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The hermeneutic spiral within faith : the passage of language as socialization

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**THE HERMENEUTIC SPIRAL WITHIN FAITH:
THE PASSAGE OF LANGUAGE AS SOCIALIZATION**

A Thesis

Presented to

**The Faculty of the Division of Teacher Education
San Jose State University**

In Partial Fulfillment

**of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts**

by

Galit Kazovsky

August 2001

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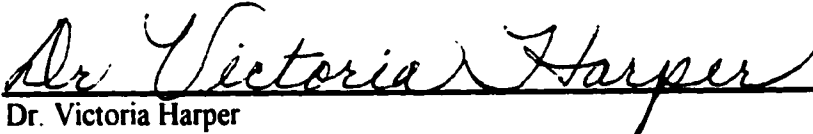
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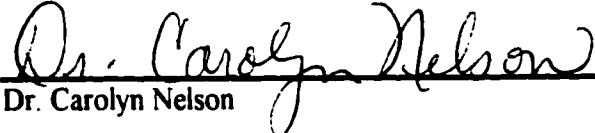
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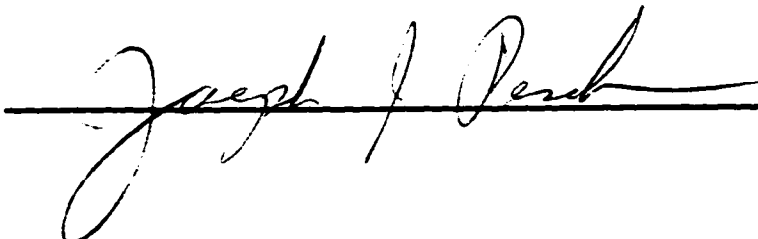


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ABSTRACT

THE HERMENEUTIC SPIRAL WITHIN FAITH: THE PASSAGE OF LANGUAGE AS SOCIALIZATION

By Galit Kazovsky

This thesis suggests that having the context for conversation opens the door for reflection, hermeneutics and critical thinking and can be passed on from institution to parent to child as socialization in the form of language. The context studied in this research was interfaith relationships. Three couples were interviewed, one Jewish and Jewish, one Jewish and Agnostic, and one Jewish and Catholic. Their conversations and reflections thereof were juxtaposed against the types of questions that their children asked. Several theological leaders in the community were interviewed for insight into language to which the parents may have been exposed. This research was conducted in Los Altos, California. Dialogic conversations, interview reflections and transcript reviews provided insight necessary to grapple with this topic.

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I am thankful for all of my research participants. They spent an incalculable amount of hours dialoguing with me and engaging in personal and conversational reflections without which this thesis would have been impossible. Their voices transformed me as well as this thesis.

Ultimately, I could not have engaged in this process without the intellectual, emotional and spiritual support of my parents, Dr. Leonid Kazovsky and Ilana Kazovsky and the love of my life, Jason Breen. Without their affection, love, support and the occasional nudge and nag, this thesis could not have been completed. This thesis is dedicated to them.

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PROLOGUE

My father argues that especially since I do not pay rent, I should not be living out of two rooms in his house. Admittedly, in June 1998, after I received a Bachelors of Science from the University of California at Davis, I came home to mom and dad, unpacked my “necessities” into my “new room” and left everything else sitting from floor to ceiling in my “old room.” Today, a full year later, it is officially time to clean my room from high school. As I make a path to my bed, which is still covered in the pink and peach bedspread that I fought tooth and nail with my mother to not buy, I move boxes and bags out of the way. The truth is that there is no “out of the way” in such a full room. Therefore, I attempt to put some undoubtedly useless things under my bed, an age-old trick that children use when cleaning for the sake of their parents’ sanity whose “roof they are living under.” Unfortunately, I find the space under my bed already occupied. Frustrated, I reach under the bed to see what I placed there exactly five years ago when I left for school. I pull out a box filled with books and pictures and amongst the chaos I find my journal from high school. I have not picked it up in years, and I literally blow some dust off of the cover before I open it up. Now I am sitting cross-legged on the floor of my old room covered with dust and surrounded by boxes, my task at hand completely forgotten as I delve into the words I wrote in this very spot. As I flip through pages filled with four years of worries, laughs, and memories I reach a section where the pages are bubbly and the words are streaked with my own tears. Without even beginning to read, I

immediately know which part of my narrative these pages are from. On January 26, 1993

[my mother's birthday] I wrote,

...I don't know why [my mother] is so angry all the time. It's not like Jake and I are getting married. Who gets married at seventeen? Who even thinks about it? And kids? She's worried about my kids? They don't even exist yet! And so what if we do get married? You'd think that a Jew, who knows exactly what it's like to be hated, would do everything that she possibly can to make sure that everybody feels good...talk about not learning from mistakes! Besides, when was the last time that she even looked at, much less, stepped into a temple? We're not even really Jewish! I wonder if dad even knows what that means. Hell, I don't! Jake at least has some morals and can say what they are even if his reasons aren't so good. Who the hell even said that I want to marry someone Jewish? Who's talking about marriage anyway? How could she not let him come to her birthday and not even be able to explain why? I wonder if she even knows. How lame is that? To be able to say what she doesn't want without being able to explain what she does want. Funny, we only talk about being Jewish when we talk about me not marrying "Jake the Mormon."...

Jake and I did not manage to stay together. The pulls of a Jewish mother one side and a Mormon father on the other were too great for us to bare. Fortunately, seventeen-year-old hearts heal well. Just three years later, I spent a quarter of my junior year in college abroad in Israel. It was here that one of my mother's dreams seemed to come true; I was dating a Jew. One Friday night in the summer of 1996, I wrote,

What an amazing experience to have Grandma and Gramps, mom, me, and Adam all sharing Shabbat together. I have to laugh because they didn't even have Shabbat candles in the house! What I finally understand today, though, is that being Jewish to them – to me?- is all about the people you love enjoying life together. Delicious food, good wine, Grandma and Gramps griping at each other, Adam trying to put his two cents in with his limited Hebrew... We're all so happy right now. I wonder if a non-Jew would enjoy this as well? Would they appreciate it less if I had to explain it all to them first? Or maybe, would they appreciate it more? Who appreciates "the given" anyway?...

The intricacies of Judaism were never discussed in my household, although our Jewishness was definitely a point of tension as I grew into the dating age. My mother and

I “discussed” the issue -loudly- for years on end, and we never did come to understand what the other was saying. There is a statistic that says that ninety-five per cent of a person’s conversational time and energy is spent attempting to defend one’s own point of view; whereas authentic learning through dialogue can only happen when the other person talks, and you listen (Lecture of Seminar in Curriculum, 22 September 1998).

Genuine listening provides an opportunity to learn something new.

Conversation is a process of coming to an understanding. Thus it belongs to every true conversation that each person opens himself to the other, truly accepts his point of view as valid and transposes himself into the other to such an extent that he understands not the particular individual but what he says (Gadamer 1989, 385).

Today I realize that my mother’s and my intentions were not to listen to, learn from or to understand each other’s standpoints. In fact, what we were doing was fighting completely different fights. I wanted her to define for me what about being with a Jewish man would be such a perfect fit to, what I viewed as, our extremely secular family. I was asking her to do something that she had never done before. What [non-Orthodox] Israeli in Israel or the United States has to explain how and why she “does Judaism?” Apparently, one with a *sabra* daughter who has a thirst for having everything laid out on the table for her. A person who is Israeli at the core and has American layers of padding surrounding the substance is called a *sabra*, which is a sweet Middle Eastern fruit that has prickly thorns on the outside. My *sabra* thorns make me need definitions and explicit reasonings for everything including for not falling for wonderful, ‘but’ non-Jewish men. I have always needed to hear more of an explanation than, “It is just easier” and that, “It is one less thing to talk about.” Through the years, my mother became convinced that I just wanted

to make things difficult for myself, and of course for her. For even when I was the president of the Jewish Student Union at UC Davis and absolutely surrounded by Jewish men, my boyfriend was a Christian.

In retrospect, I see that I thrived in these interfaith relationships because I loved the back and forth learning and teaching that went on between my non-Jewish partners and myself. Since the issue of faith was always at the forefront of these relationships, these men and I would immediately and explicitly begin to notice the similarities in our faiths and to juxtapose the differences to each other. Similarly to puzzle pieces, we would attempt to see what fit, what did not, what came close, and what belonged in a completely different puzzle altogether. Only through these continuous dialogues was I able to further define what my own Judaism meant to me. I am not particularly religious. I do not have a clear definition of what God is. I do, however, love the attention that Judaism gives to history. I appreciate the focus that this religion places on community, family, social service, the love of food, music, celebrations, spirit, and the overarching theme of questioning the given and not holding a form of unrelenting “blind faith.” All of this is explicitly my Judaism. Today, it is what I would want to exemplify for and pass on to my own future children in terms of defining their own religiosity.

I was only able to formulate this definition of my Jewishness by being forced to when I fell in love with men who were “not like me” in terms of historicity and faith. Nicolas Burbules (1993) says that for a dialogue partner to be valuable, she or he must be familiar and similar to the self enough to be understandable, but different enough to warrant a rewarding exchange that centers around a learning conversation. He writes,

“...we need to be similar enough for communication to happen, but different enough to make it worthwhile” (31). My mother was never engaged in this type of meaning making dialogue, based on the definition of personal faith, because, for her, this was quite literally a non-issue. She was raised in a Jewish household by Jewish parents, she married a Jewish man, she works in a Jewish school, and she has Jewish friends. She is not, however, by any means, the first person to utter the words, “I want you to marry someone Jewish.” This wish, and often cause of misunderstanding and disagreement, permeates the Jewish [and many other faiths’] communities. It has been my experience that without having the purpose for a meaningful dialogue and reflection process on the reasoning behind this desire, however, the conversation, the thought process, simply does not happen. The issue of language and dialogue within faith has been infused within my narrative throughout my life although I was not capable of giving the theme language until I began my graduate work at San Jose State University.

I finished one chapter of my narrative and history in Davis, California and just a few weeks later, I opened the next section back at home in Los Altos, California. I began to pursue a Multiple Subject Teaching Credential and a Masters of Arts in Education at San Jose State University. To put myself through school, I taught Sunday School at the Palo Alto School for Jewish Education (PASJE). PASJE is a non-religious organization that is not affiliated with a synagogue. I was a camp counselor there years ago and my mother taught there when I was in high school, so I felt extremely comfortable with their secular philosophy and culturally oriented mission of Jewish education. This was my first teaching position and I approached it with enthusiasm, excitement, and a bit of fear; for

my class had eighteen children and there was only one of me. I was handed a five-line curriculum expectation sheet and was given a pat on the back to get started. What I did not bargain for, however, is that this was also where my aforesaid narrative and newfound critical awareness would meet and therefore generate my thesis topic.

CHAPTER ONE

PRESENTATION OF THE ISSUE

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1989) writes, “Meanings...are like a place in which things are related to one another... Ideas become possible only when the natural relationship- i.e., the intimate unity of speech and thought- is upset” (433). I believe that the intricacies of language within faith had been at the forefront of my mind for quite awhile. However, it was only when I was introduced to the language of critical theorists in my masters program that I was able to explicitly understand and connect the speech and the thought. “Language is not just one of man’s possessions in the world; rather, on it depends the fact that man has a *world* at all” (Gadamer 1989, 443). It was timely, then, that I was reading critical theory while I was teaching kindergarten at PASJE.

On the second week of Sunday School there was a parent meeting where I attempted to democratically create the curriculum with the parents based on what they wanted their children exposed to. Within minutes, the conversation turned into a debate of sorts and at the same time it became clear to me that half of my students came from interfaith families and half from single faith families. In retrospect, I should not have been surprised by this statistic since I can see why a non-religious school would be appealing to some interfaith families; but at the time, it struck a chord with me. I became acutely aware of not only what was said but also how it was said in the classroom; I did not want any of the students or their families to feel alienated or uncomfortable. As the

year went on, I became more focused on the children and the curriculum and the single faith and interfaith dichotomy was put in the back of my mind.

I used the Sunday School to practice what I was learning in my credential program where I was exposed to several assessment methodologies. One of these pedagogical practices was anecdotal note taking which is taking objective notes on the students' words and actions to be compiled for assessment as well as to guide the teachers' own practice. The method seemed wonderful, although difficult to manage time wise. To practice, I began to take anecdotal notes on the questions my students were asking each week. I did this only for further experience with the methodology and placed the weekly cards in individual folders that I kept for the children. I did not revisit the questions that the children were asking until the middle of the academic year when I decided to call each of the parents to see if they had any questions, comments, or suggestions regarding the rest of the year.

In reviewing the notes that I had taken, I noticed a clear distinction between the kinds of questions my interfaith and single faith students had been asking. The single faith children seemed to be confident that the Jewish world they were in was the norm, just the way it was. Their questions revolved around pragmatics and details; such as: "What is a harvest?" "What does that word mean?" "Does everybody have a *Torah*?" "What do you win in the *dreidle* game?" The interfaith children, on the other hand, were asking extremely rich and complex questions; the kinds of questions that I had only begun asking during college. Their questions seemed to reflect an interest in the way the world in general ran as well as the way that this world related to their own experiences;

such as: “Did people who did this before know that we would do it, too?” “Not everybody knows all of this Jewish stuff, should we teach it to them?” “Don’t you think it’s so sad that people are dying in Kosovo? Why does it happen if we are all so good?” “Do all people know the stories in our Torah? Do they have their own stories? Who tells them theirs?” For these children, Judaism was not “the given,” they were curious. I was excited about this observation and that moment seems to be the third time that my thesis topic was born; but for the first time it was explicit. I was and am intrigued by the difference in the language that the children in this class use and I would like to gain insight into the role that interfaith and single faith familial situations in this population affect the complexity of questions that these children end up asking.

What I wonder is if within these single faith families, where the issue of explicit naming and dialogue around faith is a non-issue and goes unexamined, are young children being brought up without the ability and or opportunity to articulate and reflect upon their own faith decisions? Are they robbed of the chance to reflect upon and create their own meanings of the world and, “their right to *say his or her own word, to name the world*” (Freire 1970, 15)? Without defining one’s own reality and world lens, is a person fully human? Is this person a victim of oppression? Paulo Freire (1970) writes, “an act is oppressive only when it prevents people from being more fully human” (39). Also,

Any situation in which some individuals prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence. The means used are not important; to alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects (Freire 1970, 66).

Further, when a belief system is unexamined and unreflective, there is a danger of blindly and unknowingly transmitting the system from institution to parent to child by the mode of language. Freire (1970) writes,

This violence, as a process, is perpetuated from generation to generation of oppressors, who become its heirs and are shaped in its climate (40).

Herein lies the power of unreflected upon socialization. Chet Bowers (1984) writes,

Authority is internalized in such a way that the person under its sway experiences it as part of the natural order of things. This particular view of authority is particularly useful in understanding the hold that culture has over us. As the medium through which we move, culture provides the information codes that regulate our patterns of thought, body language, use of space, social interaction, rituals, and economic and political systems. But most of the information codes that provide the blueprints for how to think and act in specific situations are both learned and experienced at a tacit level. In describing the tacit authority of the information codes that make up our culture, Edward Hall suggested we think of the cultural controls over thought and social behavior as similar to the principal of negative feedback. To paraphrase Hall, as long as information codes of the culture are followed, the individual "is completely unaware of the fact that there is a system of controls." That we are unconscious of most of our cultural knowledge... accounts for not being aware of the authority that culture has over us; thus we have the irony of people thinking that their "rationally"-based decisions reflect their individual autonomy when, in fact, they are under the authority of the language systems (discursive, spatial, body, etc.) of the culture that makes thought and communication possible (5).

Freire (1970) argues that authentic people have to constantly reexamine themselves and their own belief systems. It is only through this constant reflection process that the dangerous hold of socialization loosens its grip on a human being. If reality is viewed as a process, constantly undergoing transformation, never reaching a state of stagnancy (Freire 1970), then true knowing and authentic being take on new definitions as well. Freire (1970) writes,

Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other (53).

Within this framework, I wonder if these interfaith families originally approached and today continually revisit their belief systems with incessant inquiry, dialogue, and reflection of the self and the other. If this is the case, when parents are forced to dialogue with each other about their similarities and differences, reflect upon these issues, and therefore constantly and consistently transform their own meaning making, are their children brought into worlds where their decisions are authentic, reflective, purposeful, and therefore human?

Given that, "reality becomes encased into what is given language" (Freire 1970, 63), this research has been formulated to explore if there is a difference between the kinds of language passed from this group of single faith and interfaith parents to their respective children. I am curious about and am looking for insight into whether there is a connection between what parents discuss and think about and their own children's words, thoughts, questions and world moves. Since people's worldviews are embedded within their culture and history, and, "Understanding is the disclosure of meaning or the opening up of the "world" which belongs to being human" (Gallagher 1992, 42), this topic naturally delves into the study of socialization's effects on language, thought, understanding and action. Socialization permeates a person's being and is therefore at the forefront of this research.

Some groups possess ways of thinking deeply rooted in the culture of their ancestors; other groups ground their view of reality in religious beliefs and at the same time attempt to regulate their everyday lives in accordance with the pattern of thought that characterizes the dominant, modern culture (Bowers 1984, 9).

To further explore the relationship between socialization, thought and language I will examine these facets from the eyes of several of my students' parents, religious leaders in the community, and critical theorists.

In Chapter Two, *Review of the Literature*, I present the theoretical basis for understanding the role of historicity and culture as a process (*Bildung*) in socializing language and thought. The foundations and opportunities for hermeneutics, critical thinking, and socialization are brought to life from the funding of language and thoughts from several key critical theorists. I draw on the words of Chet Bowers, William Doll, Paulo Freire, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Shaun Gallagher and Luis C. Moll et al. to exemplify the spiral of theoretical knowledge that grounds this research. In Chapter Three, *Methodology*, I illustrate the theory and philosophy that supports my purposeful choice of conducting qualitative research to gain insight into my research question. Therefore, I draw on the methodologies exemplified by researcher and anthropologist Corrine Glesne and critical participatory researcher Charles H. Kieffer. In Chapter Four, *Data*, I present what I saw in my research and juxtapose these data against what I gained from the critical literature. I revisit the literature as I analyze the data, attempting to see what the critical theorists would say about what I saw. In order to do this, I use the words from the slim selection of literature on interfaith relationships to show direct connections between these everyday, popular culture lifeworlds and the words of the critical theorists. Finally, in Chapter Five, *Implications and Conclusions*, I revisit the exploration in its

totality -from literature, to research, to analysis, to reflections- to gain insights into the nuances of what I observed, experienced and learned.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Bildung

Key concepts and words which we still use acquired their special stamp [in history], and if we are not to be swept along by language, but to strive for a reasoned historical self understanding, we must face a whole host of questions about verbal and conceptual history (Gadamer 1989, 9).

An individual does not stand alone. She is born among her history, which is richly embedded within traditions and the past. Culture, defined within history, becomes a vital experience, a living embodiment of being. In this sense, termed *Bildung* by Hans-Georg Gadamer, culture is not exclusively the being or the becoming. Rather, it is the procedure of reflecting on the process while continually transforming the product. Becoming is then a part of being which not only requires, but lives off of, learning from the process of history. This way of learning, "... means that everything comes to be known within a context and never in isolation. The context makes sense out of the "unknown" thing. Even the unfamiliar thing has some degree of familiarity" (Gallagher 1992, 60). This context is what makes *Bildung* alive within one's own historicity and therefore it is what breeds meaning making opportunities into daily experiences. "The world hangs together; it is collected together in such a fashion that the familiar throws light on the unfamiliar, the meaningful gives meaning to the meaningless" (Gallagher 1992, 120). It is in this sense that Hegel (In Gadamer 1989) states that culture as *Bildung* calls for acquiring the basic character of the historical spirit. When culture becomes learning and relearning,

taking tradition into account while attempting to see the self in the other, it allows for the ability to grasp at learning opportunities by exiting and returning to the self in order to become acquainted with the self within the “universal essence of spirit” (Gadamer 1989, 14). *Bildung*, however, is not simplistically the consciousness of history; it is a richly complex element within which the aware person moves through her or his world.

Gadamer explicitly states that *Bildung* is not a feeling or a memory, it is in actuality a mode of knowing, being and living. The central facet of *Bildung* lies within the yearning and desire to keep the self open to the views of the other (Gadamer 1989). This in turn requires distancing the self from one’s private purposes and beliefs in truths for the sake of transformational learning and growth. This opportunity is not grasped by the person who chooses to ignore *Bildung* as being a vital and constantly changing mode of living embedded within history, tradition, context, and rich layers of others’ being. Gadamer argues that *Bildung* is breathed in and out by the aware person who strives for the process of becoming rather than the being itself. For, “... Learning is a temporal process that always has a dimension of pastness and a dimension of futurity and incompleteness” (Gallagher 1992, 78). Within this process lies the nature of knowing, learning and being. There are different modes of living in one’s world, all of which are affected by and understood through the lens of meaning making.

Awareness

It is important to note that this meaning making, while occurring within the individual, is not a solitary activity. It requires not only the knowing of the other, but also the awareness of the value of the others’ knowing. Gadamer (1989) writes,

... We find that meanings cannot be understood in an arbitrary way. Just as we cannot continually misunderstand the use of a word without its affecting the meaning of the whole, so we cannot stick blindly to our own fore-meaning about the thing if we want to understand the meaning of another (268).

Gadamer (1989) explains that in order for meaning making to authentically occur, one must be able and willing to remain open to the meanings of the other while placing herself and her own meanings in relation to it. "... The usual problem in learning is not that one is absolutely ignorant of the subject matter, but that one thinks that one already knows" (Gallagher 1992, 70). Herein lies the role of hermeneutics within learning, "*The hermeneutical task becomes of itself a questioning of things* and is always in part so defined" (Gadamer 1989, 269). Gadamer (1989) explains that a person attempting to make meaning, to genuinely understand something, does not approach the other with a stubborn and neglectful attitude. Rather, this person comes to the other prepared for it to tell her something.

This approach does not require neutrality or submissiveness. On the contrary, the first step in hermeneutical meaning making is the awareness of one's own biases and prejudices. Gadamer uses the term prejudice here with the intention of utilizing its original definition which was, "a judgment that is rendered before all the elements that determine a situation have been finally examined" (Gadamer 1989, 270). The negative connotation of prejudice is therefore removed, leaving the word with its authentic implicit implication of heeding the reality of a historically based opinion. In turn, this explicit awareness of prejudices welcomes the other to present itself authentically and to assert its own truth, providing a meaning making opportunity as the knower begins to juxtapose and intermix her own biases with the new welcomed knowledge. For, "The

process of interpretation is the process of revising my foreconception as I gather more information” (Gallagher 1992, 61). Gallagher (1992) further explains that it is these malleable foreconceptions, frameworks and *Bildung* that actually serve as one’s, “guide to understanding” (63).

Being aware of one’s own biases is a vital component of meaning making. These prejudices are embedded within our history and personal contexts. Gadamer (1989) writes, “It is the tyranny of hidden prejudices that makes us deaf to what speaks to us in tradition” (270). It is the unnamed biases that hinder us from approaching an understanding of new knowledge. It is the questioning stance of hermeneutics that allows one to exclude everything from her or his being that could hinder the understanding of the other. By the same token, it is the consciousness of the historically based and contextual knowing, which lives within biases, that serves as the freedom to negotiate and therefore begin to understand the new knowledge as the subject matter itself. The subject matter is then seen more clearly, free from stubborn, blinding biases through the awareness of the biases themselves. Therefore, “The recognition that all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice gives the hermeneutical problem its real thrust” (Gadamer 1989, 270). It is only when a person is explicitly aware of her or his own biases and prejudices that these personal historical ways of being become starting off points for transformational learning. This is so because, “... We [can] become aware of and circumvent a particular bias; we can, through reflection, revise and reform our preconceptions” (Gallagher 1992, 91). On the same vein, when awareness itself is dimmed, such is the nature of the learning and experiencing as well.

Experience

The consciousness of being is experience in and of itself. How one views the world and moves through it is based on and defined by her or his experience of it.

Gadamer (1989) explains, "Genuine experience is experience of one's own historicity" (357). Herein lies the role of giving explicit attention to one's own tradition, which informs one's experiences of the world. As a person builds their personal ways of knowing through experience, they form a way to be, act, react, view, and live. This "way" becomes a person's *Bildung* formulated through experience. Further,

When we have had an experience, this means that we possess it. We can now predict what was previously unexpected. The same thing cannot again become a new experience for us; only something different and unexpected can provide someone who has experience with a new one (Gadamer 1989, 353).

An experienced person, then, is not someone who has simply been *through* experiences, but importantly, also someone who is constantly and consistently open *to* new experiences (Gadamer 1989). It is this striving for continual growth, rather than a stagnant state, that provides the actual possibility and opportunity for authentic experience and genuine learning to occur. "Anderson puts this in explicitly hermeneutical terms: "Text is gobbledygook unless the reader possesses an interpretive framework to breath meaning into it"" (In Gallagher 1992, 63). Authentic experience does not occur outside of an aware context; without a connection to framework and historicity, the experiential opportunity is missed.

On the one hand, Gadamer (1989) explains that experience requires a "something new," at the same time, genuine experience itself is never complete. Gadamer (1989) states that the concept of authentic experience requires first, a unity of oneself and

oneself's knowing, and second an, "experience of negation: something [that] is not what we supposed it to be" (354). Within this framework, Schleiermacher explains, "Not only do we never understand an individual view...exhaustively, but what we do understand is always subject to correction" (In Gallagher 1992, 66). Therefore, experience is always a process, never the result thereof. For viewing experience as the independent result ignores the inherent nature of experience as requiring that, "what was regarded as typical is shown not to be so" (Gadamer 1989, 353).

We cannot, therefore, have a new experience of any object at random, but it must be of such a nature that we gain better knowledge through it, not only of itself, but of what we thought we knew before (Gadamer 1989, 353).

In this way, experience formulates knowing and being but only when experience is done consciously, reflectively and within the context of historicity.

Recollection, which Plato equates with learning, is not our connection with a bygone past or with an unchanging eternity; it is our projection of meaning based on our past experience. It is the creation of a context by re-collecting into a unity the experiences relevant to unlocking the meaning of the unfamiliar (Gallagher 1992, 69).

The reflective collection of experiences is done in a back and forth manner of continual negotiation that sets the stage for learning itself. Gallagher (1992) explains, "This interchange of interpretations is a dialectical give and take between one interpretation and another, and it characterizes precisely the process of learning" (38). A person who makes her or his world moves embedded within previous learning, tradition and awareness, and with the motivation being oriented towards making and having new world moves, is therefore considered the experienced being.

The Hermeneutic Spiral

The process of hermeneutical experience is one that can be visualized within the symbolic metaphor of the hermeneutic spiral of transformational learning (Lecture of Seminar in Curriculum, 22 September 1998). This spiral addresses and redefines knowing and how it affects learning and growth. In this way,

In view that we have of another object, both things change – our knowledge and its object. We know better now, and that means that the object itself “does not pass the test.” The new object contains the truth about the old one (Gadamer 1989, 354).

This new object comes into awareness by actually opposing what was once comfortably known and accepted. Therefore, inherent within this nature, “experience in this sense inevitably involves many disappointments of one’s expectations...[but]...only thus is experience acquired” (Gadamer 1989, 356). The hermeneutic spiral frees disappointment and the unknown from its negative coloring in that when the goal is transformation, not knowing serves as the process of becoming. Gadamer (1989) explains, “Insight is more than the knowledge of this or that situation. It always involves an escape from something that had deceived us and held us captive” (356). This then is what Gadamer (1989) refers to as the “truth value of experience.” Gadamer (1989) explains that one never reaches a said goal of being experienced. Rather, as one approaches her or his world as a learning opportunity, each new process of experience feeds off of the previous and loops into the present as it builds a foundation for the future transformation. In this way, “a higher form of knowledge is reached” but only by allowing and welcoming experience as process itself, “to fully and truly be” (Gadamer 1989, 357). The language of “feeds off of,” “ongoing,” “builds upon,” and “loops into” illustrates the conceptual design of the

hermeneutic spiral of learning. The image of the spiral is visually more accessible within the context of these descriptive terms.

Conceptually, the hermeneutic spiral becomes clearer by elucidating the parts of it. In order for the explicit naming of the parts of the whole to have validity and purpose, “buy in” into the process of the spiral is vital. “The hermeneutical [spiral] is another way to express the openness that is necessary for learning. If the openness is closed off, if the circle collapses into its center, learning ceases” (Gallagher 1992, 77). The value of awareness of the hermeneutic spiral lies in its overarching goal of life’s learning being forms and processes of transformational change. Thomas Kuhn (1962) writes, “How am I to show him what it would be like to wear my spectacles when he has already learned to look at everything I can point to through his own?” Kuhn’s eloquent poignancy exemplifies that inherent in the fact that people’s ‘spectacles’ represent a deep foundation of their own school of thought, belief system, *Bildung*, and way of looking at the world, is the necessity and vitality of people experiencing transformative change for themselves. As Ira Shor (1992) would say, learning is something that people do, not something that is done unto them. Only in this fashion does learning become meaning making (Bruner 1996). The explicit awareness of the spiral then, becomes a setting stage for transformation.

Transformational Learning

Learning then, in terms of transformational change, requires what has been termed a “paradigm shift” (Kuhn 1962). A paradigm shift is a process that begins with personal experience. As a person, complete with her spectacles, context, history, and

Bildung, her “is,” maneuvers comfortably through her world, she experiences a mistake, or something which simply does not fit within her already established internalized rules of logic, language, relations, and the way things “just are.” This mistake, perturbation (Kuhn 192), disruption, or chaos (Doll 1993) initiates a self analysis which in turn requires the person to step back and reevaluate her own world ideology. This reflection process may change the tone of the individual’s *Bildung* and therefore, her actions and thoughts may shift. It is important to note that the person may choose to disregard the misfit of information as invalid. However, if the perturbation leads to a time of “wallowing,” or uncomfortable thought, analysis, and reflection, the person will be transformed and will have a new *Bildung*, a new way of viewing the world, a “new is” (Lecture of Seminar in Curriculum, Fall 1998). As Gadamer (1989) explains, when a person has an experience with said object, both are transformed. Therefore, although the person may return to the old “is” she will still have been changed through experience and reflection thereof. By the same token, the object will have been changed as well. William Doll (1993) writes that, “one cannot enter the same stream twice for the stream itself is always changing” (134). Transformational learning experiences, “...therefore, never simply repeat, copy, reproduce, reconstruct, or restore the interpreted in its originality...[Learning] produces something new” (Gallagher 1992, 128).

Kuhn (1962) and Gadamer (1989) redefine what a mistake means in terms of a transformational experience. In light of the process of being, a mistake is no longer wrong, negative, or to be avoided. A mistake actually strengthens thought and critical thinking abilities and represents a starting point for transformation embedded within

reflection (Lecture of Seminar in Curriculum, Fall 1998). Therefore, the perturbation is to be sought out by those yearning to learn for it is within reflective, questioning and uncomfortable not knowing that true transformational learning, growth and meaning making actually occur.

We could say, in the context of educational experience, that involvement with a question or with the questioning process is the path or course of learning. Only the person who has questions can learn. But the question which allows learning must be a genuine question on the part of the learner (Gallagher 1992, 162).

Gadamer (1989) has exemplified this learning process, wherein *Bildung* is examined, reflected upon and transformed, as a form of "play." Within this metaphorical definition,

The possibility of losing oneself or transcending oneself in play is attractive or alluring only because of the possibility of finding oneself again. I can let myself be taken up by the game, I can immerse myself in the spirit of play, only because I know that at some point I will reemerge transformed (Gallagher 1992, 50).

The trust, faith and commitment to transformation are what make learning as play desirable. If hermeneutics is generally conceived to be seeking meaning, truth, or consensus through interpretation modeled on conversation or dialogue, it reflects an optimism or trust that in some sense truth will be found (Gallagher 1992, 22).

Transformation, then, does not require a dismissal of historicity, only a commitment to a reflective unveiling of truth. "Interpretation always involves the attempt to remain true to our circumstances while we maintain an openness to the object of interpretation" (Gallagher 1992, 150). The buzz word 'transformation' penetrates the learner with the power to hold onto her or his context and history without dismissing either one. "This means the new is built, often literally, on the old. In this complex relationship, the future is not so much a break with, or antithesis to, the past as it is a

transformation of it” (Doll 1993, 8). Mistakes consequently allow for the redesigning of one’s own world glasses.

This “play” can be further understood within the metaphor of the hermeneutic spiral for transformational learning, which in turn can be more clearly internalized by explicitly naming each of its parts. For only when something is made explicit, is it up for negotiation and therefore an authentic meaning making transformational learning experience. A person approaches the world using her or his own *Bildung* to negotiate what she or he sees and encounters. This lens of world vision is based upon the beliefs and understandings that one holds. Gadamer (1989) writes, “Experience is valid only if it is confirmed... We generalize on the basis of chance observation and, if we encounter no contrary instance, we pronounce it valid” (347-348). The way one believes the world is has been termed the unexamined “is.” Without a contrary experience, one makes her world moves based on the “is’s” notion of how the world is. The “is” is unexamined in that it is not noticed, discussed, or negotiated. It is simply “the way things are” and is therefore an extremely comfortable way of being in that it is familiar and well known. What provokes a person to notice her or his “is,” is if she or he hits a contradiction, a perturbation, or something that does not fit into the world view of the “is.” This perturbation forces the individual to confront the self and the unexamined “is.” This state of “liminality,” of wallowing, which consists of a confrontation with the self via reflection and analysis, while uncomfortable, is where transformation towards a “new is” has the potential to occur. This learning is authentic transformation itself, for, “In playing a game I learn about myself as I learn about the world that I live in. I learn about others. I

come to understand the different roles that are open to me” (Gallagher 1992, 49).

Gallagher (1992) explains that it is in this way that the self can also be described as a continual process and a work in progress simply because, “... We are constantly learning about ourselves in light of our experiences” (53).

Closed and Open Systems

Potentiality for transformation occurs in personal hermeneutics within the contextual as well as the theoretical frameworks. William Doll (1993) dichotomizes the contextual environment in which transformational meaning making has the option and capability of occurring within and when it cannot. The first option has been termed as that of a ‘closed system.’ This system has a distinct beginning and end, where the goals and outcomes are clear, measurable, and have an ideal to live up to. The closed system has a pre-determined goal of closure and it utilizes explanatory and logical devices to reach its end point of leading people to see what is already in existence, discovering what we already see. “In closed systems, stability, centers-of-balance, and equilibrium are key ingredients... only exchanges take place; there are no transformations” (Doll 1993, 14). In a system when knowledge simply needs to be deposited and or discovered in order to be gained, explicit dialogues are not deemed necessary. “In cultures where meanings and definitions are not being continually renegotiated people do not have to possess the range of explicit knowledge essential for talking about how reality is to be defined (Bowers 1984, 7).

On the other end of the spectrum, there is the ‘open system’ of and for learning. This system has boundaries, although it does not hold set beginning and end points. Its

goal is generative in that it helps to see what we do not already see. In other words, an open system is a framework where knowledge and experience have the opportunity to be created. An open system utilizes narrative and dialogue to negotiate between that which we understand and that which we do not. Therefore, it incorporates interpretation, communicative dialogue, and metaphors into meaning making and growth.

We can no longer hold the view that, in the absence of immediate understanding, interpretive ideas are drawn, as needed, out of a linguistic storeroom where they are lying already. *Rather, language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs. Understanding occurs in interpreting* (Gadamer 1989, 389).

Within this system, then, meaning is created and causes further growth initiated by questioning and wondering in a never-ending process of learning and being. In an open system, learning shifts from being linear [as in a closed system] to transformational.

Open systems...have moving vortices or spiraling swirls and are by nature transformative; *change not stability is their essence...*[they] *require* disruptions, mistakes, and perturbations – these are the “chaotic mess” to be transformed (Doll 1993, 14).

Therefore, instead of being afraid of, transformational learning honors, celebrates, and values multiple perspectives, multicultural views, knowledge, and personal experience. As Doll (1993) exemplifies, this shift from fear to enthusiasm is possible because in an open system differing viewpoints serve to initiate meaning making rather than to upset the balance and order of the pre-set plan. In an open system,

In order to conceptualize the organization of [knowledge]... the individual must possess a complex body of knowledge that will provide a basis for an historical and comparative perspective, an understanding of how other significant groups think about the... [knowledge]... (including their taken-for-granted-assumptions), and an ability to think theoretically about the relation of... [the knowledge] to other aspects of social life: economic, political, existential, and ecological (Bowers 1984, 8).

According to Doll (1993), the focus in this system has therefore shifted from what is being taught to what is being learned. “The key point, both metaphorically...and factually...is that isolated systems exchange nothing, being at best cyclical; closed systems *transmit and transfer*; open systems *transform*” (Doll 1993, 57). The meaning making utopia of the open system becomes the vision of an environment where not one single individual holds the truth, and absolutely every member of the learning community holds the right to be heard and understood. Meaning making, therefore, becomes the setting stage for transformational learning complete with the discomfort of not knowing as well as the “liminal” state of wondering, revisiting and examining, which is only possible within an open system.

The awareness of learning opportunities as one functions within her own *Bildung* is vital. For only within awareness comes the opportunity for reflection and action towards change (Freire 1970). Without authentic learning, “one could understand all about the sun and all about the atmosphere and all about the rotation of the earth...and...still miss the radiance of the sunset” (Whitehead in Doll 1993, 76).

Understanding the parts therefore, does not naturally and automatically lead to valuing the whole.

... The meaning of the part is only understood within the context of the whole; but the whole is never given unless through an understanding of the parts. Understanding therefore requires a circular movement from parts to whole and from whole to parts (Schleiermacher in Gallagher 1992, 59).

The nonlinear process of experience, however, when explicitly complete with reflection, wallowing and transformation has the authentic potential of creating feelings of eminence

towards being experienced, the self, and the object or the other. Reflecting upon learning in light of its wholistic history, context, and purpose forces the viewing of meaning making not only within context but also within socially based theoretical opportunity.

Socialization

The process of reflection within wallowing promotes and enhances what Chet Bowers (1984) has termed communicative competence which is, “an individual’s ability to renegotiate meanings and purposes instead of passively accepting the social realities defined by others” (2). Given that *Bildung* is embedded within history and context,

What we think and experience is influenced by the cultural maps or schemas we carry around in our heads. In effect, these cultural maps represent historically grounded message systems that cause thoughts and feelings to be organized in ways that reflect the categories, assumptions and patterns of thinking acquired through socialization to the culture’s way of organizing reality (Bowers 1984, 14).

Gallagher (1992) concurs,

We always find ourselves with a past that does not simply follow behind, but goes in advance, defining the contexts by which we come to interpret the world. Despite the fact that traditions operate for the most part “behind our backs,” they are already there, ahead of us, conditioning our interpretations (91).

Only when something is brought into explicit awareness is it capable of being negotiated and therefore producing meaning making opportunities. Importantly, socialization’s role within how the “is” is formulated and therefore what causes perturbations and what does not, is great. For, “If every language is a view of the world, it is so not primarily because it is a particular type of language (in the way that linguists view language) but because of what is said or handed down in this language” (Gadamer 1989, 441). Bowers (1984), Gadamer (1989) and Gallagher (1992) explain that it is socialization via language that formulate the reality of one’s world and therefore the roles

one plays, the communication one seeks, the definitions one utilizes, the understandings one permeates and the forms of authority one turns to for explanations. "All interpretation is shaped by the traditions in which we stand; interpretations originate within and by traditions, and they continue traditions" (Gallagher 1992, 87). Further, Bowers (1984) argues,

We must acknowledge the dual role of socialization as having the potential to liberate thought and facilitate the communication of new ideas to others; it is also a binding force that may prevent people from seeing how their lives are shaped by social conversation (31).

Bowers (1984) explains that, "socialization reproduces the tacit historical knowledge of a culture" (xi). This in turn becomes a traditionally formulated *Bildung* in terms of cultural and historical affect. In this way socialization via social conversation and language formulates world lenses by creating the "is."

Socialization is the reproduction of what is commonplace, everyday and done with automaticity. Bowers (1984) explains that the continual process of socialization is done so effectively and consistently that individuals are usually not aware of what they are learning or that they are learning at all. "... Socialization contributes to acquiring the conceptual maps on which daily life is based" (Bowers 1984, 32). Therefore, socialization is not to be feared or limited for it does, "enable the culturally uninitiated child to participate in the adult world of meaning" (Bowers 1984, x). The tragedy then does not lie within socialization itself, for socialization just is. This realization needs to not only be understood, but embraced, for, "The attempt to step outside of the process of tradition would be like trying to step outside of our own skins. The pretension to escape the process would lead to a misunderstanding of both the world and oneself" (Gallagher

1992, 87). The struggle, then, is in creating historically bound awareness and explicit naming of the socialization. For,

In many instances, people simply lack the knowledge necessary for the exercise of communicative competence, and thus the political power to define “what is” passes by default to those special interest groups that are able to impose their definitions (Bowers 1984, viii).

In transformational learning and living this awareness and experience of being through becoming comes in the form of,

The relativizing of traditional forms of authority [which] provides, in effect, a moment in social time when the voice of the individual matters, and when there is the potential for new forms of authority to be established through a more democratic and educative process (Bowers 1984, viii).

This period of relativizing through questioning and not knowing may be uncomfortable for it is, “the process of renegotiating basic aspects of our belief system” (Bowers 1984, 1). This uneasy period of “liminality,” however, is the time for voice, learning, and the process of becoming. In “wallowing,” “discourse [does] not simply maintain the old cultural patterns, but [becomes] a political force in establishing new foundations” (Bowers 1984, viii). Here, within socialization and the reflection process thereof, language takes on an explicit and vital role for, “As Berger says, “In a very fundamental sense it can be said that one converses one’s way through life” (Bowers 1984, 35). Gallagher (1992) explicitly exemplifies how powerfully language socializes in stating, “... Language acquisition is the acquisition of the child by language” (113).

Language

Through language culture becomes existential: that is, it becomes part of the identities and self-conceptions of members of society, and forms the basis for their reasoning and reflection... Thus communication is not only essential to

sustaining the agreed upon conventions of belief and action, but in initiating new members into the socially shared knowledge (Bowers 1984, 35).

Language holds the transmitting power within socializing reality. Without language, socialization would not function as such a natural process. Language provides the medium of and the force behind socialization because, “People educate each other through the mediation of the world” (Freire 1970, 14) and, “The human being encounters the world and everything in it through language” (Gallagher 1992, 6). It is a part of a complex and interrelated process. This process, when made explicit,

Brings into focus the connection between the epistemological categories of the culture reproduced through language and individual thought and behavior, the reality constituting and maintenance role of communication, the individual as an unconscious carrier of the culture’s symbolic history, and the influence of culture on what the individual perceives to be the basic existential questions (Bowers 1984, x).

Bowers (1984) explains that language can be viewed as socialization when one realizes that language serves as the carrier of message systems including those of, “definitions, assumptions, and typifications communicated by significant others” (37). Through socialization, these message systems become the mode through which a person operates. Bowers (1984) explains,

The external social world is internalized into the knower’s frame of reference in the form of a cultural grammar that influences what will be seen, the categories that will be used to interpret the phenomena, and the language of communication (37).

It is important to note the reflexive quality of the relationship between the individual, consciousness and language. This quality makes *Bildung* culture itself and is what helps to formulate what Gallagher (1992) calls the, “tradition context of language.” Without this ongoing and ever changing relationship, it is not possible to have awareness,

reflection, and therefore transformation. Therefore, without *Bildung* communicative competence is impossible. Without the awareness of the usage of language, the “is” of socialization permeates without reflection. The lack of consciousness exemplifies the dangers of socialization without awareness and therefore the necessity of awareness itself. Bowers (1984) asserts,

The basic relationships that must be understood by... [people] concerned with fostering communicative competence is the role that language (or communication, in the broadest sense) plays in reproducing in individual consciousness the conceptual maps we associate with culture. In effect, the educator must understand the different dynamics that operate when communication transmits and reinforces taken-for-granted beliefs (such as sexist attitudes) and when communication makes explicit the assumptions and patterns of thought, thus enabling the individual to obtain the distance necessary for critical reflection. This understanding will require a theoretical framework that focuses on the interaction of the cultural belief system, the role of language and communication, and human consciousness (3).

It is only through and within this interrelationship that transformation may occur.

The distance from one’s world lenses, which Bowers (1984) cites as necessary for reflection, must be preceded by the awareness of said lenses. “The individual is unconsciously controlled by cultural traditions in many ways” (Bowers 1984, 3). Without the explicit naming of prejudices, reflection becomes not only impossible, but also unnecessary; for reflection occurs only through explicit communicative language. Herein lies another argument for being aware of one’s own historicity and tradition,

By emphasizing the social origins of our patterns of thinking... [there is] a renewed emphasis on understanding our beliefs and the language systems that both transmit and sustain these beliefs (Bowers 1984, 3).

Just as language is necessary to name and therefore create the present, it plays an equally important role in the validation of the substantiality of the past, “Without the language to name the past, it simply ceases to have any reality to the individual” (Bowers 1984, 11). Bowers (1984) points out that active members in society, people who have been successfully socialized into the workings of their worlds, possess what can be, and often is, an unconscious power to socialize new members of the society through the use of language.

The forestructure of understanding is shaped by certain biases (preconceptions, prejudgments, prejudices). These biases are derived from traditions to which we have access through language. Language, however, involves a dialectical turning: we not only have language, but language has us. For this reason, we not only have access to traditions, but traditions have a certain power over us (Gallagher 1992, 83).

Importantly, this passage of language lies in what is said as well as in what is not said. Conscious and unconscious decisions are made as to what is significant and what is irrelevant. People with power make these decisions for those without power. These decisions manifest themselves in what, in the form of language, each generation passes onto the next. Bowers (1984) problematizes this reality,

Is communicative competence an ability that everybody should possess or is it sufficient to look to experts as the group responsible for restoring the fabric of culture as it becomes disrupted?... The alternative often involves decision making by experts who think about the problem in an abstract language code that discounts the importance of fully understanding the cultural context, and who often do not have to live with the consequences of their efforts (8).

Without awareness and explicit dialogue based on personal socialization, people often view their world moves without considering their history and culture. The creation of the self, however, is embedded in and entwined with the socialization by the other and is therefore intimately connected to historicity. “What we learn from Descartes is that no matter how much of a conscious effort we make to walk

away from the traditions that define us, those traditions always walk with us” (Gallagher 1992, 85).

The function of language [is] in providing the interpretational rules for making sense and communicating about daily experience, [this then] becomes an irrefutable basis for arguing that there is no such thing as the autonomous individual...or the individual free of oppression...The internalization into individual consciousness of the symbols and rules which govern cognitive functions indicates that “free” choices reflect what individuals are able to imagine in terms of their [socialized] self (Bowers 1984, 38).

Bowers (1984) explains that all action is socialized behavior. Much of this socialization comes in the form of communication from and with significant others. People make their world moves as socialized beings. “Most people’s thoughts...express the deep categories and assumptions embedded in the language code they naively acquired from significant others who transmitted them with equal naivete” (Bowers 1984, 46).

When we listen to another person, unless her words get in the way, we listen through her words in order to understand *what* she is saying. Language works behind the back of the speaker, or listener, or reader, outside of his or her conscious control, and allows meaning to manifest itself out front. Meaning requires language in order to manifest itself (Gallagher 1992, 119).

In this same way, socialization requires language to manifest itself. Socialization depends on the vitality of people defining themselves through the eyes of and communication with the other. “As an African poet put it: “In your presence I know my name”” (Bowers 1984, 41).

Power

Inherent in the nature of socialization is an imbalance of power. This disparity may be in the form of a political, an economic, and [commonly] a knowledge-based difference in status. No matter the type or category, the status inequality is oppressive. Paulo Freire (1970) explains that the oppressed generally know that they are oppressed, but view the situation as status quo, just the way it is, and therefore not up for negotiation. Therefore, the inequality of power is only not problematic when it is explicitly within one's awareness. In fact, within awareness it, "can lead to personal growth...by enabl[ing] us to see more clearly the dynamics that facilitate the human potential" (Bowers 1984, 44). Aware people become engaged in an "authentic struggle" to, "gain...liberation [not] by chance but through the praxis of their quest for it, through their recognition of the necessity to fight for it" (Freire 1970, 27). This recognition of and commitment to awareness takes the form of internal and external negotiation of one's world. Freire (1970) explains,

To surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity (29).

Once again, this pursuit of empowerment thrives through awareness, explicit connection to historicity, and dialogue. The dialogue, action and reflection necessary for the humanization of the socialized oppressed involves both the oppressed and the oppressors. When both sides of the spectrum [delineated by an extremely fine line] are engaged in a dialogue,

This pedagogy makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed, and from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation. And in the struggle this pedagogy will be made and remade (Freire 1970, 30).

In this way, the reflexive dialogue and constant revisiting of the oppression itself give language to the situation and therefore bring it up for discussion, negotiation, and transformation. People socialize and therefore people transform. Freire (1970) concurs, “If humankind produce social reality... then transforming that reality is an historical task, a task for humanity” (33).

Praxis

Unreflected upon socialization is dangerous. Awareness thereof and connection to historicity, however, provides a medium to turn a potentially oppressive lifeworld (Habermas 1981) into one of empowerment. This requires what Paulo Freire (1970) has termed “praxis.” Praxis then, is the, “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire 1970, 33). The two parts of praxis are necessary and inseparable. Without action, reflection becomes what Freire (1970) describes as “idle chatter, or *verbalism*” and without reflection, action becomes “action for action’s sake or *activism*.” Transformation via praxis requires reflection and action and therefore communicative competence. In totality, the breath of praxis is made viable through authentic dialogue utilizing language. Praxis is not a solitary activity, “The correct method lies in dialogue” (Freire 1970, 49).

Herein is the connection between praxis and transformational hermeneutics: the task is now not only to unveil reality, “and thereby coming to know it critically, but...[it is] the task of re-creating that knowledge” (Freire 1970, 51). Transformation requires

creation. Freire (1970) and Gadamer (1989) explain that transformation of knowledge and of being require a certain “to and fro” and “back and forth” of the person with the self, other people and the world for, “reality is a process, undergoing constant transformation” (Freire 1970, 56) via questioning. For, “Asking the question, that is, interpretation, always opens up possibilities of meaning” (Gallagher 1992, 147). Freire (1970) explains that critical thinking is that which sees reality as a process and as a transformation. This type of thinking does not separate itself from action. It is important to note the implicit parallel between critical thinking and critical being: both rely on viewing history, culture as *Bildung*, reality, thought, and language as processes requiring constant revisiting and reflection.

Freire (1970) writes, “Only human beings *are* praxis – the praxis which, as the reflection and action which truly transform reality, is the source of knowledge and creation” (81-82). For knowledge to be gained and therefore for transformation to occur, there is the necessity of awareness of the “is.” This awareness provides an individual with the consciousness of the historicity of self which is necessary to make sense of and understand world moves.

Funds of Knowledge

An individual maneuvers through her lifeworld via the lenses of her “is.” Researchers and authors Luis C. Moll, et al. (1992) explain that this “is” is composed of what they term to be people’s “funds of knowledge.” “We use the term “funds of knowledge” to refer to these historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being”

(Greenberg et al. 1989 in Moll 1992, 133). These funds of knowledge may be visualized as interconnected internal pieces of information that people utilize to physically, emotionally, and intellectually be in their worlds.

They are formulated via socialization, passage of language, historicity and *Bildung*.

Although the term "funds of knowledge" is not meant to replace the anthropological concept of culture, it is more precise... because of its emphasis on strategic knowledge and related activities essential in household's functioning, development, and well-being (Moll et al. 1992, 139).

People use their funds of knowledge interdependently as they are formulated by the conscious and unconscious socialization via the passage of language. These funds of knowledge, then, become the lenses utilized for language use, thinking, learning, transforming, and being. Funds of knowledge are embedded within *Bildung*, historicity and the power of socialization. Therefore, different households may develop distinct funds of knowledge based on their own experience of the passage of language.

Given that Moll et al. argue that each individual's lifeworld move is based on a Being embedded within a fund of knowledge, I maintain that my research topic and methodology was born within and because of my own fund of knowledge and *Bildung*. "The direction of our interests will determine, to some extent, what we will look for and what we will see in any environment" (Gallagher 1992, 43). Gallagher (1992) further explains,

Dewey argues that practical interests are formed through informal educational experience, communication, and community life. They are pervasive throughout experience but remain for the most part unconscious. The hermeneutical point is that such interests condition and bias interpretation (44).

My experiential interpretation, as biased as it may be, has naturally led me to delineate my research within a qualitative research design, explained further in Chapter Three, *Methodology*.

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CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The Research Question

This research has been designed to delve into and explore the connection between the language that single faith and interfaith parents use, as socialized members of this society and culture, and how the passage of this language -these funds of knowledge- effects the complexity and richness of the questions that their children end up asking. While the buzzwords in my research question may be “socialization,” “language,” and “culture,” the glue that holds this research together is the people. “Qualitative study designs...generally focus on in-depth, long-term interaction with relevant people in one or several sites” (Glesne 1999, 5). Qualitative research is concerned with intimate knowing, learning, and revisiting of the data, which then is embedded within the people.

Critical research has to do with engaging in a research that has the potential to improve a situation. The goal, then, lies in giving people a context to become more self-reflective in a way that previously they were not able to be because the issue was unconscious; it did not have language. This process of giving an issue language and therefore an opportunity for reflection is one of empowerment. Charles H. Kieffer (1981) explains,

We can say that individuals are empowered as they become able to participate in the dynamics of social relations with a personal sense of potency, critical political awareness, and practical strategic skills (7).

A critical researcher utilizes qualitative data as a method of “laying it all out there” so change can happen, not to do the actual changing. As a critical qualitative researcher my goal is to bring the aforesaid research question into language and awareness, and therefore the setting stage for potentiality for transformation for a community to which I am intimately tied.

Qualitative Research: A Purposeful Choice

Qualitative researchers...state a purpose, pose a problem or raise a question, define a research population, develop a time frame, collect and analyze data, and present outcomes. They also rely (explicitly or implicitly) on theory and are concerned with rigor (Glesne 1999, 4).

Qualitative researchers seek to make sense of personal stories and the ways in which they intersect (Glesne 1999, 1).

This investigation then need[s] to adopt a strategy which could apprehend the emergence of personally meaningful involvement over time (Kieffer 1981, 8).

The focus of qualitative research is on observing an interesting phenomenon that provokes the researcher to further explore what she or he saw in order to gain greater insight into the occurrence. The way that research participants, people, are viewed within qualitative research is a vital component in the explanation of the methodology utilized.

Kieffer (1981) asserts,

Individuals are seen as immersed in interactive tasks of confronting, creating, integrating, responding, transcending, transforming, and becoming. Effective examination of these developmental dynamics then demand that the individual be viewed as a changing being acting in and interacting with a constantly changing world (9).

For the researcher and the research participants, the goal is then to become “critically conscious” over time and through dialogue. “For Freire “critical consciousness” is a

process through which, "men develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves"" (In Kieffer 1981, 7).

Qualitative research attempts to understand context-based circumstances and events rather than to prove, or argue for or against them. Qualitative research is messy by nature in that the data it yields tends to be rich, complex, lengthy, and not easily measurable or containable. Corrine Glesne recommends,

Learning to do qualitative research is like learning to paint. Study the masters, learn techniques and methods, practice them faithfully, and then adapt them to your own persuasions when you know enough to describe the work of those who have influenced you and the ways in which you are contributing new perspectives (Glesne 1999, 3).

Glesne (1999) explains that, "The research methods you choose say something about your views on what qualifies as valuable knowledge and your perspective on the nature of reality" (4). I strongly believe in the contextuality and historicity of people's being. This being is not measurable or classifiable. The messiness of being is that it is human and therefore the richness is found through exploration. "Research paradigms determine not only the approach or research methods used, but also the purpose of the research and the roles of the researcher" (Firestone 1987 in Glesne 1999, 5).

Qualitative research places the researcher as a learner; this is my bias. My goal in this research is to gain insight and therefore to be the student of critical theorists and my study subjects. "Preferred research methods reflect personal choices; they are, however, embedded in cultural and historical contexts" (Glesne 1999, 7). I was raised in a religion based on questioning and continual learning. I have read critical theorists who, for me, have brought to language, and therefore awareness and consciousness, the value of

continual learning and connecting to one's historicity. Altogether, I feel as if my narrative has naturally led me to conducting this qualitative research for, "...Every choice carries with it assumptions of value and ideology" (Kieffer 1981, 18). Glesne (1999) explains,

Different approaches allow you to know and understand different things about the world... People tend to adhere to the methodology that is most consonant with their socialized worldview... We are attracted to and shape research problems that match our personal view of seeing and understanding the world (8).

Site Selection

As framed in previous chapters, my site selection found me. I was a kindergarten Sunday School teacher in the Palo Alto School for Jewish Education (PASJE) at the same time that I began to read critical theorists. I was acutely in tune to the usage of language in my classroom because of the heightened awareness I had gained from reading the words of Bowers (1984) and Freire (1970). I observed the interesting phenomenon of my students' questions differing in complexity and richness. Today, I question whether this difference can be attributed to whether the students are interfaith or single faith. I am interested in seeing if there is a connection between the interfaith and single faith familial language usage and the children's thinking and questioning.

PASJE then became my initial site selection. PASJE is a non-religious, culturally oriented Sunday School located in Palo Alto, California. The mission of PASJE is to provide Jewish education at the secular level to the interested community at large (Teacher Handbook, PASJE 1982).

Researchers need to develop a rationale for selecting one or more sites for data collection... How many sites should you select? To make such decisions, you must look again at your research interests and carefully reflect on what you want to learn (Glesne 1999, 28).

The connections I am looking for can be found within people; PASJE remains my study site.

Selection of Study Participants

Qualitative researchers neither work (usually) with populations large enough to make random sampling meaningful, nor is their purpose that of producing generalizations. Rather, qualitative researchers tend to select each of their cases *purposefully* (Patton 1990). “The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich* cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research...” (Patton 1990 in Glesne 1999, 29).

The questions that the children in my Sunday School class asked yielded a tremendous amount of data. Given my interest in and belief that socialization affects knowledge and language use, I would like to explore several of the children’s backgrounds in more in detail and context. “For in-depth understanding, you should repeatedly spend extended periods with a few respondents and observation sites” (Glesne 1999, 30). Therefore, I plan on conducting a more in depth study on three of my eighteen Sunday School students. The nature of qualitative research is that data is embedded within *Bildung* and historicity. To gain further understanding of an individual, then, requires delving into her *Bildung*.

The specific qualitative methods of study influence not only the nature of information collected from the family, yielding data about their experiences and funds of knowledge, but provides... a more sophisticated understanding of the student, his family, and their social world (Moll et al. 1992, 137).

I chose the three students based on their parents’ religiosity as well as their own good naturedness, similarity in personality, and what I perceived to be high intellectual capacity. While I changed every name for participant privacy sake, I left every major descriptive detail authentic. William comes from a Jewish and Jewish home, Karen from

a Jewish and Catholic home, and William from a Jewish and Agnostic home. All of the children live in Los Altos with both of their parents. I will conduct narrative interviews with these specific children's parents especially noting explicit passage of language, previous and current discussion topics, and family dreams and goals. To gain greater insight into the language that the parents' themselves may have been exposed to, I will also hold interviews with four leaders of the institution of religion. I will interview two rabbis and two priests; one of each faith [Judaism and Catholicism] who will perform interfaith marriages and one of each who will not. I will especially note their own use of folk stories, explicit language passed, and suggested readings. I will ask specific questions concerning their reasoning behind choosing to perform interfaith ceremonies, or not, and about what each of these leaders tell new couples and new parents; other than that I will let the conversation flow narrative style.

The Study Participants

- **William, Marcie and Mike-** A Jewish and Agnostic couple

Marcie was raised Jewish on the East Coast. She met Mike as a teenager; he was a friend of her older brother's. They did not become romantic until years later. They were both educated at Harvard University in Boston, relocated to the West Coast and have been married for ten years. William is five years old and their only child. They chose to do some of their interviews together and some individually.

- **Karen, Amy and David-** A Jewish and Catholic couple

Amy was raised in the Midwest and met David in her mid-twenties after they had both done some travelling and had relocated to California. They had a long courtship and

have now been married for eight years. Karen is five years old and they have a younger son named Jason, who is two and a half years old. They did one interview together, and the rest of the conversations were with Amy.

- **Steven, Debbie and Thomas-** A Jewish and Jewish couple

Debbie and Thomas met in their late thirties in the Bay Area. Both were born and raised in the area, although Debbie went to school on the East Coast and did extensive travelling before settling in California. They had a short courtship and Steven is their only child. They have been married for eleven years. They did the first interview together and the rest of the times I met with Debbie.

- **Rabbi Charles-** Performs interfaith ceremonies

Rabbi Charles has been working in the Bay Area for years, both as a professor and a rabbi. Today, he performs both single faith and interfaith ceremonies and has married three of my closest family friends! The Rabbi is currently working on an autobiographical book that he generously allowed me to refer to in this research. He has published several articles in religious magazines such as *Hadassah* and *The Bureau of Jewish Education* publications. He has sent excerpts, quotes, from these articles to me via email, which I also refer to throughout the research. A bulk of our conversations occurred via email, phone and AOL's Buddy Chat; a few conversations were in person.

- **Rabbi Erwin-** Performs single faith ceremonies

Rabbi Erwin is the rabbi at the temple that my family and I belong to. He only performs single faith ceremonies. He regularly participates in and leads meetings for new parents at the temple.

- **Father Joe-** Performs interfaith ceremonies

Father Joe was raised in this area and has been performing religious ceremonies for twenty-five years. He occasionally works with Rabbi Charles. He corresponded with me over e-mail and we met once. I used his words mostly as a source to clarify my own confusions and misconceptions.

- **Father Brad-** Performs single faith ceremonies

Father Brad is a pastor in the East Bay. He strongly opposes interfaith marriages and spoke with me briefly several times. We were able to ask each other important questions, but did not have a chance for lengthy interviews at one sitting. I was able to learn a bit about his views and used this information to help guide my questions with the parents and the other theological leaders.

Selection of Research Techniques

To figure out what techniques to use, once again contemplate carefully what you want to learn. Different questions have different implications for data collection. In considering options, choose techniques that are likely to (1) elicit data needed to gain understanding of the phenomenon in question, (2) contribute different perspectives on the issue, and (3) make effective use of the time available for data-collection (Glesne 1999, 31).

Qualitative research yearns for multiple perspectives of the same issue. One research instrument tends to not be sufficient. The multiplicity of research methodology is what gives qualitative research its validity and richness.

Qualitative research offers a range of methodological alternatives that can fathom the array of cultural and intellectual resources...that, when combined analytically, can portray accurately the complex functions of households within their socio-historical contexts (Moll et al. 1992, 132).

This contextualization of qualitative data is both possible and necessary because of the messiness of this research methodology and the multifaceted goals that it holds.

Empowerment for the researcher and the research participants is at the centerpiece of critical qualitative research methodology. This is because empowerment is a natural consequence of giving issues language within praxis. Kieffer (1981) explains, “Because empowerment is defined as an interactive set of relations within a continuously reconstructed environmental politic, inquiry require[s] an approach which could capture the qualitative and relational aspects of the phenomena studied” (8).

“Three data-gathering techniques dominate in qualitative inquiry: participant observation, interviewing, and document collection” (Glesne 1999, 31). I will implement all three of these methods in my research design. In qualitative research the interviewer herself becomes an actual part of the research methodology in that,

The researcher becomes the main research instrument as he or she observes, asks questions, and interacts with research participants. The concern with researcher objectivity is replaced by a focus on the role of subjectivity in the research process (Glesne 1999, 5).

Therefore, researcher field notes will also be utilized for, “An explicitly dialogic modality simply accentuates the essential nature of investigation—the encounter of the researcher and the researched” (Kieffer 1981, 13).

Participant Observation

As the Sunday school teacher I was rarely able to step aside and “not be there.” However, my role did allow me to pose questions to my class as well as step back and see how they interacted with the new information they were being exposed to. As previously stated, each week I took anecdotal notes on the questions that all eighteen children asked.

My goal was to have one note per week per child; however because of time constraints as well as unforeseen absences, this was not always possible. I attempted to set up my classroom in such a way that all the children felt comfortable vocalizing their questions and comments. These kindergartners tended to not only be quite vocal by nature, but also seemed to take on a questioning stance. The notes were taken either during whole class circle time, small group project work time, or one-on-one teacher and student “talk time.”

Interviews

**“Interviewing is a human interaction with all of its attendant uncertainties”
(Glesne 1999, 67).**

Now that Sunday School is over, the next phase of my research will involve a series of interviews with two distinct populations: parents and religious leaders. I will begin with ongoing dialogue and narrative style interviews with Steven’s, Karen’s, and William’s parents. After a year of interactions, I already feel as if I have a certain amount of “access” to the parents as we have built a rapport with each other, chatting when the children were dropped off and picked up from Sunday School each week. Glesne (1999) defines,

Access is a process. It refers to your acquisition of consent to go where you want, observe what you want, talk to whomever you want, obtain and read whatever documents you require, and do all of this for whatever period of time you need to satisfy your research purposes (39).

Given access, the challenge is in conducting purposeful and meaningful interview sessions.

As a researcher, you want your “pitches” –your questions- to stimulate verbal flights from the important respondents who know what you do not. From these flights come the information that you transmute into data –the stuff of dissertations, articles, and books (Glesne 1999, 67).

To assure quality interviews and to increase the validity of the questions, the comfort of the participants, and the professionalism of the researcher, I conducted a pilot interview.

The Pilot

My interview questions will be based on a pilot interview that I conducted with family friends who are Jewish and Jewish and have children around the same age as my students for, "In the process of listening to your respondents, you learn what questions to ask" (Glesne 1999, 69).

The idea [behind a pilot study is] to learn about your research process, interview questions, observation techniques, and yourself... The pilot participants need to know that they are part of a pilot and that, as such, their role is to answer the questions you ask, but with the intent to improve them (Glesne 1999, 38).

My research participants (Rachel and Eric) and I went over possible interview questions. They then told me which questions they felt the most comfortable answering, gave me suggestions on what other questions to ask, and helped me reword the questions that seemed vague. Together, we came up with a several session interview outline. This includes a first session to get the parents' narrative down using artifacts such as photo albums for, "Photographs also provide useful data for the historical background of your study" (Glesne 1999, 58). The second session will be held to review the interview transcriptions and to clarify possible confusions, as well as to use the transcriptions themselves as jumping off points for further exploration.

In allowing the participants to reflect upon and respond to full and unedited transcripts of their own interviews, the dialogic method fosters more accurate retrospection and self-validation of emergent interpretation (Kieffer 1981, 14).

Lastly, however many other sessions necessary will be held to further refine the interview data. "The follow-up phase of this strategy... forces the reflective process towards greater depth, meaning, and authenticity" (Colaizzi 1978 in Kieffer 1981, 14).

The second session on will be set up to continue the precedent of validity, precision, and research as an empowerment tool. Embedded within this goal, my research will take on what Kieffer calls a "participatory approach."

The strategy portrayed is characterized as participatory by virtue of its inclusion of its subjects as active partners throughout the research process. They are involved in preliminary research design, in interactive generation of data, and in dialogic interpretation of the data as it is generated. It is also participatory to the extent that its participants are engaged in personally meaningful critical reflections upon individual growth experience (Kieffer 1981, 3).

Giving the research participants copies of their own words, written versions of their verbal historicity, gives the researcher the opportunity to work towards qualitative research's goal of creating a framework for reflection and praxis. Kieffer (1981) concurs,

It establishes the participant as subject of his/ her own history and encourages shared control of the generation of knowledge. Understanding is jointly constructed in the process of research, rather than imposed as an alienated product (16).

The pilot study was done with parents, however I will also use the insights I gained from it to formulate my interviews with the religious leaders within the community.

Insofar as the biases of prior assumption and the inclinations of emerging interpretation influence both data-gathering and analysis, the 'cooperative dialogue' of investigator and interviewee insures more rigorous fidelity to the phenomenon explored (Giorgi 1975 and Von Eckartsberg 1971 in Kieffer 1981, 13).

The goals of searching for explicit passage of language and connections to personal narrative are the same in all of the data gathering methodology, and I believe that the pilot interview with the parents will contribute a great deal to the authenticity and reflexive nature of the interviews with the rabbis and priests. I predict that “access” to these leaders will not be as natural as with the parents. My own rabbi, my mother, and my master professor will help guide me toward appropriate, willing and insightful leaders with whom I will dialogue and interview. I will work with these interviewees to gain insight into my research question for, “...Promoting collaboration and participation in research methodology increases applicability of findings and encourages implicitly empowering outcomes” (Kieffer 1981, 1).

Document Collection

The works of several critical theorists, the questions of eighteen insightful five-year-olds and the time and energy of parents and community religious leaders who will interview with me are all funding my thesis. The spoken word is the breath of my work. Language in the form of writing will also prove to be a viable part of this research.

As a society that venerates the written word, we have many types of written documents. Diaries, letters, memoranda, graffiti, notes, memorials on tombstones, scrapbooks, membership lists, newsletters, newspapers, and computer-accessed bulletin boards are all potentially useful documents (Glesne 1999, 58).

I plan on collecting materials that have to do with the religiosity and dialogic aspects of the parents’ relationships. These documents may be notes, journals, photographs, clipped magazine and newspaper articles, and literature. I believe that these artifacts will shed light on what the parents used to and continue to think about and discuss. I will use these written pieces as conversational foci as well as for my own historicity awareness raising.

I plan to ask the rabbis and priests for similar references: both readings that they would suggest to me as a researcher as well as ones that they would recommend to couples whom they marry for, “To understand a phenomenon, you need to know its history” (Glesne 1999, 59).

Field Notes

The field notebook or field log is the primary recording tool of the qualitative researcher. It becomes filled with descriptions of people, places, events, activities, and conversations; and it becomes a place for ideas, reflections, hunches, and notes about patterns that seem to be emerging. It also becomes a place for exploring the researcher’s own biases (Glesne 1999, 49).

My own reflections on the process of this research will also be viable data collection methodology. I set the precedent of taking descriptive notes immediately following my pilot interview. I immediately sat down and typed a dated and timed reflection. I left a wide left-hand margin, so I could revisit my reflections as time goes on. I will reflect on each interview as well as write when I am struck by thoughts and compile these reflections into my field notebook. These notes may be descriptions, reactions, analyses, thoughts, and connections to literature. These revisits may be numerous and I believe that they will prove to be discerning and the place where themes and patterns will emerge from my data. “Through note-taking, you reflect on the appropriateness of your problem statement and become increasingly focused” (Glesne 1999, 51). This focusing is a process, not a product, and will be transformed and reflected upon throughout the research itself.

These reflections are personal because as a qualitative researcher I am connected to the research. Keeping in mind the researcher as learner role validates and affirms the necessity of researcher reflections. Glesne (1999) concurs,

The learner's perspective will lead you to reflect on all aspects of research procedures and findings. It will also set you up for a particular type of interaction with your others. As a researcher, you are a curious student who comes to learn from and with research participants. You do not come as an expert or authority (41).

These reflections will serve as the framework and context for understanding the data. It is where I will grow to grasp the issues at hand from the participants' perspectives.

This indicates that you have been able to suspend your personal judgement and concerns. In the words of Sigmund Freud: "I [Freud] learnt to restrain speculative tendencies and to follow the unforgettable advice of my master Charcot: to look at the same thing again and again until they themselves begin to speak" (Malcolm 1987 in Glesne 1999, 60).

Prejudices and biases are an "is" of being. In order for them to be not only benign but also helpful, they must be illuminated and brought to language; this is a crucial step of transformational learning and being and the field notebook will serve as the setting stage for it.

About the Researcher

As mentioned before, I am currently progressing towards a Multiple Subject Teaching Credential and a Masters of Arts in Education at San Jose State University in San Jose, California. I have completed one year of my Critical Research program and am currently attempting to connect the critical theorists whom I have been reading to my own narrative. I am deeply connected to this research topic not only as a member of the

PASJE community and an attached Sunday School teacher, but also personally as a Jewish woman.

Part of being attuned to your subjective lenses is being attuned to your emotions. Your emotions help you to identify when your subjectivity is being engaged. Instead of trying to suppress your feelings, you use them to inquire into your perspectives and to shape new questions through re-examining your assumptions (Glesne 1999, 105).

In this way I feel that within awareness of and reflection thereof, my connectedness and passion for and with this research topic will serve as helpful, reflective mapping points for the analysis of this research.

This hermeneutic process of connecting theory to narrative has begun and will never end. I am in the middle of the hermeneutic spiral of transformational learning as I conduct this research and as I enter my first year in my chosen profession. My energies will be dispensed within two tremendous tasks this upcoming year: I will be a first year Kindergarten teacher in Sunnyvale, California and I will be a thesis researcher and author.

My thesis has been formulated within the qualitative framework because the goals of this design naturally enmesh within my own research purposes. I will learn, reflect, act and create a setting stage for reflection within dialogue and action for and with my research participants.

Indispensable in this scenario are research tools –the theory, qualitative methods of study, and ways of analyzing and interpreting data. These are what allow teachers (and others) to assume, authentically, the role of researchers in household or classroom settings (Moll et al. 1992, 139).

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CHAPTER FOUR

DATA AND ANALYSIS

Data analysis involves organizing what you have seen, heard and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned. Working with the data, you describe, create explanations, pose hypotheses, develop theories, and link your story to other stories. To do so, you must categorize, synthesize, search for patterns, and interpret the data you have collected (Glesne 1999, 130).

Writing gives form to the researcher's clumps of carefully categorized and organized data. It links together thoughts that have been developing throughout the research process. The act of writing also stimulates new thoughts, new connections. Writing is rewarding in that it creates the product, the housing for the meaning that you and others have made of your research endeavor. Writing is about constructing a text. As a writer, you engage in a sustained act of construction, which includes selecting a particular "story" to tell from the data you have analyzed, and creating the literary form that best conveys your story (Denny 1978 in Glesne 1999, 155).

Introduction

This thesis topic was funded, quite simply, by an occurrence that struck a chord with me. I was intrigued by what I observed to be the difference in language used by the students in my Sunday School class. I found a difference between Steven asking, "What story is in the *Torah*?" and Karen asking, "Who is the *Torah* important to?" I became obsessed with giving language to and connecting the historicity to such observations. Therefore, I wanted to gain insight into the role that the interfaith and single faith familial situations within this specific population effect the complexity of questions that these children end up asking.

Throughout the process of this research, I read and reread critical theory, participated in countless hours of dialogue-based interviews and read several books that

speak to the issue of interfaith relationships and how to “better the problem” or do “damage control” on the “issue.” As I proceeded with the research, I was continually drawn back to my literature review. The words of the interviewees and popular culture book selections seemed to have immediate and explicit connections to the words of the critical theorists. Therefore, I have organized my data as a reflection of the literature.

Rabbi Charles recommended that I read two books, *Mixed Blessings* by Paul and Rachel Cowan and *The Intermarriage Handbook* by Judy Peterson and Jim Remsen. I incorporated quotes from these readings that struck me as the practical and everyday versions of the critical theory. I begin each section with a critical theory “buzzword” [previously defined in the *Review of the Literature*], a section from a popular culture book and examples of language from the children. I purposely chose to frame the data in this manner in order to contextualize the connection between critical theory and the everyday language that I came across throughout my research. In this light, I was able to view and review my data, reflect upon the learning and name the transformative quality of the experience. From *Bildung* to *Funds of Knowledge*, the data is presented as intertwined within the reflexive relationship of the data, the reflection and the learning.

Bildung

The only way of putting the conflict in a context where it can be discussed is to study the two religions and cultures. For most of the arguments... take place in a vacuum of information. Unless you know the history of the concepts and symbols that trouble you, you are debating stereotypes, not history or theology (Cowan and Cowan 1987, 214-215).

When do you have to say sorry?

Steven, studying *Yom Kippur*, Jewish day of Atonement

Do you have to say that you're sorry? Even if um—even if you're not so much? Sometimes somebody else hurts you first and you feel bad that you hurt them but then they did hurt you first and so you want to say you're sorry but only because you hurt them not because they hurt you. 'Cuz even if you do feel so sorry it's not like they forget. I remember when my brother bit me and I hit him and I said sorry but he was still mad...My mom says it's good to keep talking about that...

Karen, studying *Yom Kippur*, Jewish day of Atonement

Bildung is the necessity of life living within the essence of the breath of history.

Here, yesterday, today and tomorrow are not sequential, linear aspects of a person, but rather all merge in the becoming. Tradition is of utmost importance in the breath of life. Given this ideology, the importance placed on history is tremendous. The deep understanding of a person, independently and within the context of a relationship, requires the knowledge of her or his history. To be valuable and useful, this knowledge cannot be shallow or commercial; the level of knowing needs to be able to be articulated by the knowing and aware person. It is only within the articulation that *Bildung* can survive and be passed on in a thriving manner.

Rabbi Charles comments,

When two people acknowledge and accept their differences as their being, they eat, sleep and drink these differences for their whole lives. Marriage, especially interfaith marriage, only works when both partners are filled with alive tradition. To let go of the past in order to run into the future...you would miss too much.

As these interfaith couples traveled their journey together, they shared with me that they held onto their past in a meaningful way. They used it to understand the present and look forward to the future. Connections to recent and distant experiences happened frequently and as these were articulated, the importance of learning from history was passed onto their children in both explicit and implicit manners. The cultivation of the conversation is

intricate and fully immersed in experience. In a written reflection upon looking at first interview transcriptions, Mike comments,

When we married, and I mean still today, it hasn't changed... We talk about absolutely everything. We might not agree, and we definitely compromise, but both of our parent's and grandparents' and their parents' and so on voices are alive and we hear them coming out of our own mouths sometimes! We're different than our parents, but neither Marcie or I had to completely give up anything. And the more we talk about it with William, the more we create our own questions and that's how we live.

In her own words during our first interview, Amy concurs,

It's this constant back and forth game that we play. It's so real. So honest and real and raw... do you know what I mean? It's like we live every decision and thought that we have always made in our whole lives. And it doesn't end with marriage! In fact, that's where it all starts...or actually continues, I suppose... It's not like you become a different person when you marry or have a child...your past is with you and that's healthy. I want Karen to know about both of our pasts. I hope she has a lot of questions about that...that's how she'll learn, too.

These couples talk to continue their own learning and growing. In this way, the natural importance on learning is placed indirectly, through modeling, to their children. It seems to be the focus on learning within context, however, that produces the implicit desire to clearly pass on this art of conversation with respect to history to their children. In this way, these children seem to learn directly and indirectly methods of learning, questions to ask and points of focus. The direct lessons, of course, lie within awareness.

Awareness

Several couples... participated for a number of years in an interfaith couples' discussion group... There were no clergy involved, and most of the parents considered themselves religious skeptics. Yet repeatedly they all found themselves drawn toward heavy philosophical discussions - trying to figure out what they believed. They found they couldn't settle any of the other, more practical issues until they figured out that one (Petsonk and Remsen 1988, 127).

Do all Jewish people like apples and honey?

Steven, when asked for his most important Jewish New Year question

All of the people in the whole wide world have to start with a New Year, right? So then, if we all have different ones, they're all good... Like it's just that we do different stuff for it, but it's the same good, right?

William, when asked for his most important Jewish New Year question

When a person is aware, she is knowledgeable of herself, her story, her life and her heart. This knowledge is explicit and poignant. Awareness lies within the ability to pinpoint and explain your own biases and thoughts. The first step in figuring out a process or a solution within a lifeworld move lies within awareness.

These interfaith couples found themselves forced to articulate their differences and reflect upon the consequences thereof before they got married. In a paper written on intermarriage, (Date unknown), Rabbi Charles explains the topics of discussion during premarital visits with him,

At our first meeting some history of the relationship and details of the individual backgrounds of the couple is obtained including discussion of religious and cultural differences. Some of the areas covered are: a) emotional support by family members b) home celebrations of holidays c) rites of passage such as b'ris and baptism d) attendance of religious services in houses of worship e) formal religious instruction for the children. Respect for the other's viewpoint, flexibility and accommodations are essential for agreements to be lasting and acceptable to both. Often there is another session necessary...

Note that these conversation topics are not different for interfaith and single faith couples. The difference lies within the second or third meetings where Rabbi Charles explains that for interfaith couples the "delving tends to continue" and for the singlefaith couples, "... future meetings are concerned primarily with details of the wedding ceremony."

In my own conversations with all of the parents, the amount of conversations that centered on the explicit articulation of their own independent and merged religiosity that

took place between the two interfaith couples was astounding. In a second interview with Amy, in which I specifically asked her about these conversations, she confirmed,

The conversation, that specific one, never ends. It started with the thought of marriage and continues today. David and I can both say, say- what we believe and what we want for our children. That was important to us, to know, I mean. Not that it hasn't changed, let me tell you—it definitely has! It's just that we're both so aware of what we're thinking and believing and wanting because we've talked about it so many times and it was like I couldn't ask him what he wanted without knowing what I did... It has to be that way for us to be able to—how can I say this? To grow and to make way for Karen to grow, too.

When I asked Debbie the same question, the conversation went as follows,

d: Yeah, yeah... I can see why that would come up here but I have to tell you that it was never something we talked about... We're not particularly very religious. And we're not particularly into immersing ourselves. But we are Jewish and we want to be Jewish.

g: You said that you want to be Jewish, how would you explain or define your Jewishness?

d: Well, it's like this... we're not into the whole "God is everything" thing and sometimes I feel like we live in a very Christian neighborhood and it makes me feel like we stand out where I don't really want to... I mean, we celebrate of course all of the holidays—we have always done Passover and Chanukah... And it's great, it's just great.

In my own reflections upon both of these interviews, the difference between the physical conversations that I had with these two women was extremely clear. It struck me that when I asked Amy about the awareness and the ongoing conversation that is a part of her relationship with David, she nodded as if to affirm the question, like she had heard it before. In my journal that day, I wrote,

Amy's face and posture through this interview was so passionate and assertive. She was sitting forward, elbows on the table, at the edge of her seat and almost half leaning on the table itself. She used her hands a lot and her voice seemed to be loud and confident. It seems to me that she has had this conversation before.

She values the importance of it and wanted to make sure that I understand that and walk away with that knowledge myself.

In reference to speaking on the same topic with Debbie, just a week and half later, I wrote,

The conversation seemed strained today, almost painful. I almost wished that I hadn't asked the question, Debbie did not make a lot of eye contact while she was speaking and I could tell that she was searching for what is the "right answer" or what I might be looking for. I wonder if she has ever been forced to look into her own religiosity and to speak it? I wonder if she has had to ask herself about it yet?

The difference that awareness has the power to make in an individual's being and self is amazing. Awareness in and of itself leads to the immersion within experience and therefore allows for explicit growth of a person. This awareness requires the ability to name one's own pre-thoughts and preconceptions. Amy saying, "Of course I came into things with my own mental notes; as did he. But we knew that, and it's like- that's just great! Now we know and let's move forward from there," expresses direct and raw reality: these are my biases, they are a part of who I am. Debbie's comment of, "It's not so necessary to go into all of that" exemplifies a different set of awareness and experience.

Experience

Every person has some sort of faith. That is a tenet of Dr. James W. Fowler, a Protestant minister who heads the Center for Faith Development at Emory University in Atlanta, and is one of America's foremost researchers in the psychology of religion. To Fowler, faith is how you place your bets in life. It's whatever you do to make sense of the world. It's whatever you truly trust (Petsonk and Remsen 1988, 128).

What kind of foods are there here? Do we have to eat them all?

Steven, while studying *Sukkot*, Jewish celebration of harvest

This is like what they all did before us, right? We do it because they did and that is so nice...My mom says that it's beautiful to do like they did so we feel close to

people like us. My daddy feels close, too and he's not a Jewish, but it's more good to feel close than to worry about that.

William, while studying *Sukkot*, Jewish celebration of harvest

Experience forms the person. It is this experience within which we form our *Bildung*, our thoughts and the context for our own learning. During our first conversation, Rabbi Erwin commented,

Without questions you cannot learn. But the questions have to come from the right place. Do you want to know? Or do you want to prove something else? A real question comes from the heart because the heart learns and the heart knows that there is always something more to know.

This art of meaning making through questioning is complex. It requires acute awareness of one's own knowledge as well as the historicity and the contextuality of that knowledge. This knowledge has to be intertwined with respect. Importantly, in order for authentic meaning making through shared experience to occur, this awareness and respect must reflect upon the experience of the self as well as that of the other. Rabbi Charles explains,

Judaism also places a premium on marriage and family. The elements of mutual respect and respect for one's religious and cultural roots are part and parcel of Judaism. We cannot, to my mind, employ a double standard by saying, "I must respect my heritage, and you must respect mine as well; but I don't have to return the favor." If Judaism has as a value to respect the Jewish heritage, is it not hypocritical to expect, and sometimes demand, of the non-Jewish partner not to respect theirs – and not to expect the Jewish partner to respect theirs as well?

The experience of life should leave a person thirsty for more; wanting and willing to step into new experiences simply to live and learn and breath in authenticity. One should never consider herself experienced [implying an endpoint], but rather privileged to have experienced and ready to take more in. Experience should leave a person changed; if this does not occur, the experience seems pointless. At the same time, respect for and

the desire to delve into one another's experience of the lifeworld is of utmost necessity in terms of experience as *Bildung*. In our first interview, Amy spoke to this point when I asked her how she knew that David and her were meant for each other,

You know those kinds of conversations you have when you feel like, "Wow! I didn't know that before!" or, "I never thought about it that way?" and it can be about him or you or the sidewalk, it doesn't matter...but you know how those are exhausting and the best thing ever at the same time? I knew that we were meant for each other when it seemed like every conversation we had was just like that... And it's still like that today.

Amy's self assured proclamation that learning from each other brought them together, rather than apart, exemplifies experiential learning in its purest form; for learning conversations are examples of authentic life experience. Rabbi Charles says, "An experienced conversationalist knows that the greatest learning will happen if you sit back and listen. Sometimes though, you need to have something to talk about." I noticed a running theme in my conversations with Amy and David and Marcie and Mike based on quality of on-going conversation. The depth of conversation that they had and continue to have is based on nothing more than the fact that the topics are right in front of them. Mike describes them as, "highlighted and bold faced from the getgo." Rabbi Erwin points out that, "Learning from each other, having new experiences together, sharing them and creating and recreating them...those have to be the greatest possible gifts a partner and a child can give you." The rich conversations that continue with these two couples do so because the context, the subject matter, is never-ending, it is their *Being*. This continuing contextuality for learning is the basis for hermeneutical learning.

The Hermeneutic Spiral

One of the central tasks in our lives is to become ourselves, to achieve an integrated identity. It's a task we never accomplish once and for all, because at each stage we find ourselves asking new questions, and having to disassemble and reassemble our identities to find the answers. As part of that process, our relationship to our culture and religion may change profoundly several times. Intermarriage can play central, though opposite, roles in the identity-sorting process at different times in one's life (Petsonk and Remsen 1988, 112).

That's all I have to do to be good?

Steven, making an "All About Me" book

The other kids at the other school made ones like this, too but not really the same... They had some parts different and not these parts [referring to specifically Jewish pages], but they have special parts to them, too, right? Because everybody is different but still very good in a different way.

Karen, making an "All About Me" book

The hermeneutic spiral is an amazing spectrum of knowledge. It requires so much heart and energy to "do" authentic learning. However, as the process begins and continues, the feeling is unbelievable and the learning is life altering. Change is the basis of hermeneutics. Hermeneutic change can be scary and is always uncomfortable at one point or another. This "misfit" and shift from the norm tends to be the beginning of the change. However, the comfort level is not the endpoint of learning. Amy spoke to this in a journal when she wrote, "While it may be true that the change can feel frightening and uncomfortable, there is something freeing in letting yourself immerse in that feeling. To know that you will grow together forever in that way is in actuality a comfort."

This leap into the hermeneutic spiral requires a certain amount of faith and desire for change. In a conversation about how their relationship has changed through the years, Marcie says,

We're both talkers and debaters and we love proving ourselves right. We used to say that sometimes we agreed but kept on debating just to hear ourselves talk! But after awhile, it becomes intriguing...and even though it seems like an obstacle or a problem, you know? In the beginning and right on through it...boy do you learn! And cry and feel close...and really just grow.

This mutual desire for conversations leading to growth is a central facet and tie between these two interfaith couples. The single faith couple I interviewed had a different take on this concept. When I asked Debbie if it was important to her that Thomas was Jewish, she answered, "It was just natural. We had no questions or doubts. It was one less hassle or problem, you know? It wasn't like I had to marry someone Jewish...but it sure was nice to not to have to have that conversation." In order for the hermeneutic spiral to begin, a misfit of information has to occur. While Rabbi Erwin argues, "Similarity breeds comfort and familiarity....there are so many things to learn as you marry and have children...one stable factor...and such an important one...is priceless....," hermeneutical theorists would say that the misfit of information is actually the key to the gift of authentic learning. Amy says, "I will tell you that we had the conversation, or at least started it, the first night that we met! It's a real conversation starter...to right away have something so blatantly right there that's different."

The hermeneutic spiral engages a being within transformational learning. Transformational learning is the backbone of change and has to be done with a delicacy and attentiveness that belong to an authentic heart that has complete "buy in" into the value of change. Rabbi Charles explains, "Interesting conversation draws you in and changes you...that is if it is done in the right heart."

Transformational Learning

[Some]... need time to decide what the choice of religious direction will mean to them, practically and emotionally. They are travelers who have to discover whether they will feel at ease in a religious culture... But however they will come to feel, they will have to live at the frontier of their emotions while they are exploring (Cowan and Cowan 1987, 201).

Do all Jews wear stars?

Steven, talking about symbols in Judaism

Are you always a Jewish? Even if someone around you doesn't know?

Karen, talking about symbols in Judaism

To change is to learn and to learn is to change. This reciprocal process requires all of your commitment and faith that the energy is expendable, replenishable and renewable. To go through the process of learning is an undeniable gift, even when it feels uncomfortable, and it undoubtedly will. Transformational learning, however, encompasses a change in *Bildung* and therefore, in order for it to authentically occur, this idea of change must be embraced. Rabbi Charles stated, "In my opinion and experience, sometimes – even usually– you need that discomfort of something not being quite right to get you on the ball and start talking...not chattering about your day but really talking."

There was a difference in the focus or definition of education and educational experiences within these couples as well as the types of conversations that they each had about these concepts themselves and with me. While all of them put an emphasis on "school smarts," there did seem to be a different attitude or perception about things that are new or unknown. When I broached the concept of learning with Debbie, the conversation went like this:

g: Can you tell me a story about a time when you were really proud of Steven for something that he had learned?

d: Oh, I'm always proud of him. He's a very bright little guy. Can you tell? Well, I – yeah, he's really excelling. And he's got, he just got his, he's really in tune. Really quick with things. He's already started reading a little and even with numbers and things. I guess I like the way he's quick to get answers.

The focus that Debbie made on finding answers and defining learning within the boundaries of school really struck me. When I attempted to pursue the issue, she changed the subject. At a later date, I asked her to reflect on that same comment and she wrote, "I suppose I see education as a means of getting somewhere. The more you can answer, the easier and less complicated things are." Later that same week, I asked Marcie and Mike the same question. The conversation flowed as follows:

g: Can you tell about a time when you were really proud of William for something that he had learned?

marcie: I'm always struck by the way he thinks... his mind is curious about things and I'm so proud when he wants to know more about things. Like just the other day, what was he asking about? He was asking about the cup in the bathtub and how it... how did he say it? Oh, how it "stays up all on its own"... He was playing with it and noticed that putting water in it, well you know of course, but changes how it acts. Anyway, the point is it was like he already knew that he had to play and ask questions to find out more. I love it when he uses his brain like that.

mike: Marriage in itself is a process and you learn as you go... the constant growth saves you from boredom and so on and I want that for him, too. I suppose I really am proud of the kid. I mean the main thing is that I want him to walk around the world questioning things and I want him to feel like he, well- like he can. I don't ever want to see him follow anything blindly.

There was a difference in foci on answers and questions between Debbie and Marcie and Mike. The different goals of "finding the answers to make things simple" and "creating questions to deepen learning" has the potentiality to implicitly and explicitly change the arena of learning within these two family units. I asked Amy for her thoughts and she

said, "I want to open the door to her exploration... So she can open her own can of worms of well, of learning." To me, Amy's metaphor of the "open door" was a practical version of William Doll's "open system."

Closed and Open Systems

Often...religious and cultural feelings are suppressed when a Jewish-Christian couple falls in love. They come to the surface as marriage approaches or when children are born. We call these feelings time bombs in an interfaith relationship... We suggest...anticipating these emotions and understanding them. And we suggest ways of transforming potential conflicts into a shared spiritual life (Cowan and Cowan 1987, 128).

This has to be the exact right way to mean it, right?

Steven, working on Sunday School dictionary

Do all people think words mean the same to them?

William, working on Sunday School dictionary

The friends could teach each other the words and what they think about them, right? Because we might know different stuff?

Karen, working on Sunday School dictionary

Mike made such an important point when he said, "I want him to feel like he can." Setting the stage for questing and learning is not a simplistic task. It requires a feeling of comfort and safety as well as the notion that questioning and not knowing is not only acceptable, but valued and desired. At a follow-up visit, Marcie, Mike and I were reviewing the previous interview and I decided to probe them about the issue of setting the framework for questioning. This is what I learned:

g: It really struck me...um - here where you said that you wanted to make sure that William feels like he can question. Do you do, like do anything that um - you think allows him to and makes him feel that way?

marcie: Like do we tell him to?

g: More like do you have a vision of what it needs to be like for William to feel like he can do that?

mike: Well, let's see here – um, a vision... well, I always say that I haven't learned until I've changed something... that something can be me, my mind, the furniture or whatever... but something has to move an inch for the brain to learn! I suppose I make sure that William always knows that being wrong is just a chance to, to well – to go ask a new question and learn more. I want him to feel comfortable learning and changing and never feeling like he has to do something because someone else did it before or even he did it before... I tell him when I don't know and we talk about everything with him... Like right now we have this issue with him having to change schools. And we talk about it. All three of us sit down and we make sure he understands and that he asks all of his questions. And we ask him ours'. Sort of like... I want him to know how to learn. I guess that would be what I would want for him to uh-, to- well, to walk away with. The ability to learn. And I guess I honestly tell him that, and we, Marcie and I, talk about it all together, too... Kind of showing that it's okay and it's what mommy and daddy do, too. Other than that, I suppose I also just tell him to not know for awhile until he can know!

At this point, Mike had hit on what I had noticed to be William's open and questioning nature towards education, and the conversation turned to education and the goals thereof. They both value William's exploration of things, and focus on the process rather than the product. I asked them if they thought that had an effect on William's learning style and they both said at the same time, "Certainly hope so!" Although Mike seemed to make light of, "just telling William to not know," this is an important way that he makes explicit what he implicitly models when he and Marcie engage in question based conversation. He does this by giving language to it and naming it. Both of these are important facets utilized in shaping and creating William's at-home learning environment.

In having open conversational systems of learning, Marcie and Mike were making conscious and explicit points to open up the world of questioning and learning to and with their child. In my own journal that night I wrote,

It's unbelievable to me that they know to think about these things. Do parents just know instinctively to have these conversations and to make sure that their kids are a part of it? It just seems like everything's right there—their motivation to create a world for William where he has a chance to thrive as a lifelong changing learner. I wonder if their own experience of talking everything through from the getgo helped in creating this “way” of parent talk?

From there, I initiated similar conversations with Amy and David and Debbie and Thomas. As soon as I asked Amy the question, “Do you have a vision of how you want Karen to learn? And what your role in that to be?” She said, “Wait right here.” She went upstairs and returned with a letter that she had written to Karen within the first few weeks that she was born. An excerpt reads,

I can't wait to see how you explore the world and create one for yourself. Daddy and I are always here to support you and love you and probably ask you the hardest questions that you'll ever be asked. And if you are a true mix of your father and I, you will come right back with your own questions! Don't be afraid to say you don't know and to ask for help and to create new things. It's safe and what you'll find is wonderful—it'll be yourself!

I shared with Amy that it amazed me that she and David knew to think about these things and to explicitly express them to their children. She responded, “I tell you. I have never learned so much as since David and I started talking. Because once you open that right up, if you leave it open and go from there- it's amazing what you find about yourself.”

There are multiple theories of how and when the potentiality for learning will occur. One must acknowledge that different environments will breed different kinds of

learning, questioning and thinking. Again, all environments have the potential to teach something, the focus should be on what that teaching actually involves.

I asked Debbie about these educational concepts and what she felt her role in Steven's learning thereof is and she commented, "We talk. Not a lot about being Jewish... Because we are. We do talk about what we're going to do and we answer his questions as they come along." To me, the language that Debbie used in speaking about "being Jewish just because we are" held a matter-of-fact, stating the obvious tone. As far as I could tell, she had never questioned this status. While Debbie did not seem to have a specific educational goal for Steven within this context, she did say that, "[She] want[s] Steven to always feel like he's done right... I guess that's important to me for him to learn. And to not always feel like he has to 'why, why, why' everything to death." On the same topic, Amy stated,

We want Karen to have an idea of where we're both coming from. Yes, it's true that we've become much more Jewish than we thought we would... but I want her to know the why behind it all. Like where we both came from and how that helped us create together our "today." It has to make sense in order for it to be important.

After these two conversations, I wondered about the split I was noticing in the philosophy behind questioning and the importance and reason for it as a learning method.

I decided to draw Marcie into the conversation. She said,

"We ask William a lot of questions in the hopes that he'll ask us right back. Both Mike and I – Mike more than I, I think, but both of us still—both of us have a very low tolerance for blind faith... do you know what I mean? Not questioning and just doing things just because. I originally thought that we'd have to let go of all of the holidays, the cultural side, you know... but we talked about it and once you add in the historical perspective and everything... there's so much for us to learn and to get to watch him explore it... it's really, well—it's really amazing. I

want him to learn it but with a questioning heart. That's the only way for him to have anything of his own."

The impact of the parental focus and desire to build a foundation for specific learning goals and styles is unfathomable. Explicit and implicit systems of learning are inevitable and truly have an effect on these children as well as their parents. The contextuality of the learning goals became apparent when each parent had the opportunity to give language to their own philosophy, goals and connection to *Bildung* and historicity. While the awareness of the power that these parents held over their children's development as a learner surprised me, I suppose that it should not have; for it is all a function of personal lifeworld and socialization.

Socialization

A marriage, and particularly an intermarriage, is an alliance between two nations. Couples in successful marriages use negotiating techniques remarkable similar to those used by diplomats. You can learn these techniques. Using them makes it more likely that each partner will be listened to and that neither will be left nursing unresolved grievances. Negotiating techniques can help you work out decisions about life-style, child-rearing, holidays, ceremonies, and relationships with extended family (Petsonk and Remsen 1988, 119).

Should we count them and see who does more? At my other school we chart things. Can we chart and them have a prize for the most *mitzvot*?

Steven, learning about *mitzvot*, good deeds

Are all *mitzvot* the same? Like sometimes you do something nice and they know about it and say thank you and the other times you do it and nobody knows and so no thank you, but they still feel nice to do. Are those still *mitzvot*?

Karen, learning about *mitzvot*, good deeds

The development of a person is her socialization. This process starts within tradition before she is born. Socialization occurs through the multiple, reflexive and interactive facets of language, thought and communication. Socialization is an "is" — it

exists whether we want it to or not. It is what one does with the awareness of the “is” that has the potentiality for creating variability.

All of the interviewees had a vision of ‘dreams’ for their children, although some were more “versed” in the language required to describe these visions. I noticed a difference in the reflection process that different interviewees engaged in during the post interview questions. Mike and Debbie had both said, “No...real expectations on my side.” First focusing on Marcie and Mike, separately, I asked Marcie about her visions of dreams for William and she said,

I have a vision of his happiness and probably a strong moral code. I think that how Mike and I perceive his future and our expectations have, will, well yes, will have a huge impact on who he is. Sometimes it hits me what a tremendous responsibility that is.

With Marcie’s permission, I had Mike read my transcriptions of her comments and reflect upon them. This is what he wrote,

Here it is, I didn’t have set expectations and I still don’t of what he’ll talk like and look like and think like...but I want him to be a thinker and to be curious and respectful to the world...everything else is pretty much up for negotiation and you know, well, him and us making it together...I know that Marcie had some real thoughts on behavior and morals...but it all goes well together and it works and he thinks! I mean I am so proud of that kid when I can watch his brain process something and he thinks out loud...you see the wheels turning and he asks the right questions to get at what he wants to know...that makes me so proud! In that sense, I am responsible for his upbringing and persona. I realize that and want to do my best by him. Especially knowing that I will and do have an impact on his thinking, that makes me want to work harder at forming him as a thinker and questioner of the seemingly obvious... Oh! So that’s my vision, huh? Now that I’ve said it and all, I suppose that’s my way, my “dream.”

After Mike verbalized his vision and gave language to his dream, he owned these as his own socialization of his child as a learner. The naming of the phenomenon and giving it language gave him the opportunity to claim it, name it and make it his own. He had verbalized his vision and this “ownership” came within utilizing the reflexive nature of reflection and language. At a later interview, I asked Marcie and Mike together if they thought that reflecting upon their own relationship affected their reflection upon William’s upbringing. Marcie said, “Talking in nature brings up more of those questions. I suppose thinking about our relationship and looking for all of the “what ifs” and “so whats” effects how I realize and am so aware of my and Mike’s effects on William and his world.”

I asked Debbie what she thought was the direct impact she had on Steven’s upbringing as a learner. She said,

It’s really all about what you want for you kids when they grow up... I mean how you want them to be, and what you want them to have and to think about... As for my role in it, I will make some mistakes but really roll with the punches and take things as they come... sort of like not fix what isn’t broken.

The metaphor of not talking about a subject unless it was absolutely necessary, or rather “broken” and in need of mending, struck me as curious and I wondered about the impact and the effect of that message. Does not talking create a closed system? It brought me right back to my original question of whether the open system of conversation between parents leaves more room for critical questioning for the children. I gave Debbie the opportunity to reflect on this comment further and brought the transcriptions with me to our next meeting and utilized these as the jumping off points for our conversation. After she read, she said,

d: Was something unclear?

g: I wondered if you saw what you actually said as your roll?

d: Hmm...um- well, maybe. More of a non-roll, I guess would be a better way to say it.

In reading her own words, Debbie did not engage in the process of reflection. She did not give language to or name her roll within Steven's educational socialization. Again, I wondered about the systems that promote and the systems that deter the reflection process and critical thinking. Would Debbie be more versed in this process if she had the opportunity to or been forced to engage with it? I brought my question of the conversations between parents as well as their own reflections effecting children's upbringing within the context of education to Rabbi Charles and he responded,

In my experience, if the parents promote an atmosphere of honest discussion of their different viewpoints without any attempt to indoctrinate, the children are under no pressure to select one or another. At this juncture in their development, children are simply curious and require the open door for questioning and exploration.

I asked Amy how she viewed her role in Karen's upbringing and she said, "Well, it's obvious that I am the role model. I take that seriously and although I have to accept that my mistakes effect her, I know that I don't take that responsibility lightly and that's what's most important." Debbie's answer was as follows, "As I said before, I try not to overthink it, or question myself too much. My role is big, but so is school and society and so on."

The difference in the way that these couples reflected upon themselves as socializing agents in their children's upbringing as learners struck me as important. The clearly articulated definitions were only possible to attain within reflection and a certain

amount of comfort to owning the naming language. I looked further into the conversations that each couple had between themselves, with their children and with me.

Language

If a struggle over religion does begin, it often takes couples by surprise, thrusting them into confusing, seemingly endless discussions. For suddenly they discover that they are not interchangeable parts of an American whole, but two people whose different pasts have endowed them with a distinct set of feelings. How should they discuss their differences? How can each understand the ethnic and religious context in which the others' emotions exist? (Cowan and Cowan 1987, 128)

Is this the right one? My mom says it's so important to know the right answer. Is it?

Steven, working on Sunday School dictionary

Will we keep these forever because at the regular school we don't talk about it?
William, working on Sunday School dictionary

The power of language is almost unbelievable and often, unfathomable. The implications of language can change thoughts, hearts and lives. Rabbi Erwin explains,

It is all about how you talk to each other and to the children. They feed off of everything and at the same time take it all in like sponges...and it changes them... The words you choose...have to be chosen wisely because they are so powerful and have so much influence on the person... I don't know how many people know that... And if they do know, if they think about it!

This idea of thinking about you did say, are saying and will say is extremely sensitive and complex. I noticed all of the parents looking for the "right" thing to say when I broached the subject of specific things they have said to each other or their children. This hesitation seemed to be a natural reaction to an extremely personal issue. Amy explained her own cautious approach to the topic in this way,

We have to be as true to ourselves as possible in our own thoughts, with our words with Karen and of course with each other. Because you see, she gets any message we send and there's no room for lies or things we won't talk about.

Because so much of who she is and how she is comes from what we say...and you know what? A lot of it comes from conversations that we had way before she was even around...it stays and it's the starting point...It's just so crucial and important it makes me almost cry! I know that we can't possibly talk about everything before it pops into her experience, but I think that as long as, as long as we are talking about all that comes up it makes it almost more comfortable for her to approach it with her own thoughts...It's not that we need it all planned out, but some pre-thinking helps is what I'm saying. Also, there's a difference between what we just haven't talked about and what we wont or is uncomfortable for us to talk about.

This notion of language as intricate socialization is a vital component of my own questioning within this topic. Amy reflecting upon the fact that all language, whether it is words spoken directly to Karen, or behind closed doors about Karen or just the ones spoken between David and her in the past reflects a certain heightened awareness of the power of language. This sensitivity and attention has the potentiality to create a response to socialization consumed with care and responsibility that might not otherwise be possible. When Debbie said,

Us stepping into things one day or one year at a time it's uh- it's a gestalt, it's not really um- something we put a lot of thought into in advance... Does he ask a lot of questions? I don't think he's asking too much; which I take as a good sign,

I saw a direct correlation between her "tiptoeing" into defining her own religiosity and Steven's lack of a need for questioning. Rabbi Charles explains in an article that he has previously published (date unknown),

As to the children in such an environment, they reflect the state-of-mind of the parents. If the parents are ambivalent or conflicted over their differences, so will be the children... Parents have a wonderful opportunity to teach their children, by their participation in the many kinds of celebrations, understanding, tolerance, appreciation and love of the other.

In this light, language does not only serve as an agent in socialization, but rather as socialization itself. What is spoken and not spoken is truly vital in the formation of the

Being. This passage of language between parent and child comes in both explicit and implicit forms. Both are of equal importance and have just as intense of an influence on the socialization process. I wondered if the passage of language between institution to parent has the potential to play a focal role in the socialization of parent to parent language or “couple talk.” I asked Father Brad what he felt his role was in forming couple talk. He responded, “I feel I can bring light to what they may not know and make sure that they are thinking on all levels of their relationship.” When asked the same question, Father Joe claims, “I make them confident in their own knowledge.” Rabbi Erwin’s response was, “It depends on the goal... I make sure that they have a vocabulary to articulate what they are searching for.” Rabbi Charles explained that, “[His] role is often to clarify misconceptions and help give them a context over which to discuss their views. I might help them name what they cannot, what they are not actually able to.”

The parallel nature of Rabbi and Father to couple talk as socialization and couple as parents to child talk as socialization was blatant. Both “leaders” [theological and parental] were aware of the power they held and the importance of the language they used. The natural effect of language on persona is pertinent in all facets of every relationship, especially that of power. This relationship may be between institution and couple, parent and parent, parent and child and parent and historicity.

Power

... Intermarriage can pit your parents’ needs and hopes against your own. Every child, to become an autonomous person, must at some point separate from parents. When you marry, you have to transfer your loyalty from the family you grew up in to the new family you’re creating. You must develop the ability to decide what’s right for you as a couple, independent of the desires of your parents. On the other side, most parents have religious and cultural values that are

important to them. It is a blow if you appear to be choosing a drastically different life. As a result, when you announce your intention to intermarry, you're more likely to get a cry of pain, or stony silence, than hearty congratulations (Cowan and Cowan 1987, 39).

Is this true?

Steven, discussing Chanukah

Do all people believe it?

Karen, discussing Chanukah

If people don't believe in the Chanukah, should you still talk to them about the story? Can they still learn it?

William, discussing Chanukah

Power is an influential element in every relationship. The power should not be a source of guilt. It is something to be aware, careful and thoughtful of. Otherwise, its implications can be grave. In our first interview, Debbie said,

Sometimes when there's too many options and questions... It gets confusing... And it's like, you just want to walk away from the whole thing... I didn't want that for Steven... He really asked us about coming to the JCC because a few of his friends, especially his best friend Mark, were going... We were trying to decide which one to go to... And at this point, it's just easier for us to have the same answers.

I asked Debbie about why it would be easier for Thomas and her to have the "same answers," she said, "I don't want to necessarily give him a choice." This direct recognition of the inherent power used as a parent was consistent among all of the parent interviewees. The difference seemed to lie in where the parents viewed the power source and the goal thereof to be. Mike once said,

I have to let him think and decide things for himself. I personally can't respect and justify organized religion but if he suddenly starts to look into it and question it and really learn it and take it in as his own...then more power to him...But it's not up to me...His brain has to be his.

I asked Mike if he thought that this relinquishing of all power over William's religious choices was authentically possible and he said,

What I think and how I act will obviously effect his thinking. But what I am saying is that while my own thinking effects him, I know that mine is at least partially linked to my parents' thoughts, their parents' thoughts and so on. And of course, my reactions to all of these as well. So while my direct power is relinquished, indirect power is inevitable.

This direct link and connection that Mike made between his own relationship with his son, in regards to power over thought, to their own historicity was a huge revelation to me as a researcher. In my interview reflections that night, I wrote,

This never-ending cycle of power is inevitable. I see such a connection between Mike's own rejection of religion and his desire to see William own things for himself. This control that Mike's past has over him has a direct connection to the power that even William will have over his own children. It is so hard to remember that power is an "is" to be aware of and not an obstacle to change.

I brought the same topic of power to Amy and her thoughts on the topic were as follows,

Sometimes she asks these questions that I didn't ask until my twenties...and a part of me is like, "Ugh! Don't grow up so fast!"...But at the same time she's learning and I get to support that and watch it and help her find some of what she's looking for...and I kind of see it as we have some different views which is all the more for her to work with! My parents and David's parents' words are always with us and I hope with her, too. I don't fool myself into thinking that David and I suddenly came up with all of these new things, you know? We're obviously related to our parents.

Amy's descriptive way of connecting the power source within her to the language of her historicity had a reflective and critical quality. She was able to name the power authority that she had a dual nature with: it was both what held her and what she used. Marcie's comments on Mike's interview transcriptions were,

I want for him to love to learn. How he goes about it is his choice...As a parent of course I want him to be happy and so on...But the important thing in this, is that we know that we had to not have preset goals all laid out for him. We want the best that he wants...and that's fair. I'm not scared of the power that we might have as long as it is linked to thoughts and thinking and questioning.

Marcie's own "admission" of the power she knew she held had an air of authority and original ownership to it until she said, "Omigod! I am my mother!" The inherent connection to historicity releases some of the tensions of the power hold once one can give it language and name it. I asked Debbie what kind of hold she thought her and Thomas's parents had over their thinking. Her response was as follows,

That's not something that we ever talked about...My parents have some things that they're very weird about...But you know, for the most part they don't have very strong convictions about much...Thomas and I make up our own version of what we think and see as the future based on ourselves and try to maybe separate that from the past. It seems to be a lot easier in that way.

I saw a definitive need to separate from the past in Debbie's words. She said it was a "moving forward and not getting stuck in traditional past." She did not want to ever, "sound like her mother." The funding theorists in this research point out that the "is" of power is only dangerous without reflection and connection to a history and contextuality. The danger lies in the lack of language and therefore the lack of naming and reflecting upon the power. This differentiation between power for power's sake and power linked to language, thought and history is also the path to connecting language and praxis.

Praxis

Many mixed couples get stuck in either-or thinking, feeling desperately caught between the two traditions and families, and they fight for one rite or the other even though they don't feel wholehearted about either (Petsonk and Remsen 1988, 235).

Why did God make spiders?

Steven's *Creation* question

Is a creation something that they never thought they could do and then they did...so then, does everything in the whole wide world count as a creation and God loved it all the same because it was his...like he thought it up and did it, too?

Karen's *Creation* question

The concept of praxis is complex and intriguing. There are moments in people's lives when they breathe praxis. Generally they do not know it; they just know that their "pieces fit." "Walk the walk and talk the talk" is one of the best ways that I have heard praxis defined within a metaphor. Breathe and be what you speak and do. Rabbi Erwin said, "You have to know what you're feeling before you pass it on. It has to be clear and explicit. If you have muddle, you will give muddle." When power is utilized without a connection to the thinking and the why, it is unreflected upon power and therefore irresponsible. The thinking, reflection and contextual and historical connection to power are the elements that are required to begin the transformative nature from power to praxis. Mike explains,

See, we have to question things and be open to new things if we want them to. You can't just say that you're going to be intelligent. You have to read and ask questions and go see things. Especially if these things are uncomfortable. Shells have to crack and break sometimes for what's inside to grow and shine. It's important. That's important to me.

Inherent in praxis is ultimate recognition of action as well as thoughtful response to it. When parenting decisions are made within parameters of reflection are they more responsible? In other words, when decisions are thoughtful and reflective, are they actions of praxis? Amy explains,

I want Karen to live how she talks. I bet all parents say that...But we really do it...or try to... We talk about respect and learning and changing and growing and that's what we do and have done and you know what? Because of who we are and

what we live, we always will do... Because, well, really- because it meshes and actually feels right.

Debbie explains her parenting motto to be, "live things day by day and attack what may come." Marcie describes hers as, " a careful combination of what we think we want, reality and what we can all do to make us all happy." Breathing praxis requires forethought as well as continual reflection upon action. I asked Marcie if action and reflection could be done separately. "In regards to parenting," she said, "It would be wisest to keep them together and mixed up. Otherwise, before you know it, you're doing something that you're not thinking about, and then what's the point anyway?"

Praxis as parenting and leadership requires dual and reflexive knowledge of the self and history. Together, this knowledge may meld into the pieces of knowing passed on from institution to parent as well as from parent to child throughout generations. Rabbi Charles explains that, "What [he] is mostly concerned about...is that a couple demonstrates sufficient flexibility and respect for each other's traditions, practices and beliefs to allow for a harmonious integration of their respective traditions." This integration is a melding of *Bildungs*, a creation of an "is" and praxis in and of itself. The articulation of what "he is most concerned about" was the necessary step that he had to make before he made any "checklist" for soon to be married couples to follow. In both Rabbi Charles's and parental praxis, the language and reflection are equally important as the actions that they perform. The nature of praxis- and especially its inherent usage of language- requires authentic and able to be articulated historicity embedded within personal and shared funds of knowledge.

Funds of Knowledge

Just as your ethnic background shaped your personality, your religious background shaped the way you think... The religion you grew up with shaped your world view even if you no longer believe in its tenets. Rev. Timothy Lull, head of the theology department at the Lutheran Theological Seminary, observes, "There are different types of nonbelievers, depending what religion it is you don't believe in." Religions are a way of making sense of the world. They are "reality maps." Each religion has a central story through which the world is explained. The holidays, rituals, morality, and philosophy of life all grow out of this story (Petsonk and Remsen 1988, 137-138).

Doesn't everyone know this? I do from my house.
Steven, talking about Passover

Would someone who didn't know anything about Jewish even want to come and try and learn it?
William, talking about Passover

The funds of knowledge which children create are a reflection of culturally embedded stories that each parent brings with her or him into the relationship. This fund of knowledge becomes the said map. Amy speaks to this point when she says, "People talk about a bad seed or a demon child from a perfectly good home.... Maybe, but really they reflect what you are, ... what we are, ... and they use what we give them to work through this world. And that's what it is." Marcie concurs, "I can't expect him to use what I don't give him." Agreed upon funds of knowledge have the "upper hand" in having been discussed, reflected upon and verbalized between the parents. What is engaged into a dialogue has a better chance of being praxis than what is ignored or left unarticulated. Funds of knowledge are maps used to navigate through every aspect of life. They incorporate immediate family "deposits" into the fund as well as that of society and influential institutions, such as that of religion. The effects of every deposit vary in impact, although all have an influence on a person's *Bildung*.

Rabbi Charles exemplified the authority of the societal and institutional fund of knowledge when I asked him to tell me the story of when he started to perform interfaith ceremonies. He began based on a conversation that he had with a student in the 1970s. The student, Sam, wanted the Rabbi to perform an interfaith ceremony between himself and his non-Jewish girlfriend. He describes this conversation in a soon to be published book,

Sam said, "So you are refusing to marry us just because you'd be going against a decision made by the organization of which you are a member?" It was a question I had raised in my own mind many times. I simply had not dared to give voice to it. I had played the part of the "Jewish Establishment," as it was called then, long enough in this debate. Sam and Kristin were doing no more than expressing my own private objections to that position, and I realized I could not maintain a very convincing argument against them.

Once the thought had been verbalized, it became a fund of knowledge to be reckoned with. It was given language, and therefore able to be negotiated. Rabbi Charles explains that in order to reflect upon the action, the action needs to be understood and articulated. Many funds of knowledge are not reflected upon. Rabbi Charles says, "Parents might not mean to...but they hand over the life tools to their children... These tools, then, are the product of the parents' tools. To teach how to use them, though, requires purpose of thought."

Funds of knowledge have the potential to be creations of personal worlds. When these funds are imbedded within reflection and action, praxis really, they are more purposeful. For this to be possible, within the context of parenting, dialogue is of necessity; and dialogue of course requires context. I have argued that the contextuality for conversation within these interfaith couples led to open systems of conversation that in

turn led to their children's ability to engage in open questioning and complex critical thinking and usage of language. The implications of this aforesaid expressed potentiality are great and will be discussed in the next chapter, *Conclusions and Implications*.

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

What I Learned

Qualitative researchers use many techniques... to help organize, classify, and find themes in their data, but they still must find ways to make connections that are ultimately meaningful to themselves and to the reader (Glesne 1999, 149).

This thesis was funded with an interest in learning if open conversational systems between parents, made possible in the context of interfaith relationships, opened the door for their young children to engage in complex questioning. I was intrigued with the questions that the interfaith children in my Sunday School class asked. It seemed that their questions were more complex, reflective and thoughtful than those of their single faith counterparts. I wanted to find the path and possible connection between parental language and conversation and their own children's voices. Throughout the process, I engaged myself in thought-provoking conversations with parents, rabbis and priests. I reflected upon each interview, as did most of my interviewees. The nature of my study was inquisitive and information rich. Therefore, I only have the authority to conclude upon my own learning. Based on these specific conversations with specific people, this is what I learned.

For these families, the context of conversation, by its nature of being at the forefront of the relationship, opened the system of conversation and created an arena of thinking, questioning and learning. The potentiality for complex meaning making was more available to these families based on their own conversations and the fact that they reflected upon their own funds of knowledge before they engaged in the conversation

with their partners. This conversation started before their children came into the picture. The continued conversation was made possible by the act of engaging in hermeneutical critical thinking and transformative change at the beginning of the relationship. Further, this dialogue was authentic in its reflexive nature with history and the recognition thereof. Based on critical theory, it is my opinion that this language usage would not have the rich nature that it has today, without this clearly articulated connection to the past. This contextuality of history grounds the conversation and allows for meaning making to occur with respect to historical stories and familial past, which is the *Bildung* of each person.

The conversational relationship that I explored within this specific single faith family held the tenet of taking things “as is” and “as they come.” This lack of direct reflection and dialogue on important conversations is not a fault, it is an “is” based on a lack of context for conversation based on their religious similarities. Rabbi Charles points out,

The components of a good marriage: honesty and trust, mutual respect, ability to compromise, or flexibility, so as to arrive at agreements in a peaceful and an equitable way – these apply no matter which type of marriage we are considering... So the “interfaith issues” are simply one of a number that will indicate the quality of the relationship.

The importance of this thought lies in the fact that the conversational topic is not of the utmost importance. The determining factors, rather, include its authenticity, historical connections, dialogic components and openness to the conversation itself. These specific interfaith couples were engaged in meaning making conversations based on their own funds of knowledge. Again, the interfaith relationship was not the causal factor; it was the

conversation starter and context for the dialogue, the “is” to be examined in their hermeneutical process of meaning making

In this study, both women in the interfaith couples were Jewish. One of the men came into the relationship Catholic and the other Agnostic. This did not seem to have an effect on the hermeneutics of the couples. The distinguishing factor was the openness to the conversation. The implications of this study are great in both the contexts of the family and the classroom.

What It Means

Qualitative researchers must decide what the payoff of their research can and will be. Depending on the existing state of knowledge about the topic, they may make a contribution that includes a full range, from the descriptive to the theoretical... Qualitative inquirers look to the specific, both to understand it in particular and to understand something of the world in general. From the positivists' point of view, the respondent pool in qualitative research is too limited for development of generalizations. The particular case that you study in qualitative research, however, is likely to contribute to an understanding of similar cases, such that going beyond the case in your ruminations will not be farfetched. In short, researchers conduct qualitative studies not merely for their own sake, but rather in the reasonable hope of bringing something grander than the case to the attention of others. Researchers hope for a description and analysis of its complexity that identify concepts not previously seen or fully appreciated (Glesne 1999, 153).

In the familial context, the now traditional thought that interfaith couples may breed confusion and rejection of all faith among offspring may need to be rethought within the learning embedded in this study. For these couples, dialogue led to complex meaning making. The acknowledgement of the difference in faith being a conversation topic, as well as the reflection upon and engagement of dialogue between the partners on the topic itself were important ingredients for reflective success for these couples. Critical thinking was of key importance as was dialogue itself. Awareness of *Bildung* was vital

and played a role in personal and joint meaning making. If the conversations that these couples engaged in can be used as a model for other interfaith couples as they begin their journey together, perhaps the “interfaith taboo” can become a myth to be disproved.

It is the dialogue that occurs about the topic, rather than the topic itself, that “makes or breaks” the outcome within this context. It is the way that these couples do religion, do conversation, do dialogue and do parenting that allows for transformative opportunities for both the parents and the children. Again, it is the verbalization of the nouns religion, conversation, dialogue and parenting that is of utmost importance to the process and the outcome.

When religion becomes a verb, it is the practice of what Chet Bowers (1984) has referred to as the, “naming of language.” It is no longer the adjective or noun defining a family, it is an action, a way of doing things. While religion is a mode of familial connectedness, Bowers (1984) does say that everyone has their own unique biographical patterns that inform their traditions and narrative. In this sense, a tradition becomes a pattern that recreates itself across cohorts in embedded stories and things that “just are” and this is where it reflects *Bildung*. However, within articulation and reflection [praxis] this contextuality also allows for transformative change for the family unit as a whole as well as for each individual within the unit. In this way, how we use language becomes our identities. Therefore, the implications for the family unit and the classroom are great.

The questions we ask, the answers we do not necessarily look for, the attempt to find questions rather than answers, the task of forming critical thinkers who question reality and taken for granted beliefs has the potential to change the face of education.

Naming the actions that help create critical thought can impact curriculum as well as teacher thought and teacher talk. The interfaith couples that I interviewed had a now natural reflection process as part of their way of “doing” family. Imagine the impact of them having the language to name the process and the components thereof. The power of “linguaging” their “doing” can increase their ability to “do” family in this way. The recognition that language teaches us morality has the potential to connect the role of couple talk and teacher educational talk. I recommend, as critical theorists do, that in the face of what critical theorists define as necessary for transformational learning, the focus on differences and what does not make sense be released from its negative light. With this release, it can be placed within the reality of its inherent potential to provide a context for authentic learning opportunities. The ability to dialogue, the focus on historicity, the connection to *Bildung* and the nature of reflection are all necessities for couple and classroom educational success.

Freire (1970) explains that it is the responsibility of the teacher to impart her knowledge unto the student. In the same vein, it is the moral responsibility for those in power, such as educational and theological leaders, to impart such knowledge unto those who study under them. The process of the hermeneutical spiral and transformational learning via dialogue gains an ultimate “umph” when named and articulated. Imagine the face of language as socialization if familial, educational and theological leaders took it upon themselves to give language to the spiral. What if it became a part of these job descriptions to hand the gifts of reflexive conversation, the ability to dialogue and the methodology of creating open systems for transformative learning to those in

educationally powerful positions? Within this reality, the image of different, unknown and complex has the opportunity to transform into the icon of having utmost potentiality for hermeneutical learning and transformational change. The verbalization of religion, education and conversation is the tool to the trade and is the necessity to create the image of the open conversation leading to complex questioning and meaning making within the contexts of family and classroom.

EPILOGUE

It is to the role of transformer- in the sense not of reformer but rather of catalytic educator- that writers of qualitative research rightfully aspire. As others read your story, you want them to identify with the problems, worries, joys, and dreams that are the collective human lot. By reflecting on themselves and their families, friends, and associates, they acquire new insights and perspectives on some aspect of human interaction. Although not your primary purpose, this process of learning about self through understanding others is a gift of qualitative research done well (Glesne 1999, 158).

Writing this thesis has forced me to engage within my own process of transformational learning. Intermixed within the critical theory and my own reflections, I was transformed as a student, as a researcher and as a Jewish woman. I would often get immersed in the data and in effect “too close” to the process. Glesne (1999) explains, “Writers withdraw, immersed in their data and thoughts about their others, intending to give form and meaning to that which they have observed and heard and read (160). Occasionally, I found myself with personal attachments to the information and unable to reflect upon the data in an objective manner. I began to feel a sense of guilt over the dichotomy I had created between single faith and interfaith relationships.

As a critical researcher, I entered the process curious, and I was worried that over time, I had become immersed in a vendetta of sorts and lost a sense of what qualitative research is. At these times, I would step away from the data and begin to read again. The head of my thesis committee once said that you write and you write and you write until you cannot write anymore; and then you read and you read and you read until the process starts again. I found a certain calm in reading critical theory. It grounded my research and

it grounded my focus. It gave me the opportunity to “do” praxis and reflect upon my actions and thoughts.

As I complete my masters, I am making a move in my lifeworld. I am moving to Minnesota to move forward with a relationship. Jason and I have the context of this thesis to help us maneuver through our own interfaith relationship. I met him at a time when I was “stepping away” from the data and reflecting upon my own intentions. Through numerous dialogues with him I found the reality: I do have a bias. In taking on my role as a researcher, I was trying to step away from my historicity, to in effect be “unaware.” In doing so, my brain became muddled and unclear. My motivations could not be reflected upon, only obsessed about, because I was not able to name my bias. “Continual alertness to your own biases, your own subjectivity...., assists in producing more trustworthy interpretations” (Glesne 1999, 151). Jason read my thesis, pointed that out and engaged me in a series of reflective conversations on my own biases. In this “linguaging” of my awareness, I was able to step back into the realm of my thesis. As the process is coming to a close, I have mixed feelings. I feel relieved, excited, sad and nostalgic all at once. The process is not complete; for true to the nature of critical theory, it has led to more questions. With that, I conclude this chapter of my lifeworld and enter the next; the spiral continues.

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