewska, 2002), a research methodology

blending participatory arts-based research, ethnography, and participatory action

research, was incorporated in order to further the participants discovery through art

exploration. The creation of visual art and prose as a way of exploring professional

practice can provide new avenues for reflection at a deeper level (Cullen-Reavill, 2009).

The implementation of participatory action research (Reason, 1994) honored and valued

the knowledge and experience of each first-year teacher. The participants were

considered co-researchers and, therefore, the researcher made decisions with them rather

than for them (Jordan, 2003). In order to reinforce this principle and maintain its

consistency, I refer to the participants as either first-year teachers or as co-researchers

throughout the remainder of this paper.

Third, a/r/tography, an arts-based research methodology utilizing aesthetic and

artistic processes as means of inquiry into educational phenomenon, was implemented in

order to capture the experiences of the co-researchers and explore the principal

investigator's role and connection to the research. Finally, the first-year teachers' insights

and experiences culminated in the creation of a group mural with the help of an artist.

This mural and other art that they had created over the course of the research were

incorporated into a performance ethnography (Denzin, 2003) undertaken in the presence

of a larger educational audience at my final oral defense.

Many studies describing strategies that are helpful to new teachers have explored

and evaluated existing induction and mentoring programs (Bartell, 2005; Brown, 2003;

Darling-Hammond, 2003). Although this research is informative and useful in determining positive and negative aspects of induction and mentoring programs, it often neglects the ideas, opinions, and suggestions of the first-year teachers themselves. Other studies have described the actual experiences of first-year teachers relying on data obtained from surveys or interviews conducted once or twice during the first year of teaching (Gilbert, 2005; McCann & Johannessen, 2004; Williams, 2003). These studies have identified valuable information about what new teachers experienced and what was or was not supportive to them. However, surveys and interviews provide limited kinds of information and insights. This study makes a unique contribution to the field because it provides a monthly account of the insights of first-year teachers as well as the situations they experienced during their first year of teaching.

There were four facets to this study:

1. As principal investigator, I facilitated the implementation of visual art in order to help the three co-researchers reflect upon and document their experiences during their first year of teaching on a monthly basis;

2. Together we uncovered the challenges that presented themselves throughout the first year of teaching during focus group discussions as we utilized Rodger's (2006) four steps of reflection described earlier, considered supports and situations that did or would help with these challenges, and collaboratively decided upon recommendations that will be made to the larger educational community;

3. We explored the creation of visual art as both a process of reflection and as a way to represent research findings; and

4. We developed a performance in order to report our findings in an aesthetically descriptive way.

Contribution to the Field

This study contributes to the field in two ways. First, it has uncovered the experiences of being first-year teachers through the eyes of the first-year teachers themselves. As Feiman-Nemser (2003) states, "Beginning teachers have legitimate learning needs that cannot be grasped in advance or outside the contexts of teaching." (p. 2). A clearer picture of the first-year teachers' needs was provided by hearing their voices on a continual basis. This can potentially help induction programs fulfill the needs of first-year teachers rather than perceived needs. Information relayed in this study about the challenges that first-year teachers face can help teacher education programs provide course work and practicum experiences that more adequately prepare new teachers for these challenges. Second, this study has explored the value of blending certain research methodologies. Qualitative researchers strive to generate insight about a phenomena or culture in order to better understand it (Creswell, 2002). The research questions posed helped to determine the methodology and blending focus group discussions utilizing descriptive feedback, ethno-mimesis, a/r/tography, and performance ethnography was well suited to addressing my questions. I have acquired a great amount of insight on the use of these methodologies.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were:

1. What are the experiences of a group of first-year teachers and in what ways were these experiences challenging, supportive, or detrimental?

7

2. What are the benefits for the first-year teachers in meeting monthly with other first-year teachers in a non-evaluative seminar setting to reflect upon and discuss their experiences?

3. What is the value in using a descriptive feedback process (Rodgers, 2006) in focus group discussions with first-year teachers and what effect does this process have on the reflective practices of the first-year teachers?

4. What effect does the process of creating visual art have on the first-year teacher's ability to reflect upon and express their experiences in meaningful ways?

5. What are the implications of this study for teacher education programs, schools, districts, and induction and mentoring programs?

The enthusiasm, dedication and commitment of the three co-researchers made it possible to answer these questions through the implementation of focus group discussions utilizing descriptive feedback, ethno-mimesis, a/r/tography, and performance ethnography. The first-year teachers' successes, frustrations, challenges, questions, and inspirational insights were uncovered on a monthly basis. This process not only led us to information not previously discussed, but also to solutions for the dilemmas faced by first-year teachers.

This dissertation is eight chapters in length. Chapter II: *Review of the Literature* reviews the literature on first-year teachers and the conventional and unconventional methodologies used to study them. Chapter III: *Methodology* discusses how and why specific methodological approaches were utilized in this study and how the data were collected, analyzed, and reported. Chapter IV: *Preparing for the Voyage* introduces the first-year teachers, explains their roles as co-researchers in this study, discusses our

previous relationships with one another, and clarifies my previous and current roles in the field of education. Chapter V: *Setting Sail* contains a found poem, a description of the data collection session, a discussion on the learning that took place, and the initial findings for each month during the first trimester (September, October, and November, 2008). Chapter VI: *Sink or Swim* describes our voyage during January, February, and March, 2009 utilizing a found poem, a description of the data collection session, a discussion on the learning that took place, and the initial findings for each month. Chapter VII: *Land Ho* relays the last two months of the third trimester (April and May, 2009) through focus group data, found poetry, and visual art and ends with a poem, a description of the production of the mural, and a brief narration of the co-researchers' future plans as they enter their second year of teaching. Finally, Chapter VIII: *Buried Treasure - Findings and Conclusions* reviews the origin and purposes of the study, discusses findings relative to the five research questions, considers the limitations of the study, relays the lessons learned relevant to arts-based research, discusses the need for further research, and concludes with my final thoughts on the study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The First-Year Teacher

Introduction

First-year teachers face many challenges and have needs that, when met, help to

ensure their success. Being a practicing first-year teacher is very different from being a

pre-service teacher and it is essential that teachers are well prepared to enter the field.

One goes from learning best practices with a great deal of support to teaching in the

confines of reality with limited support. The working conditions, attitudes of experienced

faculty, responsibilities, and expectations are often not what the first-year teacher

expected or desired. First-year teachers are more likely to be successful when they are

given help with furthering their skills and are provided reasonable expectations together

with a variety of support systems (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Feiman-Nemser, 2003).

Challenges Faced by First-Year Teachers

Adequate Teacher Preparation

Today there are many different avenues through which one can enter the field of

teaching. Some private schools and charter schools do not require any formal preparation

for their teachers. Traditionally public school teachers enter the field by completing a

teacher preparation program at a college or university. In these programs they undergo

extensive pre-service course work (which usually incorporates field experiences in public

school classrooms) and then complete a student teaching experience after which they

obtain licensure through the state's education department. However, since 1999 until the current economic recession, the need for new teachers has risen greatly due mainly to the large number of retiring teachers nation-wide, but also due in part to increased birth and immigration rates. Other means of obtaining licensure have become prevalent due to this increased need for teachers. Many states and districts are supporting alternative and provisional licensure programs (Johnson & Donaldson, 2004).

As Ingersoll (2001) states, "…controversy surrounds how much education, what types of training, and which kinds of preparation teachers ought to have to be considered qualified in any given field" (p. 42). However, there is evidence that the attrition rates are higher for teachers who did not have formal preparation program. Twice as many teachers who did not have a student teaching experience will leave within the first five years as those who have. Three times as many teachers who are not licensed or certified, compared to those who are, will leave within the first five years (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Transitioning into Teaching

The transition from being a student teacher to a practicing teacher is huge and the full responsibility of a teaching position is often overwhelming. First-year teachers must learn how to function in a new and unfamiliar environment, adapt to the system and cope with a myriad of difficulties (Eldar, Nabel, Schechter, Talmor, & Mazin, 2003). These difficulties may involve loneliness, exhaustion, classroom management, parent communication, working with other staff members, planning, curriculum, and facing the difference between one's expectations and the realities of the profession (Conway, Hansen, Schulz, Stimson, & Wozniak-Reese, 2004).

11

First-year teachers often talk about experiencing a sense of "reality shock" and find that what they expected from the field of teaching is much different than what they actually experience (Eldar, et al., 2003). Many of them discuss the absence of support from other teachers in areas such as team planning or time with a mentor teacher. Instead they report feeling isolated and hoping to just survive (Feiman-Nemser, 2003).

Many first-year teachers also report losing their sense of optimism, excitement, and idealism after their first year (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Manuel, 2002). Their idealism is threatened by factors such as low staff moral, deficit staffroom culture, and endemic school and district-wide challenges (Manuel, 2002). They often have valuable ideas and relevant knowledge of best practices, but find it difficult to implement these in the realities that they face once they become employed (Maloch, Flint, Eldridge, Harmon, Loven, Fine, Bryant-Shanklin, & Martinez, 2001). When they take on the full responsibilities of running a classroom, first-year teachers often find themselves disillusioned, overwhelmed, and exhausted. Many struggle to remain idealistic while complying with the school culture in which they find themselves (Manuel, 2002).

It is important to realize that during the transition from student teacher to professional a gradual change from more support to less support and from less responsibility to more responsibility is needed. However, North American teaching cultures tend to have a 'sink or swim' mentality. In the U.S. the probability of the hardest courses and the most extra-curricular duties being given to first-year teachers is very high (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

Obtaining Needed Support

More experienced teachers would most likely help a new teacher if asked to do so, but new teachers may not even know what help they need let alone be able to ask for it. Thus, first-year teachers do not always obtain useful and positive assistance. First-year teachers may go through a sense of culture shock, even if they have been through a formal student teaching experience, because the structure and framework of schools can be so drastically different. They often find themselves having to adapt to unfamiliar sets of values and norms (Eldar, et al., 2003).

Working Conditions

Working conditions play a major role in teachers leaving the profession or changing schools. The working conditions that teachers say have caused them to leave are low salary, lack of administrative support, lack of resources, and lack of input into decision-making. Teacher salaries are about 20 % lower than those of professionals in other fields who have had comparable training and education (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

First-year teachers are often placed in the positions formerly occupied by more experienced teachers who have left due to dissatisfaction. Often these positions are in schools that are known to have unhealthy climates or a competitive teaching culture. New teachers who are placed in schools without proper structure or leadership are often given the more "difficult" students (Feiman-Nemser, 2003).

Hazing

In a study on the hazing of first-year teachers, Patterson (2005) found that school culture might not be very inviting to incoming teachers. Patterson was one of three

support providers to over 60 new teachers in a large, urban public high school. In this school, first-year teachers were given large numbers of challenging students in substandard classrooms with few resources. Patterson's study also revealed that the first-year teachers were often hired at the last minute, placed in the most difficult schools and classroom settings, given inadequate materials/resources, and provided with unclear information on what was expected of them. Patterson also found that teachers who left after their first year did so not because of low pay or hard work, but because they felt they were placed in impossible situations and doubted whether they would ever acquire feelings of success or career satisfaction.

Excessive Responsibilities

First-year teachers take on the responsibilities of disciplining and motivating children, communicating with parents, coping with the stress of standardized testing, and adjusting to the community and school environment in which they are placed. In addition, they are expected to attend faculty meetings, as well as the additional district meetings required for new teachers. First-year teachers are faced with an extremely large learning agenda and steep learning curve, which, when added to the immense responsibilities that they face, often puts them in the position of trying to survive one day at a time (Manuel, 2002; Renard, 2003).

Pressures of being a full-time, first-year teacher make it difficult for beginning teachers to balance understanding, learning, and expectations with actual practice. Demands associated with coping as a first-year teacher may dampen innovative and creative teaching practices (Loughran, Brown, & Doecke, 2001). These demands require much time and energy. First-year teachers are held accountable for having the same skills

14

as experienced teachers when, instead, they should be given the time and support needed in order to acquire them (Renard, 2003).

Emotions Encountered by First-Year Teachers

The first year of teaching is also a time of intense discovery and many deep emotions (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). In general, teachers tend to be very passionate about what they do and this passion stirs up a wide range of feelings and emotions. Nias (1996) is one of many educators who believe in the rationale that emotions are rooted in cognition, therefore judgment is not separate from affectivity, and perceptions are based on feelings. She explains that feeling and cognition are formed and shaped by cultural and social forces. Thus there is good reason to suggest that the emotions of teachers should be given adequate time and attention. Emotions have a very important impact on the professional activity of the first-year teacher (Ria, Seve, Saury, Theureau, & Durand, 2003). First-year teachers may not be used to dealing with such powerful emotions and should be given support in appropriately dealing with them. First-year teachers benefit from support in a safe non-evaluative setting where they can reflect on their feelings and emotions in order to make sense of their experiences and use them to further their growth and development as educators (Eldar, et al., 2003).

First-year teachers find it difficult to see and measure their success because the teaching profession does not have clear, straightforward goals like some other professions (Cullen-Reavill, 2007). The role of teacher is hard to define and there are many different and even conflicting perspectives on what that role needs to be. Society expects more of teachers than is humanly possible (Johnson & Birkland, 2004).

15

Teaching is a field that provokes deep emotions and potentially explosive passions that other fields may not (Nias, 1996). An understanding of four main factors that may provoke all of these emotions in this profession may help the first-year teacher to manage and balance them.

First, teaching is built upon relationships with one's administration, colleagues, parents, and students. Not only are relationships central to teaching, teachers are often held responsible for these relationships (Nias, 1996). First-year teachers often find training and support in developing positive relationships with students helpful (Schlichte, Yssel, & Merbler, 2005). Teachers must acquire many types of social skills and communicate well on many different levels. First-year teachers are very concerned about creating and maintaining positive relationships with students, parents, colleagues, and supervisors (McCann & Johannessen, 2004).

Second, one's values and ethics are constantly being challenged in the teaching profession and may be undermined by mandated policies. Teachers are often called upon to make decisions which are morally ambiguous (Nias, 1996). Continually facing difficult situations, in which the teacher is responsible for a child's well-being, can be daunting and overwhelming.

Third, teachers invest a great deal of time and energy into a job where critical judgment may often outweigh appreciation. Emotional responses are created by the increase in situations where they are asked to defend who and what they are. Teachers' feelings are often influenced by elements of power, conflict, and politics. Their jobs and reputations often depend on the approval of others, which can be very political. Resentment and anger are provoked by political and micro-political influences on the

profession. Increasingly, teachers are pressured by the demands of performing to a standardized level, and simplistic notions of productivity are undermining academic quality (Nias, 1996). Teachers experience frustration and guilt when situations beyond their control take energy and time away from their efforts to help students learn.

Finally one's professional efficacy affects and is affected by one's personal efficacy, and one's personal identity often merges with one's professional identity (Nias, 1996). Fayne and Ortquist-Ahrens (2006) define teaching efficacy as "a belief system centering on the notion that teachers can and do have an impact on student learning…" (p. 321). Therefore, when the first-year teachers' students are not doing well their professional and personal efficacy may be threatened. It takes much more than emotional support and advice in order to positively affect first-year teachers' sense of efficacy. It is important that structured support programs provide first-year teachers with an opportunity to discuss and reflect on their own experiences and at the same time provide them with pedagogical content knowledge in order to improve teaching practices (Fayne & Ortquist-Ahrens, 2006).

Needs of First-Year Teachers

Reasonable Expectations

First-year teachers are usually asked to take on a range of responsibilities similar to those undertaken by veteran teachers. They are required to attend the same meetings as experienced teachers as well as additional induction meetings for new teachers. The tendency is for first-year teachers to be asked to serve on extra committees with the intention that it will be good experience for them. Their zeal and optimism along with their willingness to please and the difficulty of saying "no" often cause first-year teachers to over extend themselves. This can cause them to become overwhelmed and frustrated. In order to change this, first-year teachers must be given more time and less to do (Renard, 2003).

As previously discussed, first-year teachers are often placed in schools that have unhealthy climates or lack proper leadership. They are given the most challenging classroom settings with the more difficult students (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Patterson, 2005). Even experienced veterans would be challenged by these situations. It is essential that first-year teachers be allocated reasonable teaching assignments in which they can set and meet realistic goals and acquire a certain level of success (Manuel, 2002).

Mastering of Skills

Feiman-Nemsser (2003) found that teacher education programs can prepare pre-service teachers for their first job, but there are some skills that cannot be learned until they are practicing teachers. One such skill is the ability to learn and master relevant, situational approaches to the subject matter or grade level that they are teaching. Another

skill that teachers must obtain in their first year is the ability to teach in the particular

context in which they are hired, such as an urban school or a charter school. A task that

can be daunting for first-year teachers is interpreting state standards documents in order

to integrate them into their teaching and refrain from treating the standards as separate

tasks. Teachers in their first year are now faced with creating a public identity and

developing a comfortable performing self (Feiman-Nemser, 2003).

A Variety of Support Systems

Teaching is a very taxing field physically, intellectually, and psychologically

(Manuel, 2002). All first-year teachers, even those that are well prepared and have a great

deal of efficacy, need much support from many different sources. One source of support

is a mentor with whom the first-year teacher can establish a strong and sharing

relationship. The relationship between mentor and mentee is usually more successful

when initiated and supported by a well designed mentoring program (McCann,

Johannessen, & Ricca, 2005).

However, first-year teachers need much more than emotional and technical

support. They need an overall environment and staff that support them in their learning

and growth as teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). Supportive evaluative methods help

first-year teachers overcome individual challenges and connect to the larger educational

community (McCann et al, 2005). New teachers adapt to the demands of the field more

easily when they have structured and individualized induction programs within their

schools and when they have a supportive principal and staff who possess experience and

commitment needed to help them (Manuel, 2002).

Although support from within one's school is crucial, it has been found that continuing systematic support from college professors/researchers ensures that first-year teachers adequately adjust to the profession. This type of support is necessary in order to provide first-year teachers with the opportunity to discuss their experiences with other first-year teachers and gain some insight from a neutral authority in a confidential, non-evaluative setting (Eldar, et al., 2003; McCann, et al., 2005; Schlichte, Yssel, & Merbler, 2005)

Along with formal methods of support, informal means of support can be valuable to first-year teachers as well. Williams (2003) found that many first-year teachers learn by watching and talking to other teachers, parents, and students. Non-formal learning, learning from other people at work and day-to-day situations, is more beneficial for first-year teachers if they have someone to discuss this with in a reflective and developmental way. This learning is implicit in nature and, although very valuable, is often difficult to articulate (Williams, 2003).

Johnson and Kardos (2002) found that the support given to new teachers did not match their needs. In their interviews with over 50 first-and second-year teachers, they discovered two major situations that new teachers thought would be most helpful, but rarely happened: first, being placed in a professional culture that was integrated with both new and experienced teachers; and second, having a sustained school-based professional development program. The new teachers in the study also described supportive colleagues as those who would take them seriously, help them with daily dilemmas, watch them teach, provide feedback, help them develop instructional strategies, model skilled teaching, and share insights about students.

Summary

The success of first-year teachers is influenced by many factors, including how they were prepared, the support they receive in making the transition from pre-service teacher to teacher, working conditions, acceptance and support from experienced faculty, and, also, the first-year teacher's own personality and ability to deal with emotions encountered. Situations that are most supportive for first-year teachers are ones where expectations are reasonable and a variety of support systems are provided.

Programs Supporting First-Year Teachers

Introduction

Many countries are beginning to recognize the necessity of an organized support system for first-year teachers. The two most common means for supporting first-year teachers is through mentors and/or induction programs. There is not much consensus, however, on the best methods or structure for providing those support systems and there tends to be much variation in what is provided for first-year teachers. Some first-year teachers are given considerable support where others receive very little, or support that is not beneficial.

Mentoring

Mentoring is by no means a new concept. Villani (2002) explains the history of the term "mentor" in the following way:

> The word 'mentor' comes from the character Mentor, in
> Homer's *Odyssey*, who was chosen to educate and support
> Telemachus while his father was fighting the Trojan War.
> The word now means a wise and trusted friend, and the role
> has expanded to include teacher, supporter, guide,
> protector, and sponsor (p. 7).

21

Apprentices, such as blacksmiths, have been noted throughout history. Even now most fields have an apprenticeship phase, but not teaching. Doctors are not asked to take on surgeries, lawyers are not asked to defend cases, and architects are not asked to design buildings all by themselves in isolation for the first time. Yet, it is common practice for new teachers to take on classrooms single-handedly in virtual isolation (Bartell, 2005; Danielson, 2002).

Since the 1980's, the need to support and apprentice new teachers has been increasingly recognized. Teacher induction and mentoring programs are being established nationwide. Mentoring can contribute to student success by providing new teachers with access to the accumulated knowledge and expertise of their colleagues. It can also improve teacher retention and be used as a recruitment tool (The National Education Association Foundation for the Improvement of Education, 1999).

Benefits of Teacher Mentoring Programs

 Reducing teacher attrition.

One of the biggest problems facing schools in the United States is the ability to hire and keep qualified, successful teachers. The statistics paint a grim picture. About 6% of our nation's teachers leave the profession each year and 7% change schools. Within the first three years of their teaching career, 20% of all teachers leave the profession and 50% of all urban teachers leave within the first five years (Bartell, 2005; Brown, 2003; Ingersoll, 2002; Sachs, 2004).

This high amount of teacher attrition is costly to school communities in numerous ways. First, it is a great financial burden. A district pays around $11,000 to replace each teacher who leaves the profession. Nationwide, school districts pay an estimated $5.8 B

22

to replace teachers each year (Graziano, 2005). Second, teacher attrition diverts administrative time away from other areas of need such as staff support; it consumes the time of teachers, who are required to be part of the personnel committee. Teachers' time could be better spent on other duties such as curriculum planning. Third, school culture is hard to establish without a consistent faculty. Fourth, schools with consistently high turnover rates tend to have inexperienced or poor teachers. The school community is more reluctant to make significant personal and financial investments in a school with a faculty who will not invest in staying at that school for a significant amount of time (Millinger, 2004).

Researchers have found that one of the best ways to combat the attrition of new teachers is to establish effective induction and mentoring programs. According to the National Education Association (NEA), new teachers who participate in induction and mentoring programs are twice as likely to stay in the profession (Brown, 2003; Graziano, 2005). Well-designed, well-supported induction and mentoring programs help new teachers improve their instructional skills, attitudes, and feelings of efficacy, which, in turn, raises the retention rates of new teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

Preventing new teacher isolation.

The teaching profession has often been viewed as being somewhat isolated, with individual teachers working behind closed doors and the demands of the job preventing the needed time for collaboration. Bartell (2005) states that, "The early years of teaching are often characterized by a 'sink-or-swim' or 'survival' mentality because we have often failed to provide for careful support and thoughtful development of teaching expertise over time." (p. 3). Fortunately, teacher educators are realizing the need to change this state of affairs.

As well as helping new teachers improve instructional skills and knowledge, induction and mentoring programs can help new teachers feel welcomed and valued by the school staff and community. Also, these programs help prevent new teachers from feeling isolated (Brown, 2003). Induction programs help create venues for teachers, old and new, to engage in thoughtful and rich conversations about student learning and teaching practices. Structured induction programs with workshops focusing on new teachers' needs, and developed with their input, will give them the support that is most useful. This process will demonstrate to new teachers that their thoughts and ideas are valued and encouraged. It will recognize the challenges facing new teachers and the importance of having someone to ask for help when needed. New teachers will have different learning needs depending on their experiences, background, and training. A successful mentoring and induction program will meet the individual needs of new teachers, recognize and build on the knowledge that they bring to the classroom, give them the support and encouragement needed to improve on their weaknesses, and extend

learning in order for new teachers to move to higher levels of accomplished teaching (Bartell, 2005).

Overview of Existing Teacher Mentoring Programs

Successful programs.

The careful selection and training of mentors is an essential factor of success for mentoring programs (McCann, et al, 2005). Mentoring needs to be well-structured and mentors must know what their role is and how to fulfill it. Also, it is important, albeit difficult, to match each first-year teacher with a compatible mentor. There must be regular scheduled times for mentors and mentees to meet, in order for them to build a trusting and respectful relationship (McCann, et al, 2005).

The most successful induction programs are run by educators who actively seek out and listen to the needs and concerns of the first-year teachers in the program. Successful programs also help teachers cope with the fatigue and frustrations that they are likely to encounter (McCann, et al, 2005). Brewster and Railsback's (2001) study of successful mentoring programs led them to derive the following as essential elements to the success of a mentoring program: quality support and training for mentors, incentives for mentors and mentees, administrative support, adequate funding, clear leadership, and meeting times for mentors and mentees built into the school schedule.

Criticisms of the most common programs.

New teachers have expressed concerns and criticisms about the mentoring programs in which they participate (Graziano, 2005). Some felt that they theoretically had a mentor for support, but meetings were almost non-existent and unstructured; mentoring/induction programs were more of a "pep-rally" than a program that offered

practical guidance; and that mentors had good intentions, but, due to their high workload, were not able to offer enough time to their mentees. These reactions are not surprising since many teacher induction programs lack adequate funding, staff training, and administrative support. However, it is very important that induction coordinators and mentors solicit and listen to the input of the new teachers on what their concerns and needs are, instead of assuming that they know what they are (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

First-year teachers have been quoted in a study conducted by McCann, et al. (2005) as saying that "It is better to have no mentoring program at all than to have a bad one." When mentors and mentees feel forced or coerced into participating in the program there is likely to be a sense of resentment established which is difficult to overcome. If a mentoring program is not well structured and if the roles and responsibilities of mentors and mentees are not clearly defined, then it is more likely to be viewed as a waste of time by both mentee and mentor.

Induction

Bartell (2005) defines a teacher induction program as "a systematic, organized plan for support and development of the new teacher in the initial one to three years of service" (p. 6). Teacher induction programs are established in different ways and under different circumstances, but their underlying mission is to give new teachers the support they need to become successful in the school community.

Rationales for Induction Programs

Although, as discussed earlier, not all first-year teachers enter the field via a formal teacher education program including student teaching, most still enter the field having had some type of teaching preparation (Johnson & Donaldson, 2004). Once the first-year teacher is formally employed, their experiences are often much different from what they expected (Eldar, et al., 2003; Conway, et. al., 2004). Therefore some kind of mechanism needs to be put in place that can bridge the gap between what one experiences as a pre-service teacher and what one then experiences as a first-year teacher. Without this, many first-year teachers develop coping strategies just to make it through their first-year, rather than learning thoughtful approaches to best practices. A strong teacher induction program can be this much-needed bridge (Killeavy, 2006).

The teaching profession suffers from a higher and more consistent rate of attrition than most other professions (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Strong induction programs that promote a school-wide support system and professional development empower first-year teachers to thrive rather than just survive, and this in turn promotes teacher retention and improved student learning (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Killeavy, 2006).

Existing Programs

Internationally, the teaching profession is undergoing enormous changes and high levels of scrutiny and demands for improvement. Several countries are recognizing the extreme need for teacher induction and are developing and implementing programs to help support new teachers (Howe, 2006; Killeavy, 2006). Currently we are faced with exciting possibilities due to a push for globalization and the advantages of advanced

technology and communication. Howe (2006) encourages educators to think globally by

stating:

> While cultural context is important when considering how induction
> programs from abroad could be borrowed and adapted for use at home,
> and some foreign practices might not be appropriate, they challenge us to
> think 'outside the box,' about what we tend to ignore or leave unexamined
> (p.294).

Many European countries, including Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and England,

currently have nationally funded induction programs. All of these programs provide new

teachers with a mentor. In England, Scotland, and Wales, the first year teachers are given

a reduction in teaching responsibilities and have teacher performance evaluations built

into the induction program. In Ireland, evaluation takes place outside of the induction

program and does not include the mentor as an evaluator (Killeavy,2006).

In his international review of induction programs, Howe (2006) makes note of

outstanding and comprehensive teacher induction programs that exist in many countries

including Australia, Belgium, Britain, Canada, Chinese Taipei, France, Germany, Ireland,

Japan, Norway, People's Republic of China, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, and the

U.S. Japan inducts teachers into the profession through a real-world clinical training

processes and new teachers are given 125 days of professional development time to work

with senior teachers (Howe, 2006). Germany provides all new teachers with a

comprehensive two-year internship: the first-year teachers teach three days a week and

attend seminars the other two days without having full responsibility for a class and the

second-year teachers teach four days a week and have one day of seminar for

collaboration and reflection, and undergo school-based training with a special trained

mentor. During the second-year the teachers have full autonomy over their teaching, are

paid one-half of the regular salary, and faculty from the college and school observe and evaluate at least 25 lessons (Howe, 2006). In New Zealand teacher induction is governed locally rather than nationally and for two to five years new teachers are part of an Advice and Guidance program designed and implemented at the school level (Howe, 2006).

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT), a national teachers union in the U.S., reports that as of 2001, 17 states had no policies or funding for induction. Only 33 states had induction policies in place and of those only 22 were mandated and funded. North Carolina's teacher induction program required "optimum working conditions" for first-year teachers, which means that they were given assignments in their area of licensure, had limited numbers of preparation, had limited number of "exceptional or difficult" students, had minimal non-instructional duties, and were not required to take on extra-curricular responsibilities. Connecticut, Iowa, and Nebraska had statutes requiring release time for novice teachers, but only the state of New York had a policy in place that reduced the teaching load for first-year teachers (Howe, 2006).

California has a mandated teacher induction program that is well conceived and well funded through the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program (BTSA). New teachers receive ongoing support and one-on-one mentoring from a trained mentor for the first two years of professional practice (Howe, 2006). The Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) program in the state of Connecticut is a comprehensive program providing support and learning opportunities for teachers during their first three years of teaching (Howe, 2006). One of the best-known teacher induction programs in North America evolved from the Santa Cruz New Teacher Project (SCNTP). This is a collaborative effort between the

University of California at Santa Cruz, the Santa Cruz Office of Education, and over 20 school districts. More than 350 new teachers participate in this program (Howe, 2006).

New and Innovative Programs Supporting First-Year Teachers

Many creative and successful mentoring programs (some of which have already been mentioned) are being developed through collaborations between colleges/universities and K-12 schools/districts. Having a shared mission, and possessing adequate time and funding seem to be the key ingredients of these partnerships, which take a variety of forms. In some partnerships, school leaders and education professors develop mentoring and induction programs. In others, faculty members lead seminars for new teachers or train mentor teachers. While in others, faculty members model best practices by visiting a new teacher's classroom and leading a special activity (Brewster & Railsback, 2001).

An excellent example of an innovative collaboration is one that involves the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Milwaukee Public Schools. This partnership was established with the hopes of affirming and empowering urban music teachers through teacher recruitment, professional development, and mentoring. The two major coordinators of the project are Marsha Kindall-Smith, an elementary music education professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) and Barry Applewhite, the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) music coordinator. They recognized that five out of eight new MPS elementary/middle school music teachers were UWM graduates and in August 2000, established a more formalized structure of mentoring beginning teachers. This was implemented by a one-credit, grant-funded, graduate course for new music teachers, which was taught by Marsha Kindall-Smith at UWM. The numbers of students

in the class are kept small in order to create a comfortable environment for communication. The class has been successful in helping new teachers make a transition from the role of a student to the role of a teacher (Kindall-Smith, 2004).

Another unique mentoring program was established by professors in the College of Education at Augusta State University. Initially, it was designed to help support their student teachers and later expanded to include first-year teachers. The premise of the program was to use a mentoring model that tapped into expertise in the field with the means for communication being e-mail via the Internet. The researchers began their study by interviewing recent graduates on topics related to electronic mentoring. Next, they conducted focus groups and interviews to identify issues and themes. A listserv was established to connect the participants electronically and training was held on its use. Participants agreed on project goals and a timeline for meeting them. The data gathered helped them establish a long range mentoring plan using mentoring teams in order to enable the network to become self-sustaining (Eisenman & Thornton, 1999).

Summary

Mentoring and induction programs are the two most common means of support for first-year teachers. Both mentoring and induction can be very beneficial when they are well organized and everyone involved is committed to their success. These programs help first-year teachers cope with feelings of isolation, stress, and being overwhelmed. Mentoring programs that match mentees with compatible mentors provide adequate time for meetings and observations, and properly select and train mentors seem to be the most successful. When principals and staff take active rolls in induction programs and seek out

and listen to the ideas and concerns of first-year teachers, the programs thrive and everyone benefits from them.

Research Designs Used to Study First-Year Teachers

Introduction

Creswell (2002) states, "The procedures for collecting, analyzing, and reporting research in quantitative and qualitative research are research designs." (p. 58). He identifies eight major types of research procedures as: experimental and quasi-experimental designs, correlational designs, survey designs, grounded theory designs, ethnographic designs, narrative research designs, mixed method designs, and action research designs. In this section, I will refer to these eight major types of research procedures as *conventional designs*. Four of these eight conventional designs have been used to study first-year teachers: survey designs, ethnographic designs (case studies), narrative research designs, and mixed method designs.

I use *non-conventional designs* to refer to designs that are either totally unrelated to the eight above (e.g. arts-based research) or are a sub-category of one of the conventional designs, but are viewed as radical or political in nature (e.g. participatory action research, performance ethnography, and ethnomemisis). The four non-conventional designs that I have determined as important to my research are arts-based research, participatory action research, performance ethnography, and ethno-mimesis. In my review of the literature on first-year teachers, I located three participatory action research studies, and one arts-based research study.

In my discussion of conventional and non-conventional research designs I will begin by providing a working definition of each research approach. I will include a table

which outlines studies that are prominent examples of the research approach. I will

summarize the contributions that these studies have made to the field. I will summarize

the strengths of the research approach. And finally, I will summarize the limitations,

challenges, and responsibilities of the research approach.

   Conventional Research Designs Used in the Study of First-Year Teachers

Surveys

   Working definition.

   Survey research designs are quantitative research procedures in which a sample or

population is given a survey and the results describe characteristics, opinions, attitudes,

or behaviors of the population. Most surveys only collect quantitative data; however,

some researchers include open-ended questions which provide qualitative data usually

analyzed by a system of coding. The numeric data is analyzed statistically by describing

trends about responses in order to test research hypotheses (Creswell, 2002).

Table 1

Examples of Surveys

Author:	Hill & Brodin, 2004
Topic:	Difficulties faced in state of Washington; Strengths and weaknesses of teacher preparation programs
Data Collection:	1st year PE teachers; Sample size: 132; 4 part questionnaire; Quantitative data only
Data Analysis:	T-test
Author:	Barber & Turner, 2007
Topic:	How Great Britain deals with inclusion of special education students in classrooms
Data Collection:	1st year elementary teachers; Sample size: 132; 3 part questionnaire, Quantitative and Qualitative data
Data Analysis:	Inferential statistics (data treated as non-parametric); Coding level methodology derived from grounded theory
Author:	Algozzine, Gretes, Queen, Cowan-Hathcock, 2007
Topic:	Perceptions of beginning teachers on induction program activities, assistance, and support within first two years of employment
Data Collection:	All 3rd year teachers in an area of North Carolina; Sample size 451; 66 item cross-sectional survey; Quantitative and Qualitative data
Data Analysis:	Descriptive statistics and frequency counts were obtained; Means and standard deviations were computed; Qualitative questions were categorized by themes, analyzed for patterns using a content analysis approach, and represented according to frequency of occurrence

Contributions made to topic.

Surveys have been valuable for describing the strengths and weaknesses of existing teacher induction programs. Survey information has been used to improve induction and teacher education programs (Algozzine, Gretes, Queen, & Cowan-Hathcock, 2007; Hill & Brodin, 2004). They have also provided information on how a population reacts to a certain topic, for example: Barber and Turner (2007) identified how first-year teachers react to the inclusion of special needs students (see Table 1).

Strengths of research approach.

Surveys can be helpful in describing relationships among variables, comparing different groups, or assessing trends or characteristics of a population. Surveys are an economical means of data collection; they can be dispersed over a short period of time, and can be used to obtain a large sample size. In a survey, participants remain anonymous and removed from any influence by the researcher (Creswell, 2002).

Limitations, challenges, and responsibilities of research approach.

Surveys only provide data based on the perceptions and thoughts of the participants. The information may lack detail and clarity of responses given (Barber & Turner, 2007). If response rates are low, the results might not be representative of the population (Hill & Brodin, 2004). Surveys do not control for many variables that might explain the relationships between variables (Creswell, 2002).

Ethnographic Design - Case Studies

Working definition.

Ethnographic designs as defined by Creswell (2002) are "qualitative procedures for describing, analyzing, and interpreting a cultural group's shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language that develop over time." (p. 60). A case study is an important type of ethnography that focuses on a program, event, or activity involving individuals rather than a cultural group. Also, case study research concentrates on the activities of the group or "case" rather than shared patterns of behavior or a cultural theme (Creswell, 2002).

Case study research is a choice of what is to be studied rather than a methodological choice. A case study is the study of a functioning body or bounded

system. The object of study may be simple or complex, but it is the experiential

knowledge of the case that is concentrated on. The term case study refers to both the

process and the product of one's inquiry (Stake, 2005).

Table 2

Examples of Case Studies

Author:	Eldar, Nabel, Schechter, Talmor, & Mazin, 2003
Topic:	Induction and integration of teachers in central Israel
Data Collection:	1st year PE teachers; Sample Size: 34; Sub-sample of cases for write up - 3 written daily reports and monthly progress report; Weekly meeting between novice teacher and researcher; 5 interviews during first year (50 Min)
Data Analysis:	Pattern clarification: identification of patterns of action and interaction through cross-site analysis
Author:	Schlichte, Yssel, & Merbler, 2005
Topic:	Possible protective factors that might reverse attrition
Data Collection:	1st year special education teachers in 3 districts in a midwestern state; Sample size: 5; Semi-structured individual interviews
Data Analysis:	Analyzed for emerging themes; Write-up integrates analysis with subject commentary
Author:	Dymoke & Harrison, 2006
Topic:	Needs of 2nd year teachers and mentors in England
Data Collection:	Beginning teachers in second year and those responsible for induction; Sample size: 7; 2nd year teachers, 4 performance managers, and 5 professional tutors; Three structured interviews with each participant
Data Analysis:	Transcripts scrutinized separately; Data compared by both authors
Author:	McCormack, Gore, & Thomas, 2006
Topic:	Factors that support or hinder the professional learning of 1st year teachers in New South Wales (NSW), Australia
Data Collection:	Graduates of double degree teaching and education program at large regional university in NSW; Sample size: 16; Journals: Semi-structured format, collected at end of first 10 week term and after second ten week term; Semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions after 30 weeks of teaching
Data Analysis:	Interviews used to cross check and explore issues raised in journaling; Data transcripts from journals and interviews analyzed

and compared for major themes; Theoretical framework - Feiman-Nemser (2001) central tasks of learning to teach (CTLT)

Contributions made to topic.

Case study research takes a more personal, in-depth look at a few participants. The relationships and emotions of first-year teachers and their effect on attrition have been explored through case study research. This research suggests strategies that will help induction programs foster positive relationships and provide effective emotional support (Schlichte et al., 2005). Case study research has been used to uncover the roles and relationships of mentor and mentees (Dymoke & Harrison, 2006). The development of professional knowledge and a professional identity has been explored as well (McCormack, Gore, & Thomas, 2006). (See table 2).

Strengths of research approach.

Case study research provides depth rather than breadth and the pursuit of scholarly questions optimizes understanding. Experiential knowledge is focused upon. Credibility is obtained by a consistent and thorough triangulation of data throughout the study (Stake, 2005). It allows for the perspectives of the participants to come to the forefront and themes used in analyzing the data can be determined by the information given by the participants, if the researcher so chooses. Open-ended questions can be asked in interviews and clarification of answers can be obtained. Member checking is an additional way to ensure that the perspectives of the participants, rather than those of the researcher, are being recorded (Eldar et al., 2003).

Limitations, challenges, and responsibilities of research approach.

The methods case study researchers use to collect and analyze data are often very different, thus, it is difficult to compare or connect results from one study to another. The object of a "true" case study is a specific, unique, and bounded system (Stake, 2005). The case under study may be simple or complex. A case could focus on one first-year teacher, all of the first-year teachers at one school, all first-year teachers in one particular area such as PE, all first-year teachers having completed the same teacher education program or an induction program, or all mentors in one district. Case studies are often restricted to a small sample size which limits the demographics that can be studied (Schlichte, et al., 2005).

Narrative Research

Working definition.

According to Creswell (2002), "Narrative research designs are qualitative procedures in which researchers describe the lives of individuals, collect and tell stories about these individuals' lives, and write narratives about their experiences" (p. 60). Narrative research focuses on the biographical information and nuances of the participants' lives as told by the participants. Contemporary narrative inquiry is comprised of traditional and innovative methods and diverse research approaches (Chase, 2005).

Table 3

Examples of Narrative Research

Author:	Rippon & Martin, 2006
Topic:	The experiences and development of teacher identity in Scotland
Data Collection:	All 1st year primary teachers in 32 local authorities in Scotland (total 271); Sample Size: 10, first-year primary teachers (8 women, 2 men) from 6 local Scottish authorities; Data: Four focus group discussions ran by researcher (former tutor in teacher's undergraduate program): centered on a variety of themes, new teachers considered own views in context of others
Data Analysis:	Focus group discussions taped and transcribed by first author; Second author helped with inductive coding and analysis; Authors collaboratively discussed themes providing insider and outsider analysis of emerging concepts; A synthesized analysis was member checked by participants after each session and before final write up; Report is a narrative composite of participants' experiences, conversations, and feelings pertaining to teacher identity

---

Author:	LaBoskey, 2006
Topic:	Experiences of graduates of teacher credential program in working towards goals of establishing equity and social justice
Data Collection:	Prior graduates of the program who were teaching; Sample size: 11 graduates in their 2nd, 4th, or 5th year of elementary school teaching; Data: background questionnaires and individual interviews
Data Analysis:	Most interview responses were declarative statements analyzed through system of coding; One participant responded narratively and story was told in the article

---

Author:	Coulter, Michael, & Poynor, 2007
Topic:	How narrative research methods serve as pedagogical strategies for pre-service teachers to reflect on, question, and learn from experiences
Data Collection:	Two (one Mexican American English - only pre-service teacher and one bilingual Mexican American pre-service teacher); Data: copies of written class assignments and observations in college course, in pre-service classroom, in own classroom first year
Data Analysis:	Data was analyzed collaboratively by professor/researcher and participants; Storytelling segments coded by those demonstrating questioning, rethinking, clarifying, and altering beliefs

---

Contributions made to topic.

Rippon and Martin (2006) used a narrative approach to discuss the experiences of first-year teachers and how they developed relationships with their mentors. In order to provide anonymity for their participants they created one fictional character through which the relevant experiences and feelings of ten participants would be told. LaBoskey (2006) used narrative research to explore the impact that teacher education makes on teachers' abilities to become agents of change in school systems, particularly in the areas of social justice and educational equity. Coulter, Michael, and Poynor (2007) examine the effectiveness of using narrative research methods as pedagogical strategies in teacher education. Narrative research helped them determine the stages of reflection and development that pre-service teachers were undergoing (see Table 3).

Strengths of research approach.

Narrative accounts of the experiences of new teachers can give these teachers a voice that they may not otherwise have. This methodology can also make a valuable contribution to policy critiques when situated into a larger social, theoretical, and empirical context (LaBoskey, 2006). Narrative research can help illuminate educational issues so that they are more readily disseminated and understood by the general public. Also the actual process of telling one's story can help participants to process and understand areas of their teaching in order to learn and grow (Creswell, 2002).

Limitations, challenges, and responsibilities of research approach.

Narrative research is limited to a small and non-representative sample size. The researcher must be aware of and be able to address potential bias and possible positioning from his/her own perspective (Rippon & Martin, 2006). Narrative research is very time intensive. One issue that must be considered is ownership of the story being told, as well as the potential of the participants telling fabricated or dramatized stories. Member checking, the collection of multiple field texts, and the triangulation of data can help ensure that accurate data is collected and that authentic stories are produced. Researchers must also be careful that in the process of restorying the data the participant's voice is not lost (Creswell, 2002).

Mixed-methods Designs

Working definition.

Creswell (2002) defines mixed method designs as "procedures for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study and for analyzing and reporting this data based on a priority, sequence, and level of integration of information" (p. 61).

Table 4

Examples of Mixed-Methods Designs

Author:	Winter, 2006
Topic:	Preparation of teachers to effectively deal with inclusion of special education students in Northern Ireland
Data Collection:	Teachers and head teachers in 5 Education and Library Boards; Sample size for questionnaire: 153 teachers and 50 head teachers; Sample size for follow up focus groups: 35; Quantitative data collected in questionnaire, Qualitative data collected in focus groups
Data Analysis:	Used Likert type scale analysis for questionnaire; Used statements from focus groups to support findings from questionnaire
Author:	Barton & Haydn, 2006
Topic:	Usefulness of technology components in initial teacher training to content area instruction in Norwich, UK
Data Collection:	All secondary science and history teacher trainees; Sample size of questionnaire: 71; Sample size of groups: 27 (2 groups, 10 science, 17 history); 2 structured group interviews
Data Analysis:	Questionnaires used Likert scale analysis; Focus groups transcriptions of audio and video coded by key elements; Video clues used to determine key elements

Contributions made to topic.

Winter (2006) obtained a general picture of teachers' perceptions of how well they were prepared for the inclusion of special education students through a questionnaire and then gained in-depth insights about the opinions and perceptions of the teachers through follow-up focus groups. Barton and Haydn (2006) were able to determine the knowledge and attitude that first-year secondary teachers possessed of information and communication technology (ICT). They also discovered how much they utilized technology in their first year of teaching and why (see Table 4).

Strengths of research approach.

Policymakers tend to take studies with a quantitative component more seriously than a purely qualitative study. Mixed-design methods can provide for better understanding of a concept, richer detail, and more elaborate analysis (Winter, 2006). Mixed-methods designs take the approach that true knowledge incorporates both qualitative and quantitative information and the two cannot be separated. This can give a deeper level of understanding to a situation by looking at it from many perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Limitations, challenges, and responsibilities of research approach.

Many different variations and combinations of methodology are labeled as mixed-methods designs, from surveys utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data to the combination of a quantitative experimental design and qualitative field observations. Therefore any mixed-methods design will be constrained by the limitations of both the quantitative and qualitative approaches used. If stakeholders in the research study are from a strict research paradigm they may be less likely to support a mixed-methods design (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Potential of Non-conventional Research Designs in the Study of First-Year Teachers

As previously mentioned, non-conventional designs refer to designs that are either totally unrelated to conventional designs or are a sub-category of one of the conventional designs, but are viewed as radical or political in nature (e.g. participatory action research, performance ethnography, and ethnomemisis). The four non-conventional designs that I have determined as important to my research are arts-based research, participatory action

research, performance ethnography, and ethnomemisis. In my search of the body of literature on first-year teachers, I located three participatory action research studies, and one arts-based research study.

Participatory Action Research

 Working definition.

  Creswell (2002) explains action research designs as "systematic procedures used by teachers (or other individuals in an educational setting) to gather quantitative and/or qualitative data about and subsequently improve the ways their particular setting operates, how they teach, and how well their students learn" (p. 61). After considering this definition, it is not surprising that there are no accounts of action research on the topic of first-year teachers. As the research states, first-year teachers are often overwhelmed and are just trying to survive, so they are unlikely to have time or energy for research.

  Participatory action research (PAR), on the other hand, has been conducted with first-year teachers as participants/co-researchers in a few instances. Kemmis & McTaggart (2005) explain participatory action research as "a social procces of collaborative learning realized by groups of people who join together in changing the practices through which they interact in a shared social world in which, for better or worse, we live with the consequences of one another's actions" (p. 563). The three essential elements of PAR are research, education, and action. The data collected in the research process are then used to educate the participants in order to enable them to plan for positive action (Gardner, 2004).

Table 5

Examples of Participatory Action Research

Author:	Lundeen, 2004
Topic:	Perceived problems in Florida and how they change over time
Data Collection:	All 1st year teachers from three local school districts; Sample size: 6; Observations and transcribed recordings of 11 peer support meetings facilitated by researcher; Two structured interviews; Exit surveys; Participant generated critical events timeline
Data Analysis:	Data coded into problem units

Author:	Harrison, Lawson, & Wortley, 2005
Topic:	Participatory action research to promote deeper understanding of mentoring practices in secondary schools in England
Data Collection:	All secondary induction tutors; Sample: 30 self-selected induction tutors; Three project team intervention meetings held at beginning, middle, and end of year (audio and/or video taped); Six induction tutor lead review meetings with mentee (audio and/or video taped)
Data Analysis:	Audio and video tapes transcribed (38 total); Framework of mentoring styles and framework to identify passages of critical reflection on practice were developed; Dialogue features demonstrating the deconstruction and construction of practice identified and coding was based on this; Transcripts also coded electronically using QSR NVivo software, data analysis crossed-checked with first-year teachers

Author:	Morton, 2005
Topic:	University professor acting as collaborative researcher and mentor to two 3rd grade teachers (second year and third year teachers) who teach children from low socioeconomic status (SES) in Midwest.
Data Collection:	Sample size: 2 volunteer teachers in same low SES school; Data collection was: field notes and sketches during 2 months of regular observations in both classrooms and five months of participatory observations as co-teacher, notes during informal conversations, audiotapes of weekly collaborative sessions with both teachers, written dialogue notes and comments about student work
Data Analysis:	Data was coded into emerging patterns and collapsed into four main themes; Report written using narrative vignettes

Contributions made to topic.

Lundeen (2004) was one of several professors involved in the New Teacher Support Group Project which was sponsored by a university/school partnership. The professors developed bi-weekly support groups for first-year teachers to problem-solve and collaborate in a safe non-evaluative setting. During the group meetings the researcher identified topic-specific problem units (such as parents and classroom management) and then documented evidence of change. This study showed how first-year teachers' concerns and perspectives changed over time. Harrison, Lawson, and Wortley (2005) worked closely with induction tutors on developing reflective practice as a mentor to new teachers. They developed frameworks to identify components of mentoring styles and reflective practice. Although the mentor/participants had decision making power over making changes in their own practice as mentors, they did not have any decision making power over the research process. Morton (2005) took the role of active participant researcher in her work with two third grade teachers by co-teaching with them. Her study reveals the challenges of co-decision making, taking a non-authoritarian co-researcher role, and keeping any researcher bias or judgments about participants out of one's report (see Table 5).

Strengths of research approach.

Participatory action research gives first-year teachers a central role in the research which allows them to not only be heard, but also to have an empowering role in their own development as teachers (Lundeen, 2004; Cullen-Reavill, 2009). Focus groups can be an excellent means of data collection when doing participatory action research because the data and insights are produced by the participants' interactions rather than the

46

researchers' questions (Winter, 2006). Also, the data collected from focus group discussion is enriched by the social context, which allows participants to interact and consider their own ideas and perceptions in the context of others (Rippon & Martin, 2006).

Limitations, challenges, and responsibilities of research approach.

Participatory action research is very time intensive. Protecting participant confidentiality warrants extra time and care as it is sometimes more difficult in this approach (Harrison, Lawson, & Wortley, 2005). Researchers need to be aware of the possible stress that the process may put on participant/co-researchers and provide support around this when needed (Cullen-Reavill, 2009). Furthermore, researchers must acknowledge that participatory action research must be flexible and include cooperative and equal participation, as well as structure and leadership. The establishment of trust, communication, and roles becomes crucial to the process as well (Gardner, 2004).

Although the interactions in a focus group setting can add richness and depth to participatory research designs, it is an important responsibility of the researcher to make sure that all of the participants' voices are equally heard. Also, it can be difficult at times to determine if individuals are being true to their own perceptions and beliefs or if they are conforming to the group's consensus (Cullen-Reavill, 2009).

Arts-based Research

   Working definition.

   Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe arts-based research as inquiry using "the aesthetics, methods, and practices of the literary, performance, and visual arts as well as dance, theater, drama, film, collage, video and photography. Arts-based inquiry is intertextual. It crosses the boarders of art and research" (p. 642).

Table 6

Examples of Arts-Based Research

Author:	Swennen, Jorg, & Korthagen, 2004
Topic:	Dutch student teachers and their concerns about teaching on the basis of their mental images of teaching practice
Data Collection:	1st year student teachers getting acquainted with school practice; Sample size: 37, primary education students - 33 women and 4 men between 17 and 20 years; Data collection was: card sorting instrument, students prioritize 16 stated concerns, drawing made by student teachers at beginning of year and at end of year depicting themselves in relation to the school they were working in; Interviews conducted with 6 students (3 who ranked the cards in accordance with the general results and 3 who did not)
Data Analysis:	Researchers: 1 teacher educator of primary school teachers and two university researchers in secondary education; Data from 3 card rankings analyzed by comparing mean and standard deviations over time to assess overall change in development of concerns; Drawings used to develop 8 categories of concern based on descriptions of main visual aspects, 28 drawings chosen at random and scored by three independent raters based on if category of concern was present in the drawing and to what extent; Data from interviews used to: determine meanings students gave to items on cards, evaluate connection between images in drawings, and concerns of student teachers, illustrate outcomes of analyses of card sorting instrument and drawings.

Author:	Macintyre, Latta, Buck, & Beckenhauer, 2007
Topic:	2 year study on the formative assessment practices of sixth grade science teachers
Data Collection:	All sixth-grade science teachers within urban public school district following same curriculum and giving same assessments; Sample size: 9; Data collection (over two years): Teachers online logbooks; Assessment artifacts of 6th grade science students from teacher designed formative assessments
Data Analysis:	Reflexive approach to data collection and analysis was seen as essential; Online logbook data was coded into the categories of seeing, relational knowing, mindful embodiment, and continual assessment

Author:	Paley, Crawford, Kinney, Koons, & Seo, 2005
Topic:	A professor of a graduate seminar in contemporary curriculum discourses and his students explore Elliot Eisner's The Educational Imagination through "an arts-based examination of knowing, identity, and textual authority."
Data Collection:	Professor and all graduate students involved in a curriculum graduate seminar; Data collected: sculptures created by everyone in seminar to represent Chapters 3,4,10, & 11 of Eisner's *The Educational Imagination Sculptures* were required to evidence text, reader's personal history, & process of construction; Students' presentations & discussions of their sculptures video-taped for further analysis; Professor and 3 students from group continued process after completion of seminar by mutually reconstructing dialogue and visual documentations
Data Analysis:	Video of presentation analyzed; Reconstructions of dialogue and visual representations edited and presented as parallel conversations between professor and 3 students, meant to be a "dialogical dance"

Author:	La Jevic and Springgay, (2008)
Topic:	An a/r/tographical inquiry examining the use of visual journals in pre-service teacher education course
Data Collection:	Visual journals in which students created collages, drawings, and other visual representations of what they had learned in the course; Written reflections and vignettes on the process of keeping a visual journal
Data Analysis:	Visual journals routinely evaluated by students, peers, and instructor to examine progress, growth, and understanding; Visual journals assessed on use of different materials - fulfillment of the required assignments; incorporation of ideas, imagery, and text; skill and technique; and creativity, criticality, and effort

Contributions made to topic.

Swennen, Jorg, and Korthagen (2004) used participant drawings as data and developed a system for categorizing the concerns of student teachers based on their drawings. They coded the drawings based on which categories the participants demonstrated and to what extent. La Jevic and Springgay (2008) taught a course entitled "Art in the Elementary Schools" for non-art elementary education majors. They had students in this course keep a visual journal on what they were learning and then reflect on the process.

Macintyre, Latta, Buck, and Beckenhauer (2007) studied the use of formative assessment practices by nine sixth grade science teachers. The teachers' connections between scientific process, scientific inquiry, creative enterprises and formative assessment led them to arts based research and Eisner's concern for educating artistic vision. The connection to Eisner's work led them to a coding system for their data from the teacher's log books. One important aspect of this study was the finding that just collecting, analyzing, and coding the student assessment artifacts was insufficient because the knowledge and learning took place in the actual interactions and situations involved in the formative assessment process and could not be evidenced by the artifact. Paley, Crawford, Kinney, Koons, and Seo (2005) used an arts-based research approach to explore Elliot Eisner's (1994) text *The Educational Imagination*. In their exploration, Paley, a graduate professor of curriculum studies, and his students constructed a three-dimensional, sculptural response to the text. The sculptures had to address the following required components: evidence of process or project construction, evidence of the reader's personal history, and evidence of the book itself (see Table 6).

Strengths of research approach.

Arts-based research can reveal underlying perceptions and personal feelings whereas traditional research instruments often create a one-sided view of the kinds of perceptions measured. This methodological approach allows researchers to obtain important knowledge about teacher development and clarify the less rational and less conscious factors which affect it (Swennen, et al., 2004). It is a progressive method by which the relational understanding of meaning making can be highlighted and monitored. Students tend to accept more responsibility for their own learning when they are asked to relay concepts through art rather than memorize material (La Jevic & Springgay, 2008). Arts-based research can enhance the understandings and visions of both participants and researchers. (Macintyre Latta, et al., 2007). Arts-based researchers develop creative processes of discovery and invention referred to as heuretics. Creating art is a passionate activity that has the potential for uniting participants, researchers, and audiences (Finley, 2005). Arts-based research crosses the strict boundaries between art and research that have been set by traditionalists and it melds the processes of creativity and inquiry (Finley, 2005; Cullen-Reavill, 2009).

Limitations, challenges, and responsibilities of research approach.

When using drawings, not all participants will possess the ability to make their drawings reflect what they intend to express (Swennen, et al., 2004). In general the final artifact/product itself may not adequately represent the growth and learning that took place during the process (Macintyre Latta, et al., 2007) and because of this the focus needs to be on the learning and meaning making during the creative process itself rather than on what is learned from the final product (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind,

2005).Therefore, to truly gain insight into the participants' experiences, dialogue between the researcher and participants must occur during the artistic process when the artifacts are being created. Thus, it becomes the researcher's role and responsibility to provide the support needed and an enriching environment in which participants are led to concentrate on the process rather than the quality of their products. After the artifacts are created participants must be given the opportunity to discuss how they experienced the process and what led them to the creation of the final product (Cullen-Reavill, 2009).

Performance Ethnography

   Working definition.

   Denzin and Lincoln, (2005) define performance ethnography as "a way of inciting culture, a way of bringing culture alive, a way of fusing the pedagogical with the performative with the political" (p. 380).

Table 7

Examples of Performance Ethnographies

Author:	Jeffries, 1999
Topic:	The effectiveness of the implementation of performance ethnography as a learning tool in a multicultural pre-service teacher education course
Data Collection:	All participants in an urban education and multicultural course; Sample size: 7, participants most adequately meeting course requirements; Data Collection: individual ethnographic interviews
Data Analysis:	Analysis: data coded by themes; Reporting: narratives used to discuss and support findings

Author:	Conrad, 2004
Topic:	The use of "popular theatre" with high school drama students in rural Alberta community to draw out, question, and represent rural experiences through performance ethnography.
Data Collection:	All drama students from two classes; Sample: 22 students in grades 10-12, equal numbers of males and females; Data Collection: Popular Theatre process; games and activities to build trust and group skills; exploring themes through brainstorming, image work, and discussion; storytelling of real life incidents; Informal interviews with group of volunteer participants; Student journals; Researcher's field notes and journal; Audio and video tapes
Data Analysis:	Data created during Popular Theatre experience and telling of life incidents were collaboratively written into scenes; Transcriptions of audio and video tapes, field notes, and journals were analyzed in process of recursive writing; Reporting: scenes written were performed by participants using forum theatre model; Researcher wrote series of scripts or "ethnodramatic" vignettes

Author:	Picart, 2004
Topic:	Work combines photography, videography, poetry, prose, dance and visual art to express conjunction of ballroom dancing and relational theory
Data Collection:	Sample: not mentioned; Data Collection: not mentioned Data
Analysis:	Data analysis: not mentioned

Contributions made in other areas of study.

Jeffries (1999) implemented performance ethnography in a course on urban education and multicultural fieldwork for pre-service teachers. Teacher teams were required to take field notes and conduct interviews, and then developed and presented a 20-30 minute performance demonstrating the nature of their work. One year after the course ended, Jeffries, as the professor/principal investigator, interviewed seven of the class participants (those whom she determined to have most adequately fulfilled the course requirements) in order to determine their perceptions of the course and the effectiveness of performance ethnography as a tool for learning. Conrad (2004) conducted doctoral research in a high school drama class to examine the needs of at-risk youth in a rural community. She implemented a unit on Popular Theatre in two drama classes in a rural high school for one month as teacher, Popular Theatre facilitator, and co-researcher with the students. Picart (2004) takes a very performative and artistic approach to conducting an ethnographical study on ballroom dancing. The story/information relayed by the relationships formed between the various media is unique and could not be relayed by any one form alone. Unfortunately, Picart's article did not mention the sample, data collection, or analysis (see Table 7).

Strengths of research approach.

Performance ethnography provides the opportunity for different levels and types of understanding that other more traditional research approaches cannot. This approach can provide a collaborative inquiry model which encourages understanding through experience. Learning about and understanding others helps fulfill the need to understand

54

oneself (Jeffries, 1990). Performative research can lead to a deep understanding of the nuances and complexities of an issue. The performance conveys that understanding to a wider audience than the traditional research report (Conrad, 2004). Performance ethnography enacts an ethical, relational, and moral theory of selfhood and being. It also provokes reflective criticism often leading to radical social change (Denzin, 2003).

Limitations, challenges, and responsibilities of research approach.

Denzin (2003) states, "…performance ethnography is more than a tool of liberation. It is a way of being moral and political in the world" (p. 258). With this comes a great deal of responsibility on the part of the researcher. Alexander (2005) states that, "…performance ethnography cannot and maybe should not be easily reduced to being (just a) method" (p. 417). He goes on to explain that performance ethnography is moral discourse and that it is the knowing and understanding of others in a way that benefits all peoples.

When implementing performance ethnography, researchers take the risk that they may misrepresent their participants, or sensationalize events and experiences in ways that may be harmful rather than helpful. In order to circumvent this, it is essential to collect data that truly represents the participants, to analyze it rigorously, and to thoughtfully member-check the data on a consistent basis. Also, one must be aware of any existing biases, be prepared to address them, and make sure that they do not skew the analysis or findings in any way (Cullen-Reavill, 2009). It is essential that performance ethnographers clearly define themselves in relationship to their participants, their intentions, the methods they have used for gathering, analyzing and reporting what was learned, and what they hope to achieve through their performance (Alexander, 2005).

Ethno-mimesis

Working definition.

O'Neill created the term ethno-mimesis and defines it most simply as a combination of ethnography and art form (O'Neill & Tobolewska, 2002). O'Neill and her co-researchers are the only researchers to publish a study using this specific approach.

Table 8

Examples of Ethno-Mimesis

Author:	O'Neill & Tobolewska. 2002
Topic:	Refugees from Bosnia and how the combination of participatory action research and participatory art as praxis (ethno-mimesis) can be used to raise awareness of experiences of refugees and asylum seekers and to challenge media stereotypes
Data Collection:	Bosnia refugees in British red cross camps; Sample size: 5 (3 women and 2 men); Data: life history interview
Data Analysis:	Data analyzed into themes; Visual art co-created by participants and professional artists to represent these themes; Overarching goal was to make sure that voices of refugees were heard and seen by non-refugee viewers

Author:	O'Neill with Giddens, Breatnach, Bagley, Bourne & Judge, 2002
Topic:	Using life history work with women working as prostitutes in order to better understand the key issues around prostitution and to experience women's stories as represented through live art.
Data Collection:	Women and young people working as prostitutes; PAR project with women in the sex industry, local authority representatives, voluntary agencies, and researcher, all as co-researchers; Data collection: lifestory interviews with women
Data Analysis:	Researcher used lifestory process: Immersion in experience, Identification, Critical distancing and reflexivity; Data analysis: field notes were transcribed, anonymised and analyzed, transcripts were interpreted by artists based on key themes, images, rhythms, and life story components; Data reporting: 3 professional artists (choreo-grapher, live artist and sound artist) re-presented the transcripts into a live performance; text, images, and sounds were agreed upon by all collaborators

Author:	Cullen-Reavill, 2007 (unpublished)
Topic:	Pilot study on the experiences of first-year teachers
Data Collection:	Teachers having just completed first year of teaching; Sample size: 43 female and 1 male, 2 from alternative licensure programs and 2 from teacher education programs; Data Collection: 3- 4 hour sessions, focus

| | group, discussions, visual artifacts: individual collages and clay sculptures (process based), group piece combining painting and collage |
| Data Analysis: | Focus group discussions were transcribed and coded by themes, participant discussions and comments during participatory arts sessions and summary remarks on both process and product were transcribed and coded,pictures of artifact sections were used to triangulate data;Findings: written as unpublished article by P.I., used by participants/co-researchers to create mural using collage and acrylics |

Contributions made to topic and in other areas of study.

O'Neill's work and the methodological approach of ethno-mimesis have made significant contributions to the fields of social science and cultural criminology (see Appendix A for email conversations with O'Neill). In O'Neill & Tobolewska's (2002, p. 142) study, ethno-mimesis is defined as "the combination of socio-cultural theory; experience, through life stories; and practice (photographic forms)." Their study used a combination of ethnography, participatory action research, and participatory arts. The participants were interviewed and then with the help of professional artists told their stories through visual representations using sculpture and photography. The study that O'Neill conducted with Giddens, Breatnach, Bagley, Bourne, and Judge (2002), uses case study methodology re-presenting ethnographic interviews of women working as prostitutes through performance art (See Table 8).

My pilot study (Cullen-Reavill, 2009 -- see Appendix B for a summary) combined the process of ethno-mimesis, developed by O'Neill, with focus group discussions in order to discover what the first-year of teaching was like for the participant/co-researchers. In the first two sessions, visual art was used as a means of discovery and exploration (art as research process rather than product). In the last session, the co-researchers revisited the data from the focus group discussions and decided what

information needed to be reported, and they chose to use acrylics and collage to collaboratively produce a mural as the research product (See Table 8).

Strengths of research approach.

Ethno-mimesis is a new research form of consolidation and solidarity that develops into a process of belonging and acceptance. It also creates a space for the marginalized to use their voices and visions to empower them towards change and transformation (O'Neill & Tobolewska, 2002). Ethno-mimesis is a creative process through which the participants can make discoveries about themselves and use those discoveries to make an important statement to a bigger audience in a meaningful, aesthetic way (Cullen-Reavill, 2009). Through the use of ethno-mimesis researchers can reach a broader population beyond academic communities and shed light on the complexities of lived experiences within social structures and processes (O'Neill, 2002).

Limitations, challenges, and responsibilities of research approach.

There is a tendency in research to use visual materials as merely illustrative. This puts the perceptions and representations of the researcher and/or artist in the forefront rather than those of the participants. In order for ethno-mimesis to occur, the visual must be used in a more analytical way, representing the participants personally and intrinsically. Ethno-mimesis is a process with the potential for communicating insights from rigorous data analysis in an artistically stimulating manner. However, doing this takes a great deal of time and resources (O'Neill, 2002; Cullen-Reavill, 2009).

Summary

As we have seen in this section, many studies geared towards describing strategies that are helpful to new teachers have explored and evaluated existing induction

and mentoring programs (Bartell, 2005; Brown, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2003). Although this research is informative and useful in determining positive and negative aspects of induction and mentoring programs, it often neglects the ideas, opinions, and suggestions of the first-year teachers themselves. Other studies have described the actual experiences of first-year teachers relying on data obtained from surveys or interviews conducted once or twice during the first year of teaching (Gilbert, 2005; Mc Cann & Johannessen, 2004; Williams, 2003). These studies have identified valuable information about what new teachers experienced and what is or is not supportive to them. However, surveys and interviews provide information and insights limited by the questions asked and the topics discussed that are predetermined by the researcher. This study allowed the first-year teacher participants to determine what topics needed to be discussed and what was important to them. It makes a unique contribution to the field because it follows the first-year teachers through the first year of teaching (September to April) and provides a monthly account of their insights as well as the situations they experience.

This review of literature provided a background on the challenges, emotions, and needs of first-year teachers, supports available to them such as induction and mentoring programs, and the research designs used in studies on first-year teachers. The potential benefits of employing non-conventional methodologies in studying first-year teachers were discussed. The next chapter provides more detail about these methodologies and how they were utilized in this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The methodological approach used in this study was influenced by concepts

discussed by Creswell (2002). He defines research as:

> …a cyclical process of steps that typically begins with identifying
> a research problem or issue of study. It then involves reviewing the
> literature, specifying a purpose for the study, collecting and
> analyzing data, and forming an interpretation of the information.
> This process culminates in a report, disseminated to audiences that
> is evaluated, and used in the educational community. (p. 8)

My research process was guided by the chosen methodologies (see Chapter II) as

well as the specific approaches and techniques used within those methodologies. My

belief, which is strongly supported by Cresswell (2002), is that all methodological

approaches have merit and that one's methodology should be driven by the questions

being asked.

Research Questions and Study Design

The research questions for this study were:

1. What are the experiences of a group of first-year teachers and in what ways were

    these experiences challenging, supportive, or detrimental?

2. What are the benefits for the first-year teachers in meeting monthly with other

    first-year teachers in a non-evaluative seminar setting to reflect upon and discuss

    their experiences?

3. What is the value in using a descriptive feedback process (Rodgers, 2006) in focus group discussions with first-year teachers and what effect does this process have on the reflective practices of the first-year teachers?

4. What effect does the process of creating visual art and prose have on the first-year teacher's ability to reflect upon and express their experiences in meaningful ways?

5. What are the implications of this study for teacher education programs, schools, districts, and induction and mentoring programs?

My questions led me to the use of non-conventional methodologies, which bring to the fore the voice of the participants. This study was unique in that it blended several new research methodologies and techniques which have not been widely used in educational research: focus group discussion utilizing descriptive feedback, ethno-mimesis, a/r/tography, and performance ethnography. Since ethno-mimesis is the combination of ethnography, participatory action research, and participatory arts, I will discuss each of these three approaches individually as well as the hybrid form of ethno-mimesis.

First, the concept of descriptive feedback (Rodgers, 2006) was utilized as a research technique for structuring monthly focus group discussions involving first-year teachers. As stated previously, I define focus group discussions as focus groups utilizing topics determined by participants rather than questions predetermined by the researcher for the purpose of this study. The focus group discussions were conducted as reflexive conversations and allowed the co-researchers to describe their experiences as first-year teachers with the intent of improving upon their practice. Rodger's (2006) four steps of

reflection: presence in experience, description of experience, analysis of experience and experimentation were implemented at different times and to varying degrees.

Second, ethno-mimesis (O'Neil & Tobolewska, 2002), a research methodology blending participatory arts-based research, ethnography, and participatory action research, was incorporated into the study in order to answer the research questions from the perspectives of the first-year teachers. Participatory arts-based research was employed by using visual arts as an avenue for the first-year teachers to explore the meanings and feelings involved in their experiences. As part of ethno-mimesis, participatory action research was implemented in order to honor and value the knowledge and experience of each first-year teacher (Reason, 1994). The first-year teachers were considered co-researchers and therefore I, as the principal investigator, made decisions with them rather than for them (Jordan, 2003). As co-researchers, they determined the discussion group norms that were used. They decided on the topics to be discussed in order to ensure that the information was based on their experiences and perceptions.

Third, a/r/tography (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005), an arts-based research methodology utilizing aesthetic and artistic processes as means of inquiry into educational phenomenon, was employed in order to reveal the culture of the first-year teacher and also the researcher's role and connection to the research. La Jevic and Springgay (2008) describe a/r/tographical research as an "embodied query into the interstitial spaces between art making, researching, and teaching." (p. 67). These spaces are present in this study in three respects: in the development of a process for learning and reflecting with my participants, which was highly connected to teaching; in "normal"

research activities such as data collection, analysis, and writing; and in the communication of my own experiences through visual art and poetry.

Finally, the first-year teachers' insights and experiences culminated in a performance ethnography (Denzin, 2003). Ethnography is the study of culture and descriptive feedback; a/r/tography, and ethno-mimesis enabled me to describe the "culture" of first-year teachers. The co-researchers decided on the aesthetic venue used to relay their experiences.

There are four facets of this study:

1. As principal investigator, I facilitated the implementation of visual art in order to help the three co-researchers reflect upon and document their experiences during their first year of teaching on a monthly basis;

2. Together we uncovered the challenges that presented themselves throughout the first year of teaching during focus group discussions utilizing Rodger's (2006) four steps of reflection described earlier, considered supports and situations that did or would help with these challenges, and have collaboratively decided upon recommendations that will be made to the larger educational community;

3. We explored the creation of visual art as both a process of reflection and as a way to represent research findings; and

4. We developed a performance in order to report our findings in an aesthetically descriptive way.

Sampling

Beginning Thoughts

63

I knew that I would be using a purposeful sample since I would be selecting participants based on specific criteria in order to enhance the understanding of a specific group: first-year teachers (Creswell, 2002; Devers & Frankel, 2000). A maximum variation sample comprising first-year teachers from traditional teacher education programs and others from alternative licensure programs might be considered optimal. However, my main priority in this research was to offer support to first-year teachers; therefore I desired a holistic sample from all members of the community (Dobbert & Kurth-Schai, 1992) of first-year teachers based on their interest. Identification of research sites and subjects, and the negotiation of access to them, are critical processes in qualitative research (Devers & Frankel, 2000). At first I thought that recruiting voluntary participants for this study would be difficult because of the extreme time commitment involved for the first-year teachers.

Original Plan

Devers and Frankel (2000) suggest that when researchers are negotiating access to participants they plan ahead realizing that the process takes time and patience in order to access existing social networks and secure permission from gatekeepers. I began this process of negotiating access immediately after my proposal was finalized and five months before I planned to start data collection. First, I brainstormed with my advisor and other professors a list of people I should contact and began contacting them for potential access to participants. I also discussed my research with my former students who were about to begin teaching and asked them to mention it to other potential participants.

As a teacher education professor, I had previously established a partnership with a school district in the area. This partnership was a joint effort between the district and the

college to collaborate in matching college students with classroom teachers as part of their field experience requirement for a course that I taught. As a result of this two year partnership, I had developed a relationship with the induction coordinator of the school district and she became a potential gatekeeper.

She and I met on January 10th, 2008, to discuss the possibilities of obtaining my sample from the pool of first-year teachers employed in the district starting fall 2008. In our meeting, she expressed excitement about my research and said that I could speak to the first-year teachers at their induction meeting in July, 2008. She also mentioned trying to obtain further approval from the district in order for my research project to be offered as an in-service course. This would mean that the district would be able to pay participants to attend. She said that once this approval was obtained we would collaboratively produce a written description of the project and a memorandum of understanding. At this meeting, she also mentioned that the district was adopting a new evaluation protocol for beginning teachers that she was heavily involved in and, therefore, her time would be limited.

My many attempts to communicate with her about the research project were unsuccessful and getting no response from her, I contacted the research approval board for the district. In July 2008 I was informed that my research was denied because the board felt that they already had enough support for first-year teachers.

Adjustments to Accommodate New Circumstances

As Devers and Frankel (2008) state, "If the researcher is unable to secure the subjects' participation, the research cannot take place" (p. 265). The negotiation of access to participants takes time and patience in order to obtain the trust which is required

(Devers & Frankel, 2000; Draper, Hall, & Smith, 2006). The difficulty comes from the large time demands that are placed on potential gatekeepers and participants who often don't have the amount of time necessary for a project like the one I was proposing. Perhaps if I had been able to offer some financial support to the participants as incentives the situation might have been different. The three essential conditions for developing and maintaining democratic spaces for research according to Draper, Hall, and Smith (2007) are the selection of a task, issue, problem, or concern that all co-researchers value; the development of collegial relationships and friendships with co-researchers; and the shared belief that the research outcomes will be mutually beneficial (p. 68). My experience was that several potential gatekeepers and participants viewed my research as valuable and the potential outcomes as beneficial, but without having a relationship with me they could not trust that the benefits would be worth the amount of time involved. This realization led me to make two changes to my plan. First, I would recruit first-year teachers who had recently graduated from the college where I was employed and second I would not require monthly meetings, but instead schedule them with the participants based on their availability.

After student teaching, graduates who become employed are asked to send an information card back to the college. I obtained approximately 50 cards from former students (some of whom were known to me; others not) who had received jobs in elementary schools. I sent an e-mail to these individuals explaining my research topic.

Final Sample

Three of my former students, two females and one male, volunteered to participate and fortunately, they were all available and wanted to meet on a monthly

basis. All three were employed as first-year teachers, one at a private religious school and the other two at the same public elementary school. One of the public school teachers had a one year temporary contract. Teaching was a first career for one of the participants and a second career for the other two.

<center>Data Collection</center>

The co-researchers and I met in a university classroom for four hours on a Saturday morning during September, October, and November, 2008, and January, February, March, April, and May, 2009. We also met in July, 2009 in one of the co-researcher's driveways to create our mural with the artist I employed. Thus we met on 9 occasions for a total of 36 hours. I purposely decided to limit my data collection to these meetings and not to include observations in the co-researchers' classrooms because it was essential that their perceptions rather than my own be prominent in this study. Observing them in their classrooms would have required me to bring my own perceptions to the forefront.

Each session started with a 60–90 minute "narrative" focus group discussion. For the purposes of this research, I have defined a narrative focus group as one in which participants are not asked to answer and discuss pre-determined questions, but rather discuss their own individual experiences in relationship to certain topics. After the focus group discussions, we took a 20 minute break for refreshments. The last two hours of each session were devoted to arts-based research and the data collected included audio recordings, photographs, and journals. The audio recordings were of focus group discussions, conversations during the arts-based sessions, and the discussions about what the process was like and the art created. Photographs were taken of all visual art created.

<center>67</center>

On two occasions (November, 2008 and January, 2009), I asked the participants to look at a piece of art that I created and write down any thoughts that the art brought to mind. I collected what they wrote and used their writing as well as our discussion about the art to member check my data and adjust the piece of art as needed in order to more accurately represent their experiences.

As stated previously, research decisions were first guided by my questions, but also by the experience I obtained while doing a pilot study (Cullen-Reavill, 2009; see Appendix C). Participants/co-researchers in the pilot study, who had just completed their first year of teaching, confirmed that the combination of focus group discussions and the arts-based process of discovery was an effective venue for reflecting upon and analyzing their experiences. As the principal investigator of the study, I, too, found the process to be an effective venue for obtaining the experiences of the first-year teachers. The pilot study provided a solid foundation for this research study because it led me to a process for implementing focus group discussions and ethno-mimesis as an arts-based methodology. This study has provided me with the time to implement this process more fully and expand on what I learned in the pilot study. I will describe how the pilot study influenced the current study more specifically and how the process used in the current study developed each month in Chapter IV.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

As stated above, the data collected included audio recordings, photographs, and journals. In this section, I discuss how I analyzed my data and how the fundamental beliefs and techniques found in the qualitative research literature guided my decisions during data analysis.

Patton's work (2002) has helped me to uncover four fundamental beliefs about data analysis that have informed this study: 1) One's research purpose(s) must guide one's analysis, 2) One must use good judgment and creativity when applying guidelines for analysis, 3) Organization is essential, and 4) Researchers have the responsibility and obligation to thoroughly and honestly monitor and report their analysis procedures. These beliefs created a solid foundation on which I based decisions throughout the analysis process. I explain how these beliefs informed my analysis in more detail below.

My first belief concerns how my research purposes guided my analysis. The four main purposes of this research were:

1. To obtain information from the perspective of the first-year teacher not obtained in previous studies;

2. To create a structured, supportive venue/seminar where first-year teachers can discuss their experiences with other first-year teachers in a non-evaluative setting;

3. To explore the potential of focus group discussions utilizing descriptive feedback (Rodgers 2006), ethno-mimesis, and a/r/tography, as vehicles for enabling first-year teachers to think reflectively and critically in order to improve their practice ; and

4. To provide a positive and effective venue for participants/co-researchers to share their experiences through performance ethnography;

The first research purpose was to obtain information from the perspective of the first-year teacher not obtained in previous studies. This drove my decisions not to observe co-researchers in their classrooms nor establish pre-determined focus group questions.

These decisions ensured that the perspectives focused on were those of the co-researchers rather than my own. Thus, when analyzing the data, I did not use any predetermined codes, themes, or theoretical framework.

In order to obtain information that had not been obtained in previous studies, data were collected every month during the co-researchers' first year of teaching, except for December. This regularity allowed me to develop trust and consistency with the co-researchers and allowed them to take a more active part in the data analysis (this will be more thoroughly explained in Chapter IV). Also, by obtaining information through conversation and art, I captured subtleties that I might not have otherwise. When analyzing the data, I coded these subtleties in specific ways. For example, I started coding creative phrases and quotes from the co-researchers as "wonderful words" and the co-researchers kept saying "it's the simple things" when relating to little things that could really make a difference, so I used "simple things" as the code for this category.

The second research purpose was to create a structured, supportive venue/seminar where first-year teachers can discuss their experiences with other first-year teachers in a non-evaluative setting, leading me to collect and analyze data on the seminar process in order to continually evaluate and improve it. Since these data were on the process being used rather than on the first-year of teaching, they were analyzed separately. These data included information on the comfort level of participants, the effectiveness of the structure used, benefits to the participants/co-researchers, and recommendations for establishing future seminars. These four categories led to four initial codes for data related to the seminar process; comfort level, effectiveness, benefits, and recommendations.

The third research purpose was to explore the potential of ethno-mimesis, a/r/tography, and descriptive feedback (Rodgers 2006) as vehicles for enabling first-year teachers to think reflectively and critically in order to improve their practice, thus, prompting me to implement and integrate these methodologies in fluid ways based on the data. I reflected upon the data collection process and recorded initial analytical insights during and after each data collection session (Patton, 2002) in order to thoroughly determine how the data collection process might influence the data analysis. For example, the response of the co-researchers informed me that using descriptive feedback in a scripted way would stifle the conversation and influence the data and I was able to quickly adjust the way it was implemented.

I coded for evidence of reflection, critical thinking, and the improvement of practice and matched these codes with other preexisting codes to determine what situations led to these behaviors. I triangulated data from the focus group discussions, the arts-based discussions, and the art that was created. Triangulating the data in this way added to the credibility of my study. Patton (2002) states, "Because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of data collection and analysis provide more grist for the research mill" (pp. 555-556).

The fourth research purpose was to provide a positive and effective venue for participants/co-researcher to share their experiences through performance ethnography. This is related more to reporting data than to its analysis. However, I had to be careful that my analysis of the data did not lead to a predetermination of the performance we would create. For example, I used the data from the first two sessions to create pieces of installation art which confirmed my use of a/r/tography as a methodology. However, I

found myself wanting to influence the participants to create a play around the theme of an art museum. I shared this idea with them and they did not feel comfortable with acting in a play. So in order to preserve the participatory action research and ethno-mimesis methodologies, I dropped this idea and went with their suggestions of creating more visual art including a final collaborative piece to display our findings.

My second belief on data analysis informed how I used good judgment and creativity when applying guidelines of analysis. Since my research was more formative and participatory in nature there was no distinct line separating data collection from data analysis, as there is in survey research for example (Patton, 2002). An important aspect of my study is that it represents the experiences and development of first-year teachers over time. I collected data for four hours every month for nine months, so good judgment dictated a "cut and dry" plan of transcribing, analyzing, and writing up the data on a month by month basis. This was my original plan, however, realistically, research is not "cut and dry" and I found myself having to be flexible and creative with my analysis. For example, I found that I needed a significant amount of data and several experiences with my participants before I could adequately come up with codes and themes. I had to analyze four data collection sessions before I was able to establish enough of a structured foundation to begin writing up my findings. However, I was able to report my findings creatively in the form of visual art and prose after just the first session. It was essential that my analysis remained fluid and in sync with the process as it was being developed. Keeping the creative process and the formal process in balance was challenging at times (I expand on this point in Chapter V).

My third belief about data analysis concerned the necessity of organization. As Patton (2002) points out, massive amounts of data are generally collected in qualitative research and my study was no exception. I had approximately 36 hours of audio recordings, several pages of journaling, as well as many photographs. The recordings and photographs were digital and I was able to quickly download them onto my computer. I transcribed the audio files with the help of a digital transcription machine and the voice recognition program Dragon Naturally Speaking *9.0*

I found the Atlas TI 5.0 extremely helpful in keeping my data organized and accessible. I separated the data from each session into four parts: the focus group discussions, the conversations during the arts-based process, the discussions of the co-researchers describing their art and what it was like to create it, and the photographs of the art created by the co-researchers. I transcribed the first three sections of the data, which were audio files, separately and then downloaded them onto the Atlas TI program. I also downloaded the photographs onto Atlas TI and was able to code them by creating boxes around specific segments. Once the documents were on the Atlas TI program, I read through the transcripts and highlighted the significant text by creating quotations on the program. I then established some initial codes and was able to label sections with them quickly through use of this program. As stated earlier, it was not until after I had analyzed four complete sessions that I felt comfortable with the analysis process or the structured way in which I had begun to utilize the Atlas TI program. The discoveries made during analysis and the structured process developed in using the Atlas TI program will be addressed more specifically in Chapter V.

My fourth and final belief concerned how I explained my processes for monitoring and reporting my analytical procedures. I monitored my analytical procedures through hand written notes made to myself as I went. After each new discovery, I went through my notes and wrote down what I had learned in my research journal. I discovered that there is not a right or a wrong way to do analysis. However, there are ways that work and ways that do not, and it was not until I started to write up my findings that I was able to determine what was and was not working. I could not analyze and write in a linear fashion due to the open-ended questions that I sought to answer and the creative nature of my research. I found analyzing and writing in a fluid and cyclic fashion to be most effective. In Chapters V, VI, and VII, I describe my analytical discoveries in more detail from a creative standpoint and highlight the ups and downs and the trial and error encountered in data analysis. Patton (2002) states, "The final obligation of analysis is to analyze and report on the analytical process as part of the report of actual findings" (p. 434). Rodgers' (2006) four steps of reflections became an unexpected process of analysis and I discuss this in Chapter VII as part of my findings for question three.

The Performance

A written thesis is a requirement for the completion of a doctoral degree at my university and in writing it I have used formal categories to organize and communicate my findings. However, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) point out that when a researcher's goal is to honor the participants'/co-researchers' experiences and life stories then she/he must "find a form to represent their storied lives in storied ways, not to represent storied lives as exemplars of formal categories" (p. 141). Therefore, performance ethnography

was a key element in this dissertation because it provided a "storied" form of representation.

In most performance ethnographies the writing takes place as the script of a play or the choreography of a dance (Denzin, 2003). The first-year teachers were not comfortable with acting or dancing, so they decided to create a collaborative collage with the help of a professional artist as a way of telling their stories. Our performance was a trip through *The First Year of Teaching Museum* with the co-researchers as guides. Instead of writing a script, I wrote found poetry which Walsh (2006) defines as "poetry that is 'found' in the environment" and like Walsh the "environment" I used was the transcripts of the group meetings. I wrote a found poem for each month and the co-researchers read them as the audience viewed the artifacts they created and displayed in the museum. At the end of the performance, we unveiled the collaborative collage and entertained comments and questions from the audience.

<center>Writing</center>

My study centered on the voice of the first-year teachers, so it was imperative that this dissertation incorporate their voices through the found poems, vignettes, and direct quotations. I focused on the key experiences shared with me each month and organized them into predominant themes. In the text, the co-researchers are referred to in alphabetical order according to their pseudonym (i.e.: Cathy, James, and then Sharon). Not only have I studied the first-year of teaching through the lived experiences of the three co-researchers, I have also studied the development of a structured venue for supporting first-year teachers that could be utilized by others. Furthermore, I have studied the effects of blending focus group discussions, ethno-mimesis, a/r/t/ography, and

<center>75</center>

performance ethnography. These methodologies focus on our individuality as well as the commonalities we share as educators. Irwin and Springgay (2008) state, "The research conditions of a/r/tography reside in several notions of relationality: relational inquiry, relational aesthetics, and relational learning" (p. xxvii). The previous relationships we had with one another and the further development of these relationships as a group of co-researchers, led to our collaborative engagement in inquiry, aesthetic experiences, and learning.

Thus, my task in writing this dissertation was to weave the stories of the first-year teachers, the development of a first-year teaching seminar, and the process of blending multiple research methodologies into a creative, yet formally structured text. In Chapter IV *Preparing for the Voyage*, I explain the analogy between this study and a seafaring voyage and the previous life-events that led us four educators to become co-researchers and undertake this voyage. In Chapter V *Setting Sail*, I tell the tales from September, October, and November, 2008. In Chapter VI *Sink or Swim*, I tell the tales from January, February, and March, 2009. In Chapter VII *Land Ho*, I tell the tales from April, May, and June, 2009. Each tale in Chapters V, VI, and VII includes the found poem I wrote for the performance, a description of the data collection session, discoveries made on the seminar development, information learned about the first year of teaching, a summary of the initial findings for that month, and my personal reflections on the research process. Finally, in Chapter VIII *Buried Treasure – Findings and Conclusions* I relay the research findings, discuss the conclusions, make recommendations for further research, and discuss my next-steps as a teacher-educator and researcher.

CHAPTER IV

PREPARING FOR THE VOYAGE

Voyage upon life's sea
To yourself be true,
And, whatever, your lot may be,
Paddle your own canoe
Sarah Bolton

Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter III, I wanted to honor the co-researchers' experiences

and to "find a form to represent their storied lives in storied ways" (Clandinin &

Connelly, 2000, p. 141). I have chosen to incorporate the vignettes, found poetry (Walsh,

2006), and visual art that were produced as a result of employing ethno-mimesis and

a/r/tography. Analogies are used in aesthetic pieces to help one's audience relate to the

meaning and emotional content of the piece. For example, movements in dance are used

to represent the gracefulness of a swan and symbols such as the "peace sign" are used in

art to represent a concept. In this text, events, discoveries, and emotions experienced

during the first year of teaching are written as memoirs from a seafaring voyage with the

aim of creating a vivid setting and involving readers in the text.

A journey is defined as "a traveling from one place to another" (Merriam-

Webster, 1997) and is often used as an analogy for teaching (Howe, 2008; Thomson,

2008) and for conducting research (Crowley & Davis, 2008; Musgrave, 2009). Both

teaching and conducting research are processes/journeys whereby one overcomes barriers

and grows professionally and personally. The year in which the study took place was

more than just a journey for my co-researchers as first-year teachers and for me as a researcher. It was a voyage --"a journey esp. by water from one place or country to another" (Merriam-Webster, 1997). Three issues made this a voyage rather than a journey. First, since we were new to our respective fields of teaching and conducting research, we faced steep learning curves and traveled a great distance across the sea of knowledge. Second, the experience was similar to traveling in another country where the professional vernacular was like a foreign language and we were adapting to new cultures. Third, a voyage at sea can often be lonely and treacherous. Research has shown that first-year teachers (Conway, Hansen, Schulz, Stimson, & Wozniak-Reese, 2004; Feiman-Nemser, 2003) and dissertation students (Jansen & Howard, 2004; Smith, 2002) often feel isolated. Other studies relate the high number of new teachers who leave the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Graziano, 2005; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Johnson & Donaldson, 2004) and the many doctoral students who do not finish their dissertations (Archibald, 2008; Smith, Brownell, Simpson, & Deshler, 1993). .

As principal investigator, I became a captain organizing a fleet of three ships with the first-year teachers as captains of their own ships and began an educational research expedition. Each month we came ashore and spent four hours together sharing our experiences. Instead of convening at the local tavern over mugs of ale as true sea captains would, we congregated in a room at the university over sodas and tape-recorders and were surrounded by art supplies

In this chapter I introduce the three first-year teacher/captains and explain our previous relationships with one another. I discuss why each of us chose to teach and how we "paddled our own canoes" down separate rivers leading us to the ocean we were to

travel. Our extensive preparations for this voyage are conveyed. The first-year teachers completed student teaching and obtained their first teaching position as prerequisites for the voyage. My past voyages as an elementary school teacher and as a teacher-educator prepared me to lead this expedition. I describe how I steered my ship clear of any harmful influences and biases that appeared from my past and present roles as an educator and how I determined where to go by looking through the telescope of unconventional methodologies. I weave the sea voyage into our experiences by beginning each section with an analogy.

Before Teaching

Previous Relationships with Each Other

As mentioned in Chapter III, the three first-year teachers in this study had graduated in the spring, 2008 from a teacher education program in which I teach as a professor. From a sampling perspective, the only requirement was that they be employed in an elementary school as a K-6 classroom teacher. As their professor, I trained the three "captains" (Cathy, James, and Sharon) and had watched them steer their own ships in their field-experience classrooms. Cathy was a student in three of my courses: Multicultural Education, Classroom Management, and Teaching Writing K-6, Sharon was in my Multicultural Education and Classroom Management courses, and James was in my Classroom Management course.

The three had classes together and they all student taught during spring, 2008 in different schools. Cathy and Sharon traveled to London together as part of a teaching abroad course in May, 2008. Sharon and James were employed at the same elementary school.

Why Teaching

What attracted the captains to the sea? Perhaps it was the adventure, challenge, or strength of body and spirit which was hidden until the sea demanded that it come forth. Teaching calls us to ride the waves and discover who we are.

Cathy

Cathy entered teaching as a second career having previously owned a packaging and shipping company for over 20 years. After she and her husband decided to sell the business, Cathy volunteered for several years at her son's parochial school which proved rewarding to her: "I realized that I could make a difference in children's futures by becoming a teacher." After being a paraprofessional for a few months, she returned to college full-time to earn her teaching license.

James

While in high school, James worked in restaurants as a cook and for a golf course and park doing summer maintenance jobs. After high school he entered college because "that's what I had to do." When he was 19 he took a year off and traveled the U.S. as a corporate trainer, teaching others how to cook for the restaurant chain. Realizing that the restaurant business was not the career for him, he returned to college to become a teacher.

He commented,

> Ever since high school, in the back of my mind I felt like teaching would be an awesome job. I always felt like I was lucky. I wasn't the 'average' student, but I had amazing teachers. I became a teacher to make sure that the students like me have an equal opportunity to succeed in their life. I always knew I would bring an interesting perspective to the profession. As I went through my courses in college, I knew that I was making the right decision.

Sharon

Sharon's first career began when she was 15 working as a crewmember in a local theater. Three years later she became a full-time manager receiving benefits. After high school, she entered college to achieve her ultimate goal of "making a daily impact in children's lives" by becoming a pediatrician. She began in nursing but then switched to teaching once she discovered that medicine was not a good fit. Her only experience with children prior to college was babysitting, but her goal of helping children would be realized as a teacher.

Student Teaching

Dolphins ride the waves of the deep blue sea with ease, but for sea captains it is often an arduous task. Apprenticing under a hardy, experienced skipper who knows how to manage his crew and run a "top-notch" ship is extremely valuable. Student teachers learn how to navigate the classroom under the supervision of experts.

Cathy

"I didn't have the most pleasant student teaching experience," Cathy explained. "My cooperating teacher did not allow me to observe her classroom before I started and that should've been a red flag for me." Besides not feeling welcomed into the classroom, Cathy felt the college's expectations and the cooperating teacher's expectations of her were not the same. For example, her cooperating teacher mentioned that she should have

an early childhood degree to teach kindergarten which was not required by the college nor the state. Cathy recalled, "I think she really thought I would come in totally knowing everything and be able to take over that classroom."

As is customary, Cathy observed other classrooms at different grade levels during her last few weeks of student teaching and found that helpful. She felt that completing student teaching in the fall would have been more beneficial allowing her to experience the first day of school and the establishment of classroom procedures. Coming into the classroom in the middle of the year, she had difficulty in establishing respect and rapport with the students;"I felt like walking in mid-year the kids already had such a tight rapport with the teacher that…you're kind of in the background and they look at you more as a friend." Although Cathy was disappointed with her student teaching experience, it helped her realize that she wanted to teach in a parochial setting.

James

James student taught in a fourth grade classroom and viewed it as positive. He left student teaching feeling confident and regarded his cooperating teacher as a good role model. He felt his teaching philosophy coincided with the schools' and he enjoyed working there. When his cooperating teacher decided to move, he applied for the position.

Sharon

Sharon enjoyed student teaching fourth grade and her cooperating teacher's classroom management skills were excellent. She was treated as a teammate and included in planning and decision making. Her cooperating teacher was very open to new ideas and supported Sharon in trying new things, for example incorporating a "Jeopardy" game

into the curriculum. She consistently received constructive feedback in a supportive environment. Sharon believed that it would have been beneficial to student teach in the fall so she could have witnessed how rules and routines were set up, but felt that she might not have been able to devote the time needed at the beginning of the year.

Entering the Teaching Profession

Nothing compares to being behind the wheel of a ship, whether it's brand new or one rescued from pirates, either way it is the captain that brings the crew home. Acquiring a teaching position can be difficult, but that first day as teacher is not easily forgotten.

Cathy

Cathy was hired to teach fourth and fifth grade classes in a parochial school in June, 2008. She was relieved and surprised that she obtained a position so soon. Cathy had two months to plan for the beginning of school, but had only text books in her classroom. In the two months before school started, she shopped for supplies, reviewed the archdiocese's standards, looked through her text books, and read three books on becoming a teacher. She was still overwhelmed during the first month of the school year, despite her preparations; "the real learning comes from actually doing it."

Since Cathy was hired at the school her son attended, she was familiar with the community, principal, teachers, and other parents. Being comfortable in the environment and knowing her teammates and principal helped her adjust to her new profession. However, having two roles at the school was a challenge and at times conversations with her friends and fellow-parents became uncomfortable. For example, at the first of the year she felt that some parents were seeking information from her that was not her place

to give. To protect her professional ethics and comfort level, her husband addressed any parental concerns involving the school that she would have addressed previously.

Cathy maintained a fourth grade homeroom and taught two sections of fourth grade social studies, two fourth grade ability-based math classes and two fifth grade ability-based math classes. The teacher she replaced left due to health reasons. Cathy had been told by her principal that the students were behind in math and that he wanted her to "beef it up" and "move them along."

James

James was hired at the school where he completed his student teaching and he thought the positive reviews from his principal during that time helped him obtain the fourth grade position in May, 2008. Three weeks later, he was informed he would be teaching fifth grade instead due to student enrollment projections. His principal asked him to teach the math classes. James recalled, "She believes men teach math differently which works to the students' advantage, but math was always my weakest subject." So he taught homeroom, two levels (one high and one low) of math, a literacy block (reading and writing), and social studies -- every subject except science and spelling.

Student teaching at the school had helped James learn about the school's philosophy, policies, and curriculum which led to a certain level of comfort. However, student teaching was different from running his own classroom. He was replacing his co-operating teacher, who was well respected at the school and this led to feelings of pressure and stress. It seemed as if other faculty members expected him to know everything since he had student taught with "one of the best teachers in the building."

Sharon

Sharon applied for very few jobs during student teaching because she was contemplating relocating out of state. After deciding to stay, she began searching for a classroom teaching position in July of 2008. When she didn't receive any interviews, she also applied for "enrichment teacher positions" that did not require a teaching license and paid considerably less. The school year began and Sharon was hired as a kindergarten enrichment teacher instead of getting the classroom teaching position she desired; "At least it's still teaching." However, one week after starting that position, she was hired as a long-term substitute to replace a second grade teacher taking the rest of the year off for personal reasons. She spent three days with the teacher who was leaving and became a second grade teacher in week four of the school year. Her classroom was self-contained, but she had different groups of students for literacy and math since those subjects were ability based.

Sharon was familiar with the school since she had attended seminars there while student teaching. She met the principal at an interviewing seminar and spoke to her briefly during the summer. She did not know much about the community or school climate before she began, but was happily surprised to discover that James, who graduated with her, was also teaching there; "To have someone I know come say 'hi' to me has made my day."

Sharon maintained her position as a full time theater manger throughout college and student teaching because she needed the security of a steady income. The temporary one year contract she received did not give her the long term security she desired and

therefore she maintained a part-time management position at the theater during her first year of teaching.

<p style="text-align:center">Before My Dissertation</p>

Looking back over the seas I've traveled I am thankful they have propelled me to new shores and opportunities. I return to land only long enough to prepare for my next voyage. All of my experiences in education, both rewarding and challenging, have led me to undertake this study.

<p style="text-align:center">My Subjectivities</p>

It was important to be aware of the impact that my past and present roles as an educator would have on this study. The utilization of participatory methodologies mandated the creation of a research team and furthermore, all of the co-researchers stories, including mine, became an integral part of the study. Madison (2005) advises,

> Start where you are. The experiences in your life, both past and present, and who you are as a unique individual will lead you to certain questions about the world and certain problems about why things are the way they are. It is important to honor your own personal history and the knowledge you have accumulated up to this point, as well as the intuition or instincts that draw you toward a particular direction, question, problem, or topic----understanding that you may not always know exactly why or how you are being drawn in that direction. (p. 19)

Why I Chose Teaching

Often sea winds carry us to unexpected places where unfound treasure lies. Teaching was the profession that found me when I was looking for something else and one that I have treasured ever since.

I excelled at playing the trumpet as a young girl and knew that I wanted to study music in college. Music majors were encouraged to minor in education since jobs for music teachers were more stable than those for professional musicians. However, at that point in my life, teaching did not appeal to me since I had no desire to work with children. I had also witnessed what my older sister had experienced as a teacher; the high school position she obtained was in a rural community, the school's philosophy did not match hers, her principal told her which students to pass, and she worked long hours for low pay. Teaching was definitely not for me; thus in order to obtain a stable job I minored in computer science.

After graduation, I obtained a full-time job as a computer operator and worked part-time as a musician. I discovered the instability of computer jobs when I was laid off after six weeks. I had purchased my first car and had signed a one year rental agreement on my first apartment. Although it was an option, I was determined not to move back in with my parents and so I applied for every "want ad" position available. I sustained myself with income from a job as an instructor in a "before and after" school program and was surprised to discover that "I was meant to teach." Although I never imagined myself working with children, I immediately connected with them. I had never experienced anything (not even playing trumpet) that was as invigorating or rewarding as teaching. Therefore, I entered a teacher-licensure program the following year.

My Past Role as an Elementary School Teacher

One's first voyage as captain is memorable and crucial; for if you do not survive the first it is unlikely you will have another. I look back on my first few years as a teacher with pride; not because I was a great teacher, but because I felt like quitting many times and didn't.

I taught at the elementary school level for a total of ten years, working at two urban schools in different districts. For the first three years I taught literacy and social studies in a combined fourth and fifth grade, "multi-aged" setting. During this time, I had an unsupportive principal, reported child-abuse for the first time, gave grades without understanding assessment, observed my teammates constant arguments, and realized that I needed to "keep my mouth shut" until I obtained tenure. I moved the year I would have received tenure.

After relocating, I decided to substitute for a year and spend more time with my young daughter. In November of that year, I took a six week permanent-substitute position in a middle school teaching sixth grade science and math. From January to June of that year, I substituted at my daughter's school for a first grade teacher on sick leave. The following year I obtained a contract teaching second and third grade, "multi-aged" classes and I remained at the same school for the next six years. During this time, I had an unsupportive principal, reported child-abuse eight times, assigned grades with confidence , filed a harassment report against a parent, confiscated a six inch knife from a third grader, obtained tenure, and shared my beliefs about education tactfully.

While on maternity leave after six years at that school, I made the difficult decision: to leave elementary education and pursue my doctorate. I did not leave because

it was difficult or the pay was minimal, but I left realizing that I needed to learn more in order to make a "bigger difference" for inner-city students.

My Current Role as a Teacher Educator

A captain can never say no to the sea and when I try to hide she finds me. I decided to learn more by obtaining a doctoral degree and never teach again. What a foolish thought; of course I had to teach because empowering others with knowledge is the best reason to learn.

Since my husband was making a good income working for the government, I decided to quit my job and become a full-time doctoral student hoping to work for an educational research firm after completing my degree. I had enjoyed teaching children in elementary school, but I was certain that I would not like teaching adults. Becoming a professor was not something that I considered until my husband was laid off in the last year of his master's degree. We decided that I would go back to work full-time and become a part-time student for one year while he finished.

I was tempted to go back into an elementary classroom, but I realized that it would be hard to do both and I would most likely not be able to leave again and complete my doctorate. I decided to look for a job that would keep me focused on my degree and when I was offered a one year position with benefits teaching elementary education classes I accepted it, thinking "I can do anything for a year." Five years later, I am a third year tenure track professor and as a teacher-educator I am achieving my goal of making a "bigger difference" for elementary students. As an elementary school teacher I reached 20-25 children every year, but now the 75-80 pre-service teachers who learn from me every year are touching the lives of over a 1,000 children per year and that is extremely

rewarding. I was surprised to discover that I am just as proud of my adult education students as I was of my third graders.

My Current Role as a Researcher

I am now the captain of a new ship which I built myself with my advisors "words of wisdom." I see where I must go not by looking at the sea through the lens of a telescope, but by looking at the experiences of three first-year teachers through the lenses of non-conventional research methodologies.

Choosing My Research Topic and Methodologies

When I started my doctoral program I was interested in school reform, social justice, and mentoring programs for elementary school students. After reading books and articles on all three topics, I concluded that school reform and social justice issues were too broad and political and therefore decided to study mentoring programs for elementary school students.

I began talking to other professors about my potential research topic and my department chair asked me to join a team of professors working on a grant funded project mentoring mentors of first-year teachers. The project's goal was to help a small school district develop a formal mentoring program and help support the mentors by teaching them how to utilize a specific mentoring curriculum. I also began supervising student teachers who were very anxious about not having the support they would need during their first year of teaching. Thus my interest shifted from mentoring programs for children to mentoring programs for first-year teachers.

As discussed in Chapter II, many studies have been conducted on the benefits and effectiveness of induction and mentoring programs (Bartell, 2005; Brown, 2003; Darling-

Hammond, 2003). However few studies have uncovered the experiences and perceptions of first-year teachers and those that have relied on limited data obtained from surveys or interviews conducted once or twice during the first year of teaching (Gilbert, 2005; Mc Cann & Johannessen, 2004; Williams, 2003).

The goal of mentoring programs is to ensure the success of first-year teachers; therefore I wanted to discover what aspects categorized first-year teachers as successful. I defined a successful first-year teacher as "a first-year teacher who is asked to return to teach in the same school for a second year and truly wants to." So from this definition two key questions arose: 1) What does a first-year teacher need to demonstrate in order to be asked to return to the same school and 2) What experiences create a desire for first-year teachers to continue teaching at the same school? The first question led me to conduct a case study (Cullen-Reavill, 2009) interviewing three induction coordinators and a principal. The second question led to a pilot study (Cullen-Reavill, 2009) that helped me determine the effectiveness of ethno-mimesis as a methodology for capturing the experiences of first-year teachers.

The findings from the first study pointed out two key elements that first-year teachers were expected to demonstrate in order to be asked to return the following year: 1) a sense of professionalism, and 2) an ability to meet students' needs. Professionalism was defined from the results of the study (Cullen-Reavill, 2009) as "the maturity and confidence needed in order to work well on a team, utilize constructive criticism, maintain a positive attitude, and make a real contribution to one's class and one's school" (p. 22). The ability to meet students' needs was described (Cullen-Reavill, 2009) as

"being able to discover the potential in each student and knowing what to do to help them reach it" (p. 23).

The findings from the second study illustrated that the reward of making a difference in the lives of their students was the biggest reason the first-year teachers wanted to return. Other reasons were support from the principal, appreciation by parents and school staff, and active involvement in decision making. This pilot study confirmed 1) that the topic of my dissertation would be the experiences of first-year teachers and the development of a seminar process for supporting them, and 2) that ethno-mimesis was an effective methodology for studying this topic.

I wanted to study the "culture" of first-year teachers and develop a process that would benefit them by promoting their participation and decision making. It was important that my methodologies not rely on observations since my perceptions of what I saw would be difficult to separate from the first-year teachers' perceptions of what they experienced. I discovered O'Neill's methodology of ethno-mimesis which combines participatory-art, ethnography, and participatory action research (O'Neill, 2002; O'Neill & Tobolewska, 2002) I have provided opportunities for first-year teachers to discuss and further explore their experiences by combining ethno-mimesis with focus group discussions. These two methods helped me uncover the culture of the first-year teacher and this culture was conveyed through the perspectives and voices of the first-year teachers in performance ethnography.

My Biases and Influences from Past and Present Experiences

My past role as an elementary school teacher provided me with the knowledge and familiarity needed to relate to the first-year teachers and understand their

circumstances. They commented that it helped to have someone who "had been there" to talk to. The fact that I had no connection to their school or district freed them from anxieties about possible evaluation and provided the sense of safety necessary for open communication to take place. However, I had to be conscious not making assumptions about their experiences as first-year teachers based on my past experiences. Hearing their experiences brought up memories of my own teaching experiences which I shared only when they would enhance the research rather than influence it. For example, James relayed that his principal moved a student into another teacher's class and he mentioned feeling that he had "somehow failed that student." Having experienced a similar situation I empathized with him and shared it in order to support James and to demonstrate to the group that experienced teachers also struggle with difficult situations. However, I was very careful to not include words of judgment or advice.

My current role as a teacher educator needed to be examined as well especially since the three co-researchers had me as a professor for one or more of their courses. In our first meeting I explained how my role as principal investigator would be different than my past role as a professor (see appendix F) and that I considered them experts informing me rather than the other way around. I also had to remain distanced from conversations about the teacher education program. Although it was helpful to hear their opinions on the program, my professional ethics as a researcher, prevented me from commenting on the practices or decisions made by other professors.

This chapter presented a seafaring voyage as an analogy for this study, introduced the three first-year teachers, explained our previous relationships with one another, discussed why each of us chose to teach, and described how my past experiences have led

to this study. The next chapter explores the experiences of the first year teachers during

the first trimester (September – November, 2008) through poetry, discussion, and art.

CHAPTER V

SETTING SAIL

Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed
by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do.
So throw off the bowlines,
sail away from the safe harbor.
Catch the trade winds in your sails.
Explore. Dream. Discover.
Mark Twain

Introduction

I chose to embark on an expeditionary voyage for one year leaving the security of

the bowlines and the safety of the harbor behind as I charted new waters. I *explored* new

and unconventional methodologies, *dreamt* of developing a seminar for first-year

teachers, and *discovered* ways of doing so by learning from the experiences of the first-

year teachers on a monthly basis.

This chapter contains a found poem, a description of the data collection session, a

discussion on the learning that took place, and the initial findings for each month during

the first trimester (September, October, and November, 2008). The chapter concludes

with a brief summary.

Tales from September

Found Poem

THE BIG & THE LITTLE

BIG LEAP
from student-teaching to teaching.
Don't know what the first day holds.
Don't know how to assign seats, set up rules, or even find the room.

We talked about it,
read about it and practiced it,
but that doesn't mean we know,
how to do this thing,
called teaching.
We learn by doing it all on our own.

BIG SHOES TO FILL

replacing someone else,
doing as well as the wonderful teacher before,
or
making up for what the inadequate teacher didn't do.
Either way,
pressure weighs heavy.

LITTLE TIME,
for ourselves to relax.
Family and friends must adjust.
We can't just hang out anymore.
When they call we tell them to,
"Cut to the chase",
because when the bell rings,
our work is not done,
we've at least four more hours to go.

LITTLE THINGS ARE BIG.
Putting papers on their desks,
getting to lunch on time,
learning how to use
the phone, copier, computer, and smart board,
filling out paperwork for everything,
remembering who's allergic to nuts,
knowing who needs to get medication at lunch,
only having a one year contract,
wondering if we'll have a job next year.
But there isn't one place
that we'd rather be
than in front of those
LITTLE people we teach,
for when we see them smile or understand
we know the rewards are BIG!

Our Time Together

General Description

Only Cathy and Sharon met with me this month since James had a prior commitment. I began by discussing a handout outlining why and how I would be studying the first year of teaching (see Appendix D), and explained that the information provided by them might be used by teacher educators, district administrators, and mentors to improve their programs and decrease the high amount of attrition among new teachers. I explained how focus group discussions around topics determined by them (see Appendix E), and participatory art as a process of discovery would be used to collect data. I emphasized that they were not expected to be artists and the discoveries made during the creative process were more important than the art itself.

I discussed their roles as co-researchers in participatory action research and explained how I would be making decisions with them rather than for them. I clearly described my role as principal investigator and how it would be different from my past role as their professor (see Appendix F). I answered their questions and ensured that they were able to make an informed decision about participating. I reviewed the consent form with them -- meeting the research requirements of my doctoral university and my college of employment -- before they signed it. Then I turned on the tape recorder and we began.

Focus Group Discussions

I defined group norms as agreed upon procedures used in focus groups to ensure safety and comfort in the conversations. We agreed to keep our conversations confidential and to listen respectfully and actively to anyone speaking.

During my pilot study (Cullen-Reavill, 2009) I was concerned about keeping the conversations on topic while maintaining a free-flowing style. This prompted me to utilize Rodger's (2006) four steps of reflection discussed earlier --- presence in experience, description of experience, analysis of experience, and experimentation -- as a format for the discussion. However realizing that this strict structure was confusing and uncomfortable for the co-researchers, I dropped it.

Ethno-mimesis

After a 20 minute break, we came back together to explore teaching through the methodology of ethno-mimesis -- the combination of participatory arts-based research, ethnography, and participatory action research. I explained how art would be used to explore their thoughts and experiences, and I reassured them that the process was more important than the product.

My pilot study (Cullen-Reavill, 2009) confirmed that having an abundance of art materials facilitated the creative discovery process. Therefore, I brought three large crates of supplies such as paint, clay, stickers, feathers, and plastic animals (see Figure 1). I showed them the materials and they decided to create collages conveying the successes and challenges of the first month of teaching. They were actively engaged for the next hour and a half.

Figure 1. Art materials used

Closure

After the participatory art process they discussed their experiences and explained their collages. They both gave written permission for me to include their art in my dissertation.

Both Cathy and Sharon felt positive about the meeting and said that it helped them to reflect on what they had learned during the first month of teaching. They were anxious to see the growth they would achieve by our next meeting. Cathy said, "I think when we meet again in a month, mentally we'll be at a totally different stage."

What We Learned

Discoveries on Process

 Focus group discussions.

  Rodger's (2006) four steps of reflection -- presence in experience, description of experience, analysis of experience, and experimentation — confused and encumbered the co-researchers during the focus group discussions, and the quality of data obtained would have suffered had I continued with this process. Although these steps did not provide an adequate structure for focus group discussions, they provided a structure for my reflection on the overall process.

  First, Cathy and Sharon were overwhelmed with many responsibilities and were confused by all of the procedures and routines they had to learn. This indicated that Rodger's first step of reflection – clarity in experience — was an unrealistic expectation for them at this time. However, it was important to look for evidence of presence in experience while analyzing future data and note if and when this occurred.

  Second, Cathy and Sharon discussed and described their experiences clearly and openly which demonstrated their engagement in Rodger's second step of reflection -- description of experience. This step reminded me to clarify the experience being described by continually asking "What I am hearing you say is this. Is that correct?" This was also an instant way to member check the data obtained.

  Third, Cathy sometimes relayed satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a situation but was unsure as to why she felt that way. This led me to conclude that although she might be able to evaluate a situation, she was not able to analyze it. Sharon had only been in the

classroom for four days at this point and did not evaluate or analyze any of her experiences. Therefore, the third step of reflection--analysis of experience (Rodgers, 2006) was not evidenced. I would revisit this during future data analysis to determine if a clear sense of presence was a prerequisite for analysis.

Fourth, everything that Cathy and Sharon did at this point was so new to them that it might all be viewed as experimentation. However, without a clear sense of presence or the ability to analyze a situation, one might try something new, but, would not be able to come up with a specific plan for change based on clear reasoning. Therefore, the first-year teachers were not engaged in the fourth step of reflection--experimentation (Rodgers, 2006)--at this time. This step would be revisited during future data analysis to discover if and when the co-researchers used clear and specific reasoning to plan for change and what types of changes they would attempt to make.

Ethno-mimesis.

Two findings from the pilot study were reaffirmed by the co-researchers during the participatory arts process: (a) having lots of art supplies helped promote creativity, and (b) creating art helped them discover things they would not have discovered otherwise. People have different comfort levels with art and creativity in general. Cathy was intimidated by the thought of doing art and was fairly reserved in using the art materials, but said, "After I started I was okay." Sharon, on the other hand, was excited to create art and thoroughly enjoyed experimenting with the materials.

During the creative arts process, conversation around teaching was mingled with "small talk" and it was prudent to keep the tape recorder on. I asked the co-researchers a few questions as I thought of them, but soon discovered that asking them to discuss what

they were doing caused them to stop and seemed to interrupt their creativity. Therefore, I concluded that doing mini-interviews during the arts-based process as a means of data collection was counterproductive. The conversation seemed to continue naturally and provided spontaneous data based on what the co-researchers were thinking at the moment.

At first, Cathy looked in magazines for words to represent her challenges and successes, but when the process became time consuming and frustrating, she wrote the words on Popsicle sticks. Cathy realized that she was beginning to experience success and a feeling of self-confidence that she had not felt earlier in the year (see Figure 2) --- "I'm starting to feel like I can handle this. I can do this. I'll be okay, but a week ago I was wondering, 'How am I going to get all of this done?'"

Figure 2. Collage created by Cathy representing the challenges and positive experiences in teaching during September, 2008.

Cathy's challenges were prioritizing tasks, feeling confident in what she was doing, getting supplies that were economically feasible, and balancing family life with her professional life. Positive things that happened for her were seeing students' eyes "light up" and knowing that they were learning, teaching in a faithful environment, obtaining a sense of self-confidence, and realizing how enjoyable teaching could be.

Sharon started in one corner of her foam board using watercolor paints. However, they did not show up on her black background so she changed to pastel crayons (see Figure 3). She stated, "All I could think about was like splashing paint all over the place 'cause that's how I feel right now. There's everything everywhere and that's what this section (lower right) represents. My thoughts, my organization, everything is everywhere right now and wow, it's a challenge for me."

In Sharon's collage, challenges, goals, and positive aspects of the classroom were intermingled. The snake and the dinosaur represented one of her biggest challenges: wiggly boys. One of her goals was to give equal attention to all of the students in the classroom, but the behaviors of a few of the boys took the majority of her time and energy. Even though it had been chaotic starting this late in the year, she was very positive about her job and represented this with a golden sun. The straight line of small beads (left-hand side) represented "having my ducks in a row and getting organized." The hearts represented her love of teaching and her desire to stay passionate about it. In the center of her collage, she represented herself and her students with buttons of different shapes and sizes surrounded by a purple circle of learning. The clay heart and the balloon represented her desire to help mold the children's minds and fill them with knowledge.

103

She included the words imagine, create, and explore because she wanted her room to be a creative place where students could "develop a love of learning and dream big." She believed that to do fun activities with her students she needed a better sense of classroom control.

Figure 3. Sharon's collage combines the positive aspects of teaching with goals and challenges.

Discoveries on Teaching

Topics co-researchers brought up were very much aligned with the beginning of the year and the transitions they were making into their new careers. They expected teaching to be different from student teaching but the amount and degree of differences startled and overwhelmed them. The perceived expectations of others (principal, teachers, and parents), that they either do as well as or better than the teacher they replaced, created much stress for them. The changes in their lifestyle were also greater than when they student taught; they found it difficult to balance their personal and professional lives. They were amazed by how "little things" consumed most of their time and energy and made a huge difference when running their own classrooms.

Big leap from student teaching.

Sharon and Cathy found their experiences as teachers to be extremely different from their experiences as student teachers. Their learning curves were very high and they often wondered if they were doing well enough. They missed the direct feedback they had received during student teaching. They also felt the pressures of responsibilities they had not had as student teachers, such as addressing parental concerns and keeping track of student allergies.

As teachers, they had more direct contact with the principal than they did as student teachers. Cathy's principal made it clear from the beginning that he spent time watching from outside the classroom door instead of doing formal observations. Cathy said she was comfortable with that because she felt he would let her know if he had any concerns about her teaching. Sharon's principal came into the classroom every day and gave her no feedback which left her anxiously unaware of the principal's perceptions of her teaching.

Adjusting to a new grade level was a huge transition for them. Cathy student taught in kindergarten before becoming a fourth/fifth grade teacher and expected a big difference between the two levels. Although she preferred teaching older children, she had to develop confidence with different skills such as cursive writing. Sharon student taught in fourth grade before becoming a second grade teacher, but had not expected to face the huge differences in grade levels. For example, she spent much more time making sure the second graders were in their seats and on task than she had previously with the

fourth graders ---"The maturity level of second graders is nothing like the maturity level of fourth graders."

Another adjustment for them was the time of year. Since they both student taught in the spring, they had not observed the processes of preparing the classroom, establishing rules, or building a classroom community. Cathy felt it would have been more beneficial to student teach in the fall. Sharon agreed, but felt she would not have had the time and energy required since she was also working full time at the theater.

Filling big shoes.

Cathy replaced a teacher who had left her position due to illness. She was told by the principal that the fourth and fifth grade math program was not where it should be and he needed her to "beef it up". For several years, the majority of students entering the sixth grade were below grade level in math. This was stressful for Cathy, especially since there was no one else teaching math at the fourth and fifth grade level to plan with. She sought advice from the sixth grade teacher on what material to cover.

Sharon replaced a teacher in the fourth week of school --- "It's very overwhelming and she left big shoes to fill. I keep hearing about how well she taught." Sharon felt others expected her to do as well as the teacher she replaced, which was extremely stressful for her. The previous teacher had already established rapport with the students and Sharon was concerned about being viewed as "the mean substitute for the rest of the year."

Balancing everything.

Cathy and Sharon felt tremendously overwhelmed. Cathy mentioned, "I felt like I was in a fog. Finally, after three weeks I'm starting to figure things out." One of the challenges represented in Cathy's collage was "Where should I start?" (see Figure 4). It was difficult to set priorities when there were so many tasks for them to do, but their number one priority was to have their plans and materials ready before they taught. They found it difficult to balance time on planning with learning new things. For example, Sharon learned how to use the smart board and Cathy learned how to enter the lunch count on the computer.
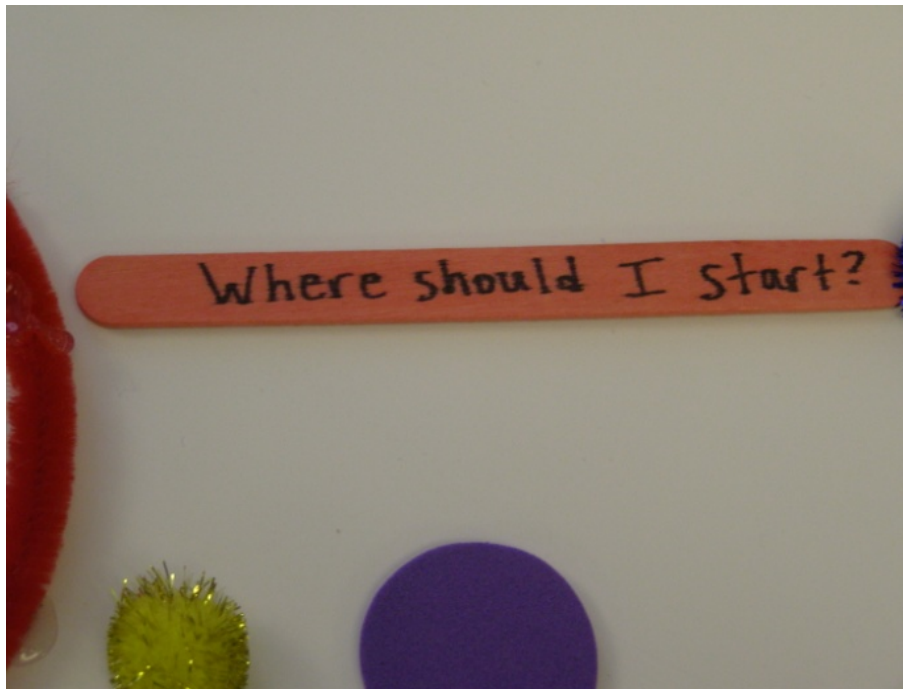
Figure 4. Example of data from art created.

They found it important to balance discipline with caring in order to develop positive and respectful relationships with their students. Both felt that students were testing them to see what they could get away with. This was especially true for Sharon,

who took over the classroom four weeks after the school year began and only four days before our meeting took place. She realized that changing teachers was difficult for the students and said, "I'm still the teacher who's not smiling because they're testing me more and more each day. They're trying to see how far they can get and I struggle with that." Sharon believed that once she had more control over classroom management, she could afford to relax and be more creative with her teaching.

Balancing their professional lives with their personal lives was difficult as well. Both worked up to four hours every night on grading papers and planning for the following day, drastically limiting time for family and friends. Sharon stayed at the school and Cathy took her work home. Cathy discussed limiting conversations with her mother-in-law to 10 minutes and not being able to take her son to places like she had in the past. In addition to teaching, Sharon was still working full-time at the theater as a manager and had no spare time. Now that she had a teaching contract with insurance benefits, she planned to cut back her work at the theater to just week-ends for the next month. After that, she hoped to quit and focus on teaching.

Little stuff.

One reoccurring phrase this month was "It's just the little things." Some items that were previously viewed as small were actually significant and required a great deal of time and energy from the first-year teachers. As mentioned previously, lots of new tasks had to be learned, including how to use the phone and the smart board, how to enter the lunch count on the computer, and how to fill out necessary paperwork such as computer acquisition forms and room inventories.

Lots of "little things" had to be remembered as well, including--putting papers on students' desks in the morning, which students needed to go to the office for medications, student allergies, students being pulled out for other classes, and all the students' names. Both Sharon and Cathy taught different groups of students for different subjects, making it even more difficult to learn names. Different group dynamics and ability levels also meant challenges in regard to classroom management and lesson planning.

Obtaining and organizing materials and supplies was an additional challenge. Since Cathy's classroom had very little in it except textbooks, she purchased items like math games, bulletin board materials, and file folders with her own money. She also had to remove items that were not useful to her such as a cumbersome podium. Since Sharon was temporarily replacing another teacher, the teachers' supplies were left for her to use, but she had very little time to go through them.

Summary of findings from September.

There were four main findings this month. First, being a teacher was totally different from being a student teacher and the amount of responsibility increased drastically while the amount of support decreased. Second, replacing the teacher from the year before and dealing with their reputation, whether good or bad, was stressful. Third, teaching changed their lifestyles and it was difficult not to become overwhelmed and consumed by it. Fourth, the "little things" were actually huge; tasks they never thought of as being time consuming or difficult were.

Tales from October

Found Poem

Questions in the Sand, Promises on Tightropes, and Water in our Hands

Mentors from different grades
answered questions at first
about learning where things were and
procedures of the school.
Kids settle in.
Rules are established.
Classroom communities begin to gel.
Now we have questions
about grade level curriculum and
coping with fifth graders.
Our teammates are there
with answers to those.

Faculty meetings are very helpful.
Everyone smiles and seems to be nice,
but we do not know the roles that they play.
We guess at where support will be when we need it.
We hesitate to speak for fear we'll seem stupid.
We remain silent to listen and learn.

Curriculum planning is like sorting grains of sand,
Matching resources to standards and pacing guides.
We don't have to reinvent the wheel and write our own lessons.
We have nice texts and resources to use.
We're getting the hang of knowing what to do when,
but what do we do when kids still don't get it?
Teammates and mentors say "It's okay just move on."
We can't leave kids behind lost and bewildered!
How will they catch up enough to move on?
We're discouraged by the fact that they won't.

We hear encouragement and praise
from teammates and principals.
It helps us feel better about probationary status,
but doesn't help us know what is good or how to grow,
or how to motivate and encourage the lower kids.

Consistent help was promised,

But is almost non-existent.
Instead of team teaching
a coach comes in unannounced
giving random suggestions and critical remarks.
It's more confusing then helpful,
more discouraging than motivating.
Promises are better not made than not kept.

Students still test us with
Undesired behaviors,
Wanting to know we care enough
To intervene.
We walk a tightrope between
Being kind and being mean.
Time ticks quick.
We scurry to catch up.
We're almost there,
Almost on track,
When suddenly it's stolen away by
another person's agenda, schedule, or important event.
Yet heavy pressure to meet goals and standards
never goes away.
Time is like gold.
More experienced teachers
seem to know how to hold on to it,
but their secrets they won't share.
Time flows through each day
Like water through our fingers
And we are left to wonder
if we were able to grasp enough of it
to make a difference.

Our Time Together

General Description

This month, Sharon was absent because she had to work at the movie theater.

Cathy and James seemed excited to see one another again and began chatting about the

amount of work they were doing at home, their school's curriculum, and parent teacher

conferences, which Cathy had just completed and James was preparing for. This was a

good indication that they were ready to begin the focus group discussion.

112

Focus Group Discussions

Since James was not with us last time, I reviewed the purpose and methodological approach to the research (See Appendix E), gave him the opportunity to ask questions, and explained the consent form before he signed it. I posted the two group norms we came up with last time: (a) keep conversations confidential, and (b) respectfully and actively listen to one another. I asked James if he could think of any norms we should add. He discussed how he might tend to speak for Sharon since they worked at the same school and so he added the norm of speaking only for oneself.

Ethno-mimesis

Once again, I reviewed the importance of process rather than product and put out all of the supplies where they could be easily reached. At the end of last month's session Cathy and Sharon had decided they wanted to use clay. I put the clay in front and told them that since it was air drying clay, the packages were not open, but to feel free to open them. James opened one color, using only a small portion of it. There may have been some concern about wasting the clay, knowing that whatever they did not use would dry up. James seemed concerned about the cost of the art materials and I reassured him that it was okay to use whatever he need. I explained that most of the materials were things I already had at home.

Cathy discussed the participatory arts process this month compared to last and said, "It was easier today by far. Last time I wandered around forever not knowing what to do." This time, she seemed more comfortable with the process and started picking her materials right away. She definitely seemed to have a plan in mind before starting her collage, but she talked about being more flexible with changing her ideas as she went.

113

Closure

After the art was completed, they both signed the consent forms allowing me to use the created art. James indicated that participating in the group helped relieve the large amount of stress he was under at his school. They agreed that it had been helpful to talk to another first-year teacher who taught the same subject at the same grade level. Cathy said it was reassuring to know someone else was experiencing the same challenges with teaching math.

<center>*What We Learned*</center>

Discoveries on Process

Focus group discussions.

Our conversation last month was somewhat cumbersome at first. I was pleasantly surprised by how quickly James adapted to the process and even though he was new, the conversation was comfortable from beginning to end. This reaffirmed my decision last month to drop Rodger's (2006) four steps of reflection as a structure for the conversation and use an informal, conversational style of discussion, which proved comfortable and welcoming. Once again, Rodger's four steps of reflection--presence in experience, description of experience, analysis of experience, and experimentation— provided a structure for my reflection on the overall process.

Last month the first-year teachers were extremely overwhelmed and confused, but this month they were not. This month the topics discussed were more specific and focused than they were last month indicating more clarity in experience (Rodger's first step of reflection). Once again the co-researchers evidenced Rodger's second step of

<center>114</center>

reflection--description of experience--by clearly describing their experiences. The third and fourth steps --analysis of experience and experimentation--were still not evidenced.

It was encouraging to me as a researcher that Cathy was already taking on a leadership role in the focus group discussions by asking pertinent questions and giving thoughtful feedback. This confirmed that she was a co-researcher searching for information instead of looking to me to determine what was important, which is what one hopes for in participatory action research.

Ethno-mimesis.

I tried to encourage free exploration by asking them to focus on whatever came up for them instead of limiting what was created to a topic. However, both co-researchers kept asking things like "What is it that we are supposed to be doing?" Thus, a topic was still needed because it provided them with a sense of structure, affirming my belief that first-year teachers and people, in general, find rules and structure comfortable. However, I kept the topic broad by asking them to represent what it meant to be a teacher.

Even though I had mentioned they could use all of the materials on the collage, James still asked if he could put clay on his collage. This confirmed that it was important to gain permission to try something new and a sense of safety was needed for creative risks to be taken. I tried to emphasis the exploratory/discovery process by saying,

> The thing I want to caution you both about is thinking that you have to have it come out a certain way. Let the materials kind of move you. Don't think that you have to come up with a big art piece with a certain message. Play with it. Have fun with it. See where it takes you.

By saying this, I realized I was leading the data since I had told them how to construct it. It probably did not help them since they both figured out what they were going to do before approaching the materials. I learned that one's approach to this

115

participatory arts process must be individual; I should allow, encourage, and accept whatever approach each co-researcher took.

Cathy started her collage by cutting out a blue foam heart and placing the letters A, B, C, D, and F on it (see Figure 6). She said she made a heart because she loved teaching and felt she would never leave the profession. She said teaching was a creative process, which is why she enjoyed it so much, but if she ever stopped loving it, then she would quit. The calculator represented the time she spent calculating grades, entering them into her grade book, and then transferring them into the school's electronic grade file. She updated her internet bulletin board every Sunday so parents would know what their children would be doing in math that week. She said, "I did the clock because time is of the essence, whether it is time while teaching lessons or finding the time to figure out what you're going to do or running out of time or just time outside of the classroom. Time is something that I didn't think would be as big as it is."

Figure 5. The progression of steps (from left to right) Cathy used to create her collage.

James started his collage by gluing lots of "googlie" eyes to his foam board (see Figure 7) and Cathy noticed this. He said he had 19 eyes because he had 19 students. They were all different sizes because "for some students I really need to always have an eye on them and for others I can have a smaller eye." Next, James glued on a wooden

116

wheel and put a red circle around it and a red line through it (see Figure 7). He said this represented something he didn't learn in college but should have: "You don't need to reinvent the wheel." He discussed how in college he was required to spend a lot of time creating elaborate, unique lesson plans. Now he was expected to use text books and to teach from already written materials rather than write his own lessons. He said that as a first-year teacher, he was relieved that he had district adopted resources to use because he didn't have the amount of time required to plan it all himself.

Figure 6. The progression of steps (from lft to right) James used to create his collage.

James indicated that his school uses the concept of "big ideas" to plan lessons around; he used that same approach to create his collage. He said that he knew he could not share his emotions in the classroom or at school. Thus, the "big idea" driving his collage was the conceptualization of what teaching was without portraying any emotion. He chose the eyes because "they are always open" and the brain because "it is always on." He was working so hard at school to get every little thing right and he was always reflecting on his teaching to such a degree that he knew it would burn him out if he kept it up. He stated,

> Unless you are in the teaching profession, you don't understand how much you're using your brain and how much that takes out of you. You have to be prepared to know or come up with some sort of solution to everything, every little thing that

117

you may have never dealt with in your life and never thought about. You have to be on. You're always thinking. The bottle cap represents one way to turn off the brain, not necessarily the best way, but I need to turn my brain off. I need to say enough.

Discoveries on Teaching

This month four main topics emerged: relationships, classroom management, curriculum, and time management. The first-year teachers discussed the roles of other people in their schools and the interactions they had with them. Curriculum challenges such as learning what to teach, how to plan for daily instruction, and how to demonstrate accountability for student learning were also at the forefront of the discussion. Time management was a struggle for them and they shared the challenges they experienced with prioritizing and streamlining tasks and making up interrupted instructional time.

The roles people play.

People who came up in our conversation were teammates, colleagues, mentors, the instructional coach (only James had one), principals, the assistant principal (only Cathy had one), and parents. At this point, Cathy's interactions were mainly with her teammates, principal, assistant principal, and parents. The majority of James' interactions were with his principal, instructional coach, and teammate.

Teachers at the same grade level were considered teammates since the opportunities for collaboration occurred most often with them; whereas other teachers in the building were considered colleagues and collaboration occurred mainly at faculty meetings. Cathy's team was comprised of four members who each taught different subjects for both fourth and fifth grades. She was comfortable being herself around her teammates because they realized she was still learning and supported her in doing so. She

118

believed that the team dynamics were good and was comfortable asking her teammates

questions on matters relating to specific students or teaching fourth and fifth graders.

Cathy would have benefited from planning math lessons with someone at the same grade

level, but was fortunate to have supportive and accessible colleagues who taught math at

different grade levels. She was glad James had joined us because it was helpful to talk

about specific issues with someone else who taught math at her grade level.

James' school did not have multi-age/multi-grade groupings like Cathy's.

Therefore, his only teammate was the other fifth grade teacher who had been teammates

and good friends with his cooperating teacher last year. He stated, "I thought she hated

me last year." He felt that actually being her teammate, instead of her teammate's

student-teacher, helped him establish a more positive relationship with her. He planned

weekly units with her, the principal, and the instructional coach. James and his teammate

worked well together, but he did not feel like he could disagree with her or ask for what

he needed. For instance, she would often ask for more time for her lower spelling class

giving him less time with the lower math students. When asked why he did not talk to her

about it, he said,

> Even though we have a good rapport, I guess that I would be afraid of stepping on
> her toes and I don't want to. I feel like she obviously needs this or she wouldn't
> ask for it and so I just have to deal with it.

Cathy and James were assigned a mentor who taught in the same school, but at a

different grade level. For both of them, interactions with their mentors had waned since

the first-few weeks of school; now they sought more help from their teammates than from

their mentors. Cathy's mentor was easy to talk to; however, since she was in a contained

classroom at third grade, Cathy often felt her mentor could not relate to what she was

119

experiencing. Instead, she often went to her teammates or the assistant principal who

taught seventh and eighth grade math for advice. James said he met with his mentor

regularly during the first few weeks of school, after that he only talked to her at lunch

time. He said he was comfortable talking to her and that he trusted her, however, since

she was good friends with his teammate, he could not talk about teaming issues.

James was not really sure what the role of the instructional coach was supposed to

be. Since she was a part-time instructional coach and a part-time special education

teacher, he was not sure where one role stopped and the other began. For example, he

was told by the instructional coach that she would team teach the lower math class with

him. Then just a few days later, she told him that she could not do this since he did not

have any special education students in the class. Since she was not able to help him plan

and teach on a consistent basis, she stopped by his math class unannounced and gave him

suggestions. James found this to be more interruptive than helpful. He remembered,

> One time she came to my classroom and she said, 'This is the most boring class
> ever. You need to wear a dress or something just to liven them up.' You know
> that bothered me because this is a very difficult subject for them. I take it
> seriously when they do not understand it and I am really trying to get them to.

He explained that when she came into the class, she did not know what the students were

working on and they often got off track. He said that even if she could not do it very

often, it would have been more helpful if she would have either demonstrated a lesson for

him or team taught one with him. Maybe then she could have given him what he needed -

- specific and constructive suggestions for improvement.

At the beginning of the year, James was told that only the principal, not the

instructional coach, would be evaluating him. However, he felt differently.

As an instructional coach she's not supposed to, but she's definitely evaluating my teammate and I. So it's really stressful when she comes into our rooms. She's always making sure our 'anchor charts' are up and is critical of what we're doing. Whereas, my principal does evaluate us, but she doesn't make it seem like we're doing anything wrong.

Cathy felt very comfortable and secure with her principal because she had already known him and his communication was honest and direct, which she liked. She felt safe asking him questions, knowing she would not be judged. If he had any concerns about her teaching, she felt he would approach her with it in a positive way so that she could improve. Since Cathy's school had a large enrollment that included kindergarten through eighth grade, the part-time assistant principal was also a part-time seventh and eighth grade math teacher. Cathy found it useful and comfortable to obtain feedback from her on ways of helping students who were struggling with math.

James saw his principal as fair and supportive. Many times he heard her make positive comments to others about his performance, which gave him needed reassurance that he was doing a good job. James' school had the reputation of being a "model school" in his district. As such, expectations of the teachers in the building were extremely high. James did not mind high expectations, but felt uncomfortable when the principal or others assumed he knew things because he had student taught there.

So far, Cathy had had more interactions with parents than James, mainly because she had just completed parent teacher conferences. As mentioned previously, Cathy had to set up professional boundaries when she went from parent to teacher/parent at the school. Now that her fellow parents had adjusted to her new role, they no longer questioned her for the "inside scoop." They were saying things like "I hear that the new teacher is doing a great job." Cathy was surprised by how many parents came to see her

121

during conference time. Overall, their comments were supportive and many mentioned they were happy she was there. She believed that the school's policy of regularly posting student grades online kept parents informed, therefore, they were not surprised if their child's grades were low. One point of frustration for Cathy was that some parents helped their children with their homework to such an extent that the student was not able to do the problems on their own. Cathy's policy was that students should do their own homework, so that when she graded it she would know who needed extra help. She said some parents were really pushing their kids to get good grades "at all costs." She wished that they would emphasize learning rather than grades.

James' school was holding parent teacher conferences in 10 days and he was concerned about having them. He was particularly stressed about meeting with one child's parents who were both in education. He was told by other teachers and the instructional coach that the parents felt "their child could do no wrong," however, their child was not performing well in math. He said, "The interaction that I might have with those parents is what's stressing me out about conferences. All the teachers have said that they are the hardest parents ever."

Classroom management challenges.

Cathy and James concurred that there was a fine line between being too friendly and being too strict with students since they had been taken advantage of by students when they were being nice and felt they had to be "mean" at times to maintain control of the classroom. Cathy remembered one day when the students were messing around and not taking her seriously. She stopped her instruction and gave them a lecture on respect.

She said, "Sometimes I feel like I have to be mean, but I know I must not be too mean 'cause my kids linger around at the end of the day just to talk to me."

Since they had different groups of students during the day, they both found that the number of students as well as the mix of personalities made a huge difference when it came to classroom management. Cathy stated, "It's really weird, but having four more bodies in the classroom makes a big difference to the dynamics." James found his biggest behavioral challenge was "bickering." He said the amount of tattling and arguing that occurred was extreme, especially between the boys in his classroom. Cathy's biggest behavioral challenge was "kids being chit chatty and whiney." She discussed how students used transitional times -- when they were supposed to be getting supplies out or preparing to change classes -- for chatting with each other. She told her students that the more time they wasted in class the more work they would have to do at home. She usually assigned math homework every night and was perplexed by the fact that some students always asked if they were going to have it; when she said yes, they started whining. She began giving an extra "whiner assignment" to students who complained.

Curriculum.

Cathy had a curriculum guide provided by the district that she used to determine what she needed to cover in each subject. James' district had a program called the Curriculum Alignment Project (CAP) which provided a planning template and a pacing guide that broke down the state and district standards into areas that needed to be taught at certain times for each grade level.

As James expressed in the participatory art, he was relieved to know that "he didn't have to reinvent the wheel" and write lesson plans every day since well written

resources were available. However, it was difficult for him to determine how and when to implement the lessons since the CAP was not well aligned with the math text. He planned each day and made sure he was on track, but did not create his own materials or write lesson plans as he did for some of his college courses. Cathy agreed that she too felt less stress because she had well written resources from which to teach. Her curriculum guide told her what she needed to cover, but not how to pace things. Consequently, she stressed over whether she would be able to cover everything in her curriculum guide.

Cathy and James were at schools that utilized ability grouping and therefore they adjusted their teaching methods to meet the varying needs of their students. They found ability grouping stressful since the schedule did not allow for any kind of flexibility and "some kids just needed more time." Cathy and James felt a great deal of pressure from their districts, principals, and themselves to increase student learning and questioned their own teaching when students did not do well. Students in their lower classes needed extra one-on-one help, which was hard for one teacher to provide. As mentioned earlier, James dealt with the added frustration of having his lower math class "short-changed" when it came to time. They knew their lower students did not understand many of the math concepts and found it frustrating when their teammates and mentors told them to just move on and not worry about it.

Time is of the essence.

Their biggest frustration was not having time to work one-on-one with students who needed it. They worked hard to meet the needs of all their students, but the amount of individualization required took more time than they had. Instructional time was taken away from both James and Cathy by special events like assemblies, field trips, and school

pictures. It was very frustrating for them when the amount of instructional time lost

became excessive, especially when the school system put enormous pressure on them to

improve standardized test scores. For James, the majority of the interruptions seemed to

take place during his lower math class, which was extremely frustrating for him since he

felt that class needed more time rather than less. Also every Thursday, half of the

students in his lower math class left for instrumental music instruction. The week prior to

our meeting, Cathy lost around six hours of instructional time when she had to revise her

schedule for three days to accommodate "Spirit Week." Since she taught in a parochial

school, attending mass weekly was part of the curriculum, which took time away from

teaching as well. Both Cathy and James provided students with extra help at lunch time

and after school.

Scheduled faculty and team meetings also required extra time. Cathy and James

gave up one planning period every week for a team meeting. James had a

leadership/faculty meeting once a week for an hour where a different topic geared

towards student learning was addressed -- for example -- school assessment, the needs of

second language learners, or helping autistic students. Cathy had an hour long weekly

faculty meeting as well; however, hers were more informational instead of topic oriented.

Both co-researchers viewed their team and faculty meetings as worthwhile and helpful.

Each trimester, James met with his teammate, principal, and instructional coach

for half-a-day to plan a three month study unit for literacy, while a paid substitute

covered his class. He was also required to attend a district-wide math meeting for one day

and an assessment meeting for a half-day each, while a paid substitute covered his

classes. Cathy was required to attend a couple of archdiocese meetings during the year, but the school was closed on those days.

James had a 30 minute planning period in the morning when the students went to specials (art, music, or PE). When he was not meeting with his teammate, James used his planning time to prepare for his math classes by rearranging the desks, getting materials ready, and checking his mail. Cathy had a 45 minute planning period each day and, like James, her time was used to prepare for class. They were surprised that their daily planning time was spent on preparing teaching materials and meeting with teammates rather than on lesson planning, which they had to do after school each day.

Both co-researchers were hopeful that the large amount of time they spent on planning the curriculum and prepping the materials this year would reduce the amount of time needed in future years. For example, Cathy hoped to use the social studies tests she wrote this year for next year's classes as well. James thought that lesson planning next year would require less time because he would already know how to utilize the resources.

Summary of findings from October.

This month, there were eight main findings. First, the first-year teachers sought help and support from their teammates more often than from their mentors. Second, it was difficult when support was promised and was not delivered. Third, first-year teachers benefited a great deal from knowing the roles and responsibilities of other people in the building. Fourth, praise helped the first-year teachers realize they were being viewed as successful; however, specific compliments and suggestions were even more important because they helped them improve. Fifth, district approved resources and well defined curriculum guides were very helpful. Sixth, dismissive comments such as "That's okay

you're not going to reach them all" in response to the concerns the first-year teachers had

were unhelpful and discouraging. Seventh, students often tested these new teachers by

acting out, which required a balance between strictness and kindness. Eighth, valuable

instructional time was stolen from the first-year teachers and they had no assistance in

protecting this time or adjusting to the loss of it.

Tales from November

Found Poem

The Sun Survives the Storm

High expectations
from ourselves and others,
Eyes everywhere watching us,
Must always go above and beyond,
Can't mess up!
Stay out of trouble.
Perfection is mandatory.

Mill levies denied
and budget cuts.
Hope dwindles and storms arise for
temporary teachers wanting to become permanent
Lots of hard days,
gray skies,
sun peaking through clouds.
A voice that doesn't matter in decisions made,
but the echo of its absence
will be felt in next year's halls.

Expectations of students,
all high, but altered to uniqueness,
Moving mountains to battle
Cursing, arguing, and bullying.

A male teacher in our midst,
Is the answer to our prayers,
and the cure for all our woes,
A role model for boys,
a teacher of math with a logical brain,
strong enough to move things,

127

Never shows emotion,
He's looked up to by all
and expected to work miracles,
What a hard place for him to be.

Costumes, celebrations causing chaos,
Conferences creating consternation and conundrums,
As captains steering through stormy seas,
we'll focus on our goals
instead of the ups and downs,
keeping our eyes on the sun
hidden behind the clouds.

General Description

  Cathy and James arrived a little early and helped carry the supplies in from my car. I had created a piece of art to relay the findings from September's session and was excited to obtain the co-researchers' feedback. While I was getting the piece out and setting up tape recorders, Cathy and James cut down collages they had previously created. Sharon was running a little late. This month, we would have all of us together for the first time.

Member Checking

  I explained that throughout my life I had experimented with art. I believed the creative process involved could lead to new discoveries, which was why I chose a research methodology that promoted the use of art. I said that I realized creating art was somewhat risky for non-artists and I appreciated their willingness to take that risk as part of this research project. I shared with them how I had taken an unexpected risk this past month by creating art to represent our data. I briefly described how the data were transcribed and coded by noting significant words and topics that fell into categories/themes. Completion of that process with September's data brought specific images to mind, which led to the creation of the art. I explained the process of member checking; it was important for me to get their feedback to make sure the art was an accurate representation of what they had experienced.

  I showed them the piece of art that I had created (see Figure 7) and I asked them to write down their thoughts before we discussed it as a group. I decided to have them

write about it first because I wanted to get each person's individual thoughts before they were influenced by anything else that was said.

Figure 7. Artistic representation of findings from September.

I explained to the group that I wanted to hear James' thoughts first since he had not been with us in September. His perspective might allow us to see how a non-participant might view the piece. James relayed how he first saw the apple as representing "the grounding for teachers." He indicated that the shoes and line of ducks represented how girls were expected to be prim and proper and never got into trouble; the snakes all over represented the boys. He said he wasn't sure why there was a cross.

Sharon noticed that the pink and blue figures were used to represent boys and girls in the upper left section and that it was lighter than the section with September on it. She said, "I look and I think there are a lot of things here representing what I said -- small

feet, big shoes to fill, teaching is from the heart, the snakes being the boys. I wasn't sure about the snakes and ducks being in a row. I just knew the snakes were the squirmy boys for me."

Cathy said that she envisioned swans, instead of ducks, representing the kids who just floated along smoothly and the snakes as the kids who kind of slithered through. She agreed with what Sharon said about the shoes and added, "You feel like the feet are too small for the shoes that you have to fill." To her, the top represented a scale that tipped down due to the amount of preparation done in September. The yellow face was a teacher leading students up a pile of information and facts. She saw the green representing September as the beginning. The red would represent the end of the year after the students had learned the information and everyone could stop and take a break.

Eventually I shared the thoughts I had while creating this piece. First, the apple is a well established symbol of teaching and therefore was used on the base as the foundation of the piece. I used the three main colors (yellow, green, and red) that Cathy and Sharon used in their art that month. Cathy had used green to represent success and red to represent challenges. Sharon used a yellow sun to represent the importance of a positive attitude. I used yellow because the positive attitudes that both of them had towards teaching were evidenced in September's data. I splattered red and green paint behind the word September because that is what Sharon had thought of doing to demonstrate how scattered she had felt. Cathy and Sharon were trying to fill big shoes in very different ways. Sharon was filling the shoes of a teacher who was loved and respected. Cathy was responsible for "beefing up the math program" and "pushing" the students to reach new heights after replacing a teacher who was ill and perhaps did not

teach at the level needed. This was portrayed by the positive yellow face leading the boys and girls up the mountain of math facts while the replaced teacher sat and read from the book. Sharon mentioned that it was difficult to keep all "of her ducks in a row" and keep all of her wiggly boys in their seats. Thus, the snakes were all over the place and the ducks were in a slightly crooked row.

Focus Group Discussions

Now that we were all together, I started the focus group by reminding the co-researchers that they were the experts about their experience and I wanted the topics we discussed to come from them. They agreed that they had experienced a lot of "firsts" this past month--their first party, the end of the first trimester, their first report cards, and their first parent teacher conferences (Cathy had hers the previous month). The importance of establishing a sense of classroom community and dealing with unexpected student behaviors, such as cussing and bullying, were discussed. They discussed the presidential election, the effects politics had on teachers, and how the state of the economy was hindering their job security. Sharon and James' school district now had to cut 7 billion dollars because the proposed bond and mill levy did not pass.

The conversation topics were definitely the most serious and difficult to discuss thus far. However, the empathy and encouragement the co-researchers demonstrated for one another were very inspiring.

Break Time

This month, the discussion was fairly intense, making an extended break time essential. We usually took a 20 minute break between the discussion and participatory art

portions of each session to allow everyone to use the restroom and get something to drink. The first two sessions I brought in food, but no one was eating it so the co-researchers said they only needed drinks. This time, however, we all decided we were hungry, so Sharon and James briefly left to purchase sandwiches from a nearby store.

As we ate lunch, we discussed future meetings and the possibility of a group performance at the end of the project. Everyone had previously agreed not to meet in December since it was such a busy month. I had briefly discussed performance ethnography in the first two sessions, but wanted to discuss how the co-researchers felt about doing a joint performance and their comfort zone levels. As a group, we discussed the possible options for a performance; the co-researchers agreed that they did not want to write, dance, or act, but liked the idea of doing a collaborative mural with help from an artist. We discussed the possibilities of putting together their words into a narrative they could read. Cathy liked this aspect and said, "Acting is not my thing, but I'm okay with reading. I think we could do that!" Sharon liked the idea of an art museum displaying their work. James mentioned the idea of having audience participation by allowing them to ask questions. We all agreed to see where the data led us over the next few months before committing to anything. I said I would look for an artist just in case we needed one.

Ethno-mimesis

We started the participatory art with only 30 minutes left. Since none of the co-researchers had any time restraints that day, they all agreed to stay an extra 30 minutes. The extremely high expectations they were striving to meet, the overwhelming amount of responsibilities that they had as first-year teachers, and not knowing if and when they should voice their opinions, were at the forefront of this month's discussion. The group decided to explore those topics creatively in their art discovery process. This time, all three co-researchers used clay and paint in their collages.

Closure

I noticed a change of ambience in this session compared to the first two. Conversation during the first two sessions seemed comfortable and free flowing, but this time, we seemed to reach an even greater comfort zone. It seemed as if everyone was more relaxed, including me. We were talking and joking with one another and there was a real sense of camaraderie. I realized that we weren't four individuals coming together anymore; we were a collaborative group of researchers.

What We Learned

Discoveries on Process

Member checking.

From the very beginning, I had been informally member checking all of the data. As mentioned in September's Voyage, I used Rodgers' (2006) second step of reflection-- description of experience--as an instant way to member check the data obtained by

continuously asking, "What I am hearing you say is this. Is that correct?" The art created was member checked through explanations given by the artists after its creation.

I realized I needed a formal process of member checking to ensure that the interpretations of the findings were accurate and aligned with the experiences of the first-year teachers. However, I struggled with how I could do this without requiring additional time from my co-researchers. I felt it would be unjust and inappropriate to require them to spend time reading what I was writing. I also did not have a cohesive document for them to read in November since I still had coded data and notes to analyze. However, the visual images flowed from the data very quickly and made more "sense" at this point. The hours I spent creating the art piece proved worthwhile because it was a very effective way of streamlining the member checking process. I was confident that this means of member checking was justifiable and methodologically sound since the art was created directly from the data obtained.

The process of member checking by having the co-researchers look at the art created from the data and write their thoughts before sharing them with the group was very helpful. It provided each co-researcher's perception of the message being relayed by the art piece without it being influenced by anything that was said. This process allowed me to see the extent to which my perceptions of the data were congruent or incongruent from those of each co-researcher. It led me to make a few specific changes to the piece.

Most of my original thoughts while creating the piece came through and fit with the experiences of the participants, i.e., there being big shoes to fill. However, their feedback led me to the fact that I needed a different overall structure for the piece because the one I used was confusing. James thought it was a cross, Sharon saw a stick

135

figure with snakes and ducks in the stomach, Cathy envisioned a scale, and none of these perceptions matched our data. I went back to the participants' collages for September and saw how the circle was significant since they both used them. I decided that I would eliminate the cross on top and would attach a circular board or hoop to the middle of the vertical rod and mount all of the smaller pieces on it.

Focus group discussions.

The conversation was as comfortable, free-flowing, and honest as it had always been. This month, however, the topics were more difficult to discuss. The co-researchers allowed themselves to share vulnerable feelings about situations when they had felt insecure and inadequate. This confirmed that the relationships we had established were strong and trustworthy and that the group structure provided them with a safe venue for openly sharing their experiences.

Ethno-mimesis.

This time, there was no hesitation on the part of the co-researchers when it came time to begin their collages. As mentioned previously, all of the co-researchers used paint and clay. These factors and the overall atmosphere during the participatory arts indicated that they were becoming comfortable with this aesthetic process. At first I had contemplated using a different aesthetic form of exploration each month, i.e., dance and reader's theater. Now I realized if I had done that, they may not have reached the same comfort level they now had with aesthetic exploration. This led me to wonder if the effectiveness of this discovery process relied on or was connected to the comfort level developed by using only one aesthetic form.

Another interesting fact was that Cathy's first piece had centered on words and she had relied on them as a way to get started. This time, she went right for the paints and the artist's pallet (see Figure 8). She mentioned that she had never thought of her son as an artist, but he had once won a city-wide art competition. She said, "So maybe if he can do something I can try to do something too." James and Sharon had not used words in their previous pieces, whereas this time they both used many words and Cathy used none.

Figure 8 Cathy branches out artistically and uses paint and clay in her collage rather than words.

Cathy incorporated the concept of climbing from the art piece I shared with them. She made it hers by extrapolating on it to represent her experiences of the past month (see Figure 9). She explained that her expectations were very high, "clear on top of the mountain," and she was climbing up to meet them. The kids were learning so they were the flowers blooming on the mountain. By meeting her expectations as a teacher, she would be helping the students meet their own expectations.

James divided his collage into three unequal parts. Just like last month, "googlie eyes" were the first items he used (see Figure 9). He created a list of expectations for the school: CAP, CSAP (Colorado Student Assessment Program), systemic meetings, core curriculum, teamwork, committees, and don't mess up!!!! He said the list could go on

137

and on. Often times, he was unaware of his expectations, i.e., being placed on a math

committee he didn't know existed. He emphasized that he had to have all of his core

curriculum planning and his anchor charts just right. There was no room for error because

the principal was always watching. The anchor charts contained the "big ideas" of what

was being taught for the students to reference. As new things were taught, they were

added, such as a fraction equivalency chart. James and Sharon both agreed that their

anchor charts had to be perfect or they would be "in trouble."

Figure 9. James constructed his collage in three parts to represent
expectations, responsibilities, and sense of voice.

Figure 10. The steps Sharon took in creating her collage representing ....
expectations, responsibilities, and knowing when to share her thoughts.

Sharon explained that the line in the middle of her collage was crooked to show

how expectations need to be slightly altered for some students (represented by the

buttons). It went beyond the edge of the board to represent how high the expectations

were at her school -- requiring teachers to go "above and beyond" (see Figure 10). She

138

listed some of the expectations at the bottom -- planning with the CAP, anchor charts, big ideas, communication, bulletin boards, meetings, and writer's workshop. She said her teammate once told her "I don't know how you do it. I have been teaching for 13 years, but the first year at this school is the first year all over again."

Sharon added her little sun by a cloud to show that she was staying positive even though she had faced challenges. She said,

> My voice in decisions really is that they don't matter, 'cause I might not be there next year even though I'm putting all my heart and my life into this school and these kids. I didn't vote during the faculty meeting and when they asked it was like well I'm temporary so my opinion doesn't matter.

That was why she put the words "voice" and "decisions" in a storm.

Discoveries on Teaching

The co-researchers jumped some new and challenging hurdles this past month including surviving parties, parent teacher conferences, and completing report cards. The amount of preparation, anxiety, and stress involved in these events was overwhelming and taxing, but completing them successfully led to a sense of relief and self-confidence. The tasks of creating a positive classroom community, managing student behaviors, and building student rapport were ongoing and demanding as well. The most difficult situation the first-year teachers faced this past month was the realization that the failing economy could leave them jobless at the end of the year.

A first time for everything.

All of the co-researchers discussed how quickly the first trimester had passed and that a well deserved winter break was around the corner. They had all survived their first class Halloween party and were amazed at how difficult it was to keep students focused

on that day. They agreed that having a party interrupted instructional time for the majority of the day.

Cathy held parent teacher conferences the last week in September while James and Sharon's were in mid October. Cathy spent one whole day from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. meeting with parents. All teachers were required to be there during that time and the parents and she had a continuous line of people waiting to see her. Even though she met with each child's parents for only 10 minutes, she did not have much of a chance for a break. She taught math to 105 students and recalled seeing close to 100 sets of parents. As mentioned previously, Cathy's parent teacher conferences went very well and parents were positive and supportive. While she was exhausted at the end of the day, she remembered, "He (the principal) was saying, 'Thanks for all the hard work you do.' You know when you get people saying that, especially your principal, you feel like he really cares. (She touches her heart)."

James and Sharon taught at the same school and therefore they had the same procedures for parent teacher conferences. They scheduled 20 minute conferences for each homeroom student's parents, 15 minutes for parents to talk to the homeroom teacher, and 5 minutes for them to talk to another teacher if they so wished. Conferences were scheduled over two days after school from 3:30 -7:30 p.m. The teachers received a district-wide day off in compensation for the extra time they spent.

James was very pleased that all but five of his parents came to meet with him and that they all mentioned that their children enjoyed being in his class. The last time we met, James had said he was very worried about meeting with one math student's parents because he had been told that they were difficult to deal with. His principal and

140

instructional coach had both told him they would sit in on the meeting to provide him with support and reassure the parents that he was doing a good job. James was surprised and relieved that the parents did not get in to see him. He said the student's mom wrote him a note saying that when they were there, he had been busy talking to other parents. She asked that he e-mail her which he did. One day after school, James spoke with the student's father and discussed how his son had started out low but was now improving. The father's response was "That's what I wanted to hear. Thanks." Thus, James was very stressed and worried about something other teachers were sure would happen because of their past experiences, but it never did.

Sharon said she was very relieved that conferences were over; preparing for them was even harder than the meetings themselves. For two weeks, she spent 12 hours a day, using the extra time to write up a sheet for each student, documenting whether or not they were meeting the standards for each subject, and commenting on their strengths and weaknesses. As a result she was so exhausted.; it was all she could do to get home, eat, and go to bed. However, she said,

> It helped me with my planning for the conversation so it was definitely beneficial and I would do it all over again. It was just all that time and it took a lot out of me. Plus I had my first evaluation with the principal the day before conferences which was very stressful.

Sharon met with every student's parents and was glad to hear that although the parents had been very nervous about the transition in teachers, their children liked coming to school. She said it was a "huge weight taken off to hear it from the parents."

They all received their first formal evaluations and were relieved that they had been so positive. Cathy said her principal only did informal observations by daily walks by teachers' rooms--watching, and listening to what was going on. The assistant principal

came into Cathy's room and formally observed. She laughed about how the observation came right after she passed back a graded math test and her higher performing students were pestering her to post the scores. She told them that they should only worry about their own score. She was very glad when the assistant principal reassured her that she had handled the situation appropriately. James said he was very pleased with his principal's review. Sharon had been feeling anxious that the principal stopped by her classroom at least once a day, but had not given her any feedback. Even though her observation was stressful, happening right before parent teacher conferences, she was relieved to know that the principal thought she was doing a good job. She was given some specific feedback on new things to try.

Building classroom community.

All three co-researchers were involved in what is commonly known as "switching classes" by which students are ability grouped for certain subjects and therefore, some students change classrooms and teachers. The group discussed how having different groups of students at different times during the day made ot necessary to build three or four classroom communities rather than just one. They also discussed how having different group dynamics created unique classroom management challenges. Sharon said, "When kids come over from the other room I have some huge challenges. I have kids cussing and I don't know how to handle it." Sharon discussed how her math class had difficulties with transitions, following directions, and getting along with one another.

James continued to be challenged by his students constantly arguing and bickering with one another, and was overwhelmed at times. He tried to handle each situation individually, but it was becoming too time consuming and disruptive. James'

principal told him that she wanted him to teach the boys who were having difficulties because she thought they needed a male role model. However, James felt that the students' behaviors limited what he could do as their teacher and he really felt bad about it. Sharon empathized with what he said and supported him by saying, "I have felt sad when you blame yourself for not being able to do anything about this. It starts in kindergarten and they become bullies before there is anything you can say that will help." She also dealt with lots of bullying behaviors at the second grade level and it made her sad that some of her math students were really mean to each other. Cathy also mentioned that her fourth grade students were not very nice to each other and that it had gotten so bad that the principal came and lectured them about it. She had two boys in tears at recess because they had been pushed down while playing ball; she took the class ball privileges away for the rest of the week.

 Exhausted economy and denied mill levies.

 Sharon had been given a one year temporary contract. She knew that even if the teacher she had replaced did not return the following year, she would have to interview for the position. She was encouraged and supported by her principal and other teachers in the building who said they would write letters of recommendation for her. However, after the bond and mill levies were denied this month, the district would not only be on a hiring freeze, but would be forced to cut positions. Sharon realized that this meant she would not have many open positions to which she could apply, but she remained positive.

 James was on a probationary contract; however, since his performance reviews were favorable, he would still have a job with the district, but might have to move to another school. Teaching positions were would most likely to be cut at his school since it

was small and had a low enrollment. Anyone on a probationary contract would most likely have to move to another school, even the teacher who had taught in a different district for 15 years.

The parochial schools did not use a system of tenure and all teachers were given a one year contract. Cathy had not been worried about her contract status; her principal was known for keeping teachers. Although she had been told she was doing a nice job, her position was at the mercy of the economy. When people are in financial distress, they cannot afford a private education.

Summary of findings from November.

This month's data led to six main findings. First, several emotionally stressful events occurred at different times during the year for teachers, such as parties and parent teacher conferences. The first-year teachers found it helpful when colleagues alerted them to challenges and gave specific suggestions for dealing with them, rather than just relaying problems that they had dealt with in the past. Second, having the support and appreciation from students' parents raised the first-year teacher's self-confidence. Third, having feedback from the principal every time they were observed helped elevate the first-year teacher's anxiety , even if it was just a few words or a short note because they needed reassurance that they were doing a good job. Fourth, when there were district changes in policy or budget cuts, current, accurate information provided the first-year teachers with a sense of security, especially if they were likely to affect them directly. Fifth, it helped the first-year teacher to hear words of appreciation for the hard work they did. Sixth, it was very important that other teachers not take advantage of the first-year teacher's desire to please by asking them to take on extra responsibilities or by giving

them the more difficult students because they felt that they had to agree to do whatever more experienced teachers asked of them

This chapter presented a found poem, discussed the experiences and relayed the initial findings during each month of the first trimester (September – November, 2008). The next chapter is organized in a similar way and covers the last two months of the second trimester (January and February, 2009) and the first month of the third trimester (March, 2009).

CHAPTER VI

SINK OR SWIM

I'm not afraid of storms,
for I'm learning to sail my ship.
Louisa May Alcott

Introduction

In the second trimester of teaching, the first-year teachers had more storms to

endure than in the first and their skills, patience, and efficacy were tested. Our research

also went through ups and downs as we endured the after effects of tension and stress.

During the previous trimester we had learned to sail our ships through data collection and

member checking and while perfecting those skills this trimester, we embarked on a new

adventure into the sea of data analysis.

The study naturally divided itself into three sections, each including three

meetings. The first section, written in Chapter V, coincides with the first-trimester of the

school year. The second section contained here, in Chapter VI, is the second and third

months (January and February, 2009) of the second trimester and the first Month (March,

2009) of the third trimester. This chapter describes our voyage during January, February,

and March, 2009 utilizing the structure developed in Chapter V: a found poem, a

description of the data collection session, a discussion on the learning that took place, and

the initial findings for each month.

Tales from January

Found Poem

Navigating Storms in the Dark

Feeling like Failures,
Many moments of doubt,
Fears seep into reality.

I really care about the kid,
but it's difficult day after day:
the spit balls, attitude, constant disruptions.

He's sat in the front of the room,
back of the room, and by himself.
Nothing changes. Nothing helps.

He hates to stay after school,
but that's where he always ends up
until he spends three days in the principal's office.

He's smart. I really like him.
I spent lunch one day talking to him,
connecting, and finally getting through to him.

Next day spit-balls, principals' office, and after school,
I've heard, "You have to reach them to teach them",
so would you PLEASE tell me how?

My most difficult student
comes late and unprepared,
tells me "I hate you."

He's permanently removed from my room.
Principal states, "You have too many tough kids."
I want to know the real reason why.

Yes it might suck and hurt my feelings,
but without the truth I cannot improve,
cannot make sure there's never a next time.

"Do you know me well enough to teach me?"
asks a poster in the faculty lounge.
YES I did. I knew him.
He shared secrets with me.
I hoped to help him make changes in his life,
but I've failed him. It's my fault.

I hope it was my fault because
if by chance I haven't failed him
than the hope of help for him is dim.

Meetings, communication, not having a voice,
mill levies denied, budget cuts,
job security for first-year teachers: non-existent.

Emotions are an impenetrable fog over a treacherous sea.
We've worked too hard to be lost
with no light, no job in sight.

Our Time Together

General Description

Since we did not meet in December, we had not spoken to each other in two months and although we had enjoyed the holiday break, we missed not being able to get together as a group. The first-year teachers mentioned that it was difficult for them to remember what we spoke of last time we met, so I gave them a brief summary.

Member Checking

When we last met, we discussed my visual representation of September's data which proved useful during member checking. I had hoped to create a visual representation of each month's data, but found that I did not have the time to continue doing so. I had an unfinished representation of October's data (see Figure 12) and the co-researchers wrote down their thoughts before we discussed them.

Figure 11. Artistic representation of findings from October.

Cathy and Sharon found it harder to determine what was being represented by this visual piece than the one from September's data because the art was more abstract, but for James it provoked lots of thoughts, "I'm loving it." Cathy saw time flowing down a river and Sharon agreed, but said, "It got bigger and that confused me." Everyone agreed with James' interpretation that the top represented the beginning of the school year when there was never enough time and the bottom represented the ability to accomplish more in the time available as time management improved. James saw the breaks in the river as representing the breaks or time off during the school year and the areas to the side of the river as a reminder of the importance of dividing one's time between students and downtime, "time for watching the grass grow." Sharon also saw the importance of balancing time spent on personal and professional endeavors and mentioned that her new goal was to leave school earlier on a consistent basis to prevent "wearing herself out."

149

For Sharon the pictures on the side of the river represented the many emotions that arose for her from circumstances such as meetings and budget cuts.

Focus Group Discussions

This was our fourth research session out of eight and the first year teachers had completed a little over a third of the year. I discussed adjusting our approach to the focus groups in order to provide the co-researchers with more decision-making opportunities, to collaboratively analyze the data collected thus far, and to focus on the significance of events that were happening and that would be shared with the larger educational community. We discussed different approaches for doing this and the group agreed to Sharon's suggestion of discussing my preliminary code list and journaling on last month's experiences. After the co-researchers privately reflected and wrote for 20 minutes we began our focus group discussion.

Each co-researcher shared one or two experiences from the past month discussing what they had learned from them and we began sifting out information that would be communicated in our performance ethnography. The co-researchers demonstrated much empathy and support for one another.

Ethno-mimesis

I asked the co-researchers for feedback on the participatory arts process. Cathy and James admittedly viewed themselves as uncreative and said that it was hard to come up with artistic ideas. Sharon did not view herself as artistic, but knew that she was creative and enjoyed creating collages.

We discussed ways of visually communicating information about the first-year of teaching that would be helpful to other educators, pre-service teachers, and community

members who would be voting on educational issues.. Sharon suggested a representation

of what teaching was like at different times during the year and what they hoped it would

be like in the future. The group agreed with this idea and decided to brainstorm a list of

important topics and collaboratively create a collage to represent them.

Closure

In appreciation of all the time and effort the co-researchers had given to this study

and in celebration of the completion of their first trimester, I had pizza delivered for

lunch. I discussed my concern that meeting for four hours once a month for the rest of the

year might be unrealistic and I gave them the option of ending our data collection next

month. James said, "I think things will be very different for us in May than they are now

and we will be able to get more information that is helpful." The co-researchers looked

forward to the meetings each month and viewed them as helpful rather than stressful.

Therefore, we decided to continue meeting each month until school was over.

What We Learned

Discoveries on Process

Member checking.

Although I would have liked to represent each month's data visually, the large

amount of time and energy required was unrealistic since I needed to focus on data

transcription and analysis The fact that my visual piece representing October's data was

incomplete actually saved me time and effort because through member checking I

discovered that one of the additions I contemplated making (adding three symbols to

represent the first-year teachers' need to hide their emotions) was inaccurate. Cathy did

not feel the need to hide her emotions, which lead me to add two symbols representing this rather than three.

Another realization made was that the modality and style of the visual representation used for member checking affected the degree to which participants could relate to it. However, since Cathy and Sharon saw more in the straight forward installation piece created for September (see Figure 8) and James saw more in the abstract collage piece created for October (see Figure 12) I could not determine which would be more useful. Therefore, time allowing, I would have continued creating visual representations of the data through different modalities and styles.

Discussing a visual representation of the data was an effective means for member checking and a valuable process for us to go through early on before enough data had been collected to start cohesive analysis. Now after three months I had analyzed the data collected and was able to member check the data analysis and written sections directly.

The co-researchers' involvement in data analysis consisted of their reviews of my initial codes, additions of new topics or words to code for in the future, and the development of significant themes; for example people (principal, mentors, teammates) and events (parties, parent teacher conferences, evaluations from the principal). This helped them understand my interpretation of the data and enabled them to give me feedback on the accuracy of it, ensuring that their stories would be told from their perspectives rather than my own.

Focus group discussions.

Previously our discussions had been open-topic, but today they were focused on the significance of specific experiences. There was much evidence supporting the

utilization of Rodger's four steps of reflection--presence in experience, description of experience, analysis of experience, and experimentation. First, presence of experience was seen in their reflections since they described not only what happened, but the roles and perspectives of other people involved. Second, description of experience was given in even greater detail than previously. Third, analysis of experience was indicated by their ability to determine how the experience affected them and discuss why. Fourth, experimentation was evidenced when the first-year teachers utilized new means for building classroom community and new methods for teaching math concepts, but were reluctant to experiment whenever there was any risk of conflict involved. For example, James needed more time for his lower math class and when the group made suggestions for approaching his teammate with alternatives, he said that he could not risk "stepping on toes."

At one point during our focus group discussion I purposefully changed roles from researcher to mentor/supporter. James shared that his principal had switched a "tough student" from his class to his teammate's class and he felt that he had failed the student. His principal told him that he had too many "difficult students" in his room and needed a break, but he did not feel that she was being totally honest with him. He said that he wanted to know what he did wrong. I had experienced similar situations in my teaching career and decided to share them because the potential benefits to the group outweighed the potential for crossing ethical boundaries. I ensured that I shared my experiences without incurring any judgment or giving advice. The co-researchers thanked me for being real with them because it encouraged them to know that an experienced

educator, who they respected, had endured some of the difficult situations and feelings that they were currently experiencing.

Figure 12. Collaborative art used to report data thus far.

Ethno-mimesis.

Participatory action research, which is an element of ethno-mimesis, requires that the co-researchers be involved in all aspects of the research process to the highest degree at which they are comfortable. At the end of every session the co-researchers explained their visual representations of their experiences, which was a form of member checking their own visual data. I was delighted by the new level at which the first-year teachers participated in the research process by member checking my visual interpretations of the data, by conducting data analysis through their development of codes and themes, and by reporting their data through a collaborative collage representing their shared experiences thus far (see Figure 12).

After discussing how they might represent their data for a larger audience they agreed to create a collage together. We discussed how art would be used to convey/report important discoveries made (findings) rather than to explore new ideas as it had been previously. They agreed to brainstorm how they would visually represent the codes and

154

themes thus far by creating a list of what they would include. After about ten minutes of trying to come up with words for the concepts they wanted to represent there was total silence. I asked them if creating a list was working and they agreed that it wasn't.

Sharon suggested working with the materials as they discussed their thoughts and she led the group in the development of the collage. Their collage took shape very quickly and their discussion of ideas did not stop for the next hour. As I watched them I realized that there was an aspect of creative play to this process that helped them relieve their stress. After their collage was completed they discussed how difficult it was to express their experiences with a list of words, but once they started creating a visual image the ideas flowed easily. They all said that doing the piece collaboratively really helped them concretize the ideas/findings that needed to be expressed to the larger community. James pointed out that having previous relationships with one another helped them feel comfortable working together.

They represented their experiences, thus far, as a journey down a curvy path with some rocks and a fence in the middle to show the obstacles they overcame, such as dealing with classroom parties, inappropriate student behaviors, judgments from others, and the responsibility of having a parental role with some of their students. Items along the sides of the path represented the ways in which they overcame their obstacles, for example, hearts represented their constant caring and compassion for their students, and a bottle cap represented an occasional drink of beer or wine they had to unwind or as James put it "to turn the brain off." They used caterpillars and butterflies to show the metamorphosis that they had undergone from being a student teacher to a classroom teacher with full responsibility.

I was amazed at how they were able to create a visual representation of their findings quickly and easily, but had not been able to do so verbally. This affirmed that the arts-based process was effective in collaboratively reporting data; however, we realized that an artistic representation by untrained artists might not communicate our findings adequately enough to be understood by others. Therefore, we agreed that I would employ a professional artist to help us create our final piece of art.

Discoveries on Teaching

   Being oneself.

   Cathy felt comfortable being herself where she taught and attributed it to being in a familiar, Christian-based community. Also she believed that being older helped her feel secure as a person because of her "life experiences." She tactfully and respectfully spoke her mind during meetings without "being afraid of walking on eggshells." She could let her emotions show around her students and talked to them openly when she was unhappy with their behavior. She realized that a religious, private school atmosphere gave her some liberties to discipline students and obtain parental support that she may not have had in a public school.

   James felt that he had to hide his emotions in order to protect his job security, but also admitted that his personality was not very open with others and he joked about things instead of sharing his feelings. James' inability to be himself was compounded by the perceived expectations that he should be just like the "master teacher" with whom he student taught and replaced. He said, "I try to stay positive around the kids, but there is so much stress. I don't go and talk to anyone about it, but it is getting difficult to cope with."

Sharon had a few colleagues she could confide in, but did not like to share her true emotions with others at the school. Her facial expressions often relayed her feelings of stress and anxiety over impending budget cuts, but like James, she did her best to appear positive in front of her students. She commented, "I try really hard to turn everything into a positive situation because some of these kids want attention whether it is negative or positive. So it is important for me not to concentrate on the negative and show them how to focus on the positive."

James and Sharon felt that they had to prove themselves to others in their school. James felt that he had to live up to the reputation of the teacher before him, and Sharon felt that she had to "go above and beyond" to ensure a job interview at the end of the year since she was on a temporary contract.

Having a voice.

Cathy asked questions of everyone and was teased by her teammates as having "an A type personality." She was confident that the principal and other faculty would not judge her based on the questions she asked. She was also comfortable talking during faculty meetings, which were oriented to the sharing of information and decision making. When the discussion centered on situations that she had not experienced before she was comfortable listening to others' experiences and when she had something to say she was confident that it would be accepted and not judged by others.

Faculty meetings for James and Sharon were becoming stressful because their principal took notes on who spoke and what they said. Sharon relayed, "You try to absorb what's going on in the meetings and you're trying to learn from everybody, but if you don't say anything you're wondering if you can be looked upon as not contributing."

They listened and learned from the teachers with more experience and found it was stressful to attempt to say something intelligent about a topic they were unfamiliar with. For example, James remembered one meeting about a workshop on gender differences that other teachers had attended and therefore he thought it was best to just listen. He became very uncomfortable when the other teachers questioned him, "You were a boy so you must know how to teach them. What do they need?"

When James and Sharon had something to say in faculty or team meetings, they were worried about sounding stupid and being judged on what they said. Since the faculty were expected to contribute at the meetings it often felt like a competition to see who got to talk more and it was difficult for them to have a chance to be heard. Staff reductions meant that Sharon would probably not be at the school next year; therefore, she felt her voice was insignificant, especially when decisions were being made, and that anything she said would probably be dismissed.

Lack of job security.

The three first-year teachers were worried that the current economic crisis would affect their jobs for the upcoming year. All teachers and administrators in Cathy's archdiocese were on one-year contracts since tenure was non-existent. The principal had told the staff that there was a predicted decline in enrollment and there would be no raises offered next year. Teachers were paid less than in the public sector, but Cathy was amazed by the generous Christmas presents and gift money that she received from parents. The school was supported financially by the archdiocese, the church, and tuition from parents. Tithes to the church decreased when economical resources became scarce and many parents had their income reduced by the decline in the stock market, which

meant that tuition might no longer be affordable for them. Although Cathy's principal had implied that she would be offered a contract for next year, she was still anxious about it.

James and Sharon were told that teaching positions would be cut at their school because their district's proposed mill levies had not passed. James would have a job with the district, but not necessarily at the same school since he was on a probationary contract. Sharon had planned to quit her job as a theater manager back in September after receiving her temporary contract, but she kept putting it off until the right time. Although it had been difficult to work a second job while teaching, she was very thankful she had since the school would not have a position to offer her next year. She would apply for new teaching positions as soon as they were posted and would work full-time at the theater again when school was out.

The possibility that the teachers they replaced might try to return to their old jobs was also a concern for them. One of Cathy's colleagues had visited with the teacher she replaced over break and that teacher mentioned she wanted her old job back. The previous teacher would not be able to return because of poor health, but just hearing that she was thinking about returning created anxiety for Cathy. James replaced a teacher who was good friends with his current teammate and the principal. James was very nervous because he had heard rumors that the previous teacher was hoping to return next year. Sharon knew upfront that her position would be terminated at the end of the year, but before the budget cuts there was a possibility that she would be offered a contract if the teacher she replaced decided not to return. Now she knew that she would not be offered a position at the school either way.

Dealing with fears, failings, and feelings.

The first-year teachers were afraid of failing their students by not being "good enough" to meet their needs and help each one of them become successful. This past month they had all felt like failures at times. Cathy had one student that acted out and threw paper across the room and she said, "I have no idea how to reach this kid." He often had to stay after school for detention and had been on in-school suspension for three days. She said she spent time talking to him after school one-on-one and thought that it had made a positive difference, but he still acted out in a group setting. James had one student that came to school late and unprepared. Even though he did everything he could "to reach and teach" this student, it was hurtful when the student said, "I hate you." This month the principal had switched the student into the other fifth grade teacher's classroom saying, "You have too many tough kids." James hoped the student would do well in the other class, but felt as if he failed him and wanted to know what he did wrong so he could improve. Sharon had one or two students on behavioral modification plans, but felt that her classroom community was improving. Most of her students were taking more responsibility for their own actions and were getting along better than they had at the beginning of the year.

The first-year teachers were also afraid of burning out. When they first started teaching they were so excited and ready to do anything for the sake of their students that they had not realized how taxing it was. Over the holiday break they were amazed by how tired they were and how much needed sleep they didn't get while teaching. After returning to school they realized that the pace they had been keeping was detrimental to their mental and physical well being and if continued could negatively affect their

teaching and their students. Cathy reduced the amount of work she brought home and was trying to take more time for herself and her family. Sharon and James, who usually stayed at school until 7 p.m. every night, decided to encourage and support each other in leaving school earlier.

Summary of findings from January.

The amount of comfort and safety the first-year teachers experienced in their school environment was influenced by many factors which comprise the eight main findings this month. First, they felt accepted and included when the staff maintained a level of professionalism that did not include gossip, favoritism, or cliques. Second, they benefitted from the reassurance that they were not expected to know everything and when others made comments about what they should know because of previous situations, such as who they student taught with, it was stressful rather than encouraging. Third, in order for the first-year teachers to feel safe in voicing opinions and ideas during meetings it was crucial that they not be judged or evaluated on the questions they asked or what they did or did not say. Fourth, they were absorbing information from more experienced teachers and when they did not talk during meetings it did not mean that they were uninterested or unengaged. Fifth, the first-year teachers felt valued when they were actively listened to and engaged in conversations in non-threatening ways. Sixth, what they desired most from their principals and other colleagues was honest, tactful communication. Seventh, the lack of job security due to the failing economy was daunting and stressful. Eighth, when the first-year teachers had a student who was unsuccessful due to behavioral issues, they felt responsible and if the student did not improve, they felt like they failed the student. In these instances, hearing advice or

161

statements such as "You can't reach them all" was defeating rather than helpful. Having

an experienced teacher that they respected and would not be judged by listen to their

feelings and validate them was helpful.

Tales from February

Found Poem

Tantrums, Tests, and Tensions

Different behaviors for different ages,
Throwing temper tantrums,
Exhibiting major attitudes,
Students sit in the principal's office.

Time to teach is continuously taken away,
By assemblies, field trips, class pictures and shortened weeks,
Yet expectations that test scores will go up remain.
More and more gets crammed into every day.

Exciting novels are put back on the shelf,
Social studies ceases to exist,
Standardized tests rule the school
And demand that we prove ourselves.

Tension over next year's reduction in force weighs heavy,
We are tired and drained of hope,
Devastated by the thought of colleagues not having a job,
Wanting to help, not knowing how, and doubting our worth as a friend.

Our Time Together

General Description

Due to scheduling conflicts it had been six weeks since we last met and that time

had been intense and stressful for the first-year teachers. James and Sharon remained in

the precarious situation of having their job security threatened by the upcoming reduction

in force. Sharon knew all along that her position would only last until the end of the

162

school year, but until last month there had been hope of an open position at the school and an interview. James, being on a probationary contract with the district, would have a job next year, but would most likely be relocated to another school. Cathy was feeling slightly uneasy about her job security due to the school's drop-in enrollment, but she was most anxious about the standardized tests that she would be administering next week.

James was not joking and laughing as he usually did and even Sharon's positive smile could not hide her stress and fatigue. James had mentioned in an earlier e-mail that he and Sharon had been "bickering" and he felt guilty that he would have a job with the district and she wouldn't. Although their stress was obvious, they were very eager to participate in the research session and agreed that it helped them cope with what they were going through.

The first-year teachers were truly becoming researchers and, just as they had last month, they started their own focus group discussion before I had a chance to get everything set up. Sharon shared a story with the group that one of her students wrote mentioning her as their "special friend." Cathy shared a math activity with James on teaching angles using a clock.

Member Checking

While creating the collaborative collage last month, Cathy had mentioned that her son had created a collage out of words. The group had agreed to try this and decided that the words they would use would be from the first trimester's data. I created a list of words and phrases from the data that had been repeated three or more times or were creative and colorful (coded as "wonderful words"). As a way of member checking the data from the first trimester and comparing it to data in the second trimester, the group

163

decided to read the list (see Appendix G), check off the ones that still applied, and write down any thoughts that came up in their journal. After this was completed, they decided to work on their word collages before having the focus group discussion

Ethno-mimesis

Before beginning their word collages, they added pictures to their group collage created in January. They scattered pictures of clocks throughout their collage to represent "how time flies and gets scattered everywhere." They added a picture of a computer to indicate the importance of technology and a picture of a teacher meeting with some parents to represent one of the biggest mile-stones thus far: parent-teacher conferences.

As previously mentioned, the list of words they had decided to use in their collage was obtained from the data collected first trimester and the one used for member checking. I made three copies of this list in large open letters so they could color them in if they so desired. Sharon asked me if they would be doing the collage individually or as a group and I replied "That's the group's decision." Cathy said, "It doesn't matter to me. Do you think we have a lot of duplicates?" Sharon replied, "You said that you didn't check very many so probably not. I think I'm kind of in a different boat since I won't be going back next year." They decided to do individual word collages to communicate their differences in experiences and feelings and then we agreed to discuss those they had in common (ones that everyone had checked on their lists) next month.

Focus Group Discussions

After the co-researchers selected the words to use in their collages there was a lot of cutting, pasting, and coloring, which was time consuming, but did not take total

concentration. Therefore, we decided to have our focus group discussion while they continued working on their word collages.

Closure

Even though this meeting took place six weeks later than our last one, we agreed that having four weeks in between our meetings was best. Therefore, we set the date for our next meeting in the middle of March and set a tentative date to meet in April after everyone's spring break was over.

This session, although positive, had been filled with tension and it was definitely the most stressful and difficult meeting that we had so far. Although the co-researchers reassured me that this process was helpful and positive for them, I realized that it was my responsibility to ensure that it remained that way. At my suggestion, we decided to wrap up an hour earlier than usual after everyone shared their collages. I decided to call each of them the following week to check in and make sure the research process was still working for them.

<div align="center">What We Learned</div>

Discoveries on Process

We made several changes to the research process this session. First, we conducted member checking in a new and innovative way prompted by the co-researchers rather than myself. Second, the co-researchers collaboratively made all the decisions during the arts-based work such as using Cathy's suggestion of doing a word collage and deciding to do them individually rather than as a group. Third, they combined the arts-based process with the focus group discussions.

Member Checking.

Using the list of words and phrases was an effective tool for member checking because in addition to checking the accuracy of data collected during the first trimester we were able to compare it to the data collected in the second trimester. I compared items that the co-researchers had checked in order to determine which situations and feelings they were still experiencing. The group agreed that looking back on what had and had not changed would be helpful in determining what they would communicate through their final art piece.

Ethno-mimesis.

As mentioned previously, the group decided to create a word collage based on Cathy's recollection of something her son had done in school. This proved to be an effective way of connecting member checking with the arts-based process. My only concern was that the arts-based process might be connected to past experiences rather than present ones since the words came from data collected during the first trimester; but we bypassed this possibility by agreeing to only use words that described feelings and experiences that had continued over the past six weeks. This proved to be an excellent means of comparing data from two time periods to determine which circumstances had changed and which ones had remained constant.

I also wondered if having the focus group discussion while completing their collages would influence their art in a way that it would not have otherwise. Since we usually had the discussions before creating the art, I concluded that it would not be influenced any more than in previous sessions. They had time to work with the words

before starting the discussion and were only cutting, pasting, and coloring the words

during the discussion. We agreed that the activity and the discussion complemented one

another and we discovered that the use of words in this collage created an avenue for a

simultaneous discussion that was not present when the collages were strictly visual.

The co-researchers stated that this process helped them look back on their

previous experiences and also contemplate their current circumstances and emotions.

James mentioned that the words could be used in different ways and that they took on

different meanings now than they had originally.

Cathy enjoyed the activity and had completed pasting her words on, but decided

to take the collage home so she could finish coloring them in (see Figure 13). The process

helped her realize how much she had grown as a person as well as a first-year teacher and

fewer of the words pertained to her now than at the first of the year.

Figure 13. Cathy's word collage.

Cathy mentioned that her stress level was much lower than it was during the first

trimester and "I have made peace with only being able to do so much in the time that I

am given." Her biggest stress, currently, was completing the standardized tests next week

in order to have more time and energy for upcoming class projects and school events such as the *World's Fair,* during which her students would be sharing reports on the United States.

James commented, "There wasn't much method to my madness." (See Figure 14). He used the words "model school" because he kept hearing that he was at a model school. He relayed that recently other teachers and administrators from the district had toured their school and came into his room to take pictures of his displays and student work. He felt proud that they had chosen to take pictures in his room and he now realized that all of his hard work to maintain the expectations of the school was paying off. He was experiencing a great deal of stress over being judged, especially since the instructional coach and the principal had chosen to set a goal for *growth improvement* at the fifth grade level. It was stressful for him to continually hear comments from the instructional coach like, "We chose you for a reason." He said, "I'm just trying to make it through my first year of teaching. I don't need this extra pressure of being chosen to set an example for the whole school."
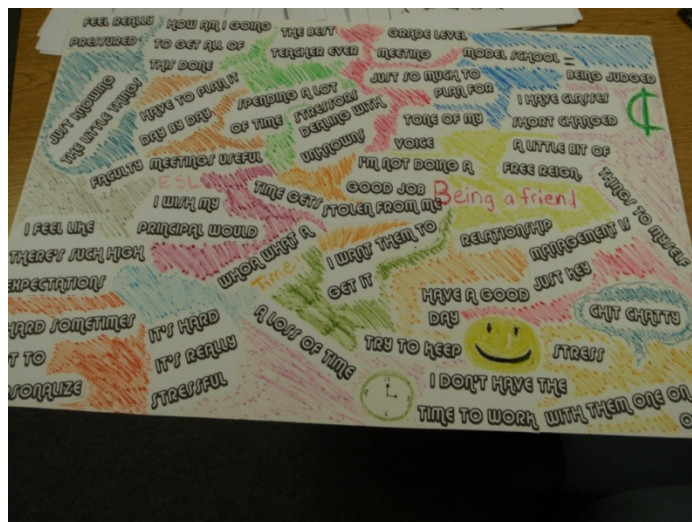
Figure 14. James' word collage.

James opened up about how much stress he really was feeling and that he couldn't talk to anybody about it, but it was coming out in undesirable ways such as losing his temper when he would not have normally done so. He said that he was just trying to keep smiling through all of the difficult times, which is why he drew the smiley face on his collage. He wrote the words "being a friend" on his collage and said, "I have not been doing a very good job of being a friend." He and Sharon looked at one another and smiled.

Sharon laid all her words out and then realized that she did not like the white background. She remarked, "Trying not to be a negative Nancy because of my last couple of days or weeks, I decided to add color and show that I was still trying to be positive" (see Figure 15). She discussed how it had been difficult to remain positive not only because she was devastated knowing that she would not be returning, but also because of frustration due to last minute meetings and exhaustion from working two jobs. She discussed being torn by the decision to maintain two jobs realizing that it had been her choice to do so, but it also felt like something she had to do because her temporary contract did not provide her with the financial stability needed, and otherwise she would've been without an income three months from now.
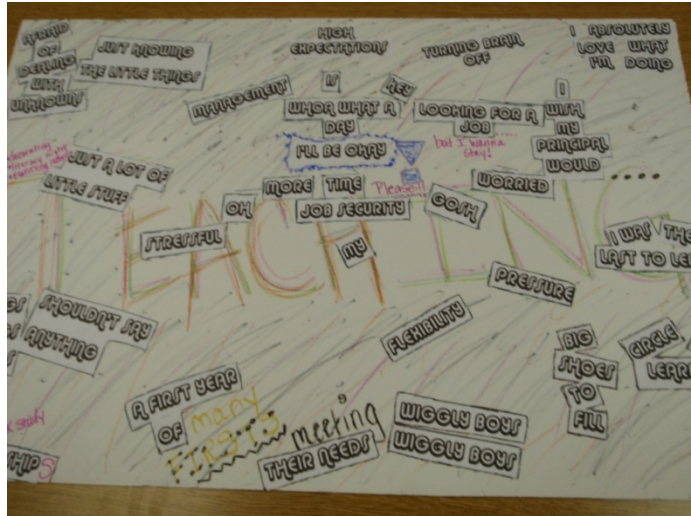
Figure 15. Sharon's word collage.

Sharon placed key phrases such as "looking for a job," "management is key," "I wish my principal would…" and "Whoa what a day" in the center of her collage. When I asked her what she wished her principal would do she replied, "I wish she would just tell me right now what the plan is. She knows what will happen, but she can't say. I also wish that she would loop second grade and keep them with the same teachers since second grade is the most impacted with behavioral issues." She mentioned that it was difficult to know that the teacher she had replaced might have her students in third grade. She had worked hard to get them to the place they were and now she would not be able to share in their accomplishments next year. Sharon summed up her discussion of her collage by saying, "Well I know things happen for a reason and that everything will be alright. I will be okay."

Focus group discussions.

I also considered the possibility that the quality of the discussion might be compromised by continuing the activity, but everyone was focused on what was being discussed. Once again, while analyzing this month's data, I reviewed Rodger's four steps

170

of reflection--presence in experience, description of experience, analysis of experience, and experimentation. First, presence of experience was obvious by the amount of awareness they were now experiencing on a daily basis. Second, description of experience was evidenced in the concise and detailed manner in which they discussed their experiences. Third, analysis of experience was demonstrated by their ability to uncover subtle and underlying reasons for certain issues that they faced; for example, inconsistent discipline at home, for one of Cathy's students, was realized as an underlying factor in his consistent acting out and mandated curriculum changes, and differences in school climate were connected to upcoming standardized tests. Fourth, experimentation was still evidenced in situations that were safe and without risk of creating conflict, but whenever they were asked to do something they did so without questioning the authority of others, even if they disagreed with it. For example, when James mentioned that he was required to stop teaching social studies in order to teach test taking skills, Cathy asked if preparing for the standardized tests helped meet the state standards and he said, "No, but when your principal and instructional coach tell you to do something, you just do it."

Discoveries on Teaching

    Busier than ever.

    The co-researchers agreed that the past six months had been "busier than ever before." Cathy discussed having one full week, three four day weeks, and one three day week since we last met, which made planning and scheduling difficult. James and Sharon had two four day weeks and James remarked, "It seems like every week something has come up that really interrupts my teaching." All of the first-year teachers had endured

many interruptions to their routines due to events such as assemblies, parties, and class pictures. Cathy commented, "You don't think those things will be any big deal, but they are and every time our students are out of uniform it is harder to teach them. You wouldn't think that they way the dress would affect them but it does. They are unfocussed and squirrelly."

Cathy had conducted her second and final parent-teacher conferences, which were less stressful then first trimester because she had established relationships with the parents. She mentioned that her school decided to hold parent-teacher conferences before spring break since last year's attendance during third trimester was low and she felt that "by then students and parents had already checked out."

Sharon mentioned that her time had been hectic managing classroom behavior, having a party for Valentine's Day, and having a couple of shorter weeks. She mentioned that "It's kind of funny how when we first met I picked out the snake to represent the boys just because they are wiggly and now I'm finding out that my boys love snakes. One of them even decorated their Valentine's box with them. It's funny because there's that symbolism that even they relate to." Cathy asked her if the boys were becoming less wiggly as the year went on and she said, "No. With the weather changing, the party, and this past week being a short week, they were just crazy!"

Temper tantrums and attitudes.

Cathy had a student who continued acting out and was told by her principal to send him directly to the office when it occurred. She said she realized that he wanted to get out of class and therefore it reinforced his behavior and prevented him from learning, but his behaviors prevented other students from learning. It surprised the group that a

172

student in private school would behave this way and Cathy said, "He has acted this way since kindergarten and the grandparents insist that he stay in the school, but I don't think he likes it and maybe he is trying to get kicked out." Sharon often had to remove a student from her class, as well, due to severe behavior problems which took time away from teaching.

James mentioned that classroom management had been somewhat less stressful for him since a student with major behavioral problems had been removed from his homeroom last month. Cathy asked if the student was doing better in the other teacher's room and James said, "Not necessarily, because he has been suspended since then and I have him for reading group and math and he hasn't come on time once." Cathy added, "It's hard when kids get to fourth or fifth grade and have a major attitude. It's really hard to get through to them when they are older." James said that he had two other students in his homeroom out of the 18 with "major attitudes" and Cathy said that she had only the one in her math class. Sharon admitted that none of her second grade students had major attitudes that got in the way of learning, but they were still having temper tantrums and did not know how to deal with frustrations. She also said that gender differences were very obvious in her classroom and the boys' overall behavior was more difficult to manage than the girls.

Relief in overcoming obstacles.

Cathy mentioned that parent teacher conferences this past month were not nearly as stressful as they were last trimester. She also believed that conferences were less stressful in a private school because parents who paid for their child's education were more likely to communicate with the teachers and stay on top of their child's progress.

173

James met with a student, his parents, the principal, and the instructional coach the previous week at the request of the student's parents because the student continually complained about hating school. James said that knowing his principal and instructional coach "had his back" and would provide data proving that the student had demonstrated the same behavioral difficulties for the past two years lessened his anxiety over this meeting. His teammate also offered reassurance that "he had nothing to worry about." James said that he was pleased with the outcome of the meeting and although he was confident that he was doing the right thing it was still "a relief to hear everyone agree that it wasn't me and that I'm not a horrible teacher."

James also had given his students a standardized math test that was predictive of how they would do on the upcoming state standardized tests. They had been given the test in the fall and the amount of unsatisfactory scores changed from11 % to 0% and the amount of advanced scores changed from 0% to 17%. He felt good about the improvements made and the principal was very complimentary of his class's progress.

All three co-researchers mentioned huge improvements in overall classroom behavior, enabling them to share fun moments with their students. Cathy had played in a dodge ball tournament with her students during school spirit week and she commented, "I realized that my relationships with the kids have gotten a lot stronger and there are some kids that I feel I've really touched." As mentioned previously, James was aware of his high stress level and was vigilant about not letting it affect his students. He went out at lunch as much as possible to play football with them, which not only helped establish relationships, but also helped him reduce his stress. Sharon's students were earning her trust by being more responsible, which meant she was able to implement more creativity

into her lessons and give them more freedom such as using the pillows during quiet reading time. The co-researchers doubted their abilities to run their own classroom and meet students' needs during the first trimester, but now their doubts had diminished.

It is what it is.

The first year teachers felt they just had to accept situations that were either uncomfortable or that they disagreed with. They felt that they had to go along with whatever their principals or other teachers said without question since they were new and inexperienced.

Cathy had not agreed with sending students to the office when they misbehaved, but when her principal told her to she did so without further discussion. Cathy had been told to not stress so much over the standardized tests and although she did not feel prepared she felt that she just had to deal with it on her own. She had many standards that she still needed to cover before the end of the year. When she asked the other teachers how they covered all of the standards they replied, "We can't" which left her feeling defeated.

James mentioned that he did whatever he was told to by his principal and instructional coach without question. His teammate stopped planning lessons with him all of a sudden without any explanation and he felt he had to just accept it.

One Saturday evening Sharon had been sent an email informing her that she had to go to a test preparation meeting during her planning period the following Monday and although she really needed her planning time that day she felt that she could not say anything. Her principal moved a second language student to a lower reading group

because she was not progressing at the rate expected and although Sharon did not agree with this decision she remained quiet.

Upcoming tests rule the school.

Cathy would not be teaching a thing next week because she would be administering the standardized test that the archdiocese required; there was no school on Monday, they had had three days of testing, and Friday was a test make-up day for students who had been absent during the week. The students would take the tests all morning long, then after lunch go to music, physical education, art, or computers. She said that the school did not require her to teach any test taking skills and she prepared to administer it by reading a teacher's manual.

James was heavily impacted by the amount of time he was required to spend preparing his students for the standardized tests, and the fifth and sixth grade teachers were told to stop teaching social studies and spend more time teaching students how to write paragraphs. He had to set aside the novels the kids had been reading in their reading groups and teach test taking skills from standardized reading booklets. He said that this was unexpected because they had not previously done any test preparation and now all of a sudden their whole curriculum had been rearranged.

Although the state's standardized testing began in third grade, Sharon integrated test taking skills into her shared reading curriculum on a daily basis in preparation for the district's standardized reading test administered in April. She demonstrated how to navigate the test's format and modeled thinking skills that "good readers use" on the document camera. Sharon was expected to ensure that her students scored well on this test because the school and district viewed it as an indication of how well prepared the

students were for third grade and how well they were likely to perform on the state test the following year.

All three first-year teachers felt that there was a lot riding on the test because their teaching skills were likely to be judged by it and the scores were used to determine which students required an Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) or help with special needs. Cathy knew that her school referred to the standardized test scores when determining special needs and James said that students who were advanced on the state tests for two years in a row were automatically viewed as gifted and put on an ALP. Cathy did not feel that there would be any repercussions for her personally if her students did not do well on the tests, but if the school's scores were low overall then they would probably be asked to come up with a plan for improvement by the archdiocese. James and Sharon had been saturated with the importance of the test results; faculty meetings focused on the tests, and curriculum was readjusted to prepare students to take them. All of the first-year teachers felt that how they were viewed as teachers would be effected by how well their students preformed on the standardized tests.

Summary of findings for February.

There were eight significant findings in February. First, there were just as many interruptions to teaching time second trimester as there were first trimester. Second, all of the first-year teachers had dealt with at least one student whose behavior was disruptive and nothing they tried seem to help. The realization that they could not reach all of their students was difficult for them. Third, student behaviors changed with age. When younger kids became frustrated they still had temper tantrums, whereas older students tended to exhibit attitudes of apathy and noncompliance. Fourth, classroom management

177

was less stressful second trimester than it was first and overall classroom behavior was improved. Fifth, the first-year teachers had developed strong relationships with most of their student's parents and dealing with parental conflicts were less anxiety provoking than they were first trimester. Sixth, the first-year teachers had developed a sense of trust and respect with most of their students and overall had established a strong rapport with their class. Seventh, the first-year teachers did not voice their opinions when they were uncomfortable with a situation or when they disagreed with anyone else. Eighth, the first-year teachers' schedules had changed due to upcoming standardized tests and they felt that their teaching would be judged by how well their students performed on the tests.

Tales from March

Found Poem

Everybody's Somebody: Taking Positive Steps toward an Unknown Future
We are doing really well.
Yet, the state of the economy
threatens to take away our jobs next year.
It is out of our control.

Teachers with experience and tenure
have recourse to "fight the system"
and demand their rights,
but we do not.

Stress is always there.
We empower ourselves
by taking positive steps
toward our unknown futures.

Tension in our schools
is a heavy fog over a stormy sea.
We must steer carefully
to avoid the glaciers of school politics.

We truly like everyone. Do other teachers know
how difficult it is for us to hear them gossip about each other?

We love our jobs. We want to be there and
if other teachers don't we wish they would leave or be quiet.

Now that our jobs are on the line,
We must shine brighter than ever before,
Everyone says, "Oh you're doing fine",
But really what does that mean?

We get no specific feedback,
but if we screwed up we would hear about it.
So maybe no news is good news.
We assume that we are doing okay, but assuming isn't fun.

First on the list to go to another school,
Updating resume, working two jobs, while applying for more,
We'd like to watch our students grow,
but we're forced to move on and not look back.

I've been dedicated, positive and you've been a supportive principal.
I'm still here for the right reasons: the students, but now that you know
I can't return next year you ask my teammate to make decisions about my students
instead of me and I feel invisible, shunned, and disrespected.

We are coached on what to say
when school board members come into our room
We feel that we are not allowed to be honest.
We must be a tool used for someone else's agenda.

Students are placed into next year's classes
not based on need, but based on numbers.
We feed kids into a number system, but they need to know
that they are more than a number. They are somebody.

Our Time Together

General Description

Last month's session was very intense and the emotions created by the lack of job

security at James' and Sharon's school was very heavy. I had been confident that the co-

researchers were all okay, but I realized that they were under a great deal of stress and I needed to ensure that the research process was not adding to their stress. I decided to call each of them to discuss our research meetings and to ensure that the benefits for them were outweighing any hardships. I sent them an e-mail asking when and how I could best reach them. I spoke with Cathy first and she said that the process had been good for her, but she was concerned about James and Sharon. She also wondered if the fact that she had more job security made it more difficult on them and I was able to reassure her that her role in the group was not negatively affecting the others. I spoke with James and he reassured me that the research was very positive for him and that it was the only venue that he had for discussing what he was going through. He also said that he "had mended fences with Sharon." I left Sharon a voice message and she sent me an e-mail explaining that she was hard to reach by phone. She said that the research meetings were "nothing but positive" for her and that the school climate had improved.

This month when we met, I noticed that everyone seemed a little more rested. As I set up the tape recorders, Cathy explained a fund raiser that her school was having and James and Sharon were laughing and joking with each other. I was pleased to see that everyone was in good spirits and although the stress had not disappeared it was no longer affecting them as it had last month.

Selecting an Artist

I found two artists who were interested in helping us create a mural to represent our data and I brought in pictures of their art. The co-researchers discussed the art and I gave them a brief background on the artists. I relayed information from the phone interviews that I completed with both artists. The co-researchers were unanimous in their

decision on which artist to hire and I agreed to arrange for him to come to our meeting next month.

Focus Group Discussions

The fact that our focus group conversation this month was much more relaxed than last time was somewhat surprising since we discussed many of the same emotional topics such as job insecurity and school climate. I was amazed by how the first-year teachers revisited these difficult topics and worked through the stress and tension which they provoked.

Data Analysis

Instead of engaging in ethno-mimesis and creating a new visual representation of the data this month, the group decided that the priority was further data analysis in order to move the arts-based work from "art as a process of discovery" to "art as a representation of data." It was important to have an idea of the concepts we wished to represent since we would meet with the artist next month.

Closure

Before concluding our meeting, we set a date for April. We were amazed by how quickly time had passed and that school would be out in about ten weeks. We were excited to meet the artist next month and we admittedly doubted that we would ever get this far.

What We Learned

Discoveries on Process

Focus group discussions.

The topics discussed this time and last were both complex and controversial. For example, whether or not a student demonstrating negative behaviors should be automatically sent to the principal's office and to what extent standardized test scores should be used when making decisions on student placements and curriculum development. I was impressed by the progress the first-year teachers had made in their ability to reflect on such difficult topics without letting the emotional aspects overwhelm them as they had last month.

I recognized growth in all of Rodger's four steps of reflection--presence in experience, description of experience, analysis of experience, and experimentation. First, the co-researchers were learning how to stay "present" in situations and remain focused on the realities of their current situations without personalizing events or the comments of others. Second, they described their experiences with specific and relevant details realizing that their perception of a situation was possibly different from what others may have perceived. Third, they were able to analyze an experience from the potential perspectives of others (for example their principal's) as well as their own. Fourth, in addition to experimenting with different teaching approaches, the first-year teachers were experimenting with different approaches of dealing with team meetings and communication.

Data analysis.

We discussed the list of words from the first-trimester's data that they used in their word collages created last month (see Appendix G) and looked at the four phrases that everyone checked as still being prevalent: management is just key, grade level meetings, how am I going to get all of this done, and I want them to get it. When we looked at the data from first trimester we distinguished four important themes that had continued over into second trimester and would most likely continue until the end of the year: classroom management, time management, impact of school meetings, and student achievement. Therefore we concluded that these themes needed to be addressed in the findings section of the final report and changes over time would be represented in the final art piece.

Discoveries on Teaching

Management is still key.

Classroom management was still a major factor and was addressed as an overall theme throughout our study. We discussed how student behaviors were intertwined with teacher behaviors and when they, as first-year teachers, became more confident in their management skills the behavior of the class as a whole became more positive. Students did not test them as much now as they had at the beginning of the year and Sharon stated, "My kids have come a long way, but they still have problems when they have a substitute." When the students' sense of structure was lost, either due to a change in teacher (having a substitute), or environment (going on a field-trip), or schedule (rearrangement of classes due to testing or assemblies), their students' behaviors were

negatively affected and classroom management had to be reestablished. Although they realized that their classroom management skills had improved overall, they each had a few individual students that struggled with behavioral issues and they did not know what to do with them.

Impact of the economy.

Although the state of the economy was impacting their salaries since none of them would be receiving a pay raise, the first-year teachers were more concerned about having contracts for the following school year. Next year's enrollment at Cathy's school had decreased by about fifty students which was not as large as had been predicted the previous month.

Although it was very difficult for James to not know where he would be teaching next year and for Sharon to have to reenter the job market, what disheartened them the most was the impact the changes would have on student learning. For example, class size at their school was predicted to increase to 38 students in the upper grades due to the reduction in force that would have been prevented had the mill levies passed. They discussed how difficult it would be for a teacher to grade everyone's work in a class that size let alone being able to meet everyone's learning needs. Cathy mentioned that people who did not have school age children probably voted against the mill levies and James remarked that it would have amounted to about twelve dollars a year and "the better the schools the higher their property values. Right?"

Changes in climate and cleaning house.

All of the co-researchers had noticed a change in school climate. Cathy said that when enrollment had been predicted to drop sharply there was an extreme amount of

184

tension and negativity in her school. Sharon mentioned that although there was a great deal of tension when the mill levies did not pass there was even more now since teachers were being involuntarily transferred (relocated to a different school). James commented, "When you walk in the building you can feel the stress. I think that the standardized testing added to that since the list of teachers who would be transferred came out at the same time. I was the first one on the list, but I don't know where I'm going to be placed yet."

James described the climate in his building as "the colder month." He had gone out with some colleagues after work and "all they did was make negative comments about everyone in the school. So I'm done with that. Now they keep asking me why I'm so distant, but I just don't want to hear it. I'm not into gossiping." He said that it seemed like other teachers on the transfer list were now acting negatively and that there were "back stabbing" or sabotaging behaviors taking place. He also said that it was disheartening to know that some teachers who were staying had often mentioned how unhappy they were at his school and he said that it was unfair of them to remain when other teachers (like Sharon and him) really enjoyed working there, but were being forced to leave.

Sharon's teammate commented, "There are a lot of teachers here that don't even say 'hi' to me anymore and I don't know why." She thanked Sharon for remaining positive even though a lot of negative things were happening to her.

Cathy's school was informed that some of the paraprofessionals would not have jobs next year. She remarked that the school seemed to have too many paraprofessionals

185

and that maybe the principal was trying to "clean house" by using the budget cuts as an excuse to let some go.

Sharon mentioned that many teachers were nervous about being moved since there was only one teacher in the building who was tenured. She had also heard that the principal was known to put teachers in uncomfortable positions in order to get them to apply for a transfer. Cathy asked, "Sharon do you think that your principal would shuffle someone to a different grade just to get them to go somewhere else?" Sharon replied, "Uh huh."

Temporary contracts and involuntary transfers.

When asked how he felt about being first on the involuntary transfer list James responded, "It's kind of stressful and our principal keeps telling me not to worry. She has told me that things will work out and that I will have a job at the school, but I don't know." He wanted to remain at the school, but said that if he had to move he wanted to know now so that he could prepare for it.

James mentioned that his district was "trying to get rid of temporary contracts" by not offering them next year. Sharon said that she was glad because it was so stressful being on a temporary contract and she would not want anyone else to go through what she had. She discussed "I am doing better with it now; last month I wasn't because it just sucks. I don't want to move schools and I want to watch my kids grow, but I can't." When I asked her what helped her to deal with that she said, "Updating my resume I guess and moving on. It's not going to happen so I've got to get over it and start finding a job for next year." I reminded Sharon of the first session we had and how stressful it had been on her to start late, but that she put a yellow sun on her collage and said, "I go to

school every morning thinking positive things." I said, "You're still thinking positive after all you've been through and you're empowering yourself by taking positive steps." Sharon mentioned being thankful that she had not quit her theater job when she had planned to be back in September, and now the extra income and stability that it provided for her would be extremely helpful until she found another teaching position.

In previous years, the district James and Sharon worked for had open positions for the upcoming school year posted by February 15th, but this year due to the high amount of involuntary transfers they would not be posted until April. Sharon was told in a meeting that eighty out of ninety involuntary transfers had taken place. Her principal said that she would keep her informed of jobs as they become available and would write her a letter of recommendation. Sharon would be able to apply for positions as soon as they opened rather than waiting for other teachers who chose to transfer, as had been the policy up until this year. She was also applying for positions in other districts.

Standardized Tests.

Cathy and James had both completed administering their district's required standardized test meeting the testing requirements for the state. Next month, Sharon would be administering some standardized reading tests with her second graders in order to meet the district's requirements and to ensure that the second graders were on grade level in reading.

Cathy was relieved that the tests were over and that she could get back to a normal schedule. She had some special reports to help her students with in social studies and needed uninterrupted class time. James also felt relieved that the tests were over, but he worried about the scores coming back lower than expected. He knew that his principal

and his instructional coach were counting on his students' scores to prove that the school was meeting their overall goals. Cathy and James did not know how their students performed on the standardized tests and would not have the results until the middle of May, which was just a few weeks before school ended.

Sharon discussed how three out of her fifteen students were "gifted learners" on an Advanced Learning Plan (ALP), three were on an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) for reading (reading six months or more behind grade level), three were on a "watch" (meaning that their reading was not improving at the rate expected), and one student was on an Individualized Exceptional Plan (IEP) and was given extra help by the special education teacher. All of these categories were determined by test score data. Sharon said that the data indicated that more of the second graders should have been on an ILP and she was wondering why they had not been placed on one. She remarked, "The principal is very concerned about improvement numbers and accreditation and it is a huge assumption on my part, but I am wondering if this has anything to do with how many students are placed on ILPs."

Sharon had been progress monitoring six students through the district's approved fluency test and one week the scores went down. Knowing that they could do better she asked for permission to retest them and they did much better than before. She said, "I had to test them again because I would have gotten reamed in our meeting next week." She explained that she had felt attacked in front of her teammate, her teammate's student teacher , and the ESL teacher during their last reading meeting when the instructional coach and principal asked her why one of her English as a Second Language (ESL) student's was behind in reading. She relayed her perception of what had taken place:

The student was not on 'benchmark' for this time of year, so even though she had made huge improvements and her comprehension was good that didn't matter because she couldn't read the material as fast as she was supposed to. Because we are being accredited and since she is ESL that doesn't look good and so they automatically switched her from my reading group to my teammate's reading group. That was how they decided to fix it and they gave me no input into the decision whatsoever. They have my one foot out the door, even though I have not given any less since the day I walked in there. They go to my teammate for everything. No one made any supportive comments on my behalf and we were looking at a graph showing that many of my students had made significant improvements. One little boy who isn't ESL was way behind the benchmark and now he has exceeded it but nobody noticed that.

Vague and scarce feedback.

Cathy recalled that her principal and assistant principal had evaluated her once and they only spent ten minutes in her room. Her principal watched from outside the room and she felt that if he had any concerns he would have told her; however, she was eager to have more feedback and suggestions for improvement. James and Sharon both felt that they would be told in their team meetings if improvements in tests scores were expected, but they would have liked more specific information on how to improve their teaching.

Summary of initial findings.

There were ten significant findings this month. First, the first-year teachers had all made great strides in classroom management and they had very few students whose negative behaviors outweighed the positive ones. Second, they worried about job-security, especially when non-tenured in a tenure system, and their anxiety over this was lessened by open, honest, and tactful communication from their principals regarding their job security. Third, stress and tension in school climate, while uncomfortable for everyone, was extremely threatening to the first-year teachers and they found it helpful when their colleagues remained calm and positive. Fourth, whereas teachers with

189

experience who have been in the building for awhile may feel comfort in venting frustrations or gossiping, hearing these remarks invoked tension and anxiety for the first-year teachers and left them feeling as if they had been put in the middle of opposing groups. Fifth, it was extremely important to the first-year teachers that their performance be discussed in private rather than in front of their colleagues or their students. Sixth, the first-year teachers benefitted from constructive criticism which recognized their strengths and provided them with ideas for building upon those strengths in order to make needed improvements. Seventh, they needed their principals and other administrators to keep their responsibilities, such as meeting school accreditation, separate from their responsibility of evaluating them. Eighth, the first-year teachers felt attacked when colleagues or principals singled them out for having students that did not perform well on mandated tests. Ninth, the first-year teachers found it difficult not to personalize comments that others made about them and it was helpful when colleagues and administrators only gave constructive criticism and modeled how to utilize it. Tenth, feedback given to the first-year teachers was vague and sparse and they felt that consistent, specific feedback would have aided them in improving their teaching.

This chapter presented a found poem, discussed the experiences and relayed the initial findings during the last two months of the second trimester (January and February, 2009) and the first month of the third trimester (March, 2009). This chapter also explored using visual representations as a means of member checking. The next chapter describes the first-year teachers' experiences during the last two months of the third trimester (April and May, 2009) and includes a found poem, description of the research session, a discussion on the learning that took place, and the initial findings for both of those

months. It also explains the transition we made in the research process from data collection to reporting of our findings and describes the creation of the final mural with the artist in July, 2009. The chapter concludes with a poem and a brief narration of the co-researchers' future plans as they enter their second year of teaching.

CHAPTER VII

LAND HO!

Once you have traveled, the voyage never ends,
but is played over and over again in the quietest chambers.
The mind can never break off from the journey.
Pat Conroy

Introduction

Now, with the end of the school year on the horizon, we were nearing the end of

our voyage, as it played over and over again while I listened to recordings, continued data

analysis, and wrote up our findings. I was certain that this voyage would be engraved

upon my mind forever as one that had changed my life in amazing ways. I was honored

that such wonderful first-year teachers had traveled it with me.

This chapter relays the last leg of our voyage describing the last two months of

the third trimester (April and May, 2009). During April we discussed what was

experienced that month, reviewed data analysis, listed information to be represented in

the art, and had our first meeting with the artist. In May, the co-researchers discussed

their expectations of teaching before they started and compared it to the realities they

faced; they created a collage(s) to represent this comparison, and we had a second

meeting with the artist. This chapter contains a found poem, description of the research

session, a discussion on the learning that took place, and the initial findings for both April

and May, 2009. The mural representing our findings was created with the artist in July,

2009 and this chapter ends with a poem, a description of that experience, and a brief

narration of the co-researchers' future plans as they enter their second year of teaching.

Tales from April

Found Poem

Living Now, Breathing, and Looking Back

Back from spring break, the end of school awaits
Being shuffled like a deck of cards,
With subjects, grade level, and where we will teach all up in the air.
Tenuous excitement.
So busy, so tired, so stressed. What keeps us going?
loving our jobs, colleagues' support, and students' smiles.
Ending the year we've as many new things
to learn as when we started it.
We are surrounded by collages of our memories.
We have come far, have learned much,
With a lump in our throat and a gleam in our eyes
we look back.
September was:
Mountains to climb and wiggly snakes,
Paint splattered all over the place: unorganized and chaotic,
Students' smiles warm our hearts.
A positive yellow sun leads us to success.
October was:
Seeing students with eyes of a different size,
Relieved at not having to reinvent the wheel,
Desperately trying to turn off our brains,
Time ticks quickly. We race to catch up.
November was:
Expectations of us are off the charts. Perfection is our goal.
Earning respect, having our voice heard,
Dealing with bias due to age or gender,
Financial storms and rocky waves did not crush us!

January was:
A winding path with many obstacles:
Parties, students' behavior, playing parent to kids who need one,
Although we care we must take down time and smell the roses.
Caterpillars and butterflies show metamorphosis from student to teacher.
February was:
Words said in the beginning
helped us discover how much we've grown.
Some words remain, some meanings have changed,
but mere words are not enough at times when we doubt ourselves.

March was:
Trying to shine and maintain our jobs.
Every minute was an interview.
In meetings we can't get a word in edgewise.
Sitting quietly in the back, with thoughts unheard.
April is here:
Realizing that we've been teaching almost a year,
But still have a lot of questions; shouldn't I know this by now?
No. It is okay to still be learning. If people would only listen they could learn too.
We are knowledgeable and our hearts make up for what we lack in experience.
We look forward to our last month of teaching,
Representing our findings in a mural all our own,
Performing with pride and reading our own words.
The light at the end of the tunnel shines bright.

Our Time Together

General Description

Everyone chatted about their spring break. Cathy and Sharon had taken vacations. James mentioned catching up on things that needed to be done like going to the dentist and said, "If the weather had been nicer I would've gone golfing." We briefly discussed how difficult it was to do those simple "life things" while school was in session like going to the dentist, getting a haircut, or getting an oil change for one's car.

Focus Group Discussions

We were to meet with the artist later in the morning, so the group agreed to concretize our findings, discus what information should be shared with others, and list topics that were important to relay visually. We wove data analysis into our conversation on the experiences of the past month. We reflected upon the visual representations, journal entries, and lists (such as our group norms) that we had made since the project began and used these as a springboard for our conversation.

Member Checking

I had written up a draft of the description of the co-researchers and they read what I had written about them. This was very valuable as each of them were able to further describe their backgrounds and correct inadequate information.

Ethno-mimesis: First Meeting with the Artist

We met with Charles the artist and he reviewed the visual representations of the first-year teachers' experiences. He discussed the symbolism that had been used throughout the year; for example, a yellow sun to represent the positive aspects of teaching and a road to represent the journey. The co-researchers discussed what they wanted to represent in their final piece of art and Charles shared his ideas on how this might be achieved.

Closure

We accomplished a great deal during our session. We decided that the first-year teachers would create their last collage, representing what they had thought teaching would be compared to what it really was, when we next met in May. Charles agreed to come back in May with sketches and our plans for creating the art collaboratively would be finalized.

What We Learned

Discoveries on Process

Focus group discussions.

The co-researchers found that displaying their previous visual representations where they could be seen was helpful in remembering the significant events that took

place since the beginning of the school year. We connected the events of the past month to codes that we had created and we discussed some major themes that had been consistent throughout our study; for example, the roles and expectations of other people, supports, and stressful situations.

Once again I reviewed progress that was made utilizing Rodgers' four steps of reflection--presence in experience, description of experience, analysis of experience, and experimentation. First, their presence in experience increased each month and their discussion this month relayed evidence of clarity not only in their teaching, but also in their communication and their relationships with others in their schools. Second, their ability to describe their experiences with specific detail improved on a monthly basis. Third, they acquired the ability to reflect upon and analyze individual situations in depth and they worked as a research group to analyze the data collected throughout the past year. Fourth, they gained more confidence each month to experiment with new teaching techniques and approaches, and were taking small risks in tackling controversial issues that they were not able to take at the beginning of the year. They discussed that just being a second-year teacher and having a year under their belts will allow them the confidence to take on more risks when needed because they will not have certain insecurities, such as the fear of sounding stupid that came from being new to the profession.

The co-researchers once again reiterated the importance of our meetings and agreed that it was valuable to meet with other first-year teachers in a non-evaluative setting. They discussed the hope that our study might inspire districts to offer a seminar for first year teachers in addition to the mentoring and induction programs they already had in place. Cathy stated, "If I wasn't doing this research project, my first year would

have been much harder. It was nice knowing that others were going through some similar stuff and it was helpful to talk about it in a nonjudgmental environment."

They also discussed the value in the exploratory arts-based process used. Cathy stated, "It was good that I didn't realize art was being used like this because I would not have done it. I am glad that I did because the art has helped me learn to take risks in teaching and I think I've become more creative because of this." James commented, "It helps us take risks and go outside our comfort zone, which translates into teaching." Sharon mentioned, "I think that it helped us reflect on what we do well, what we might not do so well, and how we can do better."

Before the artist arrived we discussed some symbolic representations of important concepts that we wished to convey. The co-researchers agreed that they envisioned a collage or mural and that it needed to visually demonstrate the simplistic view of what people think teaching is compared to the complexities and chaos of what teachers really face.

Cathy mentioned that whenever she thought of the end product she was reminded that time had been one of her biggest obstacles. James suggested, "I think it should stand out to show how awesome teaching is, but yet to show that teaching is so much more than you think it will be." Sharon said that one common theme was trying to remain positive and asked to have a yellow sun to represent that. They agreed that the art should not be dark, but also not be so bright and happy that it became superficial and that it needed to demonstrate both the "ups and downs" of teaching.

First meeting with the artist.

The artist, Charles, was excited to help us with this project. He had just finished his art degree and would be obtaining a license to teach art k-12. We discussed the complexities that the first-year teachers faced, including not having enough time, instructional time stolen, having big shoes to fill, that the "little things were huge" and being in catch-22 situations. James mentioned what was agreed upon in our previous discussion, "We do not want the piece to be depressing or dark, but at the same time still want it to speak the truth."

Charles conceptualized the contrast between the simplistic view one may have before being involved in teaching and the complex nature of the profession. He stated, "The trick to any successful piece of art is to create it in a way that the casual viewer in a hurry will stop and look at it for more than three seconds. Visually you want to have a piece that immediately brings you in, has that second layer of information, and then when the looker is in that area that is where you can keep them engaged with fresh information that they are learning." He mentioned that the art itself would be an educational tool.

We discussed the size, where it would be displayed, the materials we would use, the budget for the project, and the time needed to complete it. Charles' initial conception of the piece was a 3-dimensional collage, 8' by 4' so that it would stand out in size, shape, and contrast. He agreed that he would come back in May with some initial sketches and we would finalize the plans for creating the collaborative piece at that time.

Discoveries on Teaching

   Anticipating the end.

The first-year teachers relayed a sense of tenuous excitement about ending their first-year of teaching. Cathy mentioned being dismayed when other teachers told her that the last two weeks of school don't really count and they stop recording any grades that are given. She was also very confused about how to accomplish the end of the year responsibilities, such as completing a student's cumulative file. Sharon said that it was difficult to complete the end of the school year because there was so much to do.

Cathy mentioned looking forward to next year and said, "I can't wait until next year and I can share what it was really like with people. I remember spending so much time learning how to use the phone."

   Being shuffled.

Cathy's principal had informed some of the paraprofessionals and one of the kindergarten teachers that they would not receive a contract for next year because of the projected decrease in enrollment and she said, "Although I think I will be back, not having a contract in my hand eats at me every day and we've been told that there might be a shuffle in what people teach next year."

James said, "There was a brief moment where I was told that I would have to teach kindergarten at another school, but then someone else voluntarily transferred. So now I have been told that I will remain at the school, but I don't know what I will be teaching." Sharon said, "I'm searching for a job every night after I go home and I work at

199

the theater all weekend." She discussed applying for all positions available to her regardless of grade level, school, or district.

We remembered that during the first trimester they discussed that spending extra time on lesson plans this year would mean less work the following year, but now they were all in jeopardy of being moved around or of being out of a job. I asked them how they were able to remain dedicated and positive while dealing with such uncertainty. Cathy simply stated, "I love what I'm doing." She mentioned that if she ever stopped loving it then she would get out because, "I've seen teachers who were in it for the wrong reasons. They were always complaining and were negative towards the students." James said that Sharon's support helped him and Sharon added that her students gave her hope and strength to continue. Besides their love of teaching they also agreed that the possibility of making a difference in the world's future by making a difference in the lives of children inspired them.

Standardized Test Results.

Cathy and James had received the results of the standardized tests and were both pleased with their students' performance. Cathy was given the results, but was not told by the principal if he thought that "they were good enough." She said she had hoped they would be higher overall, but was pleased with the growth made compared to last year's scores. James said that 94% of his class performed at the "proficient" level and 6% at the "partially proficient" level which met the expectations of the school. Sharon was in the process of administering the district's standardized reading test to all of her students individually.

Roles other people play.

Cathy and James did not have regular meetings with their mentors and had not sought help from them in many months, but occasionally their mentors asked how they were doing. Cathy's mentor was not paid but had agreed to take on that role. However, Cathy relied on her teammates for any help or support and her grade level team agreed that someone at the same grade level having the same planning period and the same students would have been a more practical choice for a mentor. She hoped to become a mentor in the future, but would only agree to it if the new teacher were at her same grade level.

James felt as if his teammate was no longer receptive to planning together and that his mentor did not want to be involved. He tried "to figure things out on his own," but when he couldn't he sought help from others in the building who seemed responsive, such as the ESL teacher and the librarian. Sharon relied heavily on her mentor saying, "I would not have made it without her," but her mentor was also her teammate which she felt had helped. Sharon mentioned that their mentors were paid by their district and James replied, "Really! I didn't know that. Well she's getting paid for doing nothing."

James and Sharon often discussed the instructional coach in their building and they both mentioned that they would have liked more support and help from her in the classroom; however, Sharon's experiences with her were more positive than James' overall. Cathy asked them what the responsibilities of the instructional coach were and Sharon replied, "I don't really know what the role of the instructional coach is. I know she runs a lot of meetings and does staff development stuff, but as far as helping me in

the classroom she really hasn't." Both James and Sharon agreed that they had not been informed of the instructional coach's role or responsibilities and that it would have been helpful to know what support she would be willing and able to give them. Sharon explained that the superintendant of the district decided to hire 16 additional instructional coaches after the bond levies did not pass and the local teacher's union was boycotting this decision. Sharon stated, "Now there's a lot of drama between the teachers and the instructional coach."

 Meetings: meaningful versus a waste of time.

 The first-year teachers appreciated weekly faculty meetings and found them helpful. Cathy's faculty meetings kept the staff updated on new information and allowed teachers to give input into decisions that were made. James and Sharon's faculty meetings addressed interesting topics such as handling bullying behaviors and they found the information useful, but the environment became uncomfortable when the principal took notes to evaluate the teachers on what they did or did not say.

 Cathy's grade level team met informally once a week during their planning time to discuss student issues and upcoming events, such as standardized testing or school performances. Sharon and her teammate planned together at least once a week and then touched base several times during the week. James and his teammate stopped planning on a weekly basis back in November and touched base only when necessary. Sharon and James were required to meet with their teammate and the instructional coach monthly to discuss their planning. James commented, "I've finally given up on knowing what I am supposed to be doing for those meetings and I would much rather use my planning time

202

to prepare for my math class." Sharon agreed and said, "Those meetings are a waste of time and they focus on how badly the students are performing."

James and Sharon had many other mandatory meetings throughout the year. They met for a half-day once each trimester with their teammate, the instructional coach, and the principal to do what was referred to as "front loading": going over the standards and benchmarks they would be covering, establishing their big ideas/objectives, and discussing the activities they would use to cover them. They attended a weekly leadership meeting during lunch, where the primary teams met one day and the intermediate teams met on a different day, to discuss issues that they were facing. "Basically, what happens is that they give everyone a piece of paper and then read it to us," James stated and Sharon agreed. They were also required to attend two district wide meetings during the year. Sharon said that their first one was back in October and the teachers from their school were asked to demonstrate the front loading process, which Sharon had completed only once prior to the meeting. She said that she felt put on the spot, especially since she had not been told that she would be teaching this process to others in the district.

Summary of Findings for April.

This month there were eight initial findings. First, it was difficult for the first-year teachers to share what they were going through with the teachers at their school because of insecurities around job stability and their inexperience. They felt that they would be able to share more of what it was like to be a first-year teacher next year and they were eager to help others that would be first-year teachers. Second, they agreed that as first-year teachers they needed the direction and help of others, but they had valuable information to share that could be learned from as well and it was discouraging when

they often felt unheard. Third, they experienced anxieties around the possibilities of having to change what or where they taught due to a reduction in force. Fourth, the first-year teachers were anxious about their students' performance on the standardized test and were relieved when the scores were viewed as adequate by their principals. Fifth, the first-year teachers whose mentors taught at different grade levels did not find them to be as actively supportive as the first-year teacher whose mentor was also her grade level teammate. Sixth, it was helpful for fist-year teachers to be informed as to what the other staff members' roles and responsibilities were. Seventh, it was very stressful when the first-year teachers were expected to complete a task without being informed ahead of time. Eighth, meetings were helpful to the first-year teachers when they knew what to expect, what was expected of them, and they had a vested interest and purpose for attending.

Tales from May

Found Poem

Expectations versus Realities

We went into teaching
thinking this can't be that hard.
We'll get lots of days off
to do something we love.
Well that's not the case.
It's difficult in ways we never imagined
and the days we get off are not our own.
We grade papers, plan lessons, or attend in-services.
We thought we would work in the classroom
then leave it behind and have some free time.
NO!! Teaching primary means constant preparation.
Teaching intermediate means constant assessment.
Even when the work is done
the students are always on your mind.
When we have free time on the week-ends
we go to our students' ball games.

So even now at the end of the year
knowing that we will soon say goodbye
we will never forget them - our first class.
We have learned as much from them as they have from us.
The one thing
we thought that teaching would be
that has become a reality is that
WE LOVE IT!

Our Time Together

General Description

The first-year teachers began chatting about the numerous end-of-the-year activities that they had coming up over the next few weeks and how exhausting spring had been for them. This was our last research meeting and although we were excited to finish the research project, we concurred that we would miss our monthly meetings.

Focus Group Discussions

The co-researchers reflected on the past year and wrote their thoughts in their journals. We decided to focus on what the first-year teachers had expected teaching to be like before they began compared to what they had experienced. None of them had expected teaching to change their lifestyles to the extent that it had. Managing time and dealing with instructional time being taken away was everyone's most difficult challenge.

Ethno-mimesis

After reflecting on, writing about, and briefly discussing their expectations of teaching, before they began, versus the realities that they faced during their first year, the co-researchers created collages. Cathy and James completed one collage each to show the comparisons and Sharon created two collages; one demonstrating what she thought teaching would be like and the other representing what she experienced during her first

year. Cathy mentioned having a hard time thinking of ideas, James was excited by all of the ideas he was coming up with, and Sharon said that she struggled with this collage more than any of the others.

Second Meeting with the Artist

Sharon, leaving early last month, did not meet Charles, the artist, but we filled her in on what was discussed. Charles showed the group his sketches and reviewed some of the main concepts that were discussed last time, such as using layers and having the piece stand out. He gave the group further ideas on how to demonstrate the complexities of teaching, the need for flexibility, and the importance of time. The group decided to construct a three dimensional mural with small collages created by the first-year teachers attached. We discussed the materials that could be used, and when and where to create it. Cathy graciously offered her driveway as the location for creating our collaborative piece of art and we set a date in June.

Closure

The three co-researchers were willing and excited to take part in the performance as part of my dissertation defense and we discussed meeting in August to finalize our plans for it. Sharon jokingly asked if I was going to be okay not seeing them for that long. I discussed how much their participation meant to me and that I would miss them a great deal.

Discoveries on Process

    Focus group discussions.

The co-researchers had a brief discussion on the expectations of their first-year of teaching compared to their actual experiences. They contemplated their biggest challenges and relayed their thoughts on the differences between student teaching and teaching. The conversation was even more reflective than in past sessions.

I utilized Rodgers' four steps of reflection--presence in experience, description of experience, analysis of experience, and experimentation as a means to reflect upon the growth the first-year teachers had made since the research began. First, presence in experience was happening continuously now and it was obvious that they were all extremely focused in their teaching. Second, not only were the first-year teachers able to describe their experiences with clarity and from different perspectives, they were also able to represent them visually. Third, the co-researchers individually analyzed their monthly experiences and collaboratively analyzed the data that had been collected. They also described how they analyzed their teaching practices on a continual basis. Fourth, the greatest amount of growth was demonstrated in the area of experimentation where the first-year teachers went from being afraid of taking a risk on anything new to developing and implementing new teaching skills and communication techniques.

    Ethno-mimesis.

The co-researchers had been prepared to create the collage representing their expectations of teaching compared to the realities that they faced last month, but we ran

out of time. Sharon said that she had ideas last month, but could not remember them.

They found that using art to *represent* a topic rather than using art to *explore* a topic

required a different thinking process and experiencing this now was valuable since this

same process would be used to create their final piece with the help of the artist.

Cathy said she created her collage in two stages: the first stage on the left

represented her thought about teaching before she started and the second stage on the

right represented her thoughts now as she completed her first year of teaching (see Figure

16). She discussed that she created a beach on the left-hand side because she thought

teaching would be tranquil and that she would have time alone to reflect. The clock in the

middle tied both stages together because her expectation that teaching required a great

deal of time was the reality of what she faced, however the time actually required was

still more than she thought it would be. The yellow cross represented the fact that her

teaching was based on spirituality and she was fortunate to teach in a religious

environment. The right side represented the reality that teaching was busier than she had

imagined. The flowers on the right represented her students' individuality and the fact

that they were constantly growing. She discussed, "I feel that teaching is actually much

busier than I thought it would be and things are constantly changing. I am always

growing and the kids are always growing whereas the water and the sand don't really

change much. They are just more tranquil. My biggest challenge this whole year has been

time: budgeting the time, finding the time, making time to do stuff and not having enough

time. So that's why I drew a big clock in the middle."

Figure 16. Cathy's collage comparing expectations and realities of her first year.

When James started his collage (see Figure 17) he said, "A song popped into my head - *The Wheel* - by The Grateful Dead. 'The wheel is turning and you can't slow down and you can't pull back.' That describes the reality of my first year and that's why I put a car moving along a road." The mountains with the violins represented his love of blue grass and he said, "One expectation that I had was to be able to call the summers my own and follow a band around, but now for this coming summer I am enrolled in ESL classes. Plus I think that teaching has changed me and now I always think about looking professional. I wouldn't feel comfortable camping out all over the ground and being a groupie anymore, but maybe I would still go and stay in a hotel." He described the reality of teaching was that he did not have as many freedoms as he thought he would and that it had changed his way of life. He said that being a teacher was "the end of the beginning" for him because although his former lifestyle had ended he was beginning to become who he had always wanted to be.

Figure 17. James' collage representing his expectations of teaching compared to his experiences.

Whereas Sharon had created her previous collages quickly and easily, it was difficult for her to create a collage representing her expectations of teaching versus her experiences. Her first collage (see figure 18) represented what she thought teaching was going to be like before she started. She expected that most kids would love school and that they would have recess everyday during which she would have time to herself to reflect on her teaching. She thought that she would have nights, weekends, and the summer off and have more time for herself. She had made a green clay teacher and kids of different colors because they would all be unique and learn differently. The hearts depicted her love for her teaching and children, plus her desire to share her love for learning with each of the students.

Figure 18. Sharon's collage representing her thoughts on teaching before she began.

Sharon's second collage (see Figure 19) depicted her current thoughts on teaching, which were hard to represent with art alone and therefore, she added words to it. She displayed roads leading to different places to demonstrate the different roles that teachers play: parent, positive role model, nurse, and educator. Sharon knew that several of her students were either living with a single parent, foster parents, or grandparents and she believed that many of her students were lacking a patient and understanding role model. Therefore, she became this role model for them, which was a situation that she had not expected. She commented, "Teachers need to be a positive role model for kids because a lot of them don't have one. I don't raise my voice very often, but when I yell at a kid I feel bad because that may be all they hear at home. You also have to be a nurse and care about their little paper cut, which to them is the biggest deal in the world. Also I try to teach them how to mediate their smaller hurts and frustrations for themselves." She said that the only role that she expected to take on out of the four was that of an educator,

but even that was much more than she thought it would be. She remarked, "Coming from the educator perspective is classroom management, planning, objectives, accountability, assessment, communication, and just plain exhaustion. I mean that could be across my whole board because I am so exhausted right now. Then I put a little frog with its legs stretched out because I am stretched as far as I can go." Sharon explained that the roads all came together in the middle because the many roles that she played joined together to create a meaningful career, and she concluded, "Their little handprints and hearts make it all worthwhile."

Figure 19. Sharon's collage representing the realities of her first year of teaching.

Transitioning to art as product.

Art was an important element of our research and had become our avenue of discovery; therefore, we wanted to incorporate art into our performance. Collaborating with an artist became essential in order to adequately communicate our findings visually, since none of us were trained artists.

This month we reviewed and added to the list of important concepts that we created last month. Charles gave us practical ideas on how to represent these concepts visually while maintaining artistic quality and unity. For example, to represent the positive side of teaching, the co-researchers often used a yellow sun and wanted that symbol included in a way that did not come across as superficial. Charles said that he could paint a realistic sun in the middle of a shaded background in order to create that effect. The first-year teachers, being stretched thin, needed to be represented and as a group we decided to stretch elastic exercise bands across the mural. Time was everyone's biggest challenge and Charles mentioned using a clock in the mural. James asked if there was another way to represent time and Charles discussed his vision of using an hour glass shape for the piece. Everyone became excited about this symbolic representation and brainstormed possibilities. This led Charles to devise a way of creating an hourglass that would pour sand out onto the floor in order to represent the concept of time slipping away. We decided that everyone's individuality would be demonstrated in collages created by the first-year teachers onto small sections of cloth attached to the mural. We had a list of significant words and phrases, for example "the little things are huge," that we hoped to somehow incorporate.

We came to the awareness that we could not possibly decide on everything now and agreed to keep in touch with each other via e-mail as more ideas came up. We also realized that some decisions would have to be made during the process of creating the piece since our ideas would change as were creating it. We would have to be flexible and think on our feet as we often did in our teaching.

Discoveries on the Realities of Teaching versus Expectations

Preparation for the profession.

The first-year teachers agreed that their teacher education program taught best practices and gave them maximum support all the way through student teaching. In their first year of teaching they found that they could not always implement a best practices approach and were given minimal support, not because of anyone's neglect, but simply because everyone was busy meeting their own responsibilities and were spread thin. They went from writing a few in- depth lesson plans, being observed while teaching them, and receiving specific feedback to writing plans for many lessons each day and having no feedback. During their first year of teaching they learned how to use cues from their students; for example, staring off into space when they did not understand a concept, as feedback and adjust their lesson accordingly. They felt that they needed to go through the process of planning several lessons for their courses, but then be taught how to streamline their planning in a way that could be realistically implemented on a daily basis.

They agreed that their experience with all of the different grade levels was limited. Even though they had at least sixty hours of field work in a primary (kindergarten through second grade) and an intermediate grade (third through sixth grade), there was a great deal of difference between kindergarten and second grade and

between third and sixth grade. Management techniques and materials used varied a great deal from grade level to grade level.

They mentioned that in their preparation courses they were not exposed to the materials they were required to use, such as textbooks, and that they did not have the experience with the standardized tests that they were required to administer as teachers. They admitted that they did not tell anyone about this because of the potential risk, but instead observed other teachers until they figured out how to do it on their own.

The first-year teachers concurred that teaching was not something that could be taught but had to be experienced. Cathy commented, "I feel like I was somewhat prepared, but I don't think anyone could be totally prepared without actually doing it. It's like driving around town. If someone else is driving you don't pay attention to what is going on."

Guidance and feedback.

Cathy had said that she had expected more direction in meeting the state standards than what she received. During the summer, she read the district's curriculum and planned her year determining how and when she would address each standard and bench mark. She began the year feeling well prepared, but said, "I had so much time slip away from me and I often had to spend an extra day or two on something that the students didn't understand. I was always wondering if I was on track and often wished that I had someone who could've given me more guidance on what to teach when and how much time to spend on each objective." The amount of guidance and specific feedback that she received during her first year was much less than she had received during student teaching. She was given compliments and was reassured that she was doing a good job,

215

but did not receive as much direct feedback as she would have liked. She stated, "I don't get any direct information that reassures me that I am doing things right, so Ihave felt that I am left to figure things out on my own and it's a good thing that I am the type of person that can figure it out."

Time and responsibilities.

Sharon relayed how during student teaching she was always ready to leave school at 4 p.m. because she and her cooperating teacher were able to grade students' papers and prepare for the next day during their planning time. Now she uses her planning time to put homework in student folders and file paperwork, which was work completed by a teacher's aide when she student taught. The first-year teachers agreed that they spend more time as teachers and have more responsibilities than they did as student teachers. Sharon added, "We have so many meetings during lunch and planning time that I have to stay after school to get my other stuff done." Cathy and James also had meetings during lunch and planning times.

As mentioned in previous meetings they discussed the amount of instructional time that was lost to assemblies and other random events and how they had learned to adjust to it without the extreme frustration that they had felt at the beginning of the year. James mentioned, "When you are student teaching it is not your classroom so you're not worried about it as much." They agreed that they had more responsibilities than they expected and that they held themselves accountable for things that they would not have while student teaching. Sharon relayed, "The other big thing that I never realized was how hard it was to not go to work one day. I hate writing sub plans, but it's more than

that I don't want to leave my kids with a sub because they have such a hard time when I'm not there."

The first-year teachers conceded that field trips, parties, and special events, such as student performances and carnivals, were more taxing and time consuming than day to day teaching. They did not realize how frustrating little things associated with these events could be. For example, reserving a school bus for a field trip needed to be done months in advance and meant filling out multiple forms; then they had to collect the permission slips from students and make sure that parent volunteers knew what was appropriate when going on a field trip. Cathy summed it up: "There are a lot of dynamics to these things that I didn't think I would have to deal with."

The co-researchers agreed that teaching had changed their life style. Cathy did not spend as much time doing activities with her son and husband as she had in the past. James and Sharon mentioned that they no longer went out during the week with friends as they had while in college. Sharon stated, "It's different. I was twenty one and in college and I would stay out late and still do okay in class, but now I tell my friends, 'I can't go out. It's a school night.' And they don't really get it." The first-year teachers discussed how other teachers were telling them that their next year would be so much easier and they said that they hoped so, but at this point they weren't sure.

Communication and fitting in.

The first-year teachers found themselves confused when having to deal with many different styles of communication. For example, some teachers wrote e-mails, while others put hand written notes in their boxes, or would mention things that needed to be remembered while passing in the hallway. At times they were informed of required meetings at the last minute or were expected to find out about district meetings on their own. They also had to stay informed about school and district procedures by looking at internet sources.

The co-researchers all spoke of the transitions that they made into their staffs and that at times it was difficult when everyone else had established rapport with one another and they had to work at it. James and Sharon both discussed the faculty "cliques" at their school and recalled situations where they felt like they were being asked to choose sides on particular issues of conflict. James explained, "I'm still trying to fit in and I don't think that I do. All of the ladies have their cliques and my mentor told me not to talk to the other male teacher because it would look bad. I guess he is having some problems at the school and the principal doesn't like him. So I just hang out in my room and don't talk to anybody."

Summary of Findings for May: The Realities of Teaching versus the Expectations.

There were six main differences in the first-year teachers expectations of their profession compared to the realities that they faced. First, the learning curve was greater than they expected and the first year of teaching was very different than student teaching. Second, the amount of guidance and specific feedback that they received was much less

than they had expected. Third, teaching was more time consuming than they expected. Fourth, the changes made in their lifestyles due to teaching were not expected. Fifth, the amount of responsibility that they felt for their students was greater than expected. Sixth, communication with other staff members and dealing with environmental issues such as gossip was more difficult than expected.

Tales from July

Found Poem

Pouring Dreams onto Canvas

Twelve months ago a lofty dream:
a dissertation connecting teaching, research, and art.
Where would I find first-year teachers willing to pour themselves onto canvas?
This was it. The day was here.
Six hours on Sunday painting, gluing, nailing, and stretching.
The mural created brought our experiences to life for all to see.
Teaching is no small job.
Small people are a big responsibility.
We have fallen off the edge of time.
Yes the little things are huge,
From small stuff that takes tons of time,
To the little people who touch our hearts in a big way.
This is proof that once visualized dreams can be realized.
Once realized dreams can be shared.
Once shared dreams can improve the world in some small way.
Imagine a world where everyone was bold enough to dream together,
And courageous enough to work together to bring those dreams to life
Where people were not fighting and destroying, but were laughing and creating.
Imagine and dream.
Wonder and speculate.
Brainstorm and collaborate.
Share and care.
Create and build.
That's what teachers do.

Our Time Together

General Description

The first-year teachers, the artist, and I stayed in communication via e-mail in order to share ideas and finalize materials that would be needed. Charles created the hour glass shaped canvas ahead of time and I obtained an 8' by 4' piece of plywood which was cut in half and attached with hinges so that it would be easier to carry (see Figure 20). We readjusted the date of our final project a couple of times due to busy summer schedules and on a Sunday morning in early July, 2009 we met in Cathy's driveway to create our final work of art.
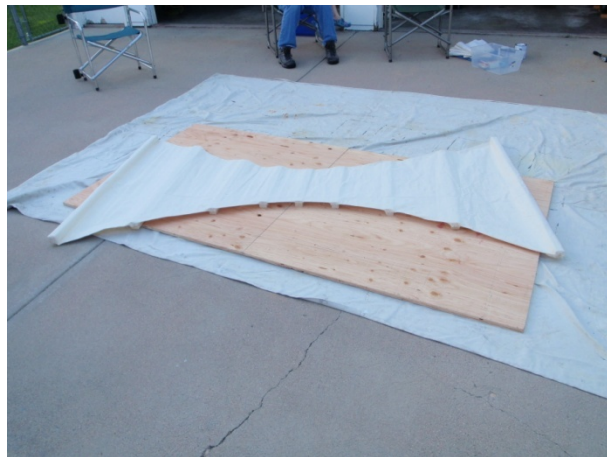
Figure 20. The plywood and canvas for the background.

Art as Product

Everyone was excited about the final project and glad to see one another again. We had extra help since Cathy's husband and son and my husband and daughter agreed to lend a hand as needed. It took some time to lay out the materials and at first we were overwhelmed, not knowing exactly how to get started. As a review of what we wanted to represent, Charles and I read the notes we had taken during the last two meetings and the

first-year teachers reviewed their artwork and a summary of the findings on my laptop

(See figure 21).

Figure 21. The co-researchers review the data and findings.

We decided that I would help Charles work on the background while the first-year

teachers brainstormed ideas for their collages. The background was to be a sunburst

amidst a stormy sky to represent the positive aspects of the first year of teaching and the

importance of a positive attitude (see Figure 22). Charles began with a burst of white

paint in the middle, applied black paint around it and then pulled the white into the black

creating a fading effect. To complete the background, Charles and my daughter applied

yellow paint on top of the white.

Figure 22. The stages for creating the mural background.

Originally, we thought that we would attach several collages representing the first-year teachers' individual experiences, but after looking at the overall construction of the piece, the first year teachers or all of you decided that more than three collages would look crowded. We concurred that this was a situation discussed in our last meeting, knowing that they needed to be willing to think on their feet and change their original plans when needed. (See figure 23).

Figure 23. The co-researchers "think on their feet" and collaborate on adjusting their plans.

Sharon suggested doing three collages collaboratively, each representing different times in the year. The first-year teachers worked together and created one collage for each trimester and placed them sequentially from left to right along the hour glass shape. In their collage representing the first trimester, they used letters and a shoe to relay the fact that they had big shoes to fill and added eyes to represent being watched and hearts to represent how much they loved their students (see Figure 24).

Figure 24. Small collages representing each of the trimesters.

After the background had dried and the small collages were completed, the hourglass-shaped canvas was attached to the plywood background, the exercise bands were stretched across it, the small collages were glued in place, and spray adhesive was used to adhere the sand onto the hour glass (see Figure 25). Although these steps sound simple we went through a great deal of trial and error to get everything to look just as we wanted. For example, Charles and James removed some of the boards from behind the canvas because it looked too bumpy.

Figure 25. Steps used to construct the art.

When the artwork was completed, Charles and the co-researchers signed it and I looked on with pride and admiration. I was amazed that they had created such a wonderful piece of art (see Figure 26), but even more amazing was the laughter, camaraderie, joy, and collaboration that we had shared that day.

Figure 26. The research team and the art created.

Plans for the Future

After we finished creating our art, I shared the first five found poems that I had written with the first-year teachers and they decided that they wanted to read them as part of the performance ethnography. I sent them the poems for the other four months as I completed them. We planned to meet to practice our performance one or two weeks before my dissertation defense in September.

All three co-researchers were moving on to become second-year teachers. Cathy was remaining in the same position at the same school. James would be at the same school, but would teach fourth instead of fifth grade, which was his preference. Sharon would be a contracted kindergarten teacher for a different school in a different district and was able to quit her second job as a theater manager.

This last leg of our voyage had proven fruitful; our performance ethnography and our mural were testaments of this courageous voyage. We anchored our ships and came ashore to rest, but we looked out at the waters we had traveled and remembered with fondness the lessons that were leaned.

This chapter reported the experiences of the first-year teachers during the last two months of the third trimester and discussed the research sessions for those months and how we adapted them to focus on reporting our findings. The creation of our mural and the future's of the co-researchers are discussed as well. The next chapter revisits the origins and purpose of the study, discusses findings relative to the research questions, explains the study's limitations, reports the discoveries made relevant to arts-based research, and discusses avenues for future research. It concludes with my final thoughts on the study and how it has affected me as a researcher, educator, artist, and a person.

CHAPTER VIII

BURIED TREASURE - FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Ships in harbor are safe, but that's not what ships are built for.
John Shedd

Introduction

The co-researchers and I left the safety of the harbor and continuously risked trying new ways of teaching and conducting research. We hope that our stories will help others to leave the safety of their harbors and sail their own ships, whether entering the first-year of teaching, running induction or mentoring programs, teaching education courses, conducting research on the needs of first-year teachers, or implementing arts-based research methodologies such as ethno-mimesis and performance ethnography.

In this chapter, I review the origins and purposes of the study and discuss findings relative to the five research questions. I contemplate the perspectives and ideas uncovered by this study and some which were denied consideration. I relay the lessons learned relevant to arts-based research, and discuss future possibilities. I conclude the chapter with my final thoughts on the study and how it has affected me as a researcher, educator, artist, and person.

Origins and Purposes

This study originated from my experiences in education as an elementary school teacher, mentor of a first-year teacher, teacher educator, student teacher supervisor, and mentor of mentors. I remembered how confusing it was to be a new teacher. There were

people available to answer questions, but I had not known what to ask. As a mentor, I was comfortable with teaching, but did not have any guidance or instruction in mentoring and I do not believe that the experience was beneficial for the first-year teacher I mentored. As a teacher educator, I taught my students "best practices" knowing that the realities of classroom teaching often did not allow teachers to implement them. While supervising student teachers, I viewed the transition from preservice teacher to teacher in a new light and witnessed the complexities and anxieties involved in becoming a teacher. As a mentor of mentors, I realized that most districts were expecting excellent teachers to automatically know how to be excellent mentors, but that teachers dedicated to mentoring needed and wanted a structure to utilize and training in order to be effective (McCann et al., 2005). Therefore I was led to study the experiences and perspectives of first-year teachers in order to obtain and share information useful in developing further support systems for them.

The four main purposes of this study were:

1. To obtain information from the perspectives of the first-year teachers not obtained in previous studies;

2. To create a structured, supportive venue/seminar where first-year teachers could discuss their experiences with other first-year teachers in a non-evaluative setting;

3. To explore the potential of focus group discussions utilizing descriptive feedback (Rodgers 2006), ethno-mimesis, and a/r/tography as vehicles for enabling first-year teachers to think reflectively and critically in order to improve their practice; and

4. To provide a positive and effective venue for participants/co-researchers to share their experiences through performance ethnography.

This study utilized the unconventional methodologies of ethno-mimesis, a/r/tography, and performance ethnography as a means for exploring the experiences of three first-year teachers on a regular basis. Many previous studies have examined the effectiveness of induction and mentoring programs (Bartell, 2005; Brown, 2003; Howe, 2006; Ingersoll, 2002; Killeavy, 2006; Sachs, 2004). Other studies have obtained information directly from first-year teachers through surveys or interviews, which provide information limited by the questions and topics addressed (Algozzine, Gretes, Queen, & Cowan-Hathcock, 2007; Hill & Brodin, 2004). However, this study depicted the experiences of three first-year teachers from their perspectives and relayed these experiences consistently throughout the year. My research identified many factors that contributed to the success of these first-year teachers and revealed the multilayered complexities that were involved. Siegesmund & Cahnmann-Taylor (2008) state:

> Arts-based research offers the layered versus the linear, the cacophonous versus the discursive, and the ambiguous versus the aphoristic. What is the advantage of pursuing the direction of the imagination? First, it is an achievement of mind to recognize the fullness and complexity of the layered, the cacophonous, and the ambiguous. Comprehending complexity is not a given. Our sensory systems are not recording devices that take a full and complete imprint of the world around us. We must learn to see (p. 232).

It is my belief that we cannot "learn to see" the true beauty of the complexities involved in human experiences if we, as qualitative researchers, force our findings into neat and orderly categories. Therefore, my findings are described as they pertain to each of my questions.

228

Experiences, Perceptions, Challenges, and Supports: Question One

What are the experiences of a group of first-year teachers and in what ways were these experiences challenging, supportive, or detrimental?

Experiences

Transitioning from Student Teaching to Teaching

As discussed in Chapter IV, the three first-year teachers attended the same teacher education program and therefore experienced similar situations as they prepared to enter the field of teaching. They completed student teaching in spring, 2008 and began teaching in fall, 2008. Teaching was different from student teaching in several ways. First, the amount of responsibility they had was much greater in teaching than in student teaching. As student teachers they had participated in, but were not responsible for, events such as faculty meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and grading, all of which they were responsible for when they became teachers. Second, the amount of feedback they received while student teaching was much greater and more consistent than what they received during their first year. Third, there were many unexpected tasks facing them as teachers that they had not learned how to do as student teachers, such as utilizing the district's technology and completing required paperwork.

Facing the Unexpected

The first-year teachers faced some situations that were expected, but not to the degree that they occurred. First, they had expected teaching to be time consuming, but they had not expected to work four to five hours every night and up to twenty hours every weekend as they did during their first-trimester. Their workload caused major changes in lifestyles for them, such as not spending much time with family and friends. Simple

things like watching their favorite television show became a great luxury that they rarely indulged in.

Other situations were totally unexpected. First, they had not realized the stress involved in replacing another teacher and either compensating for what the previous teacher had not done or living up to their reputation. For example, Cathy replaced an ill teacher and was expected to ensure that her students learned skills that had been missed the previous year, whereas both James and Sharon replaced teachers who were admired and felt that they were expected to be like these teachers. Second, they had expected their holiday breaks and three day weekends to be restful vacation time, but they often found themselves bringing work home or going into school because they had not completed what they felt was necessary. This was especially true during the first trimester. However, starting in January, 2009 they realized that they would easily burn out if they did not take time for themselves and, therefore, began to relax and enjoy their time off. Also by January, their time management skills had improved so they were able to accomplish more during the normal school day.

Relationships with Other People

The first-year teachers were often confused as to whom to turn for support and help because they were unaware of the roles and responsibilities of their colleagues. For example, none of them had been given any protocol on being mentored and they did not know what support or information to expect from their mentors. Cathy knew that there were paraprofessionals in the building, but did not know what teachers they were allowed to assist. James and Sharon had an instructional coach in the building, but neither of them

knew what that position entailed. Significant people, with whom they interacted, included mentors, teammates, colleagues, instructional coaches, principals, and parents.

Mentors.

Both Cathy and James obtained help and support from their mentors in the first month of school, but after that they sought more help from their teammates than from their mentors. Cathy and James mentioned that not having the same planning time as their mentors made it difficult for them to meet and that it would have been more beneficial for them if they had a mentor that was teaching the same curriculum. Sharon's teammate was her mentor, which was extremely beneficial because they had the same planning time and taught the same curriculum, which allowed her consistent support and collaboration throughout the year. Cathy's mentor was not paid, but James' and Sharon's were paid, thus suggesting that payment alone does not ensure availability or efficiency.

Teammates.

For purposes of this study, teachers teaching the same grade or groups of grades are referred to as teammates. Cathy was a member of a team of four fourth and fifth grade teachers whereas Sharon and James each had one teammate at their grade level. The first-year teachers found that their teammates provided them with the most support on a day-to-day basis. However, James' relationship with his teammate drastically changed midway through the year. She had been eager to plan with him on a weekly basis until January when she stopped collaborating with him and provided no explanation as to why. As the year went on, James and his teammate only spoke when necessary.

Colleagues.

For the purposes of this study, teachers in the same building who do not teach the same grade or groups of grades are referred to as colleagues. The first-year teachers relayed that simple things often brightened their day such as colleagues introducing themselves, helping them figure out the copier, or sharing supplies with them.

The first-year teachers were nervous at first and had many concerns. Colleagues had good intentions when they told them not to worry; however, dismissive comments did not relieve their anxiety. Hearing gossip about other teachers, students, or students' parents was also extremely stressful for them.

Instructional Coaches.

James' and Sharon's school had an instructional coach, but as previously mentioned they were not informed of her role and responsibilities. She seemed to take an active part in planning faculty meetings and met with each grade level team on a regular basis. James felt judged by her and was concerned that her opinions might influence his evaluation. Sharon was unclear as to what the instructional coach expected from her and was often asked to provide information at meetings without being informed ahead of time. Although she was in the school for the whole day, she was a part-time instructional coach and a part-time special education teacher, which also confused them.

Principals.

The first-year teachers received many general compliments and supportive statements from their principals, which helped boost their spirits and reassured them that they were regarded by others as being successful. However, specific compliments and

suggestions would have been more beneficial to them as they desired more feedback and information in order to improve their teaching skills.

It was stressful for the first-year teachers when the principal observed them teach (even if for just a few minutes) and did not make any comments. A simple statement, suggestion, or short note left in their box would have alleviated their anxieties over being observed. For example, although Sharon's principal visited her room every day, for the first six months of school she anxiously worried what the principal thought of her teaching because she did not give her any feedback until her formal evaluation in March, which was extremely positive.

Parents.

When school started, the teachers were very concerned as to how they would be perceived by their students' parents and how they would handle parental conflicts if and when they occurred. During the first trimester, they worked on establishing relationships with their students' parents and consistently informed them of positive situations as well as negative ones. The successful completion of their first parent-teacher conferences relieved their anxieties over parental issues. They had been reassured by the majority of their students' parents that their children enjoyed being in their class and the parents were appreciative and complimentary about their teaching. Each of them received parental requests to meet over specific concerns, but the meetings were successful and their principals offered support.

Challenges

Student Behaviors

During the first trimester, the first-year teachers had to be consistently strict with their students in order to maintain a calm and productive environment. When they weren't strict enough the students tested them by acting out in order to see what they could get away with. The first-year teachers struggled to find the necessary balance between being strict and being kind.

During the second trimester, student behaviors improved and the first-year teachers established good rapport with most of their students. However, each of them had one student who was struggling with extreme behavioral issues and when nothing they tried seemed to help they felt as if they had failed that student.

Stressful Events and Situations

The first-year teachers were surprised by how stressful holiday classroom parties were for them. Their first one was in October and they had just begun to feel as if they had established a structured environment and were managing student behaviors well. However, on the day of the party the students were very excited and there was less structure; consequently behaviors were extremely difficult to manage. Although their skills in managing holiday parties improved with time, this feature of classroom life was still difficult for them.

They had anticipated the stress that accompanied parent-teacher conferences, but the amount of time they took to prepare for them was more than expected. However, they

were very pleased with the outcome and their self confidence increased once the conferences were completed.

The most stressful situation for the first-year teachers was the lack of job security due to the failing economy. James and Sharon felt the impact of the economy in November when their district's proposed bond and mill-levies were voted down and again in March when a reduction in the teaching force was announced. Cathy was impacted in March when her school's projected enrollment went down; however, in May the projections went back up and her job security improved.

<div align="center">

Supports

</div>

Comments and Actions of Others

The first-year teachers felt extremely rewarded when others in the building, including the principal and parents, sincerely thanked them for something that they had worked hard to accomplish. For example, after parent-teacher conferences Cathy's principal walked her out of the building and thanked her for the time and effort she had spent. Parents relayed their child's enthusiasm towards being in their class or commented on their compassion and dedication towards their students.

Environmental Factors

The first-year teachers had crafted excellent lesson plans while student teaching, but had relied on the expertise of their college supervisor and their supervising teacher when determining which standards to teach, the amount of time needed to adequately cover them, and the resources to use. Without the guidance of others, the well defined curriculum guides based on state standards and the district approved resources, such as

textbooks that they were provided, were essential elements for creating successful lesson plans.

<div align="center">*Detriments*</div>

Comments and Actions of Others

The first-year teachers found it essential to stay organized and plan ahead; therefore, it was extremely difficult when what they planned for didn't happen or was rearranged: for example, having the class picture schedule readjusted at the last minute, or when Sharon was given a one hour notice that she would be required to attend a meeting during her planning time. It was also difficult when support that was promised was not delivered. For example, James was told by his instructional coach that if he and his teammate rearranged their math schedule she would be able to help him teach the class. However, once the schedule was rearranged she discovered that being with James did not meet the requirements that she had for working with the special education students. Therefore, James received no support with his lower level math class and it was now held right before lunch, which meant that the students tended to be less focused. Furthermore, his teammate often asked for extra time with the lower group right before his math class, which shortened his class time. Although James felt that the situation was unfair, he did not say anything since the other teacher had more experience.

Environmental Factors

It was detrimental to the first-year teachers' success when their new classroom was void of any supplies, except textbooks, because all of the supplies either had been taken by the departing teacher or picked over by other teachers in the building. The new teachers spent a great deal of their own money on supplies and books for their new

classrooms. Cathy and James recently worked full time at student teaching without an income and James had to pay off student loans.

Summary of Findings for Question One

Many of these findings are similar to those from other studies on the experiences of first-year teachers discussed in Chapter II. For instance, the first-year teachers encountered a huge transition from student teaching to teaching and faced difficulties in adapting to a new and unfamiliar environment (Eldar, Nabel, Schechter, Talmor, & Mazin, 2003). They encountered challenges in managing their classroom, establishing relationships with other staff members, planning curriculum, managing their time, and keeping their lives balanced (Conway, Hansen, Schulz, Stimson, & Wozniak-Reese, 2004). They encountered situations where they felt isolated, moments when they were only hoping to survive (Feiman-Nemser, 2003), and a big discrepancy between what they expected and what was actually experienced (Eldar, Nabel, Schechter, Talmor, & Mazin, 2003).

Some of the first-year teachers' experiences have not been discussed in previous literature. For example, replacing and being compared to another teacher was very stressful for them. Communication with parents is often something that first-year teachers struggle with (Conway, et al., 2004). In September, the first-year teachers discussed being apprehensive about maintaining positive communications with parents and addressing conflicts, but they did not encounter any difficulties in this area. Although many first-year teachers report losing their sense of optimism, excitement, and idealism after their first year (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Manuel, 2002), their sense of optimism,

excitement, and idealism for teaching had matured and was even greater at the end of their first year.

The most significant difference between the findings of this study and those from other studies is the amount of specific detail that is provided. For instance, Patterson (2005) found that first-year teachers were often hired at the last minute, but did not uncover the pros and cons that this situation may present. This study shows us that although being hired late presents difficulties, they can be overcome. The first-year teacher in this study, who was hired after school began, was thrilled to get a job and her teammate provided her with the support and information she needed. Her biggest challenge did not come from starting late, but rather from not having the security of a permanent contract. Patterson (2005) discusses how first-year teachers are provided with unclear information on what was expected of them, but does not give details on the clarity needed. This study reveals specific areas in which the first-year teachers need more clarity than what was provided. For example, they did not know the roles and responsibilities of other people in their building which made it difficult for them to know who to go to for help in specific situations.

Benefits of Seminars for First-Year Teachers: Question Two

What are the benefits for the first-year teachers in meeting monthly with other first-year teachers in a non-evaluative seminar setting to reflect upon and discuss their experiences?

Meeting with other first-year teachers in a non-evaluative setting provided the first-year teachers with the opportunity, encouragement, and psychological and emotional safety needed to reflect upon and discuss their experiences. Talking to other first-year

238

teachers helped them realize that others were experiencing similar challenges and this alleviated their feelings of isolation. The meetings provided Cathy and James with the opportunity to talk to someone else who taught the same subject at the same grade level and they were able to share curricular ideas as well as reassure one another that they were on the right track.

Having monthly meetings allowed the group to develop a real sense of trust and camaraderie, which enabled them to develop a sense of comfort and confidence in their knowledge of teaching and their ability to share it with others. During stressful times the meetings provided a structured venue to vent and relieve tension in an understanding and compassionate environment. Although the meetings were therapeutic at times, their structure kept the group focused on the development of reflective practice and research skills. The focus groups and arts-based research activities promoted deeper reflection and direct involvement in the research process. The first-year teachers quickly developed as co-researchers in this project and each developed strengths in different areas. Cathy quickly developed acute questioning skills and often started and co-facilitated focus groups. James' innate patience and sense of humor kept the group focused and joyous. By quietly listening and observing, Sharon came up with extremely creative suggestions that moved the group forward, especially when creating collaborative art.

I discussed with the first-year teachers the possibility of ending the research project in February, realizing that it required an extensive amount of their time, but they did not hesitate in voicing their unanimous decision to continue. This in and of itself was indication that they viewed the meetings as valuable. They were also committed to the research process and wanted to provide information that would help future first-year

239

teachers, colleagues, administrators, teacher educators, and the general public (voting on

educational issues) make thoughtful and intelligent decisions in the best interest of

children.

Summary of Findings for Question Two

This study demonstrates how teacher-educators can establish support seminars for

first-year teachers that will complement the induction and mentoring programs provided

by most districts. This extra support is valuable because it provides the first-year teachers

with a sense of safety that induction and mentoring meetings cannot provide simply

because they are conducted by district employees and therefore first-year teachers are

more likely to "watch what they say". The ability to speak openly and honestly without

any fear of repercussion is vital to the support seminar. First-year teachers working with

other first-year teachers and professors from their teacher education program share the

same knowledge base of what they were taught and can relate what they have learned to

what they are experiencing. It is important to hear the needs of the first-year teachers

involved in a structured and focused way in order to provide opportunities for reflective

practice and professional growth.

Value of the Descriptive Feedback Process: Question Three

What is the value in using a descriptive feedback process (Rodgers, 2006) in focus

group discussions with first-year teachers and what effect does this process have on the

reflective practices of the first-year teachers?

As previously stated, I attempted to utilize Rodger's (2006) four steps of

reflection – presence in experience, description of experience, analysis of experience, and

experimentation – as a format for the focus group discussions, but it soon became evident that this format was not effective and, if continued, the quality of the data would have been compromised. However, I discovered that these four steps provided a helpful structure for data analysis. I reviewed the 4 steps monthly throughout the year and obtained information on how the first-year teachers had grown.

The first step – presence in experience – was not a realistic expectation for the first-year teachers during the first-trimester because they faced too many obstacles which prevented them from having a real sense of presence. For example they were overwhelmed with tasks and responsibilities and confused by a multitude of procedures and routines. Only after gaining experience, self-confidence, clarity in what was expected of them, and clarity in their teaching were they able to develop a true sense of presence. A sense of presence was evidenced in the second trimester when they not only described their experiences, but also described the roles and potential perspectives of other people involved. During the third trimester, an even greater sense of presence in experience was witnessed by the amount of awareness that they were experiencing on a daily basis. They were also demonstrating more awareness of factors, which not only influenced their teaching, but also their communication and relationships with others. By the end of the year the co-researchers demonstrated a great deal of presence even in difficult situations by remaining focused on the realities of the situations without personalizing events or the comments of others.

Rodger's second step of reflection – description of experience – was evidenced early in the focus group discussion as the first-year teachers described their experiences clearly and openly. Each month the topics became more specific and the discussion more

focused than in the previous month indicating continual growth. As the year continued their descriptions contained more specific details and they also described how their perception of a situation was possibly different from the perceptions of others. During the third trimester the first-year teachers consistently described their experiences with clarity and from different perspectives, both verbally and visually.

Rodger's third step of reflection – analysis of experience – was not evidenced until the second trimester. During the first trimester, Cathy demonstrated the ability to evaluate certain situations by relaying satisfaction or dissatisfaction with them, but was unable to analyze them since she could not determine why she felt that way. In January analysis of experience was demonstrated when the co-researchers determined how and why specific experiences affected them. They began utilizing deductive and inductive reasoning during their reflections and were able to analyze experiences from different perspectives. During the third trimester they reflected upon individual situations in depth, analyzed data as a research group, and described how they analyzed their teaching practices on a continual basis.

Rodger's fourth step of reflection – experimentation – entails creating a specific plan for change based on clear reasoning. This was not observed until January when the co-researchers utilized new means for building classroom community and new methods for teaching math concepts. However, they were reluctant to try anything new whenever there was any risk of conflict. In April they began experimenting with different approaches for dealing with team meetings and communication as long as there was only a minimal risk of conflict. At the end of the school year they were taking small risks in tackling controversial issues that they were not able to take at the beginning of the year. It

was obvious that the fear of conflict, due to a lack of tenure status, was a real obstacle in this stage of reflection.

Summary of Findings for Question Three

Rodger's (2006) four steps of reflection – presence in experience, description of experience, analysis of experience, and experimentation - benefitted this study in unexpected ways. This process was utilized during the first focus group as a possible way of focusing the discussion, but instead it had inhibited the discussion. Although the process was not useful in conducting focus group discussions it was useful during data analysis and became a way for monitoring the growth of the first-year teachers.

Effects of Utilizing Art as a Process of Discovery: Question Four

What effect does the process of creating visual art have on the first-year teacher's ability to reflect upon and express their experiences in meaningful ways?

The first-year teachers made discoveries about their teaching while creating the collages that they felt they would not have made otherwise. During focus groups, they would describe situations that had occurred and how they felt about them without really knowing why, but often during the art exploration they would uncover the reasons as to why the situation affected them the way it had. The arts-exploration also helped them discover personal and professional growth. For example, Cathy's first collage, although very basic artistically, demonstrated a great deal of professional growth that she had not realized.

It was important to be cognizant of the fact that people have different comfort levels with art and creative expression in general and allow them to artistically explore in comfortable and nonthreatening ways. For example, I discovered early on that drawing

created anxiety for the first-year teachers and therefore it would have been inappropriate for me to ask them to draw. It was essential to clarify the concept of utilizing art as a process of discovery rather than as a means to create a visually pleasing product. I continuously reassured them that I did not expect them to be artists and what they discovered while creating the art would be focused on rather than what the art looked like.

The first-year-teachers' growth in creativity and comfort level with their artistic abilities was astounding. Cathy admitted that had she known the extent to which she would be using art she would not have volunteered for the study, but also admitted that she was glad that she was participating because utilizing her creativity in this venue was helping her become a more creative teacher. In three months time, she progressed from cutting her pictures out of magazines to painting.

Summary of Findings for Question Four

Taking risk outside of their comfort zone was an empowering experience for the co-researchers and they said that participating in the arts-based research had given them the courage to take more positive risks with their teaching. It is my belief that one must learn how to take risks gradually in order for the outcome to be continually positive and that one must be given structured opportunities in order to practice risk-taking skills in a safe environment. The arts-based exploration allowed the first-year teachers the structure and safety to practice taking creative risks with art which in turn led to their ability to take creative risks in their teaching.

Implications and Recommendations of the Study: Question Five

What are the implications of this study for teacher education programs, schools, and induction and mentoring programs?

Teacher Education Programs

The first implication of this study for teacher education programs is to ensure that the assignments and lesson plans required in the courses coincide as much as possible with what is expected of teachers in the field. During our discussions the first-year teachers revealed that they spent much time on assignments and lesson plans in their teacher education program that were not applicable. Formal lesson planning is important in order for preservice teachers to learn the process involved; however, it is also important to model and teach how to plan lessons, in a more condensed way, that are used by teachers on a day-to-day basis.

A second implication of this research for teacher education programs is the importance of exposing preservice teachers to textbooks and testing materials which are being used in the districts where they are likely to be employed. The first-year teachers were distressed when they were responsible for standardized reading tests that they had no knowledge of or when they did not know how to utilize the textbooks or curriculum adopted by their districts.

A third implication for teacher education programs is to ensure that student teachers are placed with licensed teachers who are adequately prepared to support them and who do not feel pressured to take on the responsibility. Cathy repeatedly mentioned

how discouraging her student teaching experience had been because of this. One way to ensure this is to reassure principals that their school is not expected to provide student teaching experiences and that having a student teacher should be viewed as a desired privilege rather than as an obligation. Supervising teachers should be adequately informed of their responsibilities and their expectations of the student teacher need to match the expectations of the teacher education program.

Schools

One implication for schools is to ensure that the pressures of replacing another teacher are minimized as much as possible for incoming first-year teachers. One important thing for colleagues to keep in mind is the stressful nature of making up for inadequacies or trying to live up to the reputation of the previous teacher and the importance of keeping comments focused on the first-year teacher rather than on the previous teacher. Even though they realized that no harm was intended the first-year teachers found it difficult to be compared in any way, positive or negative, to the teacher they were replacing. Another way to ensure the comfort of the first-year teacher in this matter is to place their name on the classroom door and on incoming mail right away so that people refer to the room and the class as theirs rather than that of the teacher who left.

A second implication for schools is to ensure that the paperwork for first-year teachers is limited. In the first few months of teaching they found the amount of paperwork overwhelming. For example, if a room inventory or computer requisition is required at the beginning of the year perhaps office personnel, a teammate, or a parent volunteer could complete the forms or help the first-year teacher complete them.

246

Otherwise it is very time consuming for first-year teachers to figure these things out on their own or to find someone to help them.

A third implication for schools is the importance of ensuring that all requests made of first-year teachers are reasonable and fair. Throughout this study the first-year teachers mentioned being put in situations that they saw as unfair but felt that they could not say anything. For example, time is important to all teachers, but especially the first-year teacher who has to spend extra time learning procedures and tasks unfamiliar to them. Thus, it would be unreasonable and unfair to ask them to relinquish teaching time or take on more duties than other teachers in the building. First-year teachers are eager to please and believe that their inexperience puts them in a place of needing to do what others suggest, but it is important that others not take advantage of their willingness. Colleagues with more experience can help the first-year teacher by taking the more difficult schedule or by tactfully increasing the awareness of colleagues who may be taking advantage of them.

A fourth implication for schools is to refrain from dismissing the concerns and anxieties of the first-year teacher, even when they seem unfounded. The first-year-teachers were often told by their colleagues not to worry, which only increased their anxieties. When a colleague or mentor listens to their concerns, demonstrates sincere caring through either compassion or empathy, and makes realistic suggestions, the first-year teacher will obtain the affirmation and direction that they need. Also alerting first-year teachers to potential challenges with students or parents and giving positive suggestions on how to handle them is more helpful than just relaying problematic situations that were faced in the past.

247

Induction and Mentoring Programs

The previous section provided suggestions for how school personnel and parents can help support first-year teachers. One implication for induction programs is to use this information to create a packet or pamphlet of ideas on implementing a "new teacher support system" that the schools could readily utilize. This is the first implication

A second implication for mentoring programs is to provide and require training for teachers who wish to become mentors. The skills involved in being an excellent mentor are much different from the skills involved in being an excellent teacher; therefore teachers need training on mentoring. Mentors must be able to provide adequate advice and modeling on teaching the curriculum and managing classroom behaviors as well as supporting the first-year teachers emotionally. The first-year teachers in this study often mentioned that their mentors had not been given any protocol and did not have the time or ability to help them. Experienced teachers often know what works in their classroom situation, but do not know how to explain why it works or how to advise another teacher what would work in a different situation. Teacher educators are required to explain how and why different methodologies work in different situations. Therefore, a recommendation of this study is that teacher educators, mentoring programs, and teachers collaborate in devising adequate mentor training.

The second implication for mentoring programs is that mentors be carefully matched with their mentees and, if at all possible, mentors and mentees should teach the same curriculum and plan at the same time. After the first month mentors who were not teammates of the first-year teachers did not meet with them and did not provide them

with any feedback on their teaching, which would have greatly benefitted them. Therefore, an additional implication is the need for guiding and monitoring the activities of mentors and mentees. The experience would be more beneficial to both mentor and mentee if they were provided with a structure for establishing an ongoing and productive relationship.

Summary of Findings for Question Five

The findings of this study strongly imply that teacher education programs, schools, and district induction and mentoring programs are too removed from one another. In order to support first-year teachers to the greatest extent possible there needs to be more collaboration and communication between these three entities. Teacher educators can better prepare teachers to meet the curriculum needs of the school districts where they will be employed if they are aware of the curriculum and resources being utilized in those districts. Schools can better support student teachers if they are aware of the teacher education program expectations. District induction and mentoring programs can more adequately support their first-year teachers if they are aware of how they have been trained.

Strengths and Limitations

Sometimes research situations that are commonly labeled as limitations may prove to be strengths. For instance, having a small number of participants and having previous relationships with those participants can be viewed as strengths rather than limitations (Devers & Frankel, 2000; Draper, Hall, & Smith, 2006) I had originally hoped for eight participants whom I had not known previously. However, as I relayed in Chapter III, I initially planned to recruit first-year teachers from a particular district where key people

249

had shown interest in my study, but I was denied access. Consequently I adopted the snowball sampling technique to recruit students who attended the college where I teach. As previously mentioned the three first-year teachers who volunteered were former students of mine.

The fact that I obtained a small sample of first-year teachers with whom I already had established trust and rapport actually worked to my advantage. The data collected from three participants was extensive (over 35 hours of recorded data, 30 pages of journaling, and 50 photographs); therefore, if more participants had been involved the data would have been even more voluminous, and I would have found it difficult to transcribe, code, and analyze it all. Also, if there had been more participants they would have had less opportunity to share and I would have been forced to sacrifice depth of data for more breadth, which would have altered the information obtained. The fact that all of the co-researchers had already established positive relationships with one another and with me granted us the high level of trust essential to undertake such an involved and personal research project.

Quantitative researchers must ensure validity based on statistical principles and evidence from statistical results. Qualitative researchers seek out valuable information based on sound qualitative principles and results that can increase understanding and knowledge of a topic. This study had a great deal of catalytic validity. Kincheloe & Mclaren (2005) state, "Catalytic validity points to the degree to which research moves those it studies to understand the world and the way it is shaped in order for them to transform it." (p.324). This study not only provided information on the experiences of first-year teachers, it also provided the first-year teacher with the self-understanding and

self-direction needed in order to improve their teaching practice and preserve their optimism towards the teaching profession.

However, even though the small sample size, established relationships, and degree of catalytic validity proved to be strengths of this study, there were several factors which could be viewed as limitations. First, the first-year teachers in this study had received the same training and were dedicated and persistent, which is not representative of all first-year teachers. Second, although I discussed my role as principal investigator compared to my role as their former professor and guarded the research from the potential of research bias, I was aware of its existence. For example, I consistently reflected on the data collection process and diligently refrained from giving advice; however, when the participants were struggling with an issue and I could offer support I did do so after explaining why I was leaving the role of researcher and taking on the role of supporter. Third, the conscious choice that I made not to observe the first-year teachers in their classroom in order to ensure that the study focused on their perceptions alone limited this study by not including observational data or the perceptions of others involved with the first-year teachers. Fourth, obtaining the co-researchers' feedback on a visual representation of the data proved to be an effective means of member checking; however, my ability to continue doing so was limited by my time and artistic abilities and therefore the degree to which a/r/tography was utilized as a methodology was limited.

Lessons Learned in Arts-Based Research

Time Required

Conventional qualitative research demands a great amount of time for data collection, transcription, coding, analysis, and writing. However utilizing creative and

251

aesthetic research methodologies requires even more time (Foster, 2007). In addition to the tasks required by conventional qualitative methodologies, the unconventional methodologies of ethno-mimesis, a/r/tography, and performance ethnography required time to collect, move, and replenish art supplies, as well as time for crafting the artistic representations of the data: the found poetry, the visual art, and the performance.

Finesse and Professionalism

As well as requiring extra time the artistic methodologies required a sense of honesty and vulnerability from me as principal investigator and from the co-researchers. This proved challenging at times when we encountered difficult situations that were out of our control and our levels of stress were high; for example, the lack of job security experienced by the co-researchers. Therefore, this study required a great deal of professionalism and efficacy for all of us as co-researchers. As principal investigator, I had to balance my roles as researcher and supporter and make sure that our meetings focused on reflective practice and collaborative research.

Blending Ethno-Mimesis, A/r/tography, and Performance Ethnography

The amount of ambiguity encountered was also a challenge because I was utilizing and blending unconventional methodologies in ways that were new. The literature on arts-based methodologies and, more specifically, on the ethno-mimesis, a/r/tography, and performance ethnography), although limited, was extremely valuable. Four discoveries made in this study reaffirm findings from previous studies.

First, this study revealed that the use of art as a process for discovery meant that the artifacts alone were insufficient data. Therefore conversations during the creation of the artifacts, as well as discussions on the creative process and what the artifact

252

represented to the creator, were essential. This finding coincided with Macintyre, Latta, Buck, and Beckenhauer's (2007) view that just collecting, analyzing, and coding the student assessment artifacts is insufficient because the knowledge and learning taking place in interactions and situations as part of involved the formative assessment process cannot be evidenced by the artifact. When using drawings, not all participants will possess the ability to make their drawings reflect what they intend to express (Swennen, Jorg, & Korthagen, 2004). In general the final artifact/product itself may not adequately represent the growth and learning that took place during the process (Macintyre Latta et al., 2007); thus the focus needs to be on the learning and meaning making during the creative process itself rather than on what is learned from the final product (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005).

Second, the utilization of arts-based research in this study revealed the multi-layered, complex experiences of the first-year teachers, as well as their underlying perceptions and personal feelings about these experiences. As co-researchers we concurred that focus groups alone would not have revealed as much. An arts-based methodological approach allows researchers to obtain important knowledge about teacher development and clarify the less rational and less conscious factors which affect it (Swennen et al., 2004). Arts-based research crosses the strict boundaries between art and research that have been set by traditionalists by melding the processes of creativity and inquiry (Cullen-Reavill, 2009; Finley, 2005).

Third, this study revealed the potential for collaboration and unification inherent within the creative process used to produce visual art. Creating art is a passionate activity that can unite participants, researchers, and audiences (Finley, 2005). Arts-based research

253

can enhance the understandings and visions of both participants and researchers (Macintyre Latta, et al., 2007).

Fourth, none of the co-researchers in this study were trained in art and they possessed different comfort levels in creating the collages. Therefore, it was extremely important to reassure them that the creative process rather than the final art product would be focused upon. Thus, the researcher's role and responsibility is to provide the necessary supportive and enriching environment in which participants are led to concentrate on the process rather than on the quality of their products (Cullen-Reavill, 2009).

In addition to affirming four findings from previous studies, this study uncovered four unique findings by blending ethno-mimesis, a/r/tography, and performance ethnography. First, when promoting exploration through visual art with non-artists it was essential that I establish a safe and inviting environment for creating visual art since I was asking them to take risks and try things with which they were not always comfortable. It was prudent that I allow them to be involved in the creative process in the ways and degrees comfortable for them rather than to encourage a specific approach. It was important to provide an abundance and variety of art supplies for them to choose from and for all of the supplies to be open and easily accessible. There needed to be adequate room to work comfortably and consistent reminders that the goal was not to create a beautiful piece of art, but to have fun and explore experiences in a creative way. The co-researchers often looked to me for permission and encouragement to try something new and they discussed how participating in arts-based research led them to become more creative teachers. It is my belief that creativity is more discouraged in society than it is

encouraged and that teachers are not encouraged or supported in promoting their own creativity or that of their students.

Second, the participatory-action component of this research empowered the co-researchers to take an active role in reflecting upon, discussing, and improving their teaching practice. The leadership and research roles which they developed in this process were a key element in their sense of empowerment. This empowerment was evidenced by their growth in Rodger's (2006) four steps of reflection – presence in experience, description of experience, analysis of experience, and experimentation. As previously discussed in the discussion of the findings from question 3, they progressed from being overwhelmed and unfocussed to being able to demonstrate a great deal of presence even in the most difficult situations and refrain from personalizing the comments or actions of others. They learned to describe their experiences with clarity, detail and from the potential perspectives of others. They grew in their abilities to analyze situations; at the beginning of the year they were not able to explain why they agreed or disagreed with a situation, but at the end of the year they were able to utilize inductive and deductive reasoning in their reflections and were analyzing their teaching with spontaneity on a daily basis. They demonstrated much growth in being able to take educated risks in trying new things in the best interest of students even when slightly controversial.

Third, the principles imbedded in a/r/tography led me to discover that a visual representation of data was an effective tool for member checking. Discussions around the visual representation either confirmed or disconfirmed that my perceptions of the information matched those of the co-researchers. Furthermore, the visual representation promoted further exploration and data collection as evidenced in Chapter V.

255

Fourth, the performance ethnography led us to expand on what could be considered performative by implementing art and poetry rather than a more traditional theatrical performance. In order for a performance conducted by non-artists to be meaningful it was essential that the performance utilize artistic modalities with which the co-researchers were comfortable. Another important factor was the inclusion of a professional artist, to ensure that the artistic representation of the research would communicate what was intended to a larger audience.

<center>Reasons for Developing Arts-Based Support Seminars</center>

The arts-based support seminar for first-year teachers developed in this study provided a safe and trusting environment where they were given the support and opportunities for practice needed in taking creative risks. When their art did not turn out as planned they realized that making mistakes in a safe environment could lead them to new possibilities instead of ridicule. They realized the importance of a safe classroom environment where their own students would also experience making mistakes as learning experiences. In their classrooms they were concerned about meeting standards and raising test scores while feeling as if their performance was constantly scrutinized. However in this seminar they felt safe in learning from their mistakes and empowered to become more proficient and creative teachers. The seminar also provided them with a way to keep their optimism, enthusiasm and love for teaching alive. With so much emphasis on standardization and accountability in the classroom that a creative arts-based support program has the potential to counteract some of the overwhelming stress that new teachers face while providing them with creative opportunities for reflecting upon and improving their teaching.

<center>256</center>

The Need for Future Research

This study revealed that the first-year teachers were not given the amount or specificity of feedback needed to improve their teaching practice in their schools. Therefore, additional research that addresses how feedback is given to first-year teachers and by whom, would be useful to school principals, mentors, and induction coordinators.

This study demonstrated the importance of providing mentors with structured training and support for mentoring responsibilities. Future studies should identify the features of programs that effectively prepare and support mentors.

This study developed a structure for providing an effective support seminar for three first-year teachers. Additional research should explore whether features of this structure could be adopted in programs that support first-year teachers in other settings. Also, research is needed to determine the extent to which the development of support seminars for first-year teachers is an effective approach for teacher education programs to ensure the success of their graduates.

Final Thoughts

Do not go where the path may lead: go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.
Ralph Waldo Emerson

This study was a voyage through unchartered waters which although extremely challenging proved to be even more rewarding. My skills as captain of a research vessel improved in many expected and unexpected ways. I learned to navigate the familiar waters of data collection, analysis, and reporting with a greater sense of ease and finesse. While I was swept away by the less traveled waters of unconventional, arts-based research methodologies, enduring the ambiguity and exploring the possibilities of these

methodologies has empowered me with a new sense of strength and courage as a researcher.

I have always believed that teaching was not just a job or even a profession, but rather an artistic skill to be crafted with creativity, joy, and humor. This research has confirmed this belief for me in a way unimaginable. I was honored and inspired to work with these three wonderful first-year teachers and they instilled a renewed hope and passion for me as a teacher educator.

Since a very early age, I have possessed imagination and passion for the creative and artistic. My background in music performance and creative writing has engendered my love for exploring life with various visual art media. This research experience has given me the self-confidence and courage needed to actually consider myself an artist and to pursue training in the visual and performative arts.

Final Poem

The Art in Heart

I'm moving into a new time
I'm discovering a new rhyme
I'm playing a new song
I'm moving along
Living my life
True to me
Instead of who they
Said I should be
Dreaming my dreams
Dancing my way
Learning new things
While I play
Life is fun now
And I know why
The art in my heart
Is free to fly
I'm flying high
Come on along
And hear my song

REFERENCES

Alexander, B. K. (2005). Performance ethnography: The reenacting and inciting of culture. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 411-442). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Algozzine, B., Gretes, J., Queen, A.J., & Cowan-Hathcock, M. (2007). Beginning teachers' perceptions of their induction program experiences. *Clearing House, 80(3),* 137-143.

Archbald, D. (2008). Research versus problem solving for the education leadership doctoral thesis: Implication for form and function. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 44, 704-739.*

Barber, N. & Turner, M. (2007). Even while they teach, newly-qualified teachers learn. *British Journal of Special Education, 34(1),* 33-39.

Bartell, C. A. (2005). *Cultivating high-quality teaching through induction and mentoring.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Barton, R. & Haydn, T. (2006). Trainee teachers' views on what helps them to use information and communication technology effectively in their subject teaching. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning, 22(4),* 257-272.

Black, J. & Smith, K. (2008). Inspired by the poetic moving image. *Art Education, 61(2),* 25-29.

Brewster, C. & Railsback, J. (May, 2001). *Supporting beginning teachers: How administrators, teachers and policymakers can help new teachers succeed. Portland,* OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Retrieved May 16, 2005 from the World Wide Web: http://www.nwrel.or.org/request/may01/textonly.html

Brown, S. (May, 2003). Working models: Why mentoring programs may be the key to teacher retention. *Techniques, 62*, 18-21.

Cawelti, G. (2006). The side effects of the NCLB. *Educational Leadership, 64(3),* 64-68.

Chase, S.E. (2005). Narrative inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 651-680). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Clandinin, D.J. & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Conrad, D. (2004). Exploring risky youth experiences: Popular theatre as a participatory, performative research method. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 3(1),* 1-24.

Conway, C., Hansen, E., Schulz, A., Stimson, J., & Wozniak-Reese, J. (2004). Becoming a teacher: Stories of the first few years. *Music Educators Journal, 91(1),* 45-50.

Coulter, C., Michael, C., & Poynor, L. (2007). Storytelling as pedagogy: An unexpected outcome of narrative inquiry. *Curriculum Inquiry, 37(2),* 103-122.

Creswell, J. W. (2002). Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education.

Crowley, J. & Davis, A. (2008). A researcher's journey for clarity: Clarifying liability and indemnity issues when careers take on a role in medicines management. *Journal of Psychiatric & Mental Health Nursing,* 15(9), 717-721.

Cullen-Reavill, M. F. (2009). *Art as a process for educational inquiry: Exploring the first year of teaching through ethno-mimesis.* Unpublished manuscript presented at the 2009 American Education Research Association Conference.

Danielson, C. (2002). Foreword. In *Mentoring programs for new teachers: Models of induction and support.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1997). What matters most: 21st-centrury teaching. *Education Digest, 63(3),* 4-9.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2003). Keeping good teachers: Why it matters, what leaders can do. *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 60(8),* 6-13.

Darling-Hammond, L. & Berry, B. (2006). Highly qualified teachers for all. *Educational Leadership, 64(3),* 14-20.

Denzin, N. K. (2003). Performing [auto] ethnography politically. *Review of Education, Pedagogy & Cultural Studies. 25(3),* 14-20.
Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2005). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research.* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Devers, K. J. & Frankel, R. M. (2000). Study design in qualitative research – 2: Sampling and data collection strategies. *Education for Health. 13(2),* 263-271.

Dobert, L. D. & Kurth-Schai, R. (1992). Systematic ethnography: Toward an evolutionary science of education and culture. In *The handbook of qualitative research in education* (pp 93-159). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Dymoke S. & Harrison J. (2006). Professional development and the beginning teacher: Issues of teacher autonomy and institutional conformity in the performance review. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 32(1).* 71-92.

Eldar, E., Nabel, N., Schechter, C., Talmor, R., & Mazin, K. (2003). Anatomy of success and failure: The story of three novice teachers. *Educational Research, 45(1).* 29.

Eisenman, G. & Thornton, H. (1999). Telementoring: Helping new teachers through the first year. *T. H. E. Journal, 26,* 79-82.

Eisner, E. (1994). *The educational imagination: On the design and evaluation of school programs* (3rd ed.). New York: Macmillan.

Fayne, H.R. & Ortquist-Ahrens, L. (2006). Entry-year teachers inside and outside of the academy. *College Teaching, 54(4),* 320-323.

Feiman-Nemser, S. (2003). What New Teachers Need to Learn. *Educational Leadership, 60(8),* 25-30.

Finley, S. (2005). Arts-based inquiry: Performing revolutionary pedagogy. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 681-694). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Gardner, S. (2004, November). Participatory action research helps now. *Education Digest,* 51-55.

Gilbert, L. (2005). What helps beginning teachers? *Educational Leadership, 62(8),* 36-39.

Graziano, C. (2005, February). Schools out. *Edutopia Magazine,* 38-44.

Harrison, J., Lawson, T., & Wortley, A. (2005). Facilitating the professional learning of new teachers through critical reflection on practice during mentoring meetings. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 28(3),* 267-292.

Hasslen, R. (2008). From a tarpaper shack to a transformed classroom: A teacher's journey. *Kappa Delta Pi Record, 44(2),* 52-54.

Hill, G. & Brodin, K.L. (2004). Physical education teachers' perceptions of the adequacy of university coursework in preparation for teaching. *Physical Educator, 61(2),* 75-87.

Howe, E.R. (2006). Exemplary teacher induction: An international review. *Educational Philosophy & Theory, 38(3),* 287-297.

Howe, J. M. (2008). A journey of a thousand miles. *New Directions for Higher Education, 143, 73-79.*

262

Ingersoll, R. M. (2001). The realities of out of field teaching. *Educational Leadership, 58(8),* 42-45.

Ingersoll, R. M. (2002). The teacher shortage: A case of wrong diagnosis and wrong prescription. *NASSP Bulletin, 86(631),* 16-31.

Ingersoll, R. M., & Smith, T. M. (2003). The wrong solution to the teacher shortage. *Educational Leadership, 60(8),* 30-33.

Irwin, R. L. & Springgay, S. (2008). A/r/tography as practice-based research. In S. Springgay, R. L. Irwin, C. Leggo, & P. Gouzouasis (Eds.), *Being with a/r/tography* (pp. xix-xxxiii). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Janson, A. & Howard, L. (2004). The odyssey of Ph.D. students becoming a community of practice. *Business Communication Quarterly,* 67, 168-181.

Jeffries, R. (1999). 'Performing' community service work: A collaborative model of inquiry. *High School Journal, 82(2),* 71-79.

Johnson, S. M. & Birkland, S.E. (2004). Seeking success with students. In *Finders and keepers* (pp. 69-90). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Johnson, S. M. & Donaldson, M.L. (2004). Greater expectations, higher demands. In *Finders and keepers* (pp. 1-18). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Johnson, S.M. & Kardos, S.M. (2004). Professional culture and the promise of colleagues. In *Finders and keepers* (pp. 139-166). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Jordan, S. (2003). Who stole my methodology? Co-opting PAR [I]. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 1,* 185-200.

Kemmis, S., & McTaggert, R. (2005). Participatory action research: Communicative action and the public sphere. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 559-604). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Killeavy, M. (2006). Induction: A collective endeavor of learning, teaching, and leading. *Theory Into Practice, 45(2),* 168-176.

Kincheloe, J. L. & McLaren, P. (2005).Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 303-342). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Kindall-Smith, M. (2004). Teachers teaching teachers: Revitalization in an urban setting. *Music Educators Journal, 91,* 41-46.

King, S. (2006). *Mosaic: Techniques and traditions.* New York: Sterling Publishing Company.

LaBoskey, V. K. (2006). 'Reality check': Teachers' lives as policy critique. *Teachers & Teaching, 12(2),* 111-122.

La Jevis, L. & Springgay, S. (2008). A/r/tography as an ethics of embodiment. *Qualitative Inquiry.* 14(1), 67-89.

Leggo, C. (2008). Autobiography: Researching our lives and living our research. In S. Springgay, R. L. Irwin, C. Leggo, & P. Gouzouasis (Eds.), *Being with a/r/tography* (pp. 3-23). Rotterdam,: Sense Publishers.

Loughran, J., Brown, J.,& Doecke, B. (2001). Continuities and discontinuities: the transition from pre-service to first-year teaching. *Teachers & Teaching, 7(1),* 7-23.

Lundeen, C. A. (2004). Teacher development: The struggle of beginning teachers in creating moral (caring) classroom environments. *Early Child Development & Care, 174(6),* 549-564.

Macintyre Latta, M., Buck, G., & Beckenhauer, A. (2007). Formative assessment requires artistic vision. *International Journal of Education & the Arts, 8(4).* Retrieved June 12, 2007 from the World Wide Web: http://ijea.asu.edu/v8n4/.

Maloch, B. Flint, A.S., Eldridge, D., Harmon, J., Loven, R. Fine, J. C., et al. (2003). Understandings, beliefs, and reported decision making of first year teachers from different reading teacher preparation programs. *Elementary School Journal, 103(5),* 431-457.

Manuel, J. (2002). 'A teacher of excellence': Experiences of beginning teachers. *Education Links, 65,* 32-37.

McCann, T. M. & Johannessen, L. R. (2004). Why do new teachers cry? *Clearing House, 77(4),* 138-145.

McCann, T. M., Johannessen, L. R., & Ricca, B. (2005). Responding to new teachers' concerns. *Educational Leadership, 62(8),* 30-34.

McCormack, A., Gore, J., & Thomas, K. (2006). Early career teacher professional learning. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 34(1),* 95-113.

Millinger, C. S. (2004). Helping new teachers cope. *Educational Leadership, 61(8),* 66-69.

Morton, F. (2005). Performing ethnography: Irish traditional music sessions and new methodological spaces. *Social & Cultural Geography, 6(5),* 661-676.

Musgrave, E. (2009). Focus on the research journey. *CTS: Clinical & TranslationalScience, 2(1), 4-5.*

NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education. (1999). *News & Publications: Creating a teacher mentoring program.* Los Angeles, CA: NEA Foundation for the Improvement of Education. Retrieved May 16, 2005 from the World Wide Web: http://www.nfie.org/publications/mentoring.htm

Nias, J. (1996). Thinking about feeling: The emotions in teaching. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 26(3),* 293-305.

O'Neill, M. (with Giddens, S., Breatnach, P., Bagley, C., Bourne, D., & Judge, T.). (2002). Renewed methodologies for social research: Ethno-mimesis as performative praxis. *Sociological Review, 50(1),* 69-88.

O'Neill, M. & Tobolewska, B. (2002). Renewing methodologies for socio-cultural research: Global refugees, ethno-mimesis and the transformative role of art. *Advances in Art, Urban Futures. 2*, 141-155.

Paley, N., Crawford, J., Kinney, K., Koons, D., & Seo, J. (2005). Remaking *The Educational Imagination. International Journal of Education & the Arts, 6(17).* Retrieved June 12, 2007 from the World Wide Web: http://ijea.asu.edu/v6n17/.

Patterson, M. (2005). Hazed! *Educational leadership, 62(8),* 20-23.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods.* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Picart, C. J. S. (2004). Dharma dancing: Ballroom dancing and the relational order. *Qualitative Inquiry, 10(6),* 836-868.

Popham, W. J. (2004). Curriculum matters. *American School Board Journal, 191(11),* 30-33.

Reason, P. (Ed.). (1994). *Participation in human inquiry.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Renard, L. (2003). Setting new teachers up for failure …or success. *Educational Leadership, 60(8),* 62-64.

Ria, L., Seve, C., Saury, J., Theureau, J., & Durand, M. (2003). Beginning teachers' situated emotions: A study of first classroom experiences. *Journal of Education for Teaching, 29(3),* 219-224.

Rippon J. & Martin, M. (2006). Call me teacher: The quest of new teachers. *Teachers & Teaching, 12(3),* 305-324.

Rodgers, C. R. (2006). Attending to student voice: The impact of descriptive feedback on learning and teaching. *Curriculum Inquiry, 36(2), 209-237.*

Sachs, S. K. (2004). Evaluation of teacher attributes as predictors of success in urban schools. *Journal of Teacher Education, 55,* 177-187.

Schlichte, J., Yssel, N., & Merbler, J. (2005). Pathways to burnout: Case studies in teacher isolation and alienation. *Preventing School Failure, 50(1),* 35-40.

Seigesmund, R. & Cahnmann-Taylor, M. (2008). The tensions of arts-based research in education reconsidered: The promise of practice In Cahnmann-Taylor, M. & Seigesmund, R. (Eds.), *Arts-based research in education: Foundations for Practice.*(pp.231-246). New York: Routledge.

Smith, A. D. (2002). From process data to publication: A personal sensemaking. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 11,* 384-406.

Smith, S. W., Brownell, M. T., Simpson, R. L., & Deshler, D. D. (1993). Successfully completing the dissertation: Two reflections on the process. *Remedial and Special Education, 14,* 53-59.

Springgay, S., Irwin, R. L., & Kind, S. (2005). A/r/tography as living inquiry through art and text. *Qualitative Inquiry, 11 (6), 897-912.*

Stake, R.E., (2005). Qualitative case studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 443-466). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Swennen, A., Jorg, T., & Korthagen, F. (2004). Studying student teachers' concerns, combining image-based and more traditional research techniques. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 27(3), 265-283.*

Thomson, D. (2008). A science teacher's beginning journey. *Teaching Science – the Journal of the Australian Science Teachers Association, 54(4),* 8-8.

Villani, S. (2002). *Mentoring programs for new teachers: Models of induction and support.* Thousands Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

Williams, A. (2003). Informal learning in the workplace: a case study of new teachers. *Educational Studies, 29,* 207-219.

Winter, E. C. (2006). Preparing new teachers for inclusive schools and classrooms. *Support for Learning, 21(2),* 85-91.

Appendix A
Email Conversation with Dr. Maggie O'Neill

My First Email 12-15-07

Date: Sat, 15 Dec 2007 16:21:29 -0700 (MST)
From: "Marilyn Cullen-Reavill" <mcullenr@du.edu> **Block Address**
To: m.oneill@lboro.ac.uk
Subject: **ethno-mimesis as disertation research methodology**

Reply   Reply All   Forward   Print   Delete

Hello I am a doctoral student in Denver, Co US and I am writing to you
because I am interested in ethno-mimesis as my research methodology. I
will be studying the experiences of first-year teachers. I have read
two of your papers: Renewed Methodologies for Social Research:
Ethno-mimesis as Performative Praxis and Renewing Methodologies for
Socio-Cultural Research: Global Refugees, Ethno-mimesis and the
Transformative Role of Art. The questions that I hope you will have
time enough to answer are as follows:
1.Your work is the only place I have found the term ethno-mimesis
used. Did you create this term?
2. Ethno-mimesis is defined as a combination of ethnography and
artforms in your paper written with Tabloweska and you combined
ethnography, participatory action research and participatory arts. I
plan on combining narrative discussion groups, participatory action
research, participatory arts-based research, and performance
ethnography. Would I be correct in assuming that this could be labeled
as ethno-mimesis?

I am truly intrigued and excited by your work and I appreciate any
response that you may have time to give

Marilyn F. Cullen-Reavill
University of Denver

Reply   Reply All   Forward   Print   Delete

Top UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

https://webcentral.du.edu/cp/email/message?msgId=2be40e6dc97ed649428858f2fdca4ee1-... 1/27/2008

First Response from Dr. Maggie O'Neill 12-17-07

From: "M.ONeill" <M.ONeill@lboro.ac.uk>   **Block Address**
Subject: **Re: ethno-mimesis as disertation research methodology**
To: "Marilyn Cullen-Reavill" <mcullenr@du.edu>
Date: Mon, 17 Dec 2007 03:56:23 +0000

⌨ Reply   ⌨ Reply All   ⌨ Forward   🖨 Print   🗑 Delete

Hi Marilyn
I am writing to you from New York- Columbia Uni! Yes I coined the term and
what you plan is most definitley ethno-mimesis!! THanks so much for writing.
It would be really good to hear how you get on-so please keep in touch! I am
always happy to support PhD students
I am here at a conference you might be interested in for next year- Humiliation and Human Dignity global
network - there are a lot of educationalists here!
Who is supervising your work at Denver?
warm regards, Maggie

On Sat, 15 Dec 2007 16:21:29 -0700 (MST)
 Marilyn Cullen-Reavill <mcullenr@du.edu> wrote:
> Hello I am a doctoral student in Denver, Co US and I am
>writing to you
> because I am interested in ethno-mimesis as my research
>methodology. I
> will be studying the experiences of first-year teachers.
>I have read
> two of your papers: Renewed Methodologies for Social
>Research:
> Ethno-mimesis as Performative Praxis and Renewing
>Methodologies for
> Socio-Cultural Research: Global Refugees, Ethno-mimesis
>and the
> Transformative Role of Art. The questions that I hope
>you will have
> time enough to answer are as follows:
> 1.Your work is the only place I have found the term
>ethno-mimesis
> used. Did you create this term?
> 2. Ethno-mimesis is defined as a combination of
>ethnography and
> artforms in your paper written with Tabloweska and you
>combined
> ethnography, participatory action research and
>participatory arts. I
> plan on combining narrative discussion groups,
>participatory action
> research, participatory arts-based research, and
>performance
> ethnography. Would I be correct in assuming that this
>could be labeled
> as ethno-mimesis?
>
> I am truly intrigued and excited by your work and I
>appreciate any
> response that you may have time to give
>
> Marilyn F. Cullen-Reavill
> University of Denver

https://webcentral.du.edu/cp/email/message?msgId=ee21ebccf88ed02f4fe8a9e45505a094-...   1/27/2008

Loughborough University - Department of Social Sciences
Staff
Home•Staff•Academic Staff •Maggie O'Neill • Biography
Dr Maggie O'Neill
biography : publications : workshops & talks : links
I joined the Department of Social Sciences in May 2005. Prior to this I worked in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Staffordshire University as Senior Lecturer, then Reader in Sociology (1994-2005); and before that I was Lecturer/ Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Nottingham Trent University (1984-94). I gained my PhD in 1995.
My inter-disciplinary research career has developed along a threefold path: the development of cultural, critical and feminist theory; the development of renewed methodologies for socio-cultural research – including visual methodologies, ethno-mimesis, and creative consultation; and the development of praxis through participatory action research (PAR) as an outcome of scholarly activity. Together they contribute to the field of cultural criminology and social policy.

Research Expertise
Research activity and outcomes include the development of theory; a focus upon innovative cultural, creative and participatory methodologies; and the production of praxis – knowledge which addresses and intervenes in public policy as well as moving forward debates, dialogue and scholarship in three substantive areas: prostitution and the commercial sex industry (since 1990); forced migration (since1999); critical theory and cultural methodologies (since 1990). My methodological concept of ethno-mimesis (the inter-connection of sensitive ethnographic work and visual re-presentations) is a tool as well as a process for exploring lived experience through sensuous knowing using artistic forms and practices.

Current Research
Arts, Migration and Diaspora
My current research focuses upon migration, transnational communities, identity, belonging, placemaking and the transformative role of art. This research trajectory began in 1999 with funding from the **AHRB** for '**Global Refugees, exile displacement and belonging**'. This was followed by **AHRB research exchange** funding (working with City Arts in Nottingham) to develop a cultural strategy for working with refugees and asylum seekers in the East Midlands. In 2006 Phil Hubbard and I received **AHRC** funding to develop a regional network focusing upon **Arts, Migration and Diaspora** to examine the transformative role of arts and culture in fostering integration and belonging for new arrivals in the East Midlands. Through a series of events hosted by network members The 'Making Connections' network addresses questions of artistic access and cultural inclusion, bridging academic, voluntary and service-sector providers in the search for new strategies of participation that will a) enhance the lives of recent arrivals in the English East Midlands b) stimulate high-quality inter-disciplinary research drawing upon the rich resources and expertise in the region c) facilitate connection, communication and feed into public policy and d) contribute to public awareness of

issues facing new arrivals. This funding was followed in 2008-2009 by AHRC Knowledge Transfer fellowship funding to explore

Transnational communities: towards a sense of belonging in the integration process of new arrivals exploring themes of 'belonging' and relationships between home, place making, identity, and belonging. This will take place in collaboration with four community arts organisations: Charnwood Arts, Loughborough; City Arts, Nottingham; Soft Touch, Leicester; and the Long Journey Home, a regional organisation for artists in exile.

Human Dignity and Humiliation

I am currently exploring concepts of humiliation in relation to forced migration, sex work and citizenship with the Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies Global Network; and working with Laurie http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/ss/staff/staff_biog/oneill.html

My intent in conducting a pilot study was to explore the ethnomemisis research process and gain experience in doing ethnomemisis research, which is the combination of participatory action research and arts-based research I also needed to discover the effectiveness of connecting ethnomemisis with narrative focus groups and to ensure that this process would provide meaningful and analyzable data.

There were two main purpose of this study: 1. to engage teachers, who had just completed their first year, in narrative discussion in order to determine the needs and challenges that they faced and 2, .to determine if ethnomemisis promotes reflective practice. I was trying to answer the following three questions:

1. What are the experiences of first-year teachers in the Denver Metropolitan Area?
2. Is it beneficial for first-year teachers to meet with other first-year teachers in a non-evaluative setting to reflect upon and discuss their experiences?
3. Does the creative process used in the visual arts help first-year teachers reflect at a deep level?

The sample for this study was four inner city teachers who had just completed their first year of teaching. Three females and one male participated in the study. Three of the four participants were in teaching as a second career and the other one had worked before but considered teaching as her first career. Two of the participants had gone through a teacher education licensure program and the other two went through an alternative licensure program.

My participants and I met for 3, 4-hour sessions over the summer (June 15th, July 2nd and July 6th). From 1 -5 pm. We started each session with a 60-90 minute "narrative" focus group discussion. I define a narrative focus group as one in which participants are not asked to answer and discuss pre-determined questions, but rather participants discuss their own individual experiences in relationship to certain topics.

I chose to use ethnomemisis as the methodological foundation for my study because I thought that my questions would be best answered by this process. Since participatory action research is a large part of this foundation, my participants were actually co-researchers and they determined the discussion group norms and the topics that they believed were most important. I believe this is essential because if the researcher determines the topic to be discussed then the researcher is pre-determining what is important to the first-year teachers instead of having it be determined by them. The topics that my participants chose to focus on were: curriculum at different grade levels, the preparation or lack there of given by teacher education programs to meet the needs of all developmental levels well, relationships (parents, staff, and principals), organization (materials, environment, and time), prioritizing tasks and the demands of other people, professional politics, and dealing with different populations/demographics.

The last two hours of each session were used for the arts-based process itself. In session one the participants were asked to create a collage(s) demonstrating their expectations of teaching going in and the realities they faced in their first yea of teaching. In session two participants created clay sculptures to represent the successes and challenges that they faced. In the first two sessions the artwork was created individually

and from the perspective of the process having priority over the product. I asked participants to refrain from predetermining what they would create and allow themselves to just experiment /play with the medium and topics to see what they uncovered. At the end of session two my participants and I discussed what types of medium they would like to work with next time and how they would like to create a visual piece to communicate their first year of teaching experiences. They decided to do one large piece collaboratively in mixed mediums of paint and collage. For this third session then the product was determined by the data they had collected and would become their way of representing/reporting the findings. So the final product now determined artistic process whereas previously artistic process determined the product.

The discussion groups and discussion during the art project time were tape recorded and transcribed. All of the art created was photographed as whole pieces and in detailed sections. The transcribed data is in the process of being color coded according to participant and how it was emphasized by the participant (the level of importance it had to the participants as determined by the number of times it was repeated and voice inflection). I took the pictures from session one and started to connect them with the words of the participants. The next step then is to take the transcribed data and categorize it into themes. I will continue connecting words from the transcriptions to the photographs. My preliminary findings from this data are as follows

- o 1. The new teacher's expectations of what teaching would be like and the realities that they faced were very different
- o 2. Challenges and successes faced in the teaching profession were very different from what they faced in other professions
- o 3. The new teachers were overburdened by responsibilities and often felt responsible for things which they had no control over
- o 4. The new teachers had to deal with an enormous amount of priorities and expectations from many sources including students, parents, other teachers, school and district administrators and governmental mandates.
- o 5. The participatory arts-based research format gave the participants a way to explore the emotions they experienced and reflect upon what they learned in their first year of teaching at a very deep level. This process helped them to gain a sense of awareness and empowerment that will be useful to them in their second year of teaching.

After I finish my data analysis, I will determine the final conclusions, and I will write and submit an article for consideration to the online, peer-reviewed journal entitled *International Journal of Education & the Arts.* At the end of this study my participants and I determined that the study would be well represented through a performance of a one-person play that I could give at the AERA convention. Although I had the proposal ready to submit I came to the difficult decision that I would not be afforded the time needed this year to finish this stage of the project. My hope now is to acquire further funding for next summer and bring my participants back to work on the performance.

There is an age-old saying: "a picture paints a thousand words." Using an ethnomemisis process to study the experiences of first-year teachers has reaffirmed this

saying for me. It is my belief that the visual art created by my participants provided insight into their experiences that the narrative focus groups alone would not have provided.

Appendix D
Research Premises

Topic of Study

Why first-year teachers?
- ❖ 30% of all first-year teachers leave the profession within the first 3 years
- ❖ To improve teacher education programs by finding out what you "wished you would've learned in college but didn't"
- ❖ To provide information to mentoring and induction programs

Why study a process?
- ❖ To develop a means for activating positive change
- ❖ To learn and develop new techniques for doing research
  - ❖ To develop modes of research that are rewarding to the participants as well as the researcher

Purpose of Study
Why is this important?

- ❖ To hear from first-year teachers what it is like to be a first-year teacher and help them tell their stories. Why?
  - ❖ Because they are the experts on the topic
  - ❖ Because traditionally researchers have gotten information from mentors, induction coordinators and teacher educators but not the first-year teachers themselves
- ❖ To have ongoing conversations and creative explorations around what is experienced as a first-year teacher. Why?
  - ❖ Because these methods are likely to provide a deeper understanding of the experience than interviews or surveys
  - ❖ Because teachers in their first-year experience different things at different times
  - ❖ Because often induction and mentoring programs give first-year teachers wonderful suggestion of things to try but little time to process what it is they are experiencing
  - ❖ Because it may be supportive to them to have the opportunity to discuss what is happening to them

Format of Study
What methods will be used and why?

- ❖ Participatory Action Research
  - ❖ Participants become co-researchers and are treated as the experts on the topic
  - ❖ Participants take an active rather than a passive role
  - ❖ Collaborative: decisions are made together

- ❖ Focus Group Discussions
  - ❖ Topics for discussion are decided upon by all members rather than the principal investigator asking questions
  - ❖ Active listening and support is given to all members
  - ❖ Means for reflecting upon professional practice
- ❖ Arts-based Research
  - ❖ No one is an artist
  - ❖ Art is used to explore a topic
  - ❖ The artistic process and discovery is what is focused on rather than the product
- ❖ Performance Ethnography
  - ❖ The "performance" can take on many forms
  - ❖ A way of getting the research to a broader audience

Enables the creativity involved in teaching and research to come to the forefront

Appendix E

Procedures for Focus Group Discussions
- ❖ As co-researchers we will come up with some group norms that we want to follow and modify them as we go
- ❖ As co-researchers we will come up with a list of topics that we want to discuss
- ❖ We will have general conversation around the topic
- ❖ Then if anyone has a specific situation to discuss then we will use Descriptive Feedback(Rodgers, 2006) In the contexts of this study, descriptive feedback will be a reflexive conversation between the principal investigator and the first-year teachers/co-researchers in which they describe their experiences as teachers with the hopes of improving upon their own practice.

Using Rodgers' (2006) four steps of reflection:
1. Presence in experience
- ❖ Being aware of what one's role is in the experience
- ❖ Being aware of the role's that others may have had in the experience
2. Description of experience
- ❖ Clearly describe the situation in a factual way to the group
- ❖ The group then asks only questions needed to clarify the situation
3. Analysis of experience
- ❖ Describe the roles played by oneself and others involved
- ❖ Describe one's perspective of the situation and its outcome
- ❖ Ask a specific question of the group?
- ❖ Group then discusses the question asked?
4. Experimentation
- ❖ Person who shared their experience will then come up with one specific thing that they will think further on or something that they will do
- ❖ They will share the outcome of their thoughts or actions with the group next time

Appendix F
Past and Present Roles

Past Role as Professor
❖ I did more of the talking
❖ I created the agenda
❖ I (hopefully) taught important information
❖ I had to give grades

Present Role as Co-Researcher/Principal Investigator
❖ I will do more of the listening
❖ We will create the agenda and decide what is important together. I will be a guide with research tools to provide structure.
❖ You will teach me important information about being a first-year teacher
❖ I will give no grades only support in a confidential setting