Ways of Being in Teaching

Conversations and Reflections

Sean Wiebe, Ellyn Lyle, Peter R. Wright, Kimberly Dark, Mitchell McLarnon and Liz Day (Eds.)

SensePublishers

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SENSE PUBLISHERS
ROTTERDAM/BOSTON/TAIPEI

A C.I.P. record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: 978-94-6351-090-5 (paperback)
ISBN: 978-94-6351-091-2 (hardback)
ISBN: 978-94-6351-092-9 (e-book)

Published by: Sense Publishers,
P.O. Box 21858,
3001 AW Rotterdam,
The Netherlands
https://www.sensepublishers.com/

All chapters in this book have undergone peer review.

Printed on acid-free paper

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INTRODUCTION

Life Writing While Writing Life

> Without a sense of identity, there can be no real struggle…
>
> (Freire, 1970, p. 23)

With contributors from North America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Australasia, the phrase 'Ways of Being' celebrates differences in teaching styles, methods, and philosophies. What emerges in these differences can appear chaotic and messy. As editors, we have learned to be patient at these times and to resist the temptation to in this volume to reduce teaching to tidy boxes and neat platitudes that emphasize only our commonness. Engaging in discussion about our commonness and uncommonness both through the volume and in our discussions about it, we open ourselves to sharing practices and what has informed them in terms of those that have 'worked' and those that have not. As teachers, we have encountered failure and continue to learn to fail better, always hopeful of becoming as a work in progress. In this volume, we share our histories, our stories, our art, our poetry, and our human moments in all their tumultuousness and vulnerability. In these, our ways of being in teaching, our differences and commonness come together in a shared sense of humanity. The ways we sustain and strengthen self, soul, heart, and identity can strengthen teaching and ways of being.

We are not writing and compiling this volume because we have found the right way, or that we believe there is 'a' right way of being in teaching. We are doing this because through sharing our stories our private lives move into the public sphere, for as much as stories are autobiographical, they are also profoundly relational. In relating with one another, and by sharing our voices, we can begin to empathize with the life stories of others and locate ourselves more fully within the world of teaching. As we listen to each other's stories, we embrace and attend to this notion of otherness, becoming better listeners, as teaching cannot be separated from how we understand our relationships in terms of people, place and culture.

In these relational spaces we become oriented to who we are with others. Being oriented in communities gives us a place to contribute and grow. Being oriented recognizes that who we are, where we are, and why, is as much a social process as a personal one, and this is why we claim that attending to our purpose in life is also attending to our teaching. We are also each navigating multiple types of identity—some of which have been lauded as aspects of the "good teacher" and others we were taught to put away, or subvert because they simply don't apply to the role "teacher." We carry so much of ourselves into the classroom. While the stories differ, there is unity in sharing them, community in dialogue about them, and possibilities that are always present within them.

Drawing on our different existential contexts, each contributor offers critical reflection on their unique way of being in teaching. In our conversations, we have encouraged one another with the importance of living an undivided life (Palmer, 2009b). Such living is more relevant now than ever. In our observations, we see too many educational initiatives supporting corporate aims over humanistic ones. By contrast, we support educational endeavours that sustain and support human beings individually and collectively, holistically and spiritually, heartfully and artfully, playfully and seriously, fiercely and tenderly. As education leans toward large-scale, quantitative research that finds its knowledge generation through numbers and the tsunami of 'big data', we view our stories as a way of celebrating humanness and returning the heartbeat to our work. Knowledge generation through the humus of our humanity resists systematization, functionalism, and reductionism. Because the work of being human is not a thing one tells another, we invite you to approach the chapters ready to converse with us, ready to practice your own freedom, ready to doubt, contest, attend, love, let go, see anew.

To express one's life individually says something about how to understand what it means to live collectively. The value of critical self-reflection has been widely discussed in education. We align our perspectives with Paulo Freire's (1970) notion of praxis and dialogue. The Freirean notion of dialogue, which can be described as informal education built on mutual respect, depends on equality, love, cooperation, and a collaborative understanding within communities. Praxis refers to the action of practice and reflection within communities to understand their social realities. The action of praxis is informed by theory and values, and the reflections are meant to be critical with social justice as a touchstone. William Pinar builds on Freire's (1970) work through his conception of "complicated conversation" (2011), which he describes as:

> …conversation in which interlocutors are speaking not only among themselves but to those not present, not only to historical figures and unnamed peoples and places they may be studying, but to politicians and parents dead and alive, not to mention to the selves they have been, are in the process of becoming, and someday may become. (p. 43)

Through his life work, Pinar has created community with those whom have come before him and shaped his worldview. As you will experience in this book, our chapters are in dialogue with thinkers like Paulo Freire, William Pinar, bell hooks, Parker Palmer, and Maxine Greene. Complicated conversation depends on a way of being in community where there is both unity and dissensus—the power lying in both. Recognizing the combination of unity and dissensus recalls Freire's (1970) reminder that too often our visions of unity are instruments of conformity.

> Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and

> bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (Freire, 1970, p. 34)

ABOUT US

We invite you to imagine this introductory chapter as a scholarly conversation amongst friends, one that includes you as the reader. In our conversations, we highlight arts-based education, place-based education, critical self-reflection, identity, power sharing, compassion, and love. Through our discussions, we have represented many ways of being in teaching, but we have also left many out. We have shared how we have navigated the teaching ephemera; however, a conversation cannot be about everything at once. Feminist author and activist bell hooks (1995) suggests that discussion is the unit of social change. We have learned to listen and attend to each other in these caring and careful ways, and we encourage these kinds of critical discussions to take place elsewhere with hook's challenge in mind.

Parker Palmer (2009a) suggests that "a conversation is only as good as the question it entertains" (p. 4). Much like Palmer (2009a) asks, "How can the teacher's selfhood become a legitimate topic in education and in public dialogues on education reform?" (p. 3), we frame our discussion around the value of teachers identifying their identities and self-positions, as well as the processes they undertake to do so. We invite you to listen critically, creatively, heartfully, and hopefully about our concerns. As an editing team, we all care deeply about the who, how, and why of our differences. We seek to practice our freedoms through generosities of difference. In our evolution as teachers and human beings, it is important to understand where we come from and who we are becoming. In this collected volume, we have actively sought to consider the nature and dynamics of our conversation, its diversity and multidimensional nature. At its best, it is a provocation that generates abundance in ours and others' lives.

As teachers, we recognize that we live in story and that we can story our experiences with one another. It is a way to make sense of our teaching lives and teaching selves. There are multiple ways of being in teaching, and the paths we travel toward humanness are equally multiple, subjective, and varied. We encourage all teachers to share their stories of living: within these ebbs and flows, we become more aware of the whys and hows of who we are becoming. Existentially, over the lifespan, as who we are changes alongside our aspirations, what we write also changes.

Cynthia Chambers (2004) reminds us to take the path with heart. "Like all paths," she says, "[your chosen path] leads nowhere, but it will make you strong. If you find yourself on a path, then you must stay on it only if it has heart, and it is only your heart that can tell if it is so" (p. 6). With teaching, as with conversation about teaching, there are no guarantees. This can mean that there is no one path, much like there is no one way of being in teaching; there is no need to privilege one style of thinking over another. What matters more than the guarantee of where the path leads is how that path shapes who you become.

Despite the challenges in uniting our lives with our teaching selves, we raise the question: "Who is the self that teaches?" (Palmer, 2009a, p. 7). In describing this journey, Palmer (2009a) expresses that it takes courage to embrace the ambiguity of discovering our teaching selves. Chambers (2004) notes that the words courage and heart share the same Latin etymology, *cor*. Perhaps this means that courage ought not to be reserved for those special moments of life's intensities, but is something needed in a more daily way, something necessary in the same way that our hearts are necessary. But what exactly do we mean by this? Does it require courage to get up, have breakfast, do work, and enjoy the company of others? If, as Camus (1955) argues, the only really serious philosophical questions is "why live?" then perhaps the ways we learn to be alive deserve serious attention, a courageous commitment to listen deeply to what our hearts and others' hearts are saying. Because who we are becoming with one another "makes visible and audible the complicated interconnections between the topic of the writer's gaze, and her ideas, values and beliefs, as well as the feelings she attaches to each of these" (Chambers, 2004, p. 2). It requires courage to listen from the heart.

Beyond listening to ourselves, we listen to what surrounds us. As we evolve, our audiences can change along with our identities. "To give your audience your full, sympathetic, and thoughtful attention. To be all ears is the capacity to attend to others with full awareness" (Chambers, 2004, p. 7). But it is also the courage to be a truth teller, to speak heartfully from the particulars of experience. This is what makes the narratives of lived experience trustworthy. Veracity in life comes from "the complicated map of the inquirer's ideas, beliefs and feelings [that are] drawn from particular places, events and experiences" (Chambers, 2004, p. 2). Bringing listening and speaking together means listening and speaking about that which matters to both oneself and to others. What matters, says Chambers, "arises from the complex almost unmanageable chaos" (p. 7) that is the specificity of our lived experience, experience that is profoundly ours. For educators, this complexity and chaos is our classrooms, our relationships, and our lives. Underscoring her point, Chambers (2004) advises us to pay attention to what keeps us awake at night. What we think about at night is what we care about:

> I have found what matters shows up in obvious spots such as relationships with family and students and co-workers; in names of places and people and situations; in questions asked and questions left unasked; in declarations of love and independence and rebellion; in photo albums and mission statements; in moments of joy and those times when you are surprised or startled by tears and grief. What matters shows up in novels and poems and essays, as well as movies and documentaries, newspapers and current events. But I have also found that what matters hides in improbable places such as dreams, just beneath the surface of a story or a lie or memory; and what matters springs up in the middle of the contradiction between what I say and what I do. (p. 8)

As a group of editors, we are listening to ourselves, each other (our community), our students, and to the world around us. We listen for connections to others and ourselves. We are listening to the contributions we make as beings in teaching, and the contributions others are making to who we are becoming in and through our teaching. Sometimes in our listening we can hear the needs and vulnerabilities that we express to one another, and sometimes, though not always – ours and others' contributions meet these needs. As Chambers reminds us: we are listening for what keeps us awake at night.

CLOSING

As described earlier, *Ways of Being in Teaching* illustrates the importance of a holistic and global vision of how education may be dissimilar, yet how the act, art, and love of teaching also brings understanding. We hope that this book invites you to reflect critically on your identity and what it means to your teaching self. By sharing our histories, our stories, our art, our poetry, and our human moments, we hope that you will have the courage to share your stories with your students, friends, families, and colleagues.

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CELESTE SNOWBER

1. LIVING, LOVING, AND DANCING THE QUESTIONS

A Pedagogy of Becoming

Because the beloved wants to know, unseen things become manifest.
Hiding is the hidden purpose of creation: Bury your seed and wait.

(Rumi)

Teaching and artmaking are endeavours of wonder and discovery. One never knows which seed sprinkled in a class will come to bloom many years later. I tell my student teachers over and over again that, even with the best curriculum or greatest instruction, in reality you walk into the classroom and you are there on your feet, in your full body, and nothing you prepared may be what makes the ultimate teaching moment. The moments we wait for as artists, poets, and teachers are the ones that often come to us, unannounced, yet the soil has been prepared. The soil is our bodies, hearts, and minds.

My task in teaching is no different than my life in being, creating, or mothering. I open up a space—one that is wide and generous, and filled with both paradox and delight—and we go through the space together. I seek to invite students to fall in love with curiosity again and again. Wandering into wonder is the art of being, living, and teaching; it continually invites us to never stop asking questions. I tell my students that a teaching life is all about living in the questions. As Rilke (1984) has so beautifully said, "love the questions, as if they were books on a shelf…stay in the questions, not knowing the answer, and someday it may come" (p. 34).

Curiosity is often thought of as the domain of children but I love to discover: a new piece of sea glass found on the beach, or the colours of a starfish, or a sea urchin in its magnificence. My roaming along the Atlantic in a small island town off the coast of Boston, Massachusetts, offered my early exposure to the *lived curriculum*. Of course, I did not know that term then, nor did I understand what ontology or epistemology were, ways of being and knowing. But I was in love with discovery and took hours ruminating on the edge of sea and land. This initial school of the natural world honed my love for questions, discovering, and contemplating the world. I took that into my research, performance, writing, and, most of all, ways of being in teaching.

S. Wiebe et al. (Eds.), Ways of Being in Teaching, 1–5.

From an early age, I was encouraged that all of life was connected and, as I grew into my vocation years later, integrating teaching, dancing, writing, scholarship and education, I continued to dive into the choreography of interconnectivity. Thankfully, I arrived in the field in education, specifically curriculum theory and arts-based research, which, in turn, honoured the connection to lived experience. The emergent curriculum and the lived curriculum were articulations of knowledge and learning that I could not only relate to, but also thrive within. Over the course of two decades of teaching in a university, I have been thankful for the opportunities to engage in what I would call a philosophy of the flesh and a "body pedagogy" (Snowber, 2005). The body is not neat or predictable and neither is teaching. Our biggest gift for teaching, as Parker Palmer (1998, p. 2) says, is "we teach who we are." However, who are we? Are we just talking heads? Or are we full human beings, embracing the complexity and beauty of a life lived in the mind, heart, spirit, limbs, belly, imagination, mystery, and even limitations? And how do we embrace all those parts of us as human beings, in a time that is so absolutely compressed on all sides? How do we ultimately become human beings instead of just human doings, or let our human doings come out of our *beinghood*? And, ultimately, how does one train for such an endeavour?

I used to be very jealous of those who had so much support around them, either physically or emotionally. I am not proud of being jealous, but as a single mother of three amazing sons and carrying a tenure track Faculty position, with both my parents gone and all extended family thousands of miles away, I have often felt alone. In that aloneness, I did not have the capacity to participate in or compartmentalize life in neat ways; subsequently, everything became interrelated and connected. My children's play became a place of reflection; my cooking supper weaved them into dances; and my daily walks became poetry and performances of site-specific work. My stability and consistency lie in taking solitude every day with myself in the form of walking and writing; this has led to a 25-year practice of finding the beauty in small things and knowing that inspiration comes in and from attending to the moment. The connections between the holy and the ordinary have been my food group and a mainstay for the inspiration for all my teaching, writing, and performing. It is here in these moments, where breath and vitality fill me, that my ideas truly become part of all my being.

I now have all my undergraduate and graduate classes engage in the practice of solitude in some form. I emphasize the connections between solitude and physicality, which have the capacity to connect to a place of flow—whether it is walking, writing, resting, dancing, or drawing. I invite students to leave the details behind so the fast-paced monkey mind can settle; then expanse is granted to mind and body, and passion for inquiry is cultivated. The practice of writing is inextricably connected to these times of solitude and allows for writing to emerge from a different place, where breath turns to ink and the instincts of the belly form on the page. Here is the opportunity for both a reflective practice and an openness to insight that springs from the body's wisdom.

We are often harder on ourselves than anyone else. Standards and accountability are ways of pursuing excellence, but they are closed-minded about much that matters, such as when one is dealing with grief, or a loss, or a teachers' strike. The world is filled with disruptions, and what emerges in those times of difficulty can be a place of great creativity. The alchemy of our lives occurs in the cracks. Light is in the cracks, places of brilliance dwell there too. The challenge is to intentionally leave more room to live in the cracks, and pay attention to what seeps through our lives. Discomfort reigns here, but it can be the sacred space for perceptions to shift and new ways of becoming to be given birth. These cracks are the entrance into magic—where the poetry of our lives is met in the mundane. Summer squash and zucchini are announcing the beauty of yellow and green. A few quiet moments become a pilgrimage, and a student's insight becomes the inspiration for being a teacher. It is the surprise I wait for, but it always comes unannounced, and I am once again turned to the miracle of what being alive is all about.

BODYPSALM FOR BECOMING

Know there is a flow
working within the vessels
of your life and blood
through each spiritual artery and vein
a current all to its own

You cannot stop the life stream
only enhance its surge
listen for the sounds
inhabiting the map of your path
let what is unseen carry you
give into the wave
of the ebb and flow
of your own pulse
who knows where your journey will lead
or what you will discover

You are in a new chapter
of your own autobiography
rewriting your own narrative
every moment you take a breath.

Let the air breathe you
allow the mist of the unpredictable
to caress your plans
widen your embrace
of what is possible in the impossible

where the process of becoming
will have its way
and find you once again
with an open heart
to touch the sky
and inhabit your dreams.

Our lives are research and we are both individually and collectively co-creating the artfulness of living, being, and teaching. I often find myself roaming as I teach, not able to stay in the classroom. In the classes I teach on Embodiment, I bring my graduate students into the world as the classroom. We walk around a lake in the coolness of the forest in silence, opening all the fibers of our beings to the smells, textures, and colours of the natural world. Often, this is juxtaposed with the chatter in the mind, but here we slowly let go to hear the new words that form from the hundred shades of green entering the visceral imagination. We go to galleries and performances, or leave the classroom and share our writings around the building. It fascinates me that everywhere students are attached to a device, and yet the most sensational and sensate device is within. The inner spirit is longing for attention, waiting patiently as a lover to bring the heart to all one does; whether it is science or artmaking, the full body wants more real estate in our lives.

To attend with all of our bodies, hearts, minds, and spirits is a radical act. This alone is entering the fullness of beinghood and has a direct effect on living and teaching. One becomes wide awake, as beloved philosopher Maxine Greene (1995) says, and no syllabus could be more astounding than bringing the full self to small and large gestures. Incremental steps of being present. Here. Hear. Listening in the cracks.

The 14th century Persian poet Hafiz says, *A poet is someone/Who can pour Light into a spoon/Then raise it/To nourish/Your beautiful parched, holy mouth* (Ladinsky, 1996, p. 59). Teaching is to nourish the beautiful, parched, holy mouth. I have a practice in my teaching to integrate the arts as a place of inquiry. Dancing, painting, singing, and writing the questions of our lives gives way to the discoveries that will arise. We are not only lifewriting, but lifedancing and lifesinging and lifepainting. Our lives are research and a place of being created anew. We are an artwork and nothing can be more magnificent than creation and recreation of each day.

Connecting the arts to inquiry provides an entrance to humanity and, herein, is the lived curriculum (Snowber, 2012). An entrance to our own humanity is an invitation to the humus and humour of our own journeys. We are of the earth and live in both fragility and miracle. These stories are the paints and notes of our lives. Trust the colours of your own history, and it surely will make new colours.

I tell my students over and over again that the most important thing they can do is to "show up" for their own lives. It is an appointment that no one else can fulfill. In the pain and suffering and joy, which claims our own autobiographies, these are the entrances to compassion for ourselves and others. Compassion is being with passion and the capacity to "be with." Presence is all that is asked. And this is magnificent. And here is a pedagogy of becoming.

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JOHN J. GUINEY YALLOP

2. LOVING TEACHING

In this chapter I explore how I have come to understand teaching, or how I choose, or how I need, to live as a teacher. I also write about what I have encountered as welcome and celebration, or distrust and resistance, as responses to my ways of being as a teacher. Moving beyond my thirtieth year working in the field of education, I move back to some of my own teachers and I move ahead to the teachers I now work with as a teacher educator. A narrative inquirer and a poetic inquirer, I use both story and poetry in this exploration as a way of bringing readers into the moments I share. Also, I hope that this chapter will open up spaces for others to share their own stories and poems as we continue to move and grow into those spaces we create for each other.

LOVING TEACHING: A REMEMBERED STORY

At the end of a year when I was teaching a class of Grade 6 students, a father of one of my students called me about a note I had written to his daughter in the last week of classes. In fact, I had written a note to each of my students thanking them for their contributions to the class and telling them what I saw as their strengths as they moved on to another school and, eventually, out into the larger world. The father was very grateful for my comments to his daughter. He was also very complimentary of the teaching his daughter had received from me that year. What was most remarkable for me, however, in that moment, and even now, is that the parent I was talking with communicated that he was surprised, not because of what he called my good teaching: "My daughter has had other very good teachers in the past," he said, "but with you it's something different; you take it very seriously and you seem to really enjoy it. For you, it's something that is very important; I get the impression that you actually really love it." I smiled into the phone and I thanked him for calling and for sharing those kind comments. Because I had, that year, some difficult challenges with colleagues who did not value my teaching in ways which that parent did, something I did not share with the parent, I said somewhat tongue in cheek, "I am inclined to ask you to put your words in writing." He didn't, perhaps because it was the end of the school year and he was busy, or perhaps because he wasn't a writer. Whatever the reason, I am left with only the memory.

Only the memory…but, is it *only*, really? The impact of the memory has been deep and enduring, enough that, all these years later, I feel compelled to put my thoughts in writing. I frame this chapter as an expression of gratitude to a young girl and her father, and to all who have been a part of my teaching journey.

S. Wiebe et al. (Eds.), Ways of Being in Teaching, 7–11.

IT HASN'T ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THAT

It hasn't always been like that;
not every moment has been a warm embrace.

I have come home in tears,
hate sticking to me like spitballs.

Held through the night in my partner's arms;
released in the morning to return renewed.

A letter from a parent expressing concern and offering care,
placed over the word wounds from yesterday.

A colleague at my door with understanding and support,
and words that heal from the loud silence down the hall.

LOVING TEACHING: AN APPROACH

As I look back to that comment by the father who called me at the end of a school year, I am struck by how well he knew me and by how clearly he understood my work. Being known and being understood are desirable experiences; at least they are for me. That father's words went to my heart, and to the heart of what I was trying to do, of what I was doing—*engaging in teaching as something I was loving and as something that is loving*. It was the first time a parent of a child I was teaching had used the word love to describe my approach to teaching.

FALSE WORDS

The worst ones
are the ones who know the talk.

Contempt couched in concern;
care with an invisible suffix *less*.

Allies that are *all lies*;
enemies that act like enemas.

Sometimes at faculty meetings,
I feel empty.

LOVING TEACHING: THE ROOTS

For me, loving teaching had been there from my beginning years as an educator. Since my early days as an Educational Assistant, particularly in my work with a teacher who treated me as a respected colleague, who, even decades later, reminded me that I had taught a young man how to read in his Grade 8 year, I found that

teaching was as much, or more, a place for my heart, for my emotions, as it was for my mind and my skills. Even more clearly, I saw no separation between my heart and my mind, no separation between my emotions and my skills.

But it goes back even further than that. I experienced loving teaching as a child and as an adolescent. Mrs. Catherine Melvin and Mrs. Annie Hayes were my most memorable elementary school teachers. They both told stories, and I could tell that they loved what they were doing, and that they loved me. Mr. Gus Gibbons was my high school principal. He read my love poem to Bobby Sherman, a male superstar. A young man struggling with my emerging identities at the time, I received only affirmation from Mr. Gibbons. My high school English teacher, Mr. Leo Moriarity, noticed my love of writing and encouraged it. He even once recognized my writing style when I published anonymously. He, selflessly, advised me to go to university, where I would find an environment to continue to explore and develop my growing interests and skills. I did not, initially, take his advice and continued on a path that had been cleared for me to a Roman Catholic seminary in Dublin, Ireland; a year later, remembering my high school English teacher's advice, that getting a degree would be something I would always have and that other decisions could come later, and also needing to be with a more diverse group of people with multiple interests, I left the seminary, returned to Newfoundland, and began a Bachelor of Arts degree.

Most notable from my year in the seminary was Reverend Jerome Twomey. He was a huge man, with a proportionally huge heart. I recall sitting in his office shortly after my eighteenth birthday telling him that I was gay. He was non-judgmental. In fact, his sense of humour and genuine respect for my right to self-determination had me leaving his office laughing and walking tall. More than three decades later, I am still warmed by the memory.

"We need your voice," one of my Religious Studies professors in university, Dr. Sheldon MacKenzie, once said to me, "and you won't always know the positive impact of your voice." This idea, that my voice had power, felt new to me, even though I had experienced and been affirmed in it before. The seminary, however, was not a place for individuality, or power; it was a place of submission—a place where my voice had grown almost silent—a place I had to leave to save my voice and, perhaps, my soul.

In addition to giving space for my voice to grow, university also was a place where I learned a language of love. In my first philosophy course the professor talked about love as it relates to teaching and learning, and to the relationship between teacher and learner. "The difference between love and respect," said Dr. John Scott, "is just a matter of spelling." I realized that the respect I felt from, and for, my teachers was another spelling for love.

NOT RIGHTEOUS WORDS

"You're a queer,
and that's all you'll ever be."

"You must leave the priesthood;
homosexuality is your cross."

"You'll never be able to do it;
you'll be back; I can assure you of that."

"We shouldn't be promoting faggots;
I was embarrassed that he was representing us up there."

LOVING TEACHING: MORE THAN MEMORIES

As I look back to those loving teachers in my life, I see no fakes, no false uses of words to ensnare me, or to make themselves look more important than me. Humility is a word that comes to mind; maybe love makes room for humility. If I were to tell those teachers how I remember them, I think they would be as pleasantly surprised as I was by that father's call. But what they have given me are more than memories of teaching, although those memories are also great gifts. What they have given me are also more than examples of teaching, more than models of how to do it, more than samples of best practices. What they have, in fact, given me are experiences of having been taught in loving ways, of having had my realities respected while also being challenged to stretch beyond what I saw as my limitations. They knew me without hurting me. Indeed, they allowed me to know them, opening themselves to vulnerability. In doing so, they called on my capacity for love; they awakened and called forth my own desire to teach. They nourished me as a student; they continue to nourish me as an educator.

IN THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

A parent called to complain about my orientation;
it was not my pedagogical orientation.

A parent called because I kissed a man
in the parking lot.

A parent called because I was seen
looking at construction workers.

I was told that celebrating Lesbian and Gay Pride Week
is not appropriate for elementary school students.

I was told that we don't celebrate Heterosexual Pride Week;
I guess someone missed fifty-one weeks.

A parent called because I wore a t-shirt
with "My Ontario includes Gay and Lesbian Families."

A parent called because I wore a t-shirt
with "I support safe schools for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students."

I was told that my guest speakers would need to be pre-screened;
two lesbians and their baby were the only ones ever pre-screened.

A letter was received because I was interviewed on a local radio show
about our Pride Week unit in elementary school.

I was told that we don't talk with students about personal matters;
adopting a child is a personal matter only when the parents are queer.

LOVING TEACHING: TENSIONS IN (BE)LONGING

After almost two decades working as a teacher, I resigned from my teaching position. The near daily presence of homophobia and heterosexism in the educational environments I worked in was the main reason I left teaching. Sometimes leaving is the only self-respecting choice. I left teaching because I felt I no longer belonged. I could not live lovingly where I did not belong—where I felt disconnected. Strangely, I found I could not really leave either. Teaching was not just what I did; it remains part of who I am. I returned to teaching as a teacher educator because I found that my desire to teach was a longing, and that longing is a way of being in teaching. I found a place for being in my longing, a place for (be)longing. That place is not so much physical as it is emotional; it is not so much temporal as it is remembered. When I am teaching, I am longing; I am loving.

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3. A BONE OF CONTENTION

Mrs. Currie rubs open a clear patch so she can see through her fogged up windows. It is 7:30 a.m. and, alone in her car, she becomes preoccupied with her accounts, mentally checking and rechecking whether she has enough to cover this month's withdrawals. She waves to several people in the parking lot but doesn't really see them. After a few minutes, she notices having eaten from a bag of stale potato chips on the passenger seat, and becomes angry for snacking without thinking.

A few more cars begin arriving. The dated Civics and Corollas are almost as worn down as she is, an automaton of her usual end-of-the-year self. Becoming a ghost is like returning to adolescence: there but mostly absent, hardly caring to follow conversation; talked to not with; seen at the beginning and end of a day, but misunderstood. Everyone becomes a ghost at some point or other, living so others cannot see them.

Her sign is in the trunk: *Smaller class sizes.* She is too old for the ironic quip, the sound byte. Her simplicity hopes reason and level-headedness will win out. She has always found clarity in numbers. 12 is a private school. Clearly not realistic, at least not anymore. They lost the battle against privatizing public schools long ago—actually not that long ago; it's simply offensive that schools charging over ten thousand dollars tuition, even more than twenty thousand, would still receive a per pupil allotment of public funds.

Readying herself to join the others, she sees there is a ghost on strike with them; a small, older woman like herself, with lenses so thick that if she still had functioning eyes they would appear distorted, something like a goldfish's in a rounded bowl, never quite the right size for the occasion. She receives a phone call, and this causes her to withdraw a little.

It is difficult to overhear the conversation, but it appears the caller is on the other side of the continent, perhaps in PEI, a province few of them know anything about, though Mrs. Currie has worked with someone from PEI, or someone who had a relative who lived there.

While she is listening in, Mrs. Currie discovers that she has left her Totes umbrella in her classroom; distracted, she can no longer follow their conversation. The Education Minister is referred to, but that is the last thing she catches; apparently he spent last night in town, is on his way, in fact, to make a statement.

It would be a shame not to have her umbrella. While the drizzle is forecast to give way to some genuine summer heat, she'll need it at least until midmorning. By then

S. Wiebe et al. (Eds.), Ways of Being in Teaching, 13–16.

maybe the two sides will be closer; some real negotiating would bring relief to their solidarity, maybe even settle their nervous spirits a little.

20 is a nice, round number, easy to organize: 20 geometry sets in the red bin; 20 scribblers in the yellow one. 20 is *doable*. But something would need to shift, something broader and bigger, where the whole of society would protest the thought of packing the children in. Sometimes numbers become symbolic that way. Like speeding. 10 over: pretty normal. 20: fairly risky. Anything more than 20, reckless. They ascribe different motives and consequences for those drivers. The definition starts to change—driving becomes street racing, and the game changes—two things that look the same on the surface are actually different because of one variable.

Of course, for education that variable is class size. And at this point she wonders if having so many students in one class should be called education. 25 is why she is on strike. It's the tipping point. Anything over that and what you are saying is that you don't really give a damn. Obviously, the learning is not as personal. Ask anyone raised in a large family—back when it was regular to have eight or more siblings. More often than not, you were raised by your older sister. Mrs. Currie only had three and she remembers the incredulous stares when she was pushing the stroller. What they need is some of that social disgust. If only large class sizes could be as revolting to the common sentiment as large families once were.

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Mrs. Currie loves Evelyn like her own daughters. Evelyn is just like Edith: makes her laugh in just the same way, though she must be a few years older, already with her own classroom. She has been happy lately because she bought her boyfriend a leather cell phone case. It is the first thing she has bought him, she says, because she loves him, or she thinks she does.

Mrs. Currie can't remember being in love with her husband. Though she must have been, perhaps in and out of love. Their favourite thing was television, always with the latest technology, whether bigger, flatter, or sharper. And now without him, smaller; so small that she most often watches TV on her Ipad. Once, after falling asleep, she rolled over and cracked the screen badly enough that she had to upgrade. Her husband would have approved.

When her husband was alive they avoided horrors and thrillers, being at their very limit with Sherlock Holmes and family variety crime dramas. Lately though, with her hands shaking a little more often, and feeling nervous and queasy on account of her medication, it seems that a story scary enough to send her to the toilet simply fits with her daily routine. There are plenty of seasons of the X-Files for her to still get through.

Sharing her recently acquired appreciation for ghost stories with Evelyn, they've taken to recounting their favourites to one another. In the latest one Evelyn tells her, a teacher uses all her retirement savings to purchase a country estate a few miles off highway 97. Not too far from the famous bird sanctuary in the Okanagan. But like

so many of the area vineyards, it is acquired largely in the imagination as a way of making retirement a hobby, grapes in the Okanagan comparable to those in Tuscany.

Though this was before Mrs. Currie's time, it turns out the new owner is on the executive of the BCTF. Nearing retirement herself, Mrs. Currie understands—not only the considerable jealousy that is suppressed when wishing someone success in a new life after report cards and parent teacher interviews, but also the singular lack of focus retirement hobbies have, how the mostly-in-the-imagination and still-to-be-cultivated vineyard would turn into a lovable but not so well tended retreat center for teachers.

With Tuscany a little too far away and outside their budget, more than a few BCTF meetings take place there, often in advance of contract talks, and Mrs. Currie has a vague memory of being there herself. Legend has it that it is something in the homemade wine that makes the past executive council members formidable negotiators. That makes sense, she thinks, and probably why this story increases in circulation during job action.

Mrs. Currie confesses to Evelyn that she knows the story, even telling it herself on occasion. It is because of the poison, she says. Poison makes it personal. No one knows who poisoned the main water well, and while the target was the estate in general, one of the grandchildren dies before the poison is detected. Predictably, there is an investigation that doesn't turn up anything useful, though word spreads through the grapevine that the government is somehow involved.

The retirement dream dies soon after, and the land, plus the out buildings, and the small winemaking business are all sold well below market to an American Rancher who never does much with them. A shame, really, thinks Mrs. Currie, though supposes this can happen when the land you own is in another country and businesses closer to home are prospering.

Neglect creeps in over time and, with it, rumours that the land is haunted. Mrs. Currie imagines the four university students that stayed one night in the early 70s. There they are, looking for summer work, all their youth-filled muscles bursting in exuberance. With the estate in ruins, perhaps they see their Garden of Eden, thinking they can live off the land and their savings before classes began again in September. Of course, all they have with them are sleeping bags and some naïve optimism that none of the neighbours or the local police will bother with their intrusion.

Idyllic, really, a few cans of beans heated up on their camp stove, a guitar, some Southern Comfort, and a whole lot of summer in front of them. But they last not a single night, fleeing not long after midnight, and for the rest of the summer their telling of that night adds more detail and credibility to the rumours that the house is haunted.

Today, if you are driving this section of road past midnight, and if you are alone and the last days of June are unseasonably hot, as they often are in the grassland region of the Okanagan, in your mirrors you will see a young girl dressed up for school, running after you and waving as if you are the bus driver and she'll catch up at the next stop. This is the school teacher's revenge, a next-generation that will

haunt you for its own, indecipherable reasons. It is not until well past the southern tip of Vaseux Lake that she stops running, her blue pinafore fading into the darkness with the distance of your taillights increasing.

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Mrs. Currie decides to get her umbrella before the line forms for real. She wouldn't want to cross it, even if it were just for an umbrella. She must be mindful of perceptions. Like statistics, they can go any which way. When she walks the hallways these days, she realizes they have become her hallways, and that she'll never be able to leave. That's what makes her a ghost, she thinks. Only a few years ago they asked her what colour to paint them. She took it as a compliment. Haunting a place is mostly about surviving, living on, a defense mechanism against all the sarcasm.

It's all about endurance now. It doesn't matter that the principal wants to change her, transform her into a modern woman, into a 21st-century teacher; she has survived all previous transformations. Smile, turn everything into a compliment, practice scary sounds sotto voce.

Sadly, she feels like a sole survivor. Forty years ago, there were four other women hired along with her. There's been no time to keep in touch, and they've faded into other things, children mostly, though not only. The demands are hard, keeping up not so much: battle wounds leave scars, sure, but over time they become stories that keep the staff room percolating with laughter.

Along the way, it was the emptiness that got some. There's nothing that puts your life more at risk than a daily draining of meaning. Too much of school takes place in the head: abstract, theoretical, anemic. No, what really kills you is putting up with all the crap. It smothers you and fills your ears and nose and mouth. Eventually it beats you. It's hard to win a fight against crap. There's nothing solid to swing at, and even the most vigilant of defenses are eventually overwhelmed with a stench that leaves a person with no choice but to get the hell out. Forty years of solitude isn't one hundred but is enough to give one a little perspective, enough to know that these days are the worst days of all.

And here they are forming a line. In her head what she is protesting is all the crap. Her placard says smaller class sizes. Simple. Clear. Standard English. Communicable. Proper even, the kind of thing one expects from a teacher.

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HELEN FERRARA

4. AUTHENTIC TEACHING

Who am I when I teach? When I teach I find myself saying things in ways that reveal new insights to me, as I had not thought of them in those ways until I needed to put them into words so as to best explain them. When I teach I forget myself, in the sense that I forget to be self-conscious, and I feel as if I am outside or beyond time whilst being totally immersed in what I am doing to the point that I become one with it. This is what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, leading researcher in positive psychology and creativity, calls "flow". In an interview with Marge Scherer (2002) he explains:

> Flow happens when a person is completely involved in the task, is concentrating very deeply, and knows moment by moment what the next steps should be. … The experience is almost addictive and very rewarding. Small children are in flow most of the time as they learn to walk and talk and other new things. They choose what to do and they match their skills with challenges. Unfortunately, they begin to lose this feeling once they go to school because they can't choose their goals and they can't choose the level at which they operate. They become increasingly passive. (pp. 12–17)

Although I have often experienced this *flow* when I teach, this has not, however, been the case when I have felt compelled to formally focus on the content of teaching—planning for it and meting it out in appropriately portioned amounts. In other words, when the centre of my attention is the planned way to teach specific content, I seem to lose my spontaneity and the lesson becomes mechanical. A quotation usually attributed to Socrates may help explain my experience: "Education is not the filling of a vessel but the kindling of a flame." It is not just facts and figures, or *concrete matter*, that one deals with in teaching, but primarily with the attitudes of both the learner and the teacher. I thrive when I see the desire to learn awaken in others, and I know I have inspired their curiosity. I see the world, life, and, indeed, all of us, as being limitless repositories of discoveries and revelations, and I find rigidly imposed methodologies counterproductive to accessing these.

What this chapter does not do, therefore, is prescribe, or even describe, a tested methodology to follow. I see teaching and learning as being connected and interchangeable. Not only can an experience of authentic teaching/learning lead us to get to know ourselves better but, when occurring in a group of people

S. Wiebe et al. (Eds.), Ways of Being in Teaching, 17–24.

simultaneously, it connects us through shared experience and can, therefore, help us to build community.

IN THE BEGINNING

I cannot remember a time when I was not aware of the idea of teaching. Both my grandmothers were teachers (one in primary and one in high school), while the grandfather I never got to meet had been headmaster of a boys' boarding school for much of his life; my mother had also been a teacher before I was born. Thus, I learned early that explaining, showing, and sharing knowledge, discoveries, and even the wonder of experiences—like trying to milk a cow and watching a duckling hatch—were all somehow comprised in the mysterious word 'teaching'.

Another thing I connected to teaching were books and, again, the context of my personal environment played a big part in this. Until I was seven, my parents first worked for an educational publisher, and then ran a publishing company of their own, publishing mostly nonfiction and textbooks. Needless to say, surrounded by books, I learned to read when I was quite young. I can still recall the magical feeling that settling in an armchair with a book gave me—it was as though I were invisible (my parents saw reading as an ideal way to learn) and I was never disturbed.

All that we experience and learn from the very start goes to make up our own unique point of view. This point of view itself changes and grows as we change and grow. We could say that our individual point of view is akin to a lens that is continuously constructed (largely subconsciously) from the synthesis of all we come across in life—the experiences and learning we garner through our senses, and then process and analyse. John O'Donohue, philosopher and scholar, describes this state of being and becoming in *Divine Beauty*, where he writes: "No person is a finished thing, regardless of how frozen or paralysed their self-image might be. Each one of us is in perennial formation" (2003, p. 136). Our personal point of view (lens) leads us to see things in specific ways, and this, in turn, has an effect on how we experience life by directly influencing our decisions and actions, including our reactions. Thus, this further impacts on the development of our unique perspective.

Given the context of my early social interactions, it is not surprising that I would eventually be drawn to teaching. Sometime in the latter years of high school, I looked at various career options and concluded that teaching was the one thing that did not depend on any extraneous factors. In other words, I could do it anywhere and teach almost anything at all. It also did not present any moral dilemmas for me, something that prevented me from considering other careers, such as one in the armed forces. Regardless of having made these conscious discoveries, I did not pursue teaching as a career. Similarly to today, the 80s was not a time when teaching was thought of highly in most of the Western world. In fact, the well-known phrase: "those who can't do, teach" was frequently repeated, and this, undoubtedly, had quite a negative impact on me. As a high achieving student, I was expected to follow more glamorous

paths, and so I went on to university intending to study physics, computer science, maths, and astronomy.

DEVELOPING AN AUTHENTIC STYLE OF TEACHING

As humans, we are each of us dependent on our changing environment for our survival and, therefore, we are constantly developing, growing, and adapting. Norman Doige in his book on neuroplasticity, *The Brain that Changes Itself,* explains that our experiences shape our unique brain, which "differs from one person to the next and… [therefore] changes in the course of our individual lives" (2008, p. xvi). Considering this, it follows that we need to know ourselves as well as our environment. Thus, *being authentic* could be seen as delving within to discover both whom we are and whom we may yet be becoming—getting close to ourselves so as to better understand the self we already are, and making the choice to be as sincere as we can be, in order to be true both to ourselves and to the direction we want to grow towards, the self we are still becoming.

Our society, however, is not structured in a way that gives us much encouragement to be authentic, or even to get to know ourselves. Though we all start this journey as children through the exploration of the self, too soon formal education puts a stop to our inner searching, as we are made to focus primarily on exterior content, so that we might be socialized and educated in a standard one-fits-all way. We are tested, measured, weighted, constantly made to compete with others, and invariably we are found to be lacking. As a result, we are taught to trust and depend on *the experts*, *the rules*, and the way things *should be*, over and above ourselves. It might seem obvious, but losing the way to ourselves can cause a sense of feeling lost, and of not knowing what we like or what we want. As psychologists David Fontana and Ingrid Slack put it, being prevented from discovering our own creative inclination can produce "…a feeling that some undefined potential is going to waste, that something precious is being denied the light of day" (2007, p. 82). It is perhaps not surprising then, that many young people take a gap year at the end of high school, or college, or somewhere in the middle of college. That is also what I did, as freed for a while from the constraint of who I was 'supposed' to be, while pursuing an education I was not sure I wanted, I returned to my inner searching while travelling to places where nobody knew me.

Though I will never know what may or may not have happened had I made different choices, it nonetheless amazes me how often the choices I have made in my life have led to connections, which, when looked at in retrospect, fit together to make up a harmonious whole picture. In other words, my choices have been coherent in the context of who I am and in the timeline of my life so far. My first trip lasted only ten months, as the cold British winter saw me back to Australia. By then, though, I had caught wanderlust and it was not long before my second trip, and then only a few months into it, that I returned to Italy for the first time since I had left there as a child

of nine—my family had migrated to Australia from Tuscany. Interestingly, it was just a couple of days after having arrived in Italy that I literally fell into teaching. I had come from England to be the guest of an Italian family I had met on my travels the previous year; this had all been planned except for me running out of funds—unexpectedly I had only a few pounds left. I asked my hosts whether they thought I might be able to find some work, as I had dual citizenship, and they told me that the British School in the center of town was always looking for native English speakers to teach English, so it would be worthwhile inquiring there first. The very next day I started teaching English in Brescia (about 100 kilometres east of Milan), and then proceeded to surprise my family and friends by remaining in Italy for five years.

What could be dismissed as a fortunate series of coincidences, leading to my finding work just as I needed it, has to be reconsidered in light of the fact that I ended up living in Italy for such a length of time. Certainly my lifestyle there flowed with an ease that seemed to be an almost organic unfolding and growth for me. I taught the whole time I was there but held no job as such. Instead I free-lanced, which meant I did not earn a wage or have set hours, rather I negotiated what I would be paid with a number of schools, both public (government run) and private, and set fees for lessons directly with students.

It was hugely fulfilling to share in and celebrate the accomplishments of those who learned English with me: from teenagers being able to write to their pen-pals, to professionals passing their Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English; from someone finally understanding the sense of a song by one of their idols, to another getting a laugh when telling a joke in English while overseas. I taught an eclectic group of people, ranging in age from four to mid-sixties, and holding a variety of occupations— lawyers, doctors, builders, engineers, manufactures of different goods (from computer hardware to sock-knitting machines), government workers, secretaries and personal assistants; among my students were even a boat builder and an ice-cream maker. I would hold group lessons at home for up to six people at the time, and we spoke in English using role-play regardless of how little they knew, so the lessons were fun and there was frequently much laughter. By the end of these lessons, I would feel refreshed and energized. Some of these groups continued together for a number of years, with lasting friendships being forged between students, as well as between some of the students and me.

FORMALLY QUALIFYING AS A TEACHER

Once back in Australia, I toyed with the idea of teaching; in fact, for a year I tutored Italian at a university, but, although it was enjoyable, it lacked the level of freedom that I had experienced while teaching in Italy. It might seem obvious that I would find that, as a university course is purposely structured to cover a certain curriculum so that a specific level may be reached—but for this to be achieved does a prescriptive teaching methodology necessarily have to be followed? From my

experience in Italy, with students passing various types of tests and successfully meeting language challenges, I do not believe so. Despite my recognition of this lack of freedom, I thought that perhaps, if I gained a formal qualification as a teacher, I might be able to teach similarly to how I had done in Italy. Again, it was only with hindsight that I realized this belief largely came from my recollections of some of my teachers (particularly teachers of English) who had seemed to me to be free to teach as authentically and creatively as they were inclined.

As English was what I wanted to teach, I first acquired a Bachelor of Arts majoring in English, Drama, and Media and then, because I was really enjoying studying, I proceeded to do Honours. My learning experience changed radically, however, when I embarked on a Diploma of Education within the University's School of Education. From the start, this course was replete with contradictions. Many of the theoretical units were quite fulfilling, both in my study experience of them, and because of the focus they had on the development of a student-centered and open relational approach to teaching. The practice teaching units, however, including those units that dealt with other practical issues, were completely at odds with this. How well one did in these latter units seemed to be dependent on playing by the rules of the operating hierarchical structures. Peter McLaren (1989), educator and scholar of critical pedagogy, points out that this pressure to comply comes from the *hidden curriculum*, which he describes as:

> …the tacit ways in which knowledge and behaviour are constructed, outside the usual course material and formally scheduled lessons. It is part of the bureaucratic and managerial 'press' of the school, the combined forces by which students are induced to comply with dominant ideologies, the social practices related to authority, behaviour and morality. (p. 183)

This hidden curriculum seems to be present throughout formal schooling institutions wherever hierarchical structures are found—and the more rigidly these are run, the more tenacious and subtle the hidden curriculum appears to be within them. This is further strengthened by the managerial ethos that educational institutions have been adopting, which causes them to be strictly controlled according to the logic of accounting firms, where everything is divided up and counted.

Authenticity can be experienced and understood only through a holistic perspective, since like other big concepts—life, love, and creativity—it cannot be divided and counted as if it were coinage. As it cannot be quantified, authenticity does not stand a chance in an environment that focuses on measurable factors. Teacher, writer, and researcher, Peter Abbs (2003), asserts that the increased focus on measurement that comes with the managerial culture is to a great extent sapping meaning from our education:

> In our schools and universities we have become pathologically obsessed with quantitative measurement rather than the qualitative flow of meaning, with a brute collective standardization rather than the more subtle modes of individuation. (p. 2)

In this sort of climate, graduating with good grades, getting on with a teaching career, or even being accepted, as a parent or student, within an educational community, depends on acquiescing to the implied messages that are tacitly broadcast. So, in these cases, one can easily, though unwittingly, become an upholder of the status quo rather than continue to grow by pursuing and practicing diverse ways of being, like authentic teaching. Sadly, this is the case even if these ways of being are a much talked about part of the school philosophy. Such is its insidiousness, that "often the hidden curriculum displaces the professed educational ideals and goals of the classroom teacher or school" (McLaren, 1989, p. 183).

How then to reconcile my experience of authentic teaching with the process of acquiring a formal ticket to teach? In believing that I would achieve recognition for my teaching ability by gaining an official teaching diploma certificate, I opened myself to internalizing the contradictions present in the courses I undertook. By the end of the Diploma of Education, I could no longer freely access the authentic style of teaching I had developed in Italy. In wanting an institutional endorsement for something I had learned and integrated through precious experience, I had had to bargain, giving away some of my power in return for *being authorized* to teach. As a result, I was subjected to self-doubt and uncertainty. What this meant in practice quickly became apparent from the responses I received when teaching in a local Perth high school.

In my first term there I taught English and Drama to various classes, across most years from Year 8 to Year 12 (ages 13 to 18). Of all the classes I taught, I seemed to get on best with the students in the Fast Track class. A Fast Track program is one specifically structured for students who are identified as 'refusing the normal mode of teaching'; it was then available in all Western Australian high schools and, at the school where I taught, it was available for the last two years for students aged from 16 to 18. The focus of this sort of course is a practical one, as it encompasses things like life skills and work, rather than exams. Viewing this as a release from a primary pursuit of academic goals, I tailored the English course to suit the students so as to help them improve their overall communication skills. This meant a much more personalized approach, which was not dissimilar to how I had structured my teaching in Italy.

Feeling that I did not have this sort of freedom in other classes, I found that teaching them required a lot of effort. This was due mainly to the clash between what was expected of me (covering certain material in a set time) and what I could sense that the students needed. This was of a more personal nature and connected to real life which, given the socio-economic background of many of my students, actually made their needs more urgent. In other words, the pressure I felt to make the students perform in a certain way prevented me from acting according to what I perceived the students needed. With one particularly challenging Year 9 class, where most of the time I felt that I was facing raw rage disguised as teenage students, I had an insight one day that the anger was not actually aimed at me. So I did not defend myself nor did I try to control them; I just paused and simply allowed their emotions to

be. In retrospect I realized that, in so doing, I was reflecting back to them their own selves. I was not solving anything but I was accepting them as they were. On that day, everything went very quiet and the possibility of connection felt very strong. However, rather than holding this space, I lost my nerve, fearing I was not fulfilling the role of teacher. So the first tenuous links to a possible dialogue collapsed. Had fear not made me revert back to being a 'teacher', I might have been able to convey that I was being myself, which, in turn, could have communicated to the students that I accepted them as they were. With that as a starting point, we might have been able to move past the formality of our teacher and student roles to embrace authentic teaching, and so too authentic learning.

STAYING AUTHENTIC – THE DANCE OF CONSTANTLY 'BECOMING'

In *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change*, Ira Shor (1992) maintains that schools need to encourage student questioning, as this can lead to positive social change rather than the upholding of the status quo. According to Shor, one of the best ways to do this is through dialogue: "Dialogue, can be thought of as the threads of communication that bind people together and prepare them for reflective action … [linking] their moments of reflection to their moments of action" (1992, p. 86). I have found that dialogue arises naturally in authentic teaching—*the explaining, showing and sharing of knowledge, discoveries, and wonders* can raise further genuine questions for people to openly discuss.

Yet, if authentic teaching depends on being able to be genuine, then how does one remain so, particularly when faced with the sorts of conflicts we experience as teachers? This kind of inquiring hastened my decision to undertake more study and, years later, having gained a PhD through the research of creativity, I was eager to share my discoveries by returning to teaching. However, I did not want to pit myself against an education system that seemed more than ever to be set on standardized testing and competitiveness, especially when my research had indeed strengthened the value I placed on a more holistic way of teaching—authentic teaching. Fortunately, this predicament was resolved by an opportunity to become part of the Indigenous Tutoring Assistance Scheme (ITAS) that supports Indigenous Australian university students. With a focus on facilitating what my students want and need—to successfully complete a university education—my facilitator and mentor role is once again congruent with my inherent understanding of what teaching is. Again, then, I delight and find fulfillment in the regular occurrence of my students' successes—from a number of students who were failing math passing with distinction, to another feeling they had grown as a person as well as in their study, from one finding their dream job, to others reawakening their self-esteem and reasons to pursue their aspirations.

Who am I when I teach? I find teaching to be a way of being that is inherently linked to getting to know myself and being true to myself. This is perhaps because authentic teaching gets me out of my own way; by totally engaging me, it leads me

to connect to myself holistically and gives meaning to my life. Furthermore, I have found that this necessarily involves others, for as I reconnect more and more with my inherent curiosity, creativity, and sense of self, this is inevitably noticed by those around me, and not only those I teach. Through my practice, I have also come to recognize the signs of when authentic teaching is present, or indeed has been present in the past. With time, I have found that this can start to lead those in its circle to their own paths of self-discovery and authenticity.

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5. EDUCATION, REACHING

CAPABLE AND AT EASE: WHAT WE BECOME FOR OTHERS

I love the sea. And I also fear it.

For most of my life, I've lived near the Pacific Ocean. While I enjoy the sea as a neighbor and a mentor, its force and diversity are so great, I can't quite call it a friend. I feel humbled, yet compelled to relate to the sea, almost daily. The same is true for me about the shimmering undulation of teaching and learning. I never expect to understand it fully, but I keep coming back.

My son has also grown up with the sea—either his dad or I took him to the beach regularly. Richard often took him to ride the boogie board in rougher surf; I usually stayed in calmer water. One day, they had the board along and spent a delightful sunny day catching waves. My son, six at the time, was on the board, with his dad steering and kicking them back to shore again and again. Then a rip current began to pull them further out, until the shore seemed distant and the water frighteningly deep. I used to joke that Richard thought sharks lived in any body of water larger than a bathtub. He still went in the water, but with a keen eye out for fins. I'm sure his fear was palpable for our son that day as they were pulled out. He kicked and kicked, trying to steer the small foam board back to shore. Exhausted, with the shore receding further, he instructed our son to stay sitting on top of the board and to wave and call for help if anyone came by. Even if Dad disappeared, just stay on the board and wave and call for help. He wasn't sure he'd make it, and yet, he couldn't keep himself from striving in order to rest. Obsession sets in when the mind sees no other option. I can't imagine what our son felt, upon hearing those instructions, and seeing his father's fear.

Luckily, a surfer spotted them and called for help, and a lifeguard towed them back to land. My son was quiet for a long time on the topic of the sea. Richard told the story, teary-eyed, again and again, and our son would listen quietly, watching his father's emotion. Something big had happened for Richard—and our son didn't yet have a story of his own. It took months because, of course, something big had happened for him too. His father had almost drowned, and he'd seen his father's fear of failing him.

Perhaps it took so long for our son to discuss the day because, as he finally reported, he didn't feel the same fear his father felt. And Richard's story had been so large, where was the space for his story anyway? When he finally spoke about it, he spoke of being afraid for his dad. For him, it was still a beautiful day, a friendly-

S. Wiebe et al. (Eds.), Ways of Being in Teaching, 25–31.

seeming sea, and yet, his father was in peril. Our perceptions of the same moments can be like this. One can feel terror; another notices sunlight on water.

I've always felt a respect for the sea's power. I love living near it, walking beside it. I swim and play in the water with caution. It has the power to change us, irrevocably, in so many ways—as my son and his dad were changed that day. This is the same with the true depths of teaching and learning. I feel I must be ready—not fearfully vigilant, but steady in my attentiveness. And somehow, I must be willing for things to happen that I can't anticipate, things that might change me irrevocably. Professors have such a workaday relationship with teaching; it's a job. And despite the regularity of contact, there is something different about it every day, a faster current, a glisten, an abundance of life, a stillness. Watch the barometer, and still expect surprises. Sure, as the professor, I'm there to do my job for the students. And yet, how can any of us do a job without risking ourselves? It's relationship work, and that means we risk being changed.

Even though my son couldn't speak easily about the incident yet, I knew that our next trip into the sea would be different than the one before it. I wasn't sure if he'd be terrified or reticent. But no, he wanted to go in. He just didn't want to let go of me while we were there. I wanted to do something powerful, to assuage his concern. Intuitively I learned that it wasn't *a doing* that was needed. It was something subtler. I felt his hand in mine, tender and cautious. He wanted to be there; he wanted to be safe. So, I decided to keep the focus where it should be: swimming is swimming, playing in the water is playing in water. Rather than doing something powerful, I became powerful, in a calm, respectful manner. The sea accepts no bravado and my son was looking for my ease. He needed me to be at ease.

As we walked carefully into the water, I held his hand and then quickly, he affixed himself to my side with his arms gripping my shoulders, his feet standing on my thigh as we went deeper than where he could touch bottom, my feet still on sand. I became the buoy—the indication of current and, at the same time, the anchor to which he could cling and feel safety. I could be neither paranoid nor over-confident in this role, careful, yet sure. I wasn't cavalier about any of this. I was touched by the recent near-drowning event too. And my fears were irrelevant. I had to reach into myself for courage and stability, for his sake. I was reaching on his behalf, but becoming more of my best self in the process. Slowly, we felt the pull and sway, the strange solid comfort of shifting sand. And then, in the familiar newness, we began to play.

When I think about teaching, at the college and university levels in particular, the structure of the experience offers safety first. I make a syllabus. We meet at a prescribed time and place and we move through the planned material. Most professors received little or no specific training on how to teach. We learn by following the examples we've been given, and, at first, the structure of the role *professor* is the life jacket that keeps us afloat. There's an immediate power in the title: professor. Students must conform to our expectations or risk failure in the class. There is power and safety in

the role for all of us. Students do their job and I do mine. I'm the professor—the one who professes knowledge on our topic; the one who professes faith.

The relationship may remain just there. We label our teaching styles—or the students do it for us. Maybe you're the fun teacher, the smart teacher, the strict teacher, the show-up-late, let-them-leave-early teacher. Role within role, it's hard to even recognize the deep and diverse sea in which we're swimming. And indeed, that's part of why we cling to titles and roles, to prop up the illusion of safety. We may even think this kind of structure is good for students. We can forget that we're into something big that can change us, without us even seeing it coming.

But as children discover, it's better to learn to swim, ditch the cumbersome safety-vest in favor of proficiency, in favor of feeling challenge. Professors have to get into a few tight spots in order to remember that both the quotidian and the unexpected can guide us. When we can make ourselves buoyant, solid structures that can float and move and feel, we are at our best for students. But let's not kid ourselves either. The "banking model" of education (Freire, 2000)—where we pack the student full of the stuff we choose—is within each of us. So is the expectation that everyone should perform as we deem necessary. And these methods, our actual and historical memories of them, threaten to snap us back to rigidity every time we feel threatened or tired or afraid. In order to do differently, we have to practice differently. And it helps to remember that we're practicing on behalf of others.

My love for my son, that first day back to the sea, helped me to practice differently than I usually did. Often I complained of the cold water, or looked skeptically at the horizon. I pulled my foot away from *what was that* with a small shriek. *Oh, it's seaweed*. I usually went through my process of getting comfortable in the water in full view of others. And this became a kind of performance that reified the specifics of what should be feared in this situation. This is how children learn—through watching small daily performances of adulthood. It's how college students learn to be professionals too, by watching the world of (hopefully) respectable adults. And for many young people, regardless of the content of the course, university attendance is the first place they see adults operating in a professional setting on a regular basis. Students often juggle adult responsibilities and become aware of themselves and others as adults. For the first time, many of them see professors as real people who have families and relationships and must place meaningful work in their lives. In teaching, professors have a patterned set of very subtle performances that show students how to operate in the classroom setting, when to feel joy, how to feel shame and hold it publicly, when to work together or feel competitive. For all of us, there are some conscious and some unconscious activities in these performances. Perhaps we don't realize that we become cranky on cue, hold a look of expectation or disappointment at predictable moments. Then there are the subtler performances of social hierarchy regarding things like gender, race, class, or ability. These are within us too and, until we become conscious of how we disrupt our pre-rehearsed performances of relationship, we won't even see what we're up to.

It takes love. And this is not popular to say. Here's what's even less popular: teaching takes self-love. Otherwise there's no ability to reach beyond the cultural default scripts. In disciplines where we study human behavior (and one could argue that's most of them), there are moments where students begin to see their own lives in the context of intellectual study, or in the context of other people's lives, or in the context of their own bigger lives and mortality. Just like the first day back in the sea after nearly drowning, everything pops into sharp relief; play becomes important; breath and body-awareness rule the day. I don't know when it's going to happen that a student has one of these awakenings, yet I know it's what compels us into both deeper intellectual inquiry and more vibrant lives. I'm better at my professor job when I love myself enough to stay attentive to my own transformations, my pain, and my joy. I want to tell you that I love my students—not consistently and not always well. Sometimes this feeling comes easy and sometimes it's pure practice fueled by compassion for my own learning. I make an effort to wish for their genuine joy and peace in the world, the blossoming of their best selves. The commitment to love prompts me to reach for different aspects of myself than I would access if I were merely trying to be more effective at conveying certain subject matter. And then easily, effectiveness increases too. Even when I don't like a student's behavior or looks or ways of speaking—oh yes, I'm petty too—I breathe and blink and look again, offer love. This is practice. I'm ready to move away from how schooling reinforces what bell hooks has called "dominator values." I slowly let go of the performance that says, "You must obey me today and perhaps someone else tomorrow." When the performance of professor lacks love, it can't help but convey this message: "You should start enjoying the moments when you dominate others, expand and amass those moments like treasures. Because today, you are mine."

When I became attentive and steady with my son in the sea, it was not an act. I have this steadiness within me. And it takes a conscious effort to call it forth, to interrupt the performance of fear and wariness in the sea that I've rehearsed so often it simply seems real. I call forth amazing aspects of myself, if I remain focused on what a loved one needs. We can each become more conscious of our performances though it remains personally challenging to hold awareness. Love, more than duty, offers the motivation. An ability to hold ambiguity and still be able to act—not to polarize, but to find the best in ourselves. I could've let my fear rise up, but losing a positive relationship with the sea was too high a price. Losing the full potential of education is a high price too, if we resist the vulnerability of real relationships and give in to the status quo. With so many students bringing so many personal circumstances, it's absolutely true that we can fail to be relevant and feel devastated because we've remained open. What if we truly care and can make no progress against the current?

There's a difference between the kind of emotional vulnerability that caused Richard to keep kicking against the pull, even as he felt himself going under, and the kind of emotional vulnerability that allows for connection—and separateness. We have different tasks to manage in the classroom. And, alas, taking care of ourselves

is not often something we've been shown because we work in systems that always want us to give more of our time. We work in a profession where teachers who give up their families and their lives in favor of total commitment to students become heroes. Films are made about them and we invite them to conferences to inspire us. Rarely do we hear the epilogue, that teachers like Erin Gruwell (portrayed in the movie *Freedom Writers*) didn't stay in teaching for very long. They kept kicking until they went under. And this behavior has become part of the collective script that we'll pass on—not only to the next generation of teachers, but also to the next generation of professionals in every field. They are looking to us as examples—in every classroom, in every discipline. And often, what they find is either apathy or exhaustion. I'm not sure I'll make it, we tell them, but just keep your eye on the shore and wave for help, even if you see me going under.

Luckily, when we become aware, practice love and model self-care, we can reach within ourselves on their behalf. We can do better and become steadier in the process. All of these traits are within each of us: diligence, empathy, determination, flexibility, dignity, compassion, patience, and more. We can choose to activate them when we're aware. Teacher and student are states of being that exist on the same Mobius strip of learning, after all; through awareness, we create more and more moments of meaningful relationship in the classroom and forgive ourselves the moments when opportunity was lost.

Let me ask you this question: how do you forgive yourself for bad teaching? For the times when you discriminated unduly either because of cultural stereotypes, or just a meanness within you at a certain moment. For the times when you didn't know enough or how to reach them well enough. For the way you didn't take care of yourself enough to be available. For simply not being available. We each deride ourselves for specific things, and then there are the ways we fail without even being aware of failing. How do you forgive? I think this is part of what haunted Richard as he re-told the story of the day they almost drowned. Why wasn't he paying closer attention? He was trying to do the right thing. He shouldn't have exhausted himself so. He needed to tell it and be told that it wasn't his fault. The sea is so powerful. He did all he could.

My favorite moments in teaching are those when I have a plan, held loosely, a command of the material and a desire to discover more. That need for discovery is often not about the material itself, but about how I must stay present—and risk failing—as I bring that material to students. I genuinely want for them to discover their best selves. And all I have to give is my imperfect self. The dichotomy of success and failure—like most dichotomies in traditional Cartesian thinking—is over-simplified; banal if not inane. I am the tool of my teaching and while I continue to strive for acuity, relevance, and relationship, I will never be perfectly effective with all students. As teachers, we must forgive ourselves our humanity and realize that part of what we're modeling for students is the ability to be flawed and effective. We're modeling what happens when we fail, or when they fail at specific tasks. Professors, regardless of their fields, are examples of how professional choices play

out and how professional roles either include caring relationships or eschew them. We are teaching both content and process. The latter definitely includes how we handle failure, whether or not we ever comment on it explicitly.

For most who teach, the classroom is a familiar place, one that has rewarded us. This is not so for all students, nor even in all moments for us either. If we allow ourselves to connect with the very human process of being in community, then pain is inevitable. Conflict avoidance isn't always the clearest path to learning; sometimes it is. Discernment is paramount. When we participate in conflict, come to see it in ourselves, we model active engagement and stop being victims to the world around us. We will make some mistakes and they will wound and sadden us. Like exercising a muscle, there's a gratifying pleasure that comes from resolving conflict too. We feel stronger and more capable. Joy is more likely too—like the times when we're lost in discussion and everything relates and concepts are clear and we just float in the glistening pleasure of it. We must each find ways to forgive ourselves and keep from blaming others when it doesn't happen. Rather than controlling the classroom, I look for ways to navigate the classroom, to be alert for cues that will allow me to make my best effort. Sometimes if I try an activity that doesn't work, I'll say, "I'm sorry; I thought that would work better and it didn't. We're going to have to spend a little more time on this another way." Or sometimes I just say to myself, "I'm sorry I didn't do better today. I'll look for ways to be more available next time." When the students share responsibility for outcomes, we all forgive a bit more easily.

We will spend our lives unlearning the habits and patterns of dominator culture. There are good reasons for whatever fear or recalcitrance shows up in our students—and in us. And as my son wasn't able yet to discuss what was happening as he clung to me like a limpet on that first trip back to the sea, we can't expect clear explanations about student's complex circumstances—especially in the classroom. I ask students in every class, "How do you take responsibility for your role as a scholar?" I ask them to write about it sometimes, but no one has to talk about it unless they're ready. What we can expect of ourselves is to use our intuition, our discernment, and to make adaptations. And though we can't command them, when we make the space for stories about teaching and learning, about how we come to take responsibility for ourselves as scholars, then we get closer to being able to shift the tide, open more possibility, more of the time. The practice of opening – even when it fails – eventually creates more openness. Then the need for unattainable magnificence can fall away. We are people, in a physical space, doing our best to be trustworthy and to make good discoveries. That will be different every day.

I've heard that fish don't know what water is. It's simply the medium through which they live. I'm not sure that's true. If fish know water, it's through the current, the sun, the shadows—just the same way that we come to know ourselves and our social lives through other's reactions, through our pleasurable sensations, through what we avoid and how we perform our daily tasks. Parker Palmer (2007) says that the new professional[1] must begin to take seriously the "intelligence" in emotional intelligence. "We must do more than affirm and harness the power of emotions to

animate learning and leadership: We must help our students develop the skill of "mining" their emotions for knowledge"(8) By giving emotional intelligence the same kind of respect we give to empirical observation and logical reasoning, we can begin to act on what we know more often.

And that's one joy of teaching—we come to know our shortcomings, our gifts, and ourselves. We use our awareness, not just because we understand that those "banking methods" don't work as well, but also because our love for others brings about a deeper love of self. That's one of the paradoxes of teaching. When I reach into my varied abilities on behalf of others, I gain too. As I practice forgiving myself consciously in the classroom, I become adept at forgiveness in other areas of my life. I also find other creative practices with which to process my changing. I embrace the ambiguity of change—attentive to the weather and current of this day, and to the particular swimming partners I have this semester. Thus, we continue to do what has been given us to do, all the while yearning for something more.

NOTE

[1] "A new professional – by which I mean a person who is not only competent in his or her own discipline, but has the skill and the will to deal with the institutional pathologies that threaten the profession's highest standards" (Palmer, 2007, p. 8).

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6. WAYS OF BEING, BELONGING, AND BECOMING

Arts Practice, the Relational, and Cultural Learning

Whenever I think of 'teaching' I always come back to one singular overarching thought—the power of the relational, and the values of empathy, diversity, and interdependency. I am reminded of this when I meet students for the first time, when I see them in ongoing mentorship roles, and when I go to schools and communities. I see it in my son who has worked in remote indigenous schools and in urban schools. It is an unmistakable part of the pedagogical experience and is always imbued with the aesthetic—that is, it is felt. In Shor and Freire's words: "Education is naturally an aesthetic exercise. Even if we are not conscious of this as educators, we are still involved in a naturally aesthetic project" (1987, p. 118). What this references for me is *awareness*, *presence*, or sometimes *a lack thereof*.

In this chapter, I describe ways of being in teaching as relational: to students, place, materials, community, and ideas, and I share elements of two projects in a remote indigenous community where I saw the relational both through its presence and the effects of its absence. While this is not an evaluation of the projects themselves, I share my experiences of them to help reveal ways of being in teaching and their enablers and constraints. In each of these two projects I describe how arts practice—both as process and product—is relational through connecting materials, ideas and people together. It is this process that always has a social element at some point during inception, creation, or sharing; the social imagination always containing the possibility of dialogue. And importantly through sharing what is made, that is our inquiry and expression, our connectedness to place, heritage, and those around us is increased. In Madeleine Grumet's words, "no one learns alone" (2004). I describe five different ways of being and *possibility thinking* as a disposition that links arts practice with these generative potentialities. Finally, going beyond these two project sites, I highlight four relational principles that highlight for me what enables education to be a state of growth with the benefits and responsibilities that flow as a consequence.

STATES OF RELATEDNESS

When I think about the relational and connectedness in teaching and learning I am reminded of the aphorism "I may not remember what you said, but I will remember

S. Wiebe et al. (Eds.), Ways of Being in Teaching, 33–46.

how you made me feel" (Buechner, 1984, p. 244). What this means is that, in the art of teaching and learning, the aesthetic counts and this takes us beyond the primacy of knowledge to where affect, sensuality, liminality, and embodiment interact. It is helpful, for example, to think about the relational in terms of attributes and dimensions; that is, how we *know* it and how it may vary providing richness and depth; I turn to these now and how they might be revealed.

Most often, we see the relational through its absence or *lack;* that is, when relationships of trust are not built, not much else happens, educationally speaking. Relationships of trust, like creativity, are not something that can be taught in the way that direct instruction teaches phonics with a script to follow; they relate to ways of being (the plural being important). Rather, as teachers we can provide conditions where these relationships can be developed and supported. I share two threads both drawing on my experience. The first describes a visit to a remote indigenous community school in the Great Sandy Desert of Western Australia where, through a lack of awareness and humility, stereotypical perceptions of a cultural divide were reinforced and notions of cultural value and education as growth, never realised. This reveals that ways of being are always diverse and contingent.

The second, more hopeful description lies in a project where young people acted as artists, in other words *makers*, and developed both practices and ways of being that promoted cultural vitality, regeneration, and moved beyond shame, a lack of understanding, and lack of confidence. This second example shows how ways of being are developmental and imbued with the aesthetic and, at their best, promote connectedness through mutual understanding, collective communication, and respectful collaboration. The first, evoked by a back-story, provides a touchstone and entry for these points.

KNOWING AND (UN)KNOWING, DOING AND (UN)DOING

I was sitting in a four-wheel drive vehicle on the side of a dirt road six hours from any large town, 25 km from the interstate highway, and 2,800 km from the capital city; we were driving to a remote indigenous community. Sitting next to me in the vehicle was an eminent scholar who wanted to use this community for the purposes of research. The intention was good—build an educational game that honoured this community—draw on what was important to this community and, through their experiences, do much to educate the broader community about what it means to be an indigenous Australian at this time. This aim appealed to me immensely and referenced a lot of my own values. In short, I wanted to help.

I pulled to the shoulder of the gravel road, nothing more than a simple demarcation of where the road was used and not, and where the low sparse vegetation could grow unimpeded. The conversation went something like this.

> Me: Were you able to have a look at that book I recommended? "White Men are Liars." (Bain, 2005)

Visitor: Yeah, yeah

Me: What did you make of it?

Visitor: Interesting.

[Hmmm… I mentally raised an eyebrow, it sounded dismissive].

Me: You will find this context quite different from what you are used to.

Visitor: I can adapt.

Me: Some things are consistent, but particularities matter. When you work in a community such as this, who you are [as a person] matters much more than what you are [status]. There is a long and difficult history of communities being 'used' for someone else's purposes. It is important to listen, be present, and recognise difference.

Visitor: Yes I know that *[peering at his phone for non-existent reception]*.

We buckled up and then drove the final five kilometres to the community… I wasn't sure that he got it.

THE POP-UP APPLE SHOP

Upon arriving my visitor unpacked a digital projector, some computers, computer games, a digital scanner, a printer and assorted cables, a high definition digital video camera, microphones, extension leads, power boards and the like. It was a bit like a mobile Apple shop and stood in stark contrast to the worn tired spaces and facilities frequently found in forgotten places. Our immediate contact in the community—someone I had built a relationship with over the last year—helped us unpack and set up in one end of a community space—a stark place consisting of a concrete floor, walls of corrugated iron, and some bench seats. During the rest of the afternoon a number of young people drifted by, attracted by visitors, the games, and the high tech equipment (these having high currency in such a remote location); many stayed to play.

The intention was that we conduct interviews with young people and community members, take some images that we then share in a public space, and seek feedback on them. In my experience, this was a good approach in terms of iterative feedback loops, but attempting to do this without the bonds of knowing and relationships of trust, especially in this context was problematic; it lacked insight because connectedness implies a particular way of being and takes time. My suggestion that we visit on a number of occasions and build relationship wasn't a notion that was supported by him. My experience of this community and others was that we needed to be *present* to this community and that, given time, good things could then flow as a consequence.

Our purpose in conducting these interviews with the community and young people present was to find out about what these interviewees cared about, and this was a principle upon which the project was intended to be built. When my colleague went to talk to these (mainly) young men gathered around the technology, they either remained focussed on the games, or simply remained silent, being engaged by the attractiveness of the technology rather than my colleague himself. Turning off the games and computers as a first response by my colleague to get attention didn't help; the young people simply drifted off.

We also had sought permission for a series of interviews with students who were at the school, and introduced ourselves to the principal who was both a gatekeeper and facilitator, and who offered both advice and perspective. The way that this happened was revealing. After negotiating appropriate permissions, no young person would (by choice) be interviewed alone—we then did this in groups of four—three young people at a time and an interviewer. In each interview, and there wasn't many, we worked hard to elicit stories of these student's experience of *being* in community and education. Unfortunately—and perhaps symptomatically—being bound by an external schedule rather than responsive to place, we left before we really began.

DISCONNECTION AND SHAME

As I reflect on this experience, the interviews, and the observations I was able to make, one theme that remained consistent was that of *shame*. Shame is an interesting phenomenon that appears in particular ways in remote and rural indigenous communities that goes beyond being shy. Shyness, for example, lies more in the individual, whereas shame more strongly references the self in relation to others; the issue with this being that Western understandings of eye contact and silence are out of step with indigenous ways of being (Bain, 2005).

Shame in this context is about not putting yourself forward, stepping out in front (sometimes literally), and being visible in separating from the group. In this particular context the group is more important than the individual, hence being separate from the group is disconnecting and shaming. Shame can also take a variety of forms. For example, *shame* to be the one who is called on, *shame* about speaking out, being disrespected and *shamed* by the system that seeks to test students through standardised testing in what can be their third or fourth language. And *shamed* sometimes by friends and the teachers themselves.

For these young people—and many in traditional societies—sharing and reciprocity are not optional and so binding co-operative relationships are encouraged, coordinated, and reinforced. Consequently, disconnection as a defense of mismatched cultural understandings can mean a loss of security, belonging, identity and, in this case, anonymity provided by the group. Hence shame could be both horizontal—how I appear before my peers—and vertical, where there was a power differential.

My visitor found this perplexing and outside of his own frame of reference. For example, he would relate how many students in his experience would actively seek

opportunities to outshine others. In the context of his Western-centric experience, it was the *successful* individual who was celebrated, almost worshipped. Hence everyone who didn't aspire to stand out, individuate, and put themselves first—even at the expense of others—was somehow looked down on, this being the 'cult of the individual' to which Durkheim referred (2009). Connection in this later context comes from an aspiration that is desirable amongst young people (Psarras, 2014), but often vacuous and manufactured (Twenge & Campbell, 2010), and not relational in a way that reflects dialogue and mutuality.

More recently, the work of Brené Brown is revealing as it provides a different perspective. Brown talks about shame as a universal fear—the fear of being alone—and a threat to connection (Brown, 2012). This highlights that shame is not particular to any one group, indigenous Australians for example, and the fear of disconnection is profound. It is this notion of connection, and fear of disconnection, that has such significant implications for ways of being in teaching where relationship comes before anything.

In these remote communities referenced earlier, shame appears close to the surface and, going beyond what was our project, has significant implications for everyday life. For example, in indigenous communities there is a long history of well-intentioned but destructive forms of interventions by governments and agencies alike based on lack of awareness of different ways of being (d'Abbs, 1989; Smith et al., 2013). In an Australian context, for example, external government controversially restricts alcohol sales in indigenous communities. While limiting alcohol's destructive effects, it also indicates a diminution of agency within the community, and promotes an immediate illegal trade of procurement. However, when the community came to a decision to be alcohol free themselves, the restrictions were enforced by community members and positive benefits—such as feelings of respect and pride—resulted. Culture, in this way, was strengthened and went beyond immediate benefits of the issues, such as a reduction in domestic violence itself.

Following on the principle of connection, in indigenous communities it is the collective that is important rather than the individual. For example, people know themselves not by standing out on their own but through their relationships with others. For visitors or someone new, sharing photos of your family is far more connecting than listing individual accomplishments. Putting someone in the context of their country (place), and their family are two aspects of belonging and connecting that reflect identity not seen in white urban Australia. Connecting to people and place builds and strengthens, while sympathy fuels disconnection.

TALKING TOO MUCH—DOING, NOT BEING

It was also in this community where the school principal recounted her initial experiences in this remote setting. As the product of white middle class upbringing, she arrived in the community with a desire to improve the conditions of the community through building the aspirations of the young people. Equipped with a strong sense

of social justice and a passion for indigenous education, but distressed by the third world conditions she observed, she quickly realised that little would change unless she had the support of the community. What struck her was the first question asked of all new appointments to the community: "How long are you staying?" The history of white education in indigenous communities is replete with churn as new teachers are tested by lack of support, difficult living conditions, and the isolation one feels when removed from what is familiar. So, after school finished each day she would walk the 50 metres down to the community-run store that was a gathering place and sit down outside with the old men and women who gathered there each day.

Her initial attempts to initiate conversation were met with monosyllabic answers or abject silence. Not comfortable with silence, she would redouble her efforts. After some weeks of this routine an elder in the community lent in to her and said: "You white people just want to talk all the time." It was, for her, a powerful lesson that pointed towards a different way of being where she needed to decentre, that is, take the perspective of the community rather just seeing their lives through her own, and suspend judgment. This suspension of judgement provides space for relationship or connection building through recognising the authenticity and validity of this community's feelings and differences to her own.

Importantly, each of these ways of being are consistent with Wiseman's (1996) defining characteristics of empathy—that is, building connection through being present and listening deeply—simply put, being still. Empathy is a powerful way of being in teaching.

ARTS PRACTICE: MATCH AND (MISS)MATCH: UNICORNS, FAIRIES, AND BARBIE DOLLS

The second experience (in the same community but a different time) reveals how arts practice is connecting, and how learning by making has a particular resonance to health and wellbeing, cultural development, engagement, and agency (Wright & Pascoe, 2015). In this school there are a series of stand-alone classrooms with concrete slabs in between them. Some five years previously a new graduate with great intentions asked some students to paint murals on these pads with their choices of what the subject matter might be—the idea being that this would improve the aesthetic of the school.

Some of the young female students at that time were engaged by this prospect and volunteered. These students then filled the pads with pictures of unicorns and fairies, images that you might see in promoting the stereotypical popular culture of young pre-adolescent girls and jarring to some eyes in the context of a remote desert community.

While from a position of privilege, it might be easy to be outraged about this cultural dissonance, this view is myopic. What it does reveal, for example, is the power of the media where young women are effectively targeted as consumers for merchandising through the large advertising budgets of multinational corporations.

By way of evidence, this now familiar trope has Facebook pages, wiki links with YouTube clips, and merchandising that goes from the dolls themselves and associated collectables, to clothing, costumes, and video games.

These images represented a strong disjuncture between the rich cultural heritage of this indigenous community—part of the oldest living culture in the world—and what was reflected in the aspirations of these young women in remote communities. It raises questions about belonging and connection, fitting in, and ways of being where teaching at its best might be seen to be a distributed responsibility.

SHAME, FITTING IN, AND SAYING NO

More recently, in the same community, there was a group of young women who either did not attend school or attended only intermittently. This is an ongoing challenge and bumps up against the issue where education is the path to breaking cycles of poverty, disengagement, and disenfranchisement, but education in its current form also being the reason that many young people don't attend school at all. It is also the case that in some communities where people feel disconnected from their culture, young women particularly are at a heightened risk of exposure to domestic violence and assault.

Recognising this issue within the community, the school established a protective behaviours program. This program, adapted from the early work of Peg Flandreau-West in the 1970's, builds confidence, and identity, and *teaches* specific strategies such as the ability to say, "no". One feature of this community was that some of the senior women were also established artists successfully capturing the dreaming of their community and language group. These stories are both repositories of collective consciousness of their language group, and so not only touchstones of identity and ways of being, and also the songlines[1] important for health and wellbeing.

One of the most effective parts of the program was linking these young women in the community with some of the elders—in this case the senior women artists mentioned before. There were often, but not always, familial ties between them—some were the young women's grandmothers or aunties, for example. The school provided materials such as canvas and paint, and a space to work, in this case an outdoor undercover area within the school grounds but away from the classrooms themselves. The young women literally sat at the shoulders of the elders as they painted and yarned (an indigenous cultural form of conversation). This process built relationships, some of which had been fractured or problematic, and became a site for sharing, development, and induction into a cultural identity that had previously been rejected. What I was able to observe was these senior women teaching the young women through their presence and yarning—in short, a different way of being in teaching.

While this building of connection might seem incongruous in the context of a remote community that is village-like in scope, it reflects the pervasive effects of media and popular culture alongside young people's innate desire to push back

against the previous generation. A further complication in some of these communities is the disconnection experienced through the damaging effects of alcohol and Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), with resulting brain damage and growth problems. For example, in this context, a generation of parents have been exposed to the ravages of alcohol and other addictions—this becoming a double burden of the "Lost Generation[2]"—and those young people born under this burden have suffered developmental deficits of varying complexities.

There were a number of benefits that flowed as a consequence of this arts-based program. First, these young women attended school every day that the project was on, even coming in to paint during holidays. Second, identity was strengthened through building connections, past to present, and intergenerationally. Third, through arts practice values of life, beliefs and spirit were strengthened. Fourth, the cultural world of this community was animated and enriched both through its reproduction and affirmation, but also through the young women's creative contribution to it. Finally, these young women's artwork was displayed in a significant gallery and income was derived from it for the artists; this provided an enabling pathway that otherwise wouldn't have existed. What this project did was draw together through arts practice the individual and her peer group, the family and community, and engagement with school—each being significant in building resilience and minimizing 'risk-taking' behaviour (Hanewald, 2011; McElwee, 2007).

Ways of Being and Arts-Based Programs

This project reveals how arts-based programs are rich with possibility in education and community development. This is because they are multilayered and link various components of growth and development, drawing together both the intersubjective and intrasubjective (Wright, 2011). They offer powerful approaches to building ways of being that complete the loop between inquiry and expression, connection and belonging, referencing those in the pedagogical encounter with place, heritage, ideas through creative process, and materials. Arts-based programs provide a vision of possibility, and projects, such as the one previously touched on, reveal how ways of being, particularly relationships, might be built both through what *was* and *wasn't.* If growth, in this context, can be understood as a natural way of being then a deep consideration of projects such as this, and the way context shapes and frames interactions, enables me to provide an elaboration of how different ways of being can support and nurture rather than be strained, constrained, restricted, or stifled.

Ways of being as listening. The history of unsuccessful attempts to bridge the gap between indigenous and white Australians is replete with good meaning and well-intentioned attempts to *educate* young people and lift them out of poverty. Despite many programs and substantial injections of funds, this gap has stubbornly resisted change. Coming from a position of privilege, what has been missing is the ability to listen to community and work with their needs and aspirations. For example, there

now exists the regime of the National Assessment Plan – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). Introduced in 2008, this yearly assessment is conducted in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. On this day, annually, many indigenous students brought up speaking traditional languages first, various forms of Aboriginal English second, or English based creole before Standard Australian English—the language of *testing* and *instruction*—third and fourth, simply stay away. The testing regime, for instance, holds little benefit for these young people, is shaming (the school's results are published on a public website), and the high stakes testing produces pressure on staff that either consciously or unconsciously translates to students. One outcome of this regime of testing is a dramatically growing area of publications, resources, and private options—tutoring and the like—for NAPLAN preparation. These resources remain the province of those who have the resources to purchase them. A secondary outcome of the low results of students in remote communities where standard Australian English can be a third or fourth language has been the impact on cultural learning, one of these impacts being, by way of example, the abolition of the bilingual languages policy in Australia's Northern Territory.

This shaming of language, and hence identity, stands in stark contrast to the effectiveness of honouring indigenous languages and the successful use of two-way learning that brings together both traditional languages and standard Australian English. Listening is key to helping these young people walk in both worlds.

Ways of being as stillness. In the first visit to the community, time was a pressure. My colleague was intent on making a flying visit and maximising his time there collecting data. The location was remote, and there were considerable costs involved in long flights, car hire, and many hours of driving. Time was also a pressure in another way. In this community we were guests. The rhythm of life was different, determined more by seasons, community life, and the demands of cultural practices. This meant that there was a disjuncture between a western-centric schedule predicated on minutes and hours and an indigenous experience of time.

Being still in this context was honouring and mattered; it allowed things to happen in a sense of time determined by our participants rather than a predetermined schedule. Being still also allowed the importance of place itself to speak. Education is always contextually bound, and being responsive can allow the significance of place—that locates, grounds, and permeates every aspect of community—to also imbue the research, adding a richness and texture that might otherwise be missing.

Ways of being as reciprocity. The dreaming stories the elders told—both through yarning and their visual (re)presentations—were the cultural heritage of the land that birthed them. These acts of representation, and the country that was animated through them, was moving for the elders and young people alike and evoked reciprocity. Some of the elders, for example, had not seen their birthplaces—the country that was painted—for 50 years, walking in from their nomadic lives off the desert for the first time in living memory. These acts of connection allowed the young women to

assume ongoing custodianship of this living culture and act as keepers of place. This meant that, as one elder shared, elders could now die in peace knowing that these young women not only had an artistic future, but that their living culture with the responsibility that comes with it—caring for country—had been passed on. A young person also said, "Now I know where I come from," this being important identity work.

Ways of being as potentiality—a state of growth. It is hard to argue against both education and arts practice being sites of growth, the art in this context being important as a way of knowing. In the context of this project, the art the elders made was the mnemonic for this community's ancestral stories. These stories are touchstones for identity development, and more than this, literally ground people in place. They describe, for example, both significant geographical features as well as dreaming stories, and are repositories for different ways of knowing beyond the formally sanctioned knowledge of schools. As many older artists had now died, or were in their 70s, or too unwell to paint, the future of this practice was in doubt. As connection to culture and place fades, identity is lost, as is the ability to know who we are.

As the elders painted with the seven young women by their sides, the young women learned the styles and techniques of their elders; as the young women grew in confidence and ability, they not only learned country through representing it, but they also made the stories their own. In this context, the art was building relationship between the young and senior women, relationship with community through being visible, and relationship through connecting with this community's cultural heritage and their own contributions towards it; potentiality writ large.

Ways of being as actuality. What this project reflects is relationship as actuality, that is, going from possibility to something that occurred through action. For example, the process of sitting together, creating and (re)creating, meant that relationships developed or were strengthened in the community, that traditional knowledge of ancestral sites and creation stories that were in danger of passing away with the elders became the province of the young women who moved into relationship with this knowledge and so became custodians of it.

Ways of being as empathy not apathy. I came to see through this art project that these young women came to care for the community and the land—this notion being important in indigenous culture where the western notion of ownership of the land is foreign. The traditional view, more specifically, is that the land owns the people—they are simply caretakers of it. Being inducted into their own cultural heritage meant for these young people that the integrity, and hence the dignity, of these peoples is protected.

In this project arts practice developed ways of being, building aesthetic capacity through bringing people, place, and culture into awareness through the artwork.

In addition, the relationships that were engendered further provide an opportunity for each young person to reflect on her own life, culture, and what they, as individuals and as a community, value.

WHAT IF, AS IF—*BELONGING, BEING, BECOMING*

The notion that education is a state of growth, and growth is a natural state of being, is encompassed by *what if* type questions. These questions provide provocations and opportunities for creative thinking and problem solving that lie at the heart of arts education and practice as well as into richer ways of being in teaching. When the imagination is engaged, for example, we can act *as if* something was real and so bring it into existence. Arts-based practice allows some of these questions to be asked, and capabilities to be exercised and developed. This is because the senses allow us to engage with the world, through the capabilities that relate to them: perception, intuition, and what is felt. This means that, in order to realise these capabilities, aesthetic ways of being and doing need to be linked so that these organising practices occur in deliberate and careful ways in order to provide an evocation and engage us in a variety of ways.

When we work in artistic ways as *makers,* we share in performative ways that are the "symbolic and metaphoric extensions of human thought and feeling" (Saldaña, 2015, p. 120). These extensions ground us in the human story reflecting agency, connectedness, and engagement. It is the case, for example, that culture and cultural learning has a critical role to play in human consciousness.

One of the most helpful ways, then, that we can develop these capacities and dispositions is to practice them as "possibility thinking" in the way that Anna Craft (2011) describes. In this understanding, there are four characteristics that can "extend how we interact and learn" (Craft, 2011, p. 129): playfulness, plurality, participation, and possibilities. For example, *playfulness* is relational; it is instinctive and fundamental to our existence. It is pleasurable and a way to feel alive. It is also a creative act and, hence, generative. Playfulness can also provide an exploratory drive that is energising.

Plurality highlights that, in education, there are a variety of entry and exit points, that there are many paths that can be trod, that context is always different, and that each interaction that happens in the pedagogical encounter is always dynamic in nature. In addition, the opportunities that education itself offers changes by intent and purpose; in this sense, plurality is a defining feature of education and, hence, reveals many ways of both being and doing.

Participation is key to learning experiences and highlights that education is not about an individual, but rather about engagement, involvement and action, and the agency education manifests and affords. In the same way that plurality defines responsiveness, participation also occurs on a continuum from active to passive, creating to spectating (Brown, Novak-Leonard & Gilbride, 2011). What this means is that arts practice opens up the possibilities for "worldly, productive sites of crossing:

complex unfinished paths between local and global attachments" (Clifford, 1998, pp. 362, 365).

Even though Craft situates these observations in the context of young people in the 21st century, they provide powerful signposts towards how the practices of education can be strengthened in relational ways. Perhaps even more poignantly, this conceptualisation reminds us that it is not simply teachers who have a plurality of ways of being in teaching, but students as well; "high participation and high possibilities" (Craft, 2011, p. 134) applies to all who are implicated in a dynamic ecology of learning.

Finally, my reflections on these projects allow me to consider my own ways of being in teaching: successes and failures, pleasure and the pain, being stretched and contained, and what allows me to be mindful and continue to reach beyond. There are four principles that are consistent touchstones and allow me to continue to struggle and grow, touchstones that are also described through the Relational Movement (www.therelationalmovement.org). These principles highlight how, for me, different ways of being in teaching can be strengthened in relational ways.

First is my aim for *Collective Resonance*—practices of sensing and resonating that form the basis for access to mutual understanding and compassion, activating the capacity to recognize human belonging that transcends different groups and cultures. This underscores the playfulness and the power of the aesthetic where arts-based ways of being and knowing have much to contribute through reconfiguring what is taken for given.

Second is my aspiration towards *Radical Inclusion*—practices of strengths-based, appreciative inquiry and collaborative communication in the context of everyday community life, encouraging people to accept and value each other's differences. It is this second principle, for example, that moves me beyond deficit forms of thinking, linking cultural assets with place, community, and diversity, and so referencing plurality and the many ways of being.

Third is my purposeful work towards *Democratic Participation*—practices of respectful collaboration and distribution of shared responsibility for the well-being of communities. This third principle draws our attention to how learning is not located in silos or individuals, but rather lies in the interactions between the webs and flows of meaning and responsibility. Simply put, participation is a choice that is inter-relational, embodied, expressive, and draws on image, sound, movement, space and multimodal texts.

Finally, *Ongoing Cultivation*—practices of relational organizing and leadership in order to engage people in building and sustaining a healthy, diverse and participatory culture. This final principle is instructive in the way it amplifies that growth and development is processual and purposeful and that cultural learning is relational, connecting people, place, materials and ideas.

At its best, my own work as a maker/teacher in arts-based projects enables different ways of being allowing all participants in the pedagogical encounter to become architects of their own knowledge.

CONCLUSION

These two different experiences, the reflections and learnings from them, and what they access for me across my own trajectory of discovery reveals that there is a multiplicity of ways of being in teaching that goes beyond the taken for granted. It is awareness of these differences that can take us beyond the current climate of repressive regimes of testing where education is reduced to a *doing* not a *being,* and where teaching becomes the antithesis of accompaniment. More particularly, a lack of awareness of difference, inclusion, and the generative possibilities offered through play and the creative act means that education as a process of development for student and teacher alike is impoverished.

Arts practice as the warp and weft of cultural learning provides a different way of being for all participants in the pedagogical exchange, providing multi-modal experiences of life, developing a capacity for life, and with powerful applications. In short, working in arts-based ways develops different ways of being through: building awareness that there are more creative ways of being in teaching; representing these differences in a variety of forms where participants can take a variety of positions on them; and revealing that a tension exists between what might be universal and so shared, and that which is situated in the particulars of context and everyday lived experiences.

Finally, successful arts practice can represent a different way of being in teaching that is not didactic or reproductive, but rather expands our understanding of the power of the relational in: connecting to young people's lived experience in dialogic ways; the importance of connecting young people to themselves and the community; the importance of place and the land which shapes them; and important ideas they believe are worth telling. In short, ways of being in teaching ought to be rich with *possibility thinking.*

In this way, my own ways of being in teaching through arts-based methodologies cannot only preserve important symbolic and experiential histories of knowledge, but also communicate them in a way that builds empathy and understanding. If we accept that all good pedagogy depends on relationship before anything, then in the words of activist Lilla Watson: *If you have come here to help me, then you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.*

NOTES

[1] Songlines are imagined and actual paths across the land and recorded in traditional songs, stories, and painting. The songlines themselves both represent points of connections but also ways through the landscape and so had conceptual, spiritual and practical value.

[2] The Stolen Generation refers to a generation of children who were forcibly removed from their families by successive Australian Governments from the early 1990s for approximately 70 years. I use this term to refer to those who were the children of these indigenous Australians while, not forcibly removed, were 'lost' through various forms of abuse and disconnect.

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DEBRA BUSMAN

7. SILENCES AND STORIES

Honoring Voice and Agency in the College Classroom

The brilliant Audre Lorde (1980) once admonished, "Your silence will not protect you." Of course she is right, although, at times, in those small moments of everyday cowardice, it can feel as if it might.

Silence. A story. I am a 40-year-old re-entry student at the University of California. In class I am silent. I sit through lectures by those with the many initials after their names, knowing myself to be a total fraud, an imposter who does not *belong*. Head down, terrified that I will be found out, busted, and kicked out of the university, I am silent. Although now a grown woman and successful business owner, my educational self sits stunted at adolescence, barely having finished junior high school; *the bad kid,* the trouble-maker—too stupid, surly, and stoned to be wanted in anyone's classroom. Growing up, I was about the furthest thing from college material as one could get.

Yet, here I sit, decades later, a student at a fancy university. Even though I am *old*, re-entry students are fairly well tolerated. The important thing is that I am white; as long as I stay silent I can pass. As long as I stay silent, because I am white, I am presumed to belong. As long as I stay silent, because I am white, my presence is not questioned. I learn to hide the not-so-middle class markers of my bad teeth, bad education, and bad language, and I ride that silence like a free pass at the boardwalk, paid for by stolen coins. This I know how to do. To steal and to pass.

As a wild hooligan child raised in Los Angeles, I'd put on my pink, pressed *white girl* blouse, comb my unruly hair, and steal stores blind as security ran to follow my young dark-skinned Mexican friends, you know…the dangerous, untrustworthy ones. Now, at the university, I am utterly in love with language and learning, intoxicated with books. Fierce is my hunger and I am eating knowledge like a feral dog at a steakhouse dumpster: gulping, gnawing, stealing away the best bones for later. I am silent, but I am learning.

Then, one day, the white male sociology professor with the sparkly good teeth and the many initials after his name is giving a lecture on juvenile delinquency, adolescent drug use, homeless youth, teen sex workers. This is his dissertation topic, his field of expertise. My life. I am on heightened alert, cautious yet curious. But what comes out of his expert mouth is an articulated spew of stunning ignorance, pathologizing young folk's full humanity into the narrow confines of a "population" of "at-risk youth" with "antisocial behaviors" in need of "intervention" and "tertiary

S. Wiebe et al. (Eds.), Ways of Being in Teaching, 47–54.

prevention." His words are big but his knowing is not. I think about my friends on the streets and then listen to the professor's words—pompous, patronizing, pitying at best, and I am utterly stunned. *He doesn't know anything about them! This expert is completely ignorant! I know more than he does!*

There was something terrifying yet exhilarating about that moment, when the veil was pulled from the illusion of academic expertise. I became obsessed with the question of authority—of authorship. Framing these power dynamics in racialized context, Gloria Anzaldúa (1983) writes, "White eyes do not want to know us… *Who am I, a poor Chicanita from the sticks, to think I could write?*…I write to record what others erase when I speak, to rewrite the stories others have miswritten about me, about you" (p. 166). Who has the power to tell whose stories, to craft and shape and warp the dominant narrative, to gather initials after their names like little ducklings and assume that their privileged perception is the one, capital "T" truth? In all those warped tellings, whose stories are erased, disappeared, or twisted into some unrecognizable perversion of reality? (Gates, 1991).

As social action writers and educators, part of our work is to break silence, challenge the master narrative, insert counter narratives into the dominant domain (Adler, 2009). We must disrupt… and, yes… dismantle. But, at that moment, I was not yet a writer. I was a 40-year-old with the stunted psyche of an adolescent street kid. And when I began to write, which I knew immediately that I must, it was not my academic, authorial voice that came through with its contested analysis. No—what emerged as I put pen to paper were the voices of the kids I hung out with on the streets of L.A. so many decades before, dealing drugs, hustling tourists, shaking down johns, sleeping in cardboard boxes out behind Montgomery Wards.

Here is a brief excerpt from the piece that emerged that day, now the title chapter of my novel, *like a woman,* in which the narrator, an "at-risk youth" herself, claims agency in the telling of her own story, on her own terms (Busman, 2015).

> *The other girls tell me I am going to have to dress "like a woman" if I'm going to make it on the street. "Screw you," I laugh. "I've been fucked all my life and I've never had to wear a dress yet."*
>
> *"Just tryin' to help you out, girl," they call out as they walk on down Santa Monica Boulevard, ankles bowed out over wobbly spike heels, popping their gum and adjusting their spaghetti strap bras as if they had something special going on down there. Don't none of us, 'cept Lisa have any tits yet and even if I had 'em I wasn't about to go dressin' in no drag shit. For one thing, it costs too much and I've got better things to do with my money. And for another thing I can't hardly walk in that shit, much less run. Or fight. Some girls can, though. I seen one girl whip off those fuck me pumps and bust some motherfucker trying to get something for nothing across the side of his head quicker than I could have cracked his nuts. Said she fucked up his eardrum cuz she got the pointy part right inside his ear hole and see, check out that blood, girl. I think she was just feeling good cuz she got his wallet, messed him up and didn't even break a heel.*

As this story expanded into its present novel form, I intentionally utilized this first-person narration as a means of centering the perspective of youth on the streets whose stories have rarely been heard. By having street kids tell their own versions of gritty lived reality, I was able to develop them as complex characters, smart, funny, kind, reckless, creative, flawed, fully human, which in turn allowed me to "flip the script" and ask questions such as, whose behavior was truly "antisocial," the grown men who tried to rape teenage girls, the parents who disowned their queer sons and daughters, kicking them out into the streets, or the kids who stole and fought their way into survival?

Today, I teach in the Creative Writing and Social Action Program at California State University Monterey Bay. Housed in the interdisciplinary School of Humanities and Communication, our Creative Writing and Social Action courses examine this issue of voice and agency, and question who gets to tell the story and whose stories are not heard. Students are encouraged to break free from their own silences, to bust open the master narrative. We are a Hispanic-serving institution whose university vision statement calls on us to serve "the diverse people of California, especially the working class and historically undereducated and low-income populations" (CSUMB, 2015), so many students come from farm-working families in Salinas, King City, Watsonville. Often, these students' parents had to leave school after the third or fourth grade, sacrificing everything so their families could survive, now working two or three jobs so their child can be the first to go to college.

For these students, as well as other first-generation students of color and working class white students, told from the jump they were not *college material*, the very fact of their presence at a university is a charged act of political resistance, a transgression into the terrain of the middle class. For them to then take control of their own narrative, to *tell* the story rather than be the object of another's version of history and culture, is a profoundly radical and transformative act. This can be especially risky for students whose previous success was conditioned upon the very premises of silence and obedience. Many students from working class school districts have been taught that to be a "good student" meant that you were quiet, well-behaved, that you stayed below the radar and did not use "I" in an essay. They often come in, much as I did as a student, believing themselves to be imposters, somehow trespassing upon this middle-class and white terrain, feeling like college survival and success came from passing, leaving home language and culture behind, staying silent unless parroting back safe academic language and conventions (Valenzuela, 1999).

So how do I, as an educator, now encourage and facilitate student voice, support the transition from K-12 compliance into creative and intellectual agency and self-empowerment in a college classroom? How can I help create a caring classroom community that welcomes home culture and values, what Valenzuela calls *educación* (Sleeter, 2011)? And what happens when students do speak truth only to find their truths colliding with those of fellow classmates?

One of the gifts, and challenges, of teaching in the CSU system is the wide diversity in our classrooms. At any given moment, they might be composed of both working and middle class students from Salinas to South Central to Orange County,

surfers and skaters, college republicans, veterans and re-entry students, sons and daughters of migrant laborers, military families, and white collar workers, each bringing their own cultures, histories, and ways of inhabiting and perceiving the world. All are asked the same thing in a course offered through the Creative Writing and Social Action Program—to bring who they are and where they come from into the classroom, to bear witness, to write what they know, to speak truth (Adler, 2009).

What happens when the stories of a young Naval Officer, writing with fierce military pride about his father, a fighter pilot in the Vietnam War, share classroom space with a 70-year-old Vietnamese refugee, who fled the bombs and napalmed fields of his country, barely surviving the "American War"? What happens when the realities of a pilot dropping a payload at 30,000 feet meet up with the torn limbs, burnt flesh, ruined rice paddies, and decimated villages that were the recipients of such a proud American mission?

What happens when a young woman, whose mother and favorite uncle are both career Los Angeles police officers, hears stories of police brutality, planted evidence, cracked skulls, mandatory sentencing and the daily assaults on brown and black youth in South Central, Oakland, East Salinas? What happens when the previously uncontested ideology of *To Protect and to Serve* gets blown apart, problematized by the experiences of a fellow student, writing about how his cousin was picked up by the LAPD, then dropped off two miles away in neighboring streets controlled by a rival gang and killed within 20 minutes? Who is being protected? Who is being served? Why didn't she know about any of this, information that is as common as corn to black and brown communities all across the United States? How does she hold this story, told by a young man she cares about and has shared several classes with, in the same heart/mind that idolizes her mother and uncle? What happens to the young man, who has only known the tyranny of racialized police violence, the brutality and sadism of the badge, when he hears her stories of family love and picnics, tenderness, laughter and humanity? What happens when the enemy becomes humanized, when previously silenced stories are told?

Here is a brief excerpt from a piece called "You Gotta Be Ready," (Busman, 2002) which provides a glimpse into the challenging terrain of a Creative Writing and Social Action classroom:

> *To teach Creative Writing and Social Action means you gotta be ready for some serious truth to be spoken. When you ask students to break silence, to bear witness, to connect the meaning of their own personal lives within the larger societal frame, you gotta be ready for the truths that fly out, crawl out, peep out, and scream out from underneath the thick walls of practiced silence. You gotta be ready for stories of border crossings, coyotes and cops, night beatings, wife beatings, baby beatings, date rapes, gang rapes, daddy rapes, gunshots and chemo, pesticides, HIV, AZT, protease inhibitors, and the pink-cheeked 19-year-old who says, "Hey, next Tuesday I'll have five years clean and sober; can we have a cake in class?" You gotta be ready for stories that*

start out, "Ese pinche Columbus didn't have no stinkin' green card." You gotta be ready for the straight A student who has to leave school because her INS paperwork hasn't come through yet, and the social security number she gave at registration was the first nine numbers that came to her mind, and she cannot get financial aid because she is "illegal."

To teach Creative Writing and Social Action means you gotta be ready for the young blonde girl from a private high school in Sacramento's suburbs who rolls her Mabelline eyes the first day of class and says, "Is this going to be one of those courses where they try and ram that multicultural crap down your throat?" The same girl who, weeks later sits weeping in class, heart and mind open, listening to shared stories of INS thugs and deported grandfathers and pesticide-poisoned baby brothers, wheezing from asthma. Stories about cousins orphaned by police bombs dropped on fellow family MOVE members, seven- and nine-year-old brother and sister taken from their home, sitting in the Philadelphia police station, surrounded by cops watching the bombing live and in color on TV news, laughing, telling the children, "See those flames. See those tanks. That's your daddy inside there. That's your daddy we finally got right where he belongs." And the young, blonde, private-high-school student, who truly believed that California always 'belonged' to the United States and that racism ended with the abolition of slavery, or at the very least after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a dream" speech, turns her face to the class, Maybelline running down her cheeks, and says, "I'm so sorry. I didn't know. They never taught me about any of this. I'm so sorry. I just never knew." And her workshop buddy, Aisha, the self-described Pan Africanist revolutionary, takes the girl in her arms, rocks her softly. And Carlos, sitting in the back, can't help but shake his head, muttering: "Damn. And they got the nerve to tell me that my people are quote 'under-prepared' for college."

How do we, as teachers, handle all the complexity and contradictions? How do we take good care of our students, of all the *truths* that emerge when we ask them to bring all of who they are into the classrooms? How do we create safe spaces for students to break silence when we know for ourselves as writers that there is really nothing safe about writing? Gloria Anzaldúa (1983) addresses this in dialog with Latino writer Cherríe Moraga: "'To assess the damage is a dangerous act,' writes Cherríe Moraga. To stop there is even more dangerous… Writing is dangerous because we are afraid of what the writing reveals: the fears, the angers, the strengths of a woman under a triple or quadruple oppression. Yet in that very act lies our survival because a woman who writes has power. And a woman with power is feared" (p. 171).

What happens when a young gay man chooses to share his coming out story—decides to take the huge risk and break silence about his long journey from homophobic shame and adolescent torment, being called "sissy" and "faggot," beaten out behind the football bleachers day after day after day, somehow surviving and now embracing a thin tendril of courage to claim pride, to begin the cherishing of

self? What happens when, this same day, another student has written of his long and painful recovery from drugs and alcohol, the crazed days when he and his buddies would "get fucked up and drive up to San Francisco to beat up the queers?"

Sometimes the domain of breaking silence is understood to be for those who have been the targets and most obvious victims of social oppression—survivors of rape, incest, racial injustice, poverty, domestic violence—and these are all stories which need to be told, which need to be heard, which need to become part of what interrupts the censored denial of everyday privilege, lies, and ignorance. But, for everyone who is harmed, there is someone doing the harming. Where are these stories? Perhaps even more damaging is the enforced silence of the oppressors—the buried stories of those who batter and rape—the tight silence of soldiers who have killed, the girls who recognized their beloved granddaddy's shiny shoes in the group of Klansmen gathered at the center of a Mississippi town. As difficult as it may be to receive these stories, they are all part of the same larger narrative we are all caught up in. As Barbra Deming reminds us, "We are all part of one another" (Meyerding, 1984) and, when we open to, rather than censor, these stories, what inevitably emerges is another layer, another story of pain, buried beneath the brutality.

Silence. A story. I am teaching a Creative Writing class in which a young Anglo son of a central valley grower writes about his fraught relationship with his father. At one point in the story he describes riding in his dad's truck, coming home at dusk. As they pass by a group of fieldworkers standing by their trucks drinking beer, relaxing after a long day working in the hot sun, the father says, "See, boy, that's why I don't worry about paying them minimum wage. You give them Mexicans more money, all they do is drink it up." For the young man in the creative writing class, this was a throwaway line in his story, a response to my request that he incorporate dialogue. But, for the three young Latina students in the class who were from a labor camp in the same central valley town as the young man, it was incredibly painful. He could have been speaking about their fathers, hardworking providers, up since 3 a.m. to work in the fields, living five families in a garage, the front yard the only place cool and spacious enough to socialize and have an after-work beer.

The young women were devastated. One left the room in tears during the workshop discussion of the young man's story, hurt that he could not understand why his dad's words were disrespectful. Another was angry. "You know," she said. "I have had to live with this racist crap my whole life. I didn't come here to college and pay all this tuition money to have to sit here and listen to it again." As discussion continued, the young man began to come to the realization that he knew nothing of the lives and realities of entire families and communities he lived next to his whole life and that, for him, *truth* had come filtered and unquestioned through the lenses of his father's racism. As his stories unfolded throughout the semester, the deeper truth of his father's own alcoholism also emerged, the private shame of thousand-dollar-a-day hidden treatment centers, failed businesses and a ruined marriage, the deeper subtext of shame and self-loathing that got reduced, racialized, and externalized onto a group of workers, sharing a public beer on a dusty Fresno street corner.

As challenging as the process was for all students involved, and as tempting as it was for me as professor to shut a volatile conversation down, I knew that there were deeper stories that needed to be told (Derricotte, 1995). The young man needed to hear the impact of his words on classmates he cared about, students whose stories he had read, whose lives were becoming less and less invisible to him each week. As a writer, he needed to learn to both "write what you know" but also question the limits of knowledge. The young women needed to feel empowered to speak up and voice their pain, to resist the racist reduction of their lived experiences in others' narratives (although, this is tricky territory, and, as another Latino in class rightly pointed out, "It's not my job to have to educate ignorant white people. I'm here to get an education.").

In a creative writing class, we are fortunate to have lots of tools to support us in the work of going deeper—all the gifts of craft can be called into play. A difficult clash of stories and realities can often be guided by a discussion of the questions of audience and responsibility to one's readers. Instead of the temptation to censor the difficult areas, the egregious elements of racism, to make them shut up and go away, sometimes it is better to go more deeply into them. For example, when the grower's son was encouraged to expand his depiction of scene and setting in his central valley narrative, he began to learn more about the daily realities of field work, pesticides, and heat. When asked to provide richer character development for the father in his story, to further understand the character's motivations and desires, he uncovered the rich vein of a man struggling to put together a life ravaged by the disease of alcoholism. What he learned as a writer was that, while the characters in his story might be blind and racist in their ignorance, as an author in charge of the narrative, he must be guided by a greater heart and consciousness. Yes, like all writers, he must begin with writing what he knows. But, as a social action writer he also has to learn to listen. He may also have to delve more deeply into the frightening terrain of what he does not yet know if his work is to resist rather than replicate oppression, leading us towards a more just world.

And what about those of us who teach? What roles do silence, speech, and listening play in our work if we wish to resist rather than replicate systems of oppression? How do our own social identities and life histories impact the ways in which we address race, class, and gender dynamics in the classroom (Sleeter, 2011; Tochluk, 2008; Wise, 2010)? As a white woman carrying race, age, professorial and class privilege, it is important that I be especially mindful and vigilant about examining my own biases and assumptions, however well-intended I know myself to be. Ignoring racial dynamics in a classroom, or taking cover under the guise of colorblindness, is not an option, because "when one claims not to see color, one ignores much of a person's identity" (Sleeter, 2011, p. 99). While there may be strategic moments in the facilitation of charged classroom discussions around race where it is wise to allow student dialog to run unencumbered by professorial intrusion, it is important to also keep in mind that silence speaks volumes and is never neutral. As anti-racist and #BlackLivesMatter groups remind white folks, "Silence = Consent" so, if we are serious about developing caring classrooms and honoring the voices of all our students, we must be mindful of our silences and to what exactly we are actually consenting (White, 2015).

Decades ago, as a queer, working class white student with a rather colorful past, I had believed safety was to be found in the refuge of silence and attempts to pass as middle class and, to some extent, it was. But it was only when I began to claim voice and break silence, to insert all my fraught and contested identities into the academic mix, that my education truly began. As an educator, the power dynamics have shifted and it is now my role to support students in bringing their full selves, what poet Mary Oliver (2004) calls their "one wild and precious life" (p. 94), into the educational experience. And to be sure, it is risky business navigating all these charged identities in the classroom, including our own. But I am heartened by the wisdom of one of my greatest teachers, Audre Lorde, a Black, lesbian, feminist, activist, and mother who refused to have any of her complicated identities erased. A woman who once told me that the work is always more important than the fear. So, I will close this chapter as I began, with Lorde's (1980) words: "When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid" (p. 13).

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8. LIVING CURRICULA

Teaching Conversations

Recognizing archives as sites of institutional power and knowledge custody, feminist attention is shifting perspectives to revision archives as sites for social change. Moreover, feminists are increasingly using archives as social sites for productive discussions and discourse that invite and host difficult conversations, cross-disciplinary activities, and cultural community building. This *archival turn* is a driving force in refiguring the archive by societies in transformation. For example, archivist Kate Eichhorn (2010) argues that, where the generations of feminists before focused on the documentation, collection, and preservation of feminist materials, contemporary feminists are expanding the notion of archives as sites for activism and pedagogy. Eichorn (2010) writes:

> What is unique to this generation of feminists, however, is the necessity to adopt the archive as a central rather than peripheral part of our scholarship, cultural production, and activism—in short, the recognition of the archive as the practice and site upon which these forms of resistance hinge. (p. 636)

Teaching Conversations, the focus of this chapter, is one example that goes beyond the idea of orienting individual users to a particular collection or thinking about archives. This includes outdated thinking about archives as physical, static records that serve merely as a foundation for knowledge in the present about the past or knowledge that exists for the lone, isolated researcher in the reading room. Rather, *Teaching Conversations* encourages collaborative learning, as an entanglement of ideas, disciplines, and curricular possibilities and potential imaginings of new communities of research, teaching, and learning in the future.

BEGINNING *TEACHING CONVERSATIONS*

What is a feminist way of being in teaching? To reflect critically upon this question, we studied the curricular engagement with an archival collection by a group of 12 feminist colleagues at the Pennsylvania State University over a period of three years, 2011–2014. These professors draw upon the Judy Chicago Art Education Collection within a feminist orientation to archives called *Teaching Conversations*. The Judy

S. Wiebe et al. (Eds.), Ways of Being in Teaching, 55–64.

Chicago Art Education Collection is an archive related to feminist art pedagogy consisting of primary source materials (digital and analog/physical) on feminist teaching, research, and pedagogy in the visual arts. Archival materials are collected and preserved for the inherent values that they hold in helping users understand the past, present, and future. The Judy Chicago Art Education Collection is vital to understanding the history of feminist art pedagogy. Further, it is helpful toward developing insightful perspectives in relation to broader contemporary educational paradigms. The collection is also especially useful toward provoking reflexive practice that invites individuals to ask new questions and develop new ideas about feminist pedagogy, while examining ourselves as feminist teachers, activists, and scholars.

In this chapter, we provide a summary of this on-going project from its emergence, while weaving in participants' voices from conversations that tease out feminist theories around teaching, research, and learning with and through archives.[1] We focus mainly on what it means for curricula to live, that is the *living curriculum* of the Judy Chicago Art Education Collection, and we work through notions of *feminist pedagogy* in using the Collection for teaching. Feminist pedagogy is a way of being that seeks to empower rather than oppress, validates the entanglement of social identities of race, class, and gender dynamics without domination, and recognizes complexities inherent in different ways of knowing.

Teaching Conversations *as Living Curricula*

The Judy Chicago Art Education Collection is a living archive. Unique in comparison to most archives, the definition of a living archive containing living curricula is embedded in the deed of gift for the collection. Hence, as part of its stewardship in perpetuity, the archivist must continue to encourage growth, renewal, life, and transformation of the archive; the notion of a living curriculum encourages and supports the repurposing of the archive as well as a community of practice around the collection (Deed of Gift, 2010). Work produced from the collection by users can be considered living curriculum as participants have the opportunity to archive their teaching projects to inspire future users.[2] Their curricula are folded back into the archive itself to be shared and repurposed.

Typically, the idea of curriculum conjures up notions of school syllabi, which list goals and objectives of a course of study. But *living curricula* is generative, always in the making in conversation with other people, texts, materials, and artifacts (Ellsworth, 2005). New Zealand educators, Steven Marshall and Scott Wilson (2012), indicate "developing a living curricula involves 'conversations' about enquiry, knowledge, practice, and learning and teaching approaches which focus on engagement between and among learners, teachers, practitioners, communities, scholars, and with self and texts" (p. 2). The notion of living curricula involves being aware of the contexts of epistemologies, that is, the nature and formation

of knowledges, as well as awareness of one's teaching philosophy and practice. Moreover, living curricula entails working with others within and *through* one's discipline, field, and particular teaching context to explore and imagine ways of knowing outside these contexts (Barab et al., 2007).

Ways of Being in the Feminist Archive: Possibilities

Because feminist education is about becoming aware of patriarchal systems of power and privilege, and how these systems impact a politic of identity, feminist archival education also supports these principles through its capacity to bring attention to the need for feminist perspectives and voices to resist erasures of women's histories and women's contributions. Since the late 1800s, feminists have recognized the need to start documenting, collecting, and preserving materials that could represent a history about women (Lerner, 1993). Although many of those activities were heavily biased, they did start the precedent for putting together, over time, an "enormous archive of collective consciousness-raising" for feminists to be able to find their feminist ancestors, to build on the work that they have done, gain strength from it, and learn from other women's contributions (Kohrs-Campbell, 2002, p. 46).

Archivists and historians concerned with the lack of historical representation of women worked first towards inserting women into the historical record through documentation and collection mechanisms to address the lack of materials on women and to support the writing of women into history. Later, archivists put forth efforts to develop catalogs, databases, and library policies to enable the search and discovery of women already existing in collections but hidden behind the contributions of their male counterparts. Archivists with feminist sensibilities also sought to address the discrepancies involved in finding critical feminist voices within particular disciplines because of ambiguous cataloging descriptions (Gilley, 2007).

Teaching Conversations: *Feminist Ways of Being Educators*

The materials in the Judy Chicago Art Education Collection document aspects of Chicago's teaching projects and her students' work. Some materials concentrate on issues not easily engaged in the classroom—such as issues of identity, racism, ageism, sexuality, equity, violence against women, and many other social issues that affect women and girls. The Collection served as an anchor or a point of departure for *Teaching Conversations.* Begun in fall 2011, *Teaching Conversations* embraces feminist principles of equity and eco-social justice and set into participatory motion practices of self-knowledge and critical inquiry. Participatory practices, involving mutual goals and collaborative processes, are embedded in how the archive grows and is repurposed, how knowledge is generated, and how inquiry is activated. Dialogue was central to this project.

Teaching Conversations is based on situating, locating, and positioning self within the archive, while providing a safe space for discourse about the collection, to generate and share new content through course curricula. This content-based approach to generative work is intended to affect social change, envision teaching as a political act, view knowledge as value-laden, bolster personal experience and self-representation, provide avenues for multivocality, and build capacity for distributed leadership in student-centered learning environments.

Teaching Conversations *as a Feminist Orientation to the Archive: The Invitation*

One of the most significant factors of *Teaching Conversations* toward both attracting and sustaining experiences and engagements with the collection was the seemingly simple gesture of an invitation to the archive. The invitation framed the archive as a social space for feminist teaching conversations. While posters, announcements, or e-mails may have spurred curiosity and brought visitors into the archive, the impact of human contact and dialogue with the materials was pivotal to opening opportunities and sustaining engagement with the collection.

Each semester (2011–2014),[3] an invitation to engage in conversations about teaching with the Judy Chicago Art Education Collection brought together faculty from various disciplines including architecture, art history, theatre, visual arts, art education, English/utopian studies, information science and technology, archives, Jewish studies, and women's, gender, and sexuality studies. Seldom do faculty from different disciplines in higher education meet to discuss teaching, let alone, feminist teaching. *Teaching Conversations* transformed the archive to become a transdisciplinary space for both feminist activism and scholarship, where feminists can find ways "to resolve the tensions between theory and praxis, the university and the community" (Eichorn, 2010, p. 635).

Teachers came to *Teaching Conversations* for various reasons and, as a feminist orientation to the Judy Chicago Art Education Collection, the project acknowledged the individual user and served as a support mechanism for dialogue about the collection. Participants brought their understandings, awareness, and particular disciplinary lens to the archive. Each, also, brought an individual lived experience. Some expressed an interest in the artist Judy Chicago and were curious about what her archive might contain. Moreover, some were inspired by the notion of a teaching conversation, in general. Others were enthralled by the idea of a feminist teaching conversation across disciplines. All saw possibilities in drawing from a community of feminist teachers to create a curriculum for enacting change and creating a better world. A vast majority of participants were intrigued by feminist pedagogy and the possibilities inherent in the practical application of the collection in the classroom. Similarly, many participants perceived *Teaching Conversations* as an opportunity to discover feminist ways of teaching to make a difference, create social change, or begin a larger conversation.

For those whom feminist inclinations were more marginalized in their particular fields, *Teaching Conversations* served as a safe space to explore feminist ideas and find inspiration. As a network for difficult dialogue and community building, *Teaching Conversations* attracted instructors who sought a network, individuals who might not, under usual circumstances, access an archive for network purposes—but, nonetheless, were curious about what an archive entails.

POSSIBLE WAYS OF BEING: EXPLORING THE JUDY CHICAGO ART EDUCATION COLLECTION

During the first meeting of *Teaching Conversations,* faculty members shared both trepidation and possibilities regarding teaching with the collection. They also discussed differences and similarities in their teaching contexts. For example, one participant stated, "You are on the inside peering out, and I'm, totally, from the outside looking in." Another noted, "the culture of my college is problem-based learning."

The discussions around the collection unearthed conversations concerning various ways to teach using the Judy Chicago Art Education Collection. For instance, one professor brought her students to the archives to explore the ideas embedded in the visual images of the *Womanhouse* series to create their own performance stories. Another used the *Holocaust Project* in the collection to offer the opportunity for her students to encounter how the history of the Holocaust has been interpreted and depicted through a contemporary artist's perspective. A third professor focused her teaching on comparing and contrasting the notions of monumentality and intimacy within feminist expressions of identity.

Teaching Conversations meetings were modeled after Judy Chicago's content-based teaching methodology (Keifer-Boyd, 2007) in which content is a vehicle for learning or transmitting knowledge. Content-based means that communication of specific content is the purpose of the work, and the content investigated is an intra-action of self, which is (re)read, (re)mapped, and (re)coded to expose systemic patterns of oppression. Within this context, preparation for making/doing/teaching starts with conversations about readings, presentations, or other texts that the group has experienced together. In *Teaching Conversations,* the shared content involved watching a film, hearing a presentation, and reading texts that contextualized the body of materials in the collection. We used Chicago's methodology of self-presentations, which allowed participants to delve into their situated knowledge and to examine ways of being in teaching.

Self-presentations entail considering participants' points of departure, their profession, their perspectives, and their interests, which can be linked to feminist standpoint theory. Self-presentation is also a way of being, in which the personal is interpreted as political. Additionally, the proximity of the participants in relation to one another—the placement of the chairs, how the room is arranged, the location of the facilitator, are also considered elements within the teaching process that play a

role in the learning process. For instance, sitting in a circle for conversation is one of the strategies that Judy Chicago uses, where there is no table in the middle that obstructs students' ability to see each other. In *Teaching Conversations,* we also sat in a circle as a way of being as we engaged with each other.

Student research, that is, finding out what's written, painted, or performed about a topic, is another critical component of Judy Chicago's teaching methodology. Research, according to Chicago, is considered part of preparation after self-presentations, yet before making art, and continues throughout. In a parallel manner, *Teaching Conversations* explorations into the materials in the collection led to further content-searches by participants for ways that topics related to each faculty member's teaching and how the topic might be represented in the artworks from Chicago's 11 teaching projects.

Chicago refers to making the *ideal real* for emphasizing that the artist needs to consider what s/he wants to say, and to whom? So, whether the work will result in an art histories paper, technology creation, or other assignment, students should consider what they want to communicate, and, to whom it is directed. In making the ideal real, the format, mode, and medium were important considerations for communication in *Teaching Conversations*. As Chicago encouraged her students, *Teaching Conversations* participants provided support to each other by serving as sounding boards, by asking pertinent questions that might provide particular skills or help others attain a specific goal. In this way, artmaking is a social process. Creating is dialogic.

In Chicago's methodology, art making begins after much preparation with models, sketches, revisions, and experiments. Likewise, in *Teaching Conversations*, after exploring the collection, we discussed ways to teach. For example, a lecturer in Jewish Studies, History, and Religious Studies developed a new pedagogical game after hearing how other *Teaching Conversations* participants introduced their assignments and presented their research. Even though none of the students in this lecturer's class had backgrounds in art, many opted to translate what they had learned into musical, literary, and visual forms. The materials in the collection served as an impetus for creation and reached students across traditional modes for communicating their learning.

Chicago's teaching balances critique with support. The participants in *Teaching Conversations* discussed strategies to build capacities and potentialities of students. The content-based critique refers to the art making goals, by asking students: "What are you trying to say here? Can people understand what you are trying to communicate? To whom are you trying to communicate? Who is the audience for the work? Who do you want to read or interpret the work—peers, teachers, the field?" In this regard, audience response is part of the evaluation. *Teaching Conversations* participants discussed how evaluation might include various forms of recognition, awards, opportunities, exhibition, and publication.

One *Teaching Conversations* participant utilized the Judy Chicago Art Education Collection to create video projects as a feminist response to a highly controversial

and publicized sexual assault scandal that had been occurring for more than a decade on a well-known university campus and had recently made national news. The participant described, "After watching how Judy Chicago worked with students to present their problems and concerns as art, students discussed their fears with creating a response to such controversial material. Chicago's videos encouraged students to create performance art from their concerns surrounding sexual assault." The works in the collection also offered a platform for conversations on media representation of women as well as symbolic visual languages that could be used to explore local and global issues of violence against women and children. Student groups, using the collection during their exploration of feminist theory, global female playwrights, and local fieldwork, dramatized local stories of assault in ways that questioned dominant discourses of politics, media, and community. Their resulting videos interpreted a "feminist response" through communication, listening, and actively seeking to shake the foundations of violence in contemporary culture.

Another participant, who is a professor of English and women's, gender, and sexuality studies, planned to use the Collection as the framework for revising an online introductory women's, gender, and sexuality studies course. The course features women in the arts from the 1970s to contemporary times—and Chicago's work would be considered as a transitional moment that helped to define the representation of women in the arts, as well as the role of women artists. The support of the *Teaching Conversations* participants with input from professors immersed in art and teaching/learning technology helped to catalyze ideas for this course that might not otherwise surface. This same participant also described sometime feeling a lack of confidence in her teaching—not always feeling like a "natural teacher". Questioning her methods as a feminist teacher, *Teaching Conversations* became a supportive structural arrangement for her to discover feminist ways of teaching, such as Chicago's participatory art pedagogy, within a safe space that supports learning and experimentation.

CONCLUSION: NAVIGATING WAYS OF BEING A FEMINIST TEACHER

For some *Teaching Conversations* participants, Judy Chicago's teaching methodology would not work in their teaching contexts because of prescribed ways of teaching and specific foundational content believed to be essential education. For example, one participant considered her way of being in teaching by stating:

> But I do wonder if, in fact, it's something that can be used for, say, a history class. When I'm teaching art of the 1950s and 1960s, for example, I've got a certain amount of information that I need to convey, and it involves facts. They need to know certain things. It's not exactly the same kind of class, where I can say, 'here are the issues that I'm interested in talking about, you go out and bring your experiences to me'.

Another described that within her respective architecture program, feminist theories, principles, practices, and teaching would not be welcomed. In such circumstances, stealth feminism that is not identified by patriarchy radar might be the safest way of being in teaching.

Lack of recognition, support, or erasure of women's contributions and achievements is not a discipline-specific problem. As *Teaching Conversations* participants discussed their experiences and women's representation in their fields, other topics arose that reflected similar patterns such as lower wages, low-profile, and time-consuming work assignments, as well as the devaluation of their research and teaching content. *Teaching Conversations,* therefore, expanded to encompass not only uses of the Judy Chicago Art Education Collection in teaching projects but also included what the material itself represents for all women in broader terms and the conditions existing for women in both public and private arenas.

The conversations that occurred, surrounding the collection, provided a necessary and productive outlet of support for those who sought to create a teaching and learning environment that affirms feminist values and perspectives, which could "encourage us to move past an exclusive focus on the individual and toward a focus on the *relationships* between the individual and others" (Ball, 2005, p. 134). *Teaching Conversations* became a place to seek community. As one participant expressed,

> I think it's a way to experience the possibilities of the collection in teaching. And it's also…very much community-oriented. You know… because it's such a solo operation to teach…I always work better when I know there [are] people there who I can talk to.

This same participant also referred to her need to draw energy from the group. This notion aligns with feminist theory that "emphasizes the importance of participation, dialogue, and communication" (Ball, 2005, p. 125). Carving out spaces to gather with colleagues and renew strength allows teachers opportunities for self-actualization and self-reflection in regard to their practice.

Safe spaces for meaningful, productive dialogue can be challenging for faculty who operate within competitive environments. Similarly, it may be tough to create spaces for difficult dialogue, to help bolster taboo topics that keep certain subjects ignored as in the case of sexual violence or to support difficult discussions that cross varying perspectives. Nevertheless, another participant saw great value in using the artwork in the Judy Chicago Art Education Collection even if just as a way to spark dialogue—to get a conversation started.

> If we take the time to just familiarize ourselves with the pieces … that in and of itself, I guarantee that anybody who sees it, man, woman, child, something in here will resonate with them, something will jar them. Or they'll feel something about it, and be compelled to have a conversation or a dialogue, or other educators or professors will look at it, and see how they might want to use it—even if it's complaining about it. That is dialogue. And it opens up those other possibilities, as well.

The transdisciplinary methods employed in *Teaching Conversations*, where archives users converse across disciplinary boundaries use materials as a starting point for thinking about creative solutions to pressing issues, were integral to creating productive communities of feminist practice. One participant declared,

> We're all in this together in how to understand, articulate, and create a new culture. Being in the room with creative thinkers is catching us in the act of ultimate creativity.

Teaching Conversations became a haven for feminist activism, a place for envisioning possibilities of enacting change in the classroom. As one participant expressed, and we agree, "anytime people are in a room talking about possibilities, things can change."

The Judy Chicago collection continues as a living curriculum. In concluding the study of *Teaching Conversations* in 2014, we launched an online dialogue portal to continue and expand conversations of feminist art pedagogy among teachers and students across disciplines and beyond the institutional site of the physical archival collection. Periodically, Judy Chicago joins the online dialog. Whoever is in the room, virtually or physically, shapes the nature of our teaching conversations and generates new content that forms and expands future teaching conversations that, hopefully, will fuel social change and create a better world.

NOTES

[1] Along with Institutional Review Board approval for the case study of *Teaching Conversations*, the professors involved in the study granted permission to video record the conversations. We transcribed the recordings and wrote reflections after each *Teaching Conversation* large group meeting, which occurred at least one time per semester for six semesters, and numerous small group and individual meetings between professors involved in the study with one or more of the authors of this chapter.

[2] See the Judy Chicago Art Education Collection at http://judychicago.arted.psu.edu/

[3] The study presented in this chapter focuses on Teaching Conversations in the first three years of Judy Chicago Art Education Collection. Since 2014, an online dialogue portal has broadened Teaching Conversations with the Collection to teachers and students at other universities, k-12 schools, and other sites of teaching and learning.

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9. PLACE AND PEDAGOGY

I grew up on a farm adjacent to the twinkling waters of Malpeque Bay. There, with 1,000 acres as my classroom, I became a creature of the land. Despite the many years and meandering paths that have created physical distance, I continue to feel a deep resonance with the place I first called home. I know neither why nor how I remain soulfully connected to it, but I often wonder if it is born of the same irreducible chemistry that leads people to fall in love. I do not fancy myself a romantic. Every once in a while, though, I remind myself that underneath my garments of realism there resides an idealist. My continued relationship with the land and cognizance of how it contributes to my growth has led me to consider more deeply the role of *place* in pedagogy. I noticed this connection first when I felt the tug of home in times when my professional context challenged my idealism. I began to wonder if nurturing the generosity of the land sustains me as I work to improve systems of schooling that often prioritize dehumanized, disembodied, and disconnected ways of being. It occurred to me in these wonderings that I am drawn to the study of *place* because it reminds me of the beauty of connectedness and underpins the importance of roots to developing strength and sustainability. In watching the land give of itself and still manage to heal and replenish, I am reminded of my ability to persevere. Baldwin et al. (2013) say that place matters because it grounds us while encouraging new ways of being in the world. They maintain that place is integral to knowing self and engaging with others because our contexts are "mirrored reflections of history, values, interests, power relations, and meanings… [and they represent] those real and imagined spaces…densely occupied…[and] personally felt" (p. 9). With such deep implications for informing my perspectives, I am called to consider how the places we inhabit affect ways of being in teaching and learning.

Acknowledging the fundamental role of place, and the multiple ways it informs how we come to knowledge, place-based educators understand the places we live as the looms on which our inner fibres are woven. These same scholars suggest that place-based pedagogies can help overcome the sense of rootlessness and displacement becoming pervasive in environments increasingly characterized by mobility and globality (Gruenewald, 2008; Sheldrake, 2001; Wilhelm, 2007). Gruenewald (2008) discusses specific benefits of integrating studies of place in the curriculum and claims that it has the potential to maximize student learning through "multidisciplinary, experiential, and intergenerational" education (p. 315). Ball and Lai (2006) and Bartholomaeus (2013) agree and, in doing so, position place-based

S. Wiebe et al. (Eds.), Ways of Being in Teaching, 65–69.

education as an effective framework for content learning. Akinbola (2005) and Israel (2012) extend this notion and maintain that a place-based framework can be employed to promote not only content learning, but also rich cultural understanding and the pursuit of social justice. In this way, place-based education uniquely encourages multiple perspectives while embracing the humanity of self and other.

As a perspective, place-based education aims to overcome the often hegemonic and ubiquitous educational agendas developed *elsewhere* in favour of an approach that uses the local as a starting point (Bartholomaeus, 2013). It emphasizes lived experiences as a vehicle to transport students to deeper understandings of both regional and global affairs while encouraging them to imagine possibilities for change (Israel, 2012; Sobel, 2004). According to its advocates, place-based possibilities for change reside in fostering agency (McInerney, 2011). Specifically, place-based approaches encourage teachers and students as active participants in meaning making by seeing them as producers of knowledge, rather than mere consumers. Hearing echoes of the critical pedagogues in this philosophical undergirding, I was not surprised to uncover literature that stands "against policies and practices that disregard place and leave the assumptions about the relationship between education and the politics of economic development unexamined" (Gruenewald, 2008, p. 309). This consciousness gave rise to a critical pedagogy of place, which challenges us to consider the connection between the kind of education available and the places we populate. Ultimately, critical place-based education seeks the dual objectives of "decolonization and reinhabitation" (Gruenewald, p. 308). Also driven by a critical agenda, Lane-Zucker (2004) says place-based education can lead to a "fundamental reimagining of the ethical, economic, political, and spiritual foundations upon which society is based" (p. iii). Such a reconceptualization must occur respectful of the unique experiences and knowledge that can enrich each other and augment our own learning.

While I've had the pleasure of living in many locations, *place* remains the small island in the Gulf of St. Lawrence where I spent my childhood. Islands are unique: they are about knowing boundaries without being limited by them and accepting change even as we resist it. Islands pretend certainty while embracing ambiguity. They are the illusion of constancy and the reality of transience. Islands are special kinds contradictions, but they endure. I've thought deeply about my relationship with place and how it has created me. I have come to recognize that outer landscapes shape our inner ones. In that way, I, too, am an Island—my form and my ways of being shaped by my experiences. Conkling (2007) refers to this as the tendency of Islandness to become "a part of your being, a part as deep as marrow, and as natural and unselfconscious as breathing" (p. 198). This *becoming* has deep implications for the development of identity.

Tran and Nguyen (2013) discuss identity as being informed by the convergence of multiple tenets: individual beliefs and practices; institutional policies; sectoral boundaries; socio-cultural context; and the political climate in which we dwell. They argue that the process of be(com)ing teachers involves knowing ourselves inwardly

as much as interacting with the world. Palmer (1998) agrees: he explains identity as an evolving nexus constituted by the convergence of all aspects of our lives, and he describes integrity as the wholeness found within this nexus. He cautions that we must not permit schooling to exclude fundamental aspects of ourselves, such as place and experience, because doing so erodes identity and diminishes the integrity of who we are. He says that "by choosing integrity, [we] become more whole, but wholeness does not mean perfection. It means becoming more real by acknowledging the whole of who [we are]" (p. 6). Accessing this wholeness as we redefine ourselves is helped by listening to what Palmer names the teacher within: "The teacher within is not the voice of conscience but of identity and integrity. It speaks not of what ought to be, but of what is real for us" (p. 11).

Because teaching emerges from who we are, and the places we inhabit affect our selfhood, I am mindful of the ways my relationship with place has informed my ways of being in teaching. I find myself circling back to lessons I learned on the land and considering ways these lessons continue to inform pedagogy and guide practice.

It may seem odd to claim that the land taught me about *communication*. But think about all the wonders that make up the earth and what we can learn from them if we are attentive. The sky is an endless source of messages for those of us who have been raised on the land: mares' tails tell of wind; sundogs of foul weather; and mackerel sky of heavy precipitation. The clouds are expressions of air pressure art; the wind whispers poems about changes to come; the night sky is a pregnant promise of all the tomorrows yet to be born. Similarly, the land offers hints about the changing seasons, and the tide and its sea life reveal both the past and what is to come. Animals, too, are wonderful teachers. This became particularly evident to me in my relationship with horses. Interacting with horses was an integral part of my growing up on the land, and working with them taught me a lot about communication. In communicating across language and species barriers, I learned to listen deeply and be attentive to the subtleties of body language. This way of being requires a calm, focussed assurance. It also requires that we are consistent with each other and considerate. In short, we need to be our best selves if we are to learn together (Irwin, 2007). A commitment to deep communication and attentiveness supports engaging and meaningful learning experiences.

Place also reinforces the importance of *responsiveness.* Born of my commitment to deep communication, responsiveness fosters care. Just as the land requires particular tending, so, too, do our teaching and learning relationships. It is insufficient to recognize students' needs if we do not act in ways that support their attainment. Responding to needs is validating and fosters growth and sustainability. Further, it promotes relationality and mutuality as our ways of being intersect and the outcomes we seek become intertwined.

Place has also taught me the importance of *critical consciousness.* Growing up in a farming community on a small island demands an awareness of how our actions impact others. On the farm, this consciousness was ecological. Practiced in crop rotation, minimal use of pesticides, creation of buffer zones, and active soil

conservation, I learned to preserve resources for future generations. As an educator, this critical consciousness manifests in untangling positions of power and promoting agency in the individuals who look to me to support their learning so that, together, we can advocate for more liberating education practices. Despite their seeming difference, socially critical and ecologically critical positions come together to encourage critically conscious ways of being (Ball & Lai, 2006; Delind & Link, 2004). Several scholars point to the apathy, particularly evident in Western societies, of students who are unconnected to their surroundings (e.g. Sheldrake, 2001; Wilhelm, 2007). Not only does this dividedness have implications for engagement and motivation in learning, it also results in a sense of dislocation in our future citizens.

This disconnectedness reminds me how my relationship with place has provided roots and these roots have allowed me to feel a *sense of wholeness and groundedness* rather than dislocation. Palmer (2004) discusses this type of dividedness as *a personal pathology* that diminishes integrity of self and self /other interactions. He says it emerges when we are young and begin to discern the incongruence between "life's bright promises and its shadowy realties" (p. 14). By adulthood, he says, we have learned to create portals to move "between the public world of role and the hidden world of soul (p. 15). Accepting this incongruence deepens the disconnect such that we feel severed even from ourselves. Palmer implores us to listen to our "inner teacher whose guidance is more reliable than anything we can get from a doctrine, ideology, collective belief system, institution, or leader" (p. 25). He assures us that we can dispense with living half-lives and "thrive amid the complexities…by deepening our awareness of the endless inner-outer exchanges that shape us and our world and the power we have to make choices about them" (p. 49).

It may seem curious to liken pedagogies of place to ways of being in teaching but I maintain that our lived experiences deeply inform our practices. Being attentive to why we engage in particular ways helps us to be more critically conscious. Like the waves cresting on the bay, one set of eyes sees teaching as a cohesive practice that shimmers or crashes on a whim. Another set of eyes, though, sees not a capricious entity but the sum of so many facets—the shimmer or chop is little more than a manifestation covering the complexities within.

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10. TEACHERS AS CULTURAL TRANSLATORS

Beyond the Cultural Paradigm

INTRODUCTION

Australia has become home for a significant number of African migrants with the 2006 Census data showing that there were 248,699 African-born people living in Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2011). Increasing immigration has been specified as one of the forces promoting globalisation, and identities become more complex for immigrants as they are influenced by their native culture, the local culture to which they have immigrated, and the 'global' culture, thus potentially leading to a plurality of identities and 'culturalisms' (Cuccioletta, 2001/2002). What this reflects is that both cultural fragmentation and modernist homogenisation are equally constitutive of our global reality and the complex interrelation of social processes and flows of identity (Friedman, 1994); this complexity is adding to the burden of transition between worlds.

It is important, therefore, referencing hybridity, diaspora, and cultural flow (Nurse, 1999), that teachers working in culturally diverse classrooms provide a curriculum that is responsive to these pluralities as it integrates academic objectives for specific subjects while respecting curricular goals of education for diversity (Schlein & Chan, 2012). This means that teachers in culturally diverse classrooms need to engage as 'cultural translators' in their school contexts if they are to be effective educators of students from cultures other than their own. Critical to this role for teachers working at a cultural interface is not only going beyond uncritically reproducing the notion of universalist ideas in and of themselves, but rather establishing practices where respect for differences and identities are resources for dialogue and become a matter of every day pedagogical life.

This capability of 'translation'—that is *dialogic* in nature—entails developing certain personal and interpersonal awareness and sensitivities that includes: learning specific bodies of cultural knowledge; and mastering a set of skills that, taken together, underlie effective cross-cultural teaching and inclusion (Moule, 2012) thereby supporting young people 'betwixt and between' worlds. An effective cultural translator may also be an individual from a minority individual's own ethnic or cultural group who has undergone the dual socialisation experience and has knowledge and skills to share. This might mean that the cultural translator

S. Wiebe et al. (Eds.), Ways of Being in Teaching, 71–86.

is able to share his or her own experiences, draw on cultural resources that are familiar and provide access to one's heritage, provide information that facilitates understanding of the values and perceptions of the majority culture—including, for example, the behavioural demands made on minority members of the society—without compromising ethnic values and norms (de Anda, 1984). What the arts offer in this regard are multiple pathways for "understanding the foreign and familiar, and how they are inter-related in every form of cultural production" (Papastergiadis, 2000, p. 124).

This chapter explores issues relating to immigration and education. In particular, it provides a perspective on multiculturalism through multiple explorations of self, other, and place, identifying the position of the teacher as a cultural translator, and what this might mean in 'hyper-complex times' (Wright et al., 2013).

THE SCHOOL ENCOUNTER: BARRIERS TO EQUALITY

We share this recount as a further way of contextualising the role of 'cultural translator'. The following event occurred in March 1992 during Harmony week, an event whereby Western Australia celebrates cultural diversity, and Peter Wakholi (one of the authors) tells it this way.

> My wife, Sarah, offered to do storytelling and cook African food for the pre-primary children at St. Kieran Catholic Primary School as part of the festivities. Mrs M taught our daughter's pre-primary class (five year olds), and was also the Religious Coordinator of the school. Sarah told an African story, sang, and cooked African food—meat curry and steamed bananas, for the pre-primary kids. According to Sarah the children participated enthusiastically in the storytelling, singing and cooking—asking questions and listening attentively to satisfy their curiosity. The exchanges went something like this.
>
> Child: "What are you cooking?"
>
> Sarah: "Green bananas and meat curry."
>
> Child: "Yum"
>
> Sarah: "I will peel the bananas before steaming them."
>
> Child: "Why do you have to peel the bananas?"
>
> Sarah: "Because it makes it easier to mash them once they are cooked."
>
> Child: "Why do you have to mash them?"
>
> Sarah: "It is easier to serve them mashed."
>
> Child: "Yummy."

Sarah: “Okay let us sit down in a circle while the food cooks. I am going to tell you an African story.”

Long, long time ago, there once lived a man called Teya, and wife, Kanda. The couple were very much in love with each other. They were hard working and had everything in plenty. They were kind to their neighbours but spent most of the time working and had no time for gossip.

Now, Teya and Kanda had been together for many rains but yet had no children and this caused a lot of whispering among their neighbours. This caused pain to them, as they wanted to have children very much, and every night, they always prayed for a child to take care of.

[…]

The medicine man gave them specific instructions about the child and how they should never say mean things to her, however annoying she may be. He blessed them and sent them home with their baby girl, the miracle child, whom they named Sela. They celebrated the joy of parenthood with the village and returned to their usual routine. Kanda was so happy that she could often be heard singing to her baby girl and Teya was proud of his family.

I will now teach you one of the songs Kanda sang to her child, Sela

The song goes like this

Olele, Olele, Olele, Olele, mulesi womwana.

(Quiet, quiet, quiet, quiet I am babysitting you)

Kona lilo, kona lilo, kona lilo, kona lilo mulesi womwana.

(Fall asleep, fall asleep, fall asleep, fall asleep I am babysitting you)

The kids picked up the pronunciation of the words by watching and listening to Sarah sing. They subsequently joined in the singing.

The story had a sad ending. Teya and Kanda increasingly became mean to Sela and one day she disappeared from them, reverting to her supernatural being.

Once Sarah was done Mrs M wound up the lesson by reading from a pictorial book about tribal life in Africa. As Mrs M flipped through the book and explained about African tribal life, she came to a picture of an African child, sitting in dirt, with mucous and flies around her nose. Mrs M turned to Sarah:

Mrs M: “I bet this is the way Sahya (our daughter) lived while back in Africa.”

Sarah: “No, Sahya did not live like that in Africa,” (responding firmly).

By this time most of the kids had turned in Sahya’s direction, embarrassing her.

Taking little notice of Sarah's response, the teacher continued with her description of tribal life in Africa. At the end of the lesson, Sarah and Sahya left disappointed with the teacher's attitude towards Africa, and the way in which her concluding presentation had undermined the positive aspects of Africa that Sarah had brought into the classroom through storytelling and cooking.

In reflecting on this event we could see that, instead of boundary crossing through the act of translating—recognising that this is series of processes, not just products (Pratt et al., 2010)—this subsequent interchange served to reinforce rather than ameliorate difference. More specifically, the experience with the pre-primary (5 year olds) teacher made us aware of the lack of knowledge about the diversity of lifestyles in contemporary Africa, and the potential for prejudice and racism in an Australian classroom. Moreover, as parents, Peter and Sarah were concerned about the psycho-social wellbeing of their children. Denigration of Africa and African culture could potentially undermine the self-concept of their children as people of African descent, and could translate into self-hate and intergenerational conflict (Pyke, 2010).

It is this lack of responsiveness by the teacher in this example, that Pyke (2010) suggests builds internalised racial oppression. Intergenerational conflict between parents and children could potentially be enhanced by negative feelings towards culture of origin developed in the early years of their schooling. Peter and Sarah's concern was that this 'acculturation gap' would increasingly play out in family conflict and adjustment (Birman, 2006; TN & Stockdale, 2008).

Teachers have a role to play in this regard, and we believe that teachers in culturally diverse classrooms need to be sensitive to cultural diversity and how the various knowledges they pass on to the students may have multiple interpretations and impact on the students they teach. One outcome of this experience was that Peter and Sarah resolved to actively create an environment for their children through which the sense of being both African and Australian was appreciated in a positive way.

The arts and musical performances, in particular, became a vehicle for this educational experience, in addition to which it can be the case that immigrant children may have few opportunities to participate in and learn about their cultural heritage (www.humanrights.gov.au), the arts being a way of holding and expressing culture (UNESCO, 2005). Drawing on a significant heritage, and amplifying storytelling as one of the 'six-senses' (Pink, 2005), Peter and Sarah turned to the value of the arts as a multimodal pedagogy (Wright, 2009, 2015).

It was this cultural learning that provided a means for educating children and the wider community. For example, as a family, Peter and Sarah performed in various churches and festivals, sharing their African heritage with others. This worked out well because, in the process of being involved in these artistic activities, a context was created for dialogue about culture and identity as well as other issues relating to the children's psycho-social development and wellbeing.

In examining the role of culture as an expression of human values, Matarasso (2001) a cultural theorist, suggests that culture is far more than entertainment. Culture, Matarasso highlights, "is the means by which we begin to understand our

experience, our hopes, desires and fears. It is through culture that we build identity, the essential component of humanity and community" (2001, p. 1). Accordingly, culture can act as an empowering and humanising element of our being.

There was a subsequent encounter with Mrs M, this time it was to do with the confirmation ceremony of Peter and Sarah's daughter at St Kieran Catholic Church[2] in Perth.

> "No, you won't be allowed to perform your music at the confirmation mass," she said.
>
> Peter: "Why not?"
>
> Mrs M: "African music is too exciting. It is not appropriate for a confirmation mass."

Mrs. M's motivation for her negative attitude towards African music seemed to reside in ignorance, prejudice, ethnocentrism and racism; this was especially perplexing given the expressive nature of this event.

What this revealed was the awareness that cultural difference and its manifestation in public spaces was a contested phenomenon and consequently political. Akinyela (1996) sheds some light on this matter observing that cultures take their form in the dialectical tension that exists in the asymmetrical power relations between and within groups. Hence, culture is constructed as the more powerful and less powerful segments of society contend for positions of power and privilege among themselves. As a White woman, school teacher, and religious coordinator, Mrs. M was in a privileged position.

Homi Bhabha (1994), a cultural theorist, pointed out that the terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced 'performatively'. Such performance may include anything from individual agents' negotiations of everyday life, the stories people tell each other, and popular forms of entertainment, to political oratory or bounded events such as theatre, ritual, festivals and parades. The persistence to perform at Sahya's confirmation was a struggle to establish terms of cultural engagement and what would be an act of 'cultural translation'.

More specifically, performance offers possibilities for purposeful re-enactment and interrogation of cultural memory through embodied selves with the intention of negotiating cultural identity. Therefore, along with other like-minded friends, we persisted with our community performances, the power of these acts lying in the way they become a means of understanding historical, social and cultural processes towards bicultural competence (Gordon, 2001; Nagel, 1994). It was this later notion that helped to explain benefits that might accrue when embodying and enacting culture across boundaries.

BICULTURAL COMPETENCE: SOCIAL INTERCONNECTEDNESS AND TEACHING ACROSS BOUNDARIES

Bicultural competence refers to a process wherein individuals learn to function in two distinct sociocultural environments: their primary culture; and the dominant

mainstream culture of the society in which they live (Darder, 1991). Bicultural competence is a deliberate process of becoming bicultural, rather than merely making erroneous claims of biculturality as an automatic and defensive response to the realities of being 'Black' in 'White' society.

To achieve bicultural competence, Gordon (2001) proposes that it is necessary to gain self-knowledge, educate self for critical consciousness, nurture one's internal world, seek support, and embed process as a way of being. Achieving bicultural competence means being competent not only in terms of the culture of residence but also, and importantly, the 'culture of origin'. This demands that we work with the visible and invisible legacies bequeathed to us by history and our ancestors.

Because cultural memory is political, and because different stories and representations struggle for a place in history, memory is crucial to understanding a culture since it reveals collective desires, needs, self-definitions and power struggles (Hua, 2005). Therefore, a cultural translator needs to acquire attributes of both cultural competence and bicultural competence and then, as suggested earlier, move purposefully towards a critical awareness and consciousness that moves beyond the notion of competency as an end in and of itself. While cultural competence is the ability to teach students who come from cultures other than your own (Moule, 2012), it is more helpful to think about the contemporary forms of 'culturalism' that exist where culture is assumed to be integrated and an internally homogeneous whole (Darder, 1991; Stjernfelt, 2010).

Attributes of a Teacher as Cultural Translator

In order for teachers to be effective cultural translators they need to become both culturally and biculturally competent, with cultural recognition being key in the way the teacher views diversity as a resource rather than an impediment. In this respect, we have identified the following attributes as key: expertise in translating curriculum and teaching in a culturally inclusive context; accepting multiple world views; developing empathy and gaining an appreciation for the life experiences of those who are culturally different; being aware of the diverse forms of discrimination; teaching students to be critical thinkers; and educating as a 'practice of freedom' (Freire, 1976). These practices embody and then seek to reflect the interactive processes of identity construction and the polyethnic constitution of contemporary classrooms (Koole, 2003). We now consider each of these practices in turn.

Expertise in translating curriculum and teaching as co-creation in a culturally inclusive context—accepting multiple world views. As professionals, educators are expected to demonstrate expertise in engaging students with curriculum and structuring the classroom for optimal learning (Moule, 2012). Teachers as cultural translators develop expertise in cross-cultural teaching by acquiring knowledge beyond traditional disciplines, and being equally alert to process as well as product; that is, going beyond the banking model of education (Freire, 1970). Such teachers

recognize the manner in which traditional education programs foster a dependency on a predefined curriculum, and consequently reduce teachers to technicians.

Teaching for inclusivity requires teachers to become lifelong learners and willing to make the curriculum alive by accommodating stories and perspectives that reflect the cultural diversity of their classrooms. It is this process of *animating* the curriculum that is made more salient when teachers are responsive to the way indigenous understandings of art and culture to embody everyday life, rather than that arts and culture are seen as separate and remote in economically developed societies (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

Accepting multiple worldviews. It is not always easy to start the journey towards developing cultural competence because we all have specific lived experiences and biases, and hence working to accept multiple views is a difficult choice and task (Moule, 2012). Nevertheless, the importance of teachers making curriculum decisions and interacting with students and their parents in ways free from the delimiting viewpoints held by those such as Mrs. M is a quality appreciated in a culturally-diverse society (Chan, 2006). Key to this process is recognising that students, no matter what their heritage, are those who are 'recipients of needs' rather than 'holders of [assumed] rights' (Sullivan, 2007).

Developing empathy and gaining an appreciation for the life experiences of those who are culturally different. Being empathic and seeing value in difference means an effective cultural translator is more likely to develop healthy relationships with students. In the same way, valuing life experiences of those who are culturally different is a pathway towards effective cross-culturally rich and inclusive teaching (Moule, 2012). A teacher as a cultural translator could contemplate questions such as: Why do many culturally different students and parents harbour fears about and mistrust those who represent the system? What is the source of stress felt by many culturally different students and their parents? Why do they so often feel that majority group members have little awareness of or concern for the often harsh realities of their lives? Without keen insight into the complex answers to these questions educators cannot hope to teach their students sensitively and successfully (Moule, 2012). Teachers who set curricular goals that work towards education for diversity have the potential to expand possibilities for development of curricular situations and interactions with diverse student populations as a means of cultivating hopeful imaginings of multicultural education (Schlein & Chan, 2012).

Being aware of diverse forms of discrimination. Discrimination in education involves more than merely ignoring the contributions of ethnically and racially different people in the curriculum. It also includes, for example, being unaware of: one's own prejudices and how one may inadvertently communicate them to students; differences in cultural style, interactive patterns, and values and how these can lead to miscommunication; and the culturally-bound and homogenising theories taught

in many teacher education programs (Moule, 2012). Teachers who are effective cultural translators know that knowledge is flexible, contestable, and situated. They are careful to search for the warrants that supported curriculum assertions, and they vet materials by looking for other ways for substantiating claims with a consequence being that they expect students to do the same. It is this level of criticality that is key. These teachers, for example, do not want their students to just receive and consume knowledge. They want them to be able to produce knowledge, and their demands for success are evident in how they teach (Ladson-Billing, 2009).

Teaching students to be critical thinkers. Critical thinking is enabled by the process of dialogue, dialogue being the imperative behind effective cultural translation (Pollock et al., 2002). Through dialogue, teachers and students are conjointly responsible for the process in which all grow. In this process, arguments based on 'authority' are no longer valid because both teacher and students are engaged in a collaborative process of teaching and learning. Dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking—thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and the people, thinking which does not separate itself from action (Freire, 2007).

Education as a practice of freedom. To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. That learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred, and those who believe that our work is not merely to share information, but also to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin (hooks, 1994). It is in this context that teachers as cultural translators mediate between people and culture and see 'translation' as an act of growth (Singh, 2010).

The following section shows what working as a cultural translator looks like. This project was undertaken with ten young people of African descent in Western Australia where 'translation' was as much about the forms used and developed—in this case arts-based—as content. What arts practice offered in this context was diverse pathways towards growth through mediation and dialogue, giving form to feeling.

AFRICAN CULTURAL EDUCATION: A DIALOGUE WITH AFRICAN MIGRANT YOUTH IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

We don't have to look far to see images of famine and wars in Africa. The 40-hour famine fundraising campaigns by organisations such as World Vision frequently display images of starving Africans in schools where children attend. Most recently we see images of South Sudan. This exposure becomes irritably disturbing for parents of African migrant background who recognise this as only one part of the African experience that seeks to portray the vast diversity of Africa in one 10 second grab. Peter shares that, for Sarah and himself, the psychological humiliation of being African

becomes palpable. Even more critical was the concern for what impact this may have on their children. Consequently, they resolved to focus on teaching their children the positive aspects of Africa—African culture and being through the rich evocative stories, songs, and dances that were their heritage. For example, Peter and Sarah told them stories about Africa, sang beautiful songs of Africa, taught them African dances, and told them stories about their ancestral heritage. The more they did this, the more confident they saw their children become. Over time as their children became older, they taught them to play musical instruments and other aspects of their culture of origin. It was through these initiatives that their children learnt an alternative reality about Africa to that portrayed in the Australian media, and importantly, this alternative reality became one that was embodied and known in deep way.

Reflecting on this process, Peter recounted that teaching their children their African heritage was the easy bit, however, the issues of cultural identity had to be located in broader contexts of globalisation, cultural politics and race relations. Accordingly, the concept of 'African cultural education' (Akinyela, 1996), became a useful conceptual context through which issues of cultural identity and cultural renewal could be explored and then practiced; this process then becoming cultural translation *embodied*.

The Ujamaa Circle

One practice of African cultural education outlined by Akinyela was the Ujamma Circle, a process he employed with African American families. Ujamaa is a word from the Swahili language of East and Central Africa and can be translated as "Familyhood". A person who sets out to become a facilitator for this process should know and practise the applications of educational and social cultural principles which, when correctly understood and applied, guides circle participants to develop a sense of connectedness.

This support and group process avoids pre-packaged models or recipes and formulas. It does not focus on teaching any skills or techniques other than critical thinking and connectedness and draws on storytelling as a mode of inquiry and expression. A primary concern in developing the principles of the Ujamaa Circle process was that participants reflect the issues and experience that arise out of the culture and their daily reality; this process has its parallels in other cultures such as 'yarning' in an indigenous Australian context (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010).

The Ujamaa Circle teaches through structured dialogues. Dialogue, or focussed two-way conversation which encourages questions and answers from participants, can be a strengthening educational tool with which participants are able to uncover knowledge about a subject (Swain, 2000). Often this knowledge can be tacit with participants not being conscious they knew what they possessed. Participants are also able to discover new knowledge gained from other participants and the facilitator. Through dialogue, participants are able to define new ways of participating in the educational process in ways that are respectful, accessible, and culturally appropriate.

The ujamaa circle sessions. As a tool for cultural translation, the Ujamaa Circle became core to a project undertaken with ten young people of different African-Australian backgrounds. These young people ranged from 12 to 26 years. Three of the ten were male, two identifying as Tanzanian, with the remaining eight claimed Ugandan ancestry. The group was diverse and therefore provided opportunities for bringing different ideas to the topic of 'African cultural education'. Dei (2012) reminds us that critical teaching about Africa is a form of decolonisation. Hence, beyond questioning imperial, colonial, and oppressive knowledge, the Ujamaa Circle became important to subvert the cultural, symbolic, and political practices that render difference unimportant.

The sessions that followed weekly for 10 weeks were therefore set out as teaching and learning contexts through which the participants were posed with problems relating to themselves. Freire (2007) tells us that "Students, as they are increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge" (p. 81). Indeed, the Ujamaa Circles were lively, educative, and acts of inquiry and translation.

In overview, the sessions explored a range of issues relating to aspects of identity perceptions of the participants and the role of African culture in their self-definition. Questions discussed included: Who am I? What makes you feel African? What makes you feel Australian? What are the cultural challenges of identifying as an African, Australia, or African-Australian? Have you experiences of racism? And what does this feel like? How could the problem of racism be dealt with? How will knowledge about African cultures benefit us? And in what ways will the concept of African cultural education benefit the African community and the broader community? The sessions further explored the themes that emerged linking them to globalisation, African diaspora, and lifelong learning.

This approach enabled the development of transnational perspectives of 'African cultural education'. Dei (2012), for example, emphasises the importance of African youth developing an African-centred knowledge base that stresses the importance of Africa and the links to the Diaspora as an intellectual exercise to affirm the students' sense of pride in their histories, myriad identities, and social, cultural, and political achievements.

Key to these processes were those that were arts-based including African aesthetics embodied through cultural forms and artefacts. McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras and Brooks (2004) in their discussion of the social benefits of the arts point to the ways that the arts offer opportunities for building social capital, and tools for cultural production. The arts allow us to communicate our ideas, feelings, insights, and our very selves to others (Matarasso, 2001; Wakholi, 2012; Wakholi & Wright, 2012).

The sessions progressively grew towards a series of presentations that captured and expressed participants' imagination of 'African cultural education'. This strategy encouraged both critical and creative thinking among participants producing presentations that reflected their values and interests and what was heart-felt. As Freire (2007) proposes, "because [participants] apprehend the challenge as

interrelated to other problems within a total context, not as a theoretical question, the resulting comprehension tends to be increasingly critical and thus constantly less alienated" (p. 81).

It was particularly the arts-based aspects of this work—as acts of cultural translation—that allowed participants to have a sense of ownership in the creation of knowledge. And following Freire, it was these responses to the challenges presented that went on to evoke new challenges, new understandings, with the participants over time coming to regard themselves as committed (2007).

By way of example, one participant inspired by Hugh Masekela's CDs, wrote a story about living and growing up in the diaspora, Australia. This story was one of disappointment and hope, but most importantly it revealed the challenges of growing up as a visible African Australian in a Eurocentric Australia.

Another student made a presentation about black music observing that Black (African) music serves the same purpose as poetry. It is often described as part of rhythmical compositions written or spoken for exciting pleasure, by beautiful, imaginative, or alleviative thoughts. Musicians produce and compose songs, as a medium through which they can express their attitudes and values, towards a specific topic. Depending on the concerns surrounding them at the time, musicians may choose to focus on current issues in their society. African and African descendant music does this. They write about liberation, oppression and how to overcome it. This is evident all round the world, in the music that you hear. In Tanzania, we have a genre of music called Bongo flavour. It is about politics and education on isssues such as HIV/AIDS.

In sharing 'I was' by Nas (an African American rapper) he went on to say, "this music is about empowerment, through education, moral and historical links to Africa. It targets young people, to look at their rich African history as a source of inspiration".

I know I can (I know I can)
Be what I wanna be (be what I wanna be)
If I work hard at it (If I work hard it)
I'll be where I wanna be (I'll be where I wanna be)
Be, B-Boys and girls, listen up
You can be anything in the world, in God we trust
An architect, doctor, maybe an actress
But nothing comes easy it takes much practice…
Be, be, 'fore we came to this country
We were kings and queens, never porch monkeys
There was empires in Africa called Kush
Timbuktu, where every race came to get books
To learn from black teachers who taught Greeks and Romans
Asian Arabs and gave them gold when
Gold was converted to money it all changed
Money then became empowerment for Europeans…
Hold your head up, little man, you're a king

Young Princess when you get your wedding ring
Your man is saying “She’s my queen”.

By way of a final example, and reflecting not only the Ujamma Circle in action, but processes used to create and interrogate culture and identity—that is, cultural translation at work—one participant noted how storytelling is a critical part of African culture.

African stories are told for fun, as in jokes and general anecdotes. Stories are also told to explain things, to gain greater knowledge, and to preserve the memory of events. In modern society we get a bit of recorded or written down history. Books that we use in classes, now, often describe African places with colonial names. Like Lake Nyanza in Northern Tanzania, was named Lake Victoria in the textbooks. In Tanzania, the local people who live around the areas tell stories surrounding the lake and how it came to be; it is called Lake Nyanza, which means great lake. The locals, in Tanzania, refuse to call it by the colonial name.

Through storytelling, this participant exhibits the power of problem-posing education. In problem-posing education (as was the case in the Ujamaa Circle), people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation (Freire, 2007, p. 83). In reflecting on the importance of African storytelling, this person also deconstructed the colonizing discourse of discovering and renaming places with total disregard to local discourses and authority discerning the problematic nature of renaming an African lake with a European alternative.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Working as a cultural translator allows teachers to engage in dialogue with young people, such as exemplified by the Ujamaa Circle, revealing the power of teaching for freedom through a problem-posing strategy that poses problems relating to student’s lived experience. Indeed, students’ experience through the Ujamaa Circle evoked new challenges, followed by new understandings (Freire, 2007).

Reflecting the arts-based approach, these practices strengthened students’ capability to draw on their reflective, imaginative and affective experiences in ways beyond what might be possible through rational argumentation. In addition, these relational ways of being and knowing are respectful, accessible, and strengthen links with one’s own cultural heritage as well as providing a means of critique. This developing capability was evident in one participant’s reflection on the Ujamaa Circle experience:

I have found the workshops on cultural education to be enlightening, as they have opened up several issues that relate to me, issues that I would not have discussed before with anyone. It has motivated me to want to do something about my lack of knowledge for my own culture. Especially as I am someone

> who has moved around so much, I am beginning to acknowledge the importance of settling down and becoming at peace with myself and knowing who I am.

What this possibility highlights is the way that education can be 'humanizing' where, according to Freire (1998), this becomes the path through which men and women can become conscious about their presence in the world. The Ujamaa Circle was indeed a humanizing experience; it increased self-awareness and the significance of African cultural knowledge amongst the participants. In this regard, another participant observed that:

> The Ujamaa Circle sessions have helped me to identify youths with a similar mentality towards African culture. There is urgency and need, for our generation to take a stand towards preservation of African culture through different avenues that have been raised in the meetings.

Freire (2007) tells us that the problem-posing method does not dichotomize the activity of teacher/student. A problem-posing education requires that the teacher/student contradiction be resolved so that both teacher and students are collaborators in dialogue—this dialogue being cultural translation at work.

When working as a cultural translator as one powerful way of being in teaching, teachers are working with the ideals of democratic education and helping to build community for those in places of transition. While we have exemplified one particular group of young people, through this recount we can also understand that young people can be in many places of transition in *time, space*, and *place.*

In discussing a critical approach to community development, Ledwith (2012) suggests that critical community development begins in the everyday reality of people's lives by extraordinarily re-experiencing the ordinary. In this respect, when teachers work as cultural translators they work towards and through a critical community development (Morgan, 1998). This form of criticality is a praxis that locates the silenced stories of those who are marginalized and excluded that lie at the heart of any theory of social justice.

These stories become the basis of community development theory and practice and, as Freire reminds us, the key to developing these stories into action is the process of problem-posing (Freire, 2007). In some ways, therefore, the project shared here could be perceived as an aspect of critical community development whereby the concept of African cultural education was developed with the participants in a community context through cultural translation. This was evident in the feedback from participants, with one sharing:

> African migrant families need African cultural education. And that's where we talk about our difference. It doesn't mean that we'll segregate ourselves, it just needs to be recognized that I am going to be who I am. I'm not going to have blonde hair. I'm not going to have the white skin, but I'm still capable of doing everything that I need to do to fit in the society that I have decided to immigrate. Something I have noticed is, we kind of want to just fit in and

> accept the culture or whatever that we've come into. In the process you forget where you come from.

This process began in people's lives in community, but reaches beyond the symptoms of injustice to the root causes by making critical connections between personal experiences and the oppressive political structures that perpetuate discrimination.

In a school context the concept of an empowering school culture and social structure involves restructuring the culture and organization of the school so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, language, and social class groups will experience educational equality and cultural empowerment (Banks, 2004). This project with the young people illustrates a pedagogy where teachers can develop practices that incorporate explicit subject content as well as critical pedagogical approaches. These approaches require adopting a critical attitude towards teaching and habits of lifelong learning.

A great maxim is that the more we live critically and the more we internalize a radical and critical practice of education, the more we discover the impossibility of separating teaching and learning (Freire, 1985). While changing teacher's attitudes and school environments is an enormous task our own experiences in working with young people (Wright & Wakholi, 2012; Wakholi, 2005, 2010, 2012) suggests that creating alternative creative spaces for empowering community is a viable option. To not do so, is to potentially reinscribe or increase, identify, or even re-direct lines of disharmony and conflict.

NOTES

[1] A pseudonym.
[2] A pseudonym.

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JOHN J. GUINEY YALLOP AND CARMEN SHIELDS

11. THE ART OF TEACHING RESTS IN CONNECTION

> Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings and also experience them.
>
> (Tolstoy, 1896/trans A. Maude, 1900, p. xx)

> Curriculum is often taken to mean a course of study. When we set our imaginations free from the narrow notion that a course of study is a series of textbooks or specific outline of topics to be covered and objectives to be attained, broader and more meaningful notions emerge. A curriculum can become one's life course of action. It can mean the paths we have followed and the paths we intend to follow.
>
> (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. xx)

We begin this chapter with these two quotations as a way of focusing on our belief that meaning making in teaching and learning is premised on the art of building personally meaningful connections with those whom we teach. Using stories and poems to reflect on the bricks and mortar of our teaching philosophy, we turn to the four curricular commonplaces that Schwab (1969) described: the student, the teacher, the milieu, and the subject matter, highlighting the milieu, as we consider the attributes that emerge from an artful teaching life—relationship, care, kindness, and love.

THINKING FIRST ABOUT TEACHER INTENTION

Recognizing that most decisions about teaching and learning in our university classrooms rest in our hands, we focus on the importance of the milieu as the organizing aspect of curriculum development noted in Schwab's definition of curriculum; without careful consideration for the milieu, the student, the teacher, and the subject matter cannot come together. Our desire is to construct an atmosphere for learning where tensions, queries, imaginings, and new perspectives can be explored and boundaries pressed outward. We hope to create a learning environment where students can add to their own epistemological quests and understand that, in a teaching life, knowing and being able to name personal beliefs about living and learning guide what we

S. Wiebe et al. (Eds.), Ways of Being in Teaching, 87–101.

foreground and display to others. Much as Palmer (1993) suggests, our intention as teachers is to open a space for inquiry and meaningful dialogue for students and ourselves, so how we create a milieu where our subject matter can be addressed as personal and storied takes a prominent place in our planning.

In a chapter called "Working from within," Pinar (1994) provides two examples of interaction in his classroom and then notes the following:

> I have knowledge of my discipline, some knowledge of my students, and some self-knowledge which I am willing to share… As well, I come ready to respond, not only as a student and teacher…but as a person. In fact, I must be willing to disclose my thoughts and feelings if I am to hope for similar disclosure from students. I must be willing to explain, at times I intuit as "right," how and why a certain literary piece affects me. I must be so willing if I am to hope that the discipline that is significant for me will also be significant for my students. (p. 9)

This insightful description of classroom work resonates for us in terms of attention to the milieu. Pinar's intent is aimed at including the multiple voices in his classroom in a personal way in order for meaning to be of particular importance to each student. Concluding the chapter, he references the artist Jackson Pollock, writing: "Like some modern painters, my students and I have come to feel that we rarely need to go to subject matter outside ourselves. We work from a different source. We work from within" (p. 10). We, too, subscribe to this perspective believing that if we model such a stance in the milieu we create for teaching and learning, our students will likewise draw from within their own lived experience as they connect to new subject matter.

JOHN'S POEM: LESSONS FROM THE PAST

When Our Sharing Circle Became My Mirror

My grade eight class
held class meetings
I introduced
as a way to include their voices
in our classroom.

Word travelled.
Others came.
A professor of education
sat in my place
in the circle
while I stood
with his student teachers
forming another circle

looking in.

I felt proud
of myself
of my students;
new teachers
would learn from us
about how to collaborate,
about how to create
community.

The question went around,
as it usually did every week.
[What worked well,
and what could we improve?]
I think everyone responded,
as they also usually did
each week.

Then it was time for issues,
another part of our regular process;
there was only one—the seating arrangement.

I listened
as my students took turns
explaining
how last week
I had changed the seating arrangement
because I wasn't happy
with how the students were working.

Student: "He usually asks for our input."

Professor: "And he didn't this time?"

Student: "No, he just changed them and we had to accept it."

Professor: "But, you weren't working well. Would you agree with that?"

Student: "Yes, but that's not the point. He should still ask our opinion,
like he always does."

Professor: "Always?"

Student: "Well always except for this time."

Professor: "But isn't it important that you be working well in the classroom?"

Student: "Yes, but we should also be happy in our classroom.
We were all happy
with the seating arrangement before;

but nobody is happy now,
except Mr. Guiney."

Professor: "Is there something you would like to ask your teacher?"

Student: "Yes,"

and looking to me
my student asked,
"Mr. Guiney,
could we discuss a new seating arrangement?
We're not happy with this one."

I wrote this poem, not so concerned, as Carl Leggo (2012) says, about whether or not it is a good poem, but with more attention to what would this poem be good for? What is this poem good for? I have told the story contained in this poem to many of the students in university courses I have taught. I have told this story from one of my earliest years of teaching because it contains so many messages for me. I learn so much about my teaching practice, about my students, about myself whenever I share this story. Putting it into a poetic form allows me to capture in text, formed through my own memories, what the experience was; it allows me to bring the reader emotionally into the experience with me. What is this poem good for? I look at myself in this poem, still in my first five years of teaching; I see the pride I felt in my students and in myself because a university professor had brought his class to observe my students in one of our class meetings. I look at myself being humbled, and accepting that humility. I look at my students empowered by the space of the circle—a space I had offered them, and a space they were now holding up to me, publicly and respectfully calling me to live up to the ideals I had espoused. I look at my students and myself. I still feel proud of that moment. It was a pivotal moment for me because it was one where it was clear to me that my students had made it their circle as much as it was mine; it was our circle, and it was based on respect and kindness for one another.

As I look back at that experience from this moment, I recognize the importance of relationship in my teaching practice. I wanted to create a relationship where students would trust that they could take a different view than me, where they could challenge me and feel confident that their views would be seriously considered and respected. The students had, in a sense, switched the roles; I was the learner, and they were teaching me how to live my practice. Such a relationship, I believe, can only emerge in the context of love. A loving relationship creates space for difference, including difference of views.

CARMEN'S STORY: REMEMBERING A MOMENT OF AWAKENING

The following story is an excerpt from a chapter I wrote (Shields, 2001) for a book entitled *"Exploring Human Potential: Facilitating Growth in the New Millennium."*

I have reflected on this classroom experience many times over the years as I have continued to think about the milieu I construct for students in my classroom.

Valerie's Monkeys

During the final term of a two-year B. Ed. program, I asked my students to bring to class one lesson plan that they had written and used. I asked them to bring one that they felt had gone well. They sat in small groups to share and discuss their lessons from the point of view of lesson content (subject matter), student learning, teacher role, and classroom setting (milieu). As the conversation progressed, there was a shout from one table. Valerie had shared a lesson from a day in Grade 1, where she had completed a unit on wild animals with a story and an activity about monkeys. She rose to her feet as she shared a moment of awakening with the whole class.

She told us that she had spent a long evening amassing brown lunch bags, cutting out monkey heads and tails, arms and legs, for her class to assemble as a final task for her unit. She described the 28 monkeys hanging up outside the classroom in the hall, all looking the same except for the colouring of eyes and mouths that the students had done. She told us that her classroom teacher had been pleased with her activity and had written it up in her report for the university.

Valerie said it was only now, in this conversation that she understood that, as teacher, she had constructed and entirely controlled the learning situation. She had set up a milieu of conformity where choice was not an option, where student input was absent, where subject matter was reduced from a unit on wild animals to one task on one wild animal. She saw that the milieu she created that day belonged to her, and was not shared with students. As she sat down, a new and interesting conversation began to be heard in the classroom.

At this point in our teaching lives, we believe that if the classroom milieu is carefully considered by us to maximize dialogue and interaction among and between those present, then, together, with intention, we can make connections to the subject matter that we could not make otherwise. *With intention* means we reach for depth of understanding that encompasses aspects of ourselves beyond the cognitive to the emotional and spiritual. In order for this stage to be set, we believe we must slow down class time, model careful listening and response, and invite everyone to contribute to the ongoing conversation that, in our view, is at the heart of our interpretation of an academic life.

JOHN'S POETIC AND NARRATIVE MEMORIES: STIRRED BY CARMEN'S STORY

Am I Lazy, or Just Not Creative…Enough?

The principal makes her rounds
in late August

ostensibly welcoming us back
for another year of schooling,
but her eyes spend more time on walls
than on people.

"I see you still have your walls to do, Mr. Guiney."

"Oh, they're ready."

"Do you need some help? I have some bubble letters and posters you could use."

"No, I'm fine. Thanks."

She walks away, and I know I've been judged.
My walls don't have colourful posters,
or bubble letters,
or any letters;
I don't even have the corkboards covered
in construction paper.

Doesn't she know
that the walls are ready
for my students to create their first group art project
telling us a positive message about school?

Carmen's story is striking to me because it reminds me of the lengths we go to create physical environments for our students, while not paying nearly as much attention to the relational environments. As well as a first group art project, I would ask my students to individually apply to become a member of our class. They had to write a cover letter and provide a copy of their resume. I provided them with a cover letter describing what I would bring to the class as their teacher, and I included a copy of the shortened version of my own resume listing my educational background, my teaching experience, and my interests or hobbies such as reading and swimming. Parents often told me that the cover letter and resume told them so much of what they wanted to know, but weren't sure how to ask. Students responded with enthusiasm to this assignment. Ten year olds also have their own lived experience to draw on, and, whatever the grade level, students delighted in writing those letters telling me about themselves. Creating resumes was also a bonding moment with their parents who often showed their children their own resumes; sometimes this sharing was the first time their children made the connection with the life learning and life work journey of their parents. They also connected their parents' lives with their teacher's life, and their own lives with both. In connecting, they identified community.

Another first assignment, this time in math, was to create a floor plan (to scale in the higher grades, but very rudimentary in the earlier grades). Students were given some parameters. We had to have spaces for individual work and group

work. We had to have spaces for centres such as reading and listening. We needed a performance or presentation space. Apart from that, it was very open; all the movable pieces of furniture, including the teacher's desk, could be moved, as long as the teacher's desk remained in the classroom. When the plans (done with a partner or individually) were completed, we voted on them. Through a process of elimination, we decided on the floor plan for the term; seating arrangements were a further negotiation.

By the end of the first two weeks of school, I had lots of assessment notes on students regarding their willingness and ability to work in groups, their artistic/creative explorations, their negotiation and language skills, their math skills. I also walked into a classroom with a similar feeling my students had when they walked into it; this is our classroom because I played a part in creating it.

One morning as I was walking rather quickly past another classroom having forgotten my attendance folder in the office, I heard another teacher calling out attendance. "Good morning, [John]. Good morning, [Carmen]." The students would respond with "Good morning" to their teacher. Later that day, I spoke to my colleague in the staffroom. I mentioned how lovely it was that she said "Good morning" to each of her students every day instead of doing a kind of roll call for attendance. My colleague thanked me, but clarified that she didn't do it every day. She said that she found other ways to do attendance as well, such as asking her students what they were reading or inviting an adjective to describe themselves but it was never a roll call. Since that day, I have avoided roll calls for attendance; I found these practices to be another way of being in teaching.

FURTHER REFLECTIONS

Schools can be places of learning for teachers, too, when we take the time to listen to each other or to look into classrooms with respect rather than judgment. We know that John's colleagues who decorated their classrooms beautifully for their students' first day of arrival did so with skill and good intention. We also know that many prepared materials are done to save time, so that students use the time for other activities and to develop other skills. What is important, we believe, is attention and intention…and balance. Just as John was able and willing to learn from his colleague who took attendance in creative ways, other educators might learn to let go of some of the control they impose on the learning environment at the beginning of the year so there is more room for connection among students and between teacher and students.

THE CONTINUITY OF EXPERIENCE

Dewey (1938), writing about the two principles of continuity and interaction, notes that

> they are not separate from each other. They intercept and unite. They are… the longitudinal and lateral aspects of experience. Different situations succeed

> one another. But because of the principle of continuity something is carried over from the earlier to the later ones…What [one] has learned in the way of knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations that follow. (p. 44)

When we ponder how to proceed with curricular planning in the courses we teach, we keep in mind the importance of weaving experiences students have had in other classes as part of their undergraduate and/or graduate program(s), in the field where they teach classes of their own under supervision, and in their lives as students in the past. Our way forward is to use class time for dialogue and interaction, including sharing some of our own experiences and involving ourselves in the interactions, using course content as a focus as we help students add to their own ongoing understanding of teaching and learning. We find that crossing time and situation in class interactions reveals to students the value in constructing and reconstructing experiences from the past as a means of coming to understand their own thinking about a subject or topic or perspective in the present, and as they move forward.

JOHN BEGINS TEACHING WITH A POEM AND A STORY

I often begin each session of courses I teach in the B.Ed. program, particularly in the Language Arts courses, with a poem and a story; the poems are sometimes children's poems, but often they are poems for the audience I am present with, and the stories come from my own experiences of teaching in schools. It is rare for me to receive negative comments about sharing stories, such as when one student wrote in a course evaluation *Fewer Stories—More Teaching*; rather, many students have expressed appreciation for hearing those stories of experience. The stories make the classroom *real* for them, I've been told. The stories allow them to see inside experience, and allow them to connect that experience to their own experiences or to their own expectations of what the experience might be for them, often addressing fears with some humour, and unreasonably high expectations with a dose of humility.

FOR CARMEN THE CONTINUITY OF EXPERIENCE HAS PROVEN ARTFUL

In the early years of my university career, I was fortunate to teach in a two-year B.Ed. program. This structure allowed me the time to witness the growth and development of individuals as they came to understand their own perspectives on topics that previously had seemed straightforward to them. Since I had a number of students in my classes, I responded to their individual writing journals each week with a letter to the class. In the following two excerpts, I share the beginning of one class letter I wrote near the beginning of a term and a response from a student at the end of his B. Ed. program.

A Segment of a Class Letter

September 28, 1994

Dear Class,
Here goes response number two in reply to your second round of journal entries. I found quite a change in the tone of your comments this time, as many more of you incorporated reflections from your own experience into your responses. It seems to me that this is important – to demonstrate a willingness to reflect on what you know, talk about it, and then change and adapt as you interact with others who have different ideas and experiences to share. This is an example of the power of language interaction in the learning process…Many personal stories brought your thoughts to life this time. I could see evidence of old stories being reconstructed in new ways in many of your examples.

Some of you wrote that you were no longer sure what you thought about this issue [in special education]. I take this as a very positive thing, because it means you are incorporating new ideas and thinking in new ways. I think that when you are always sure what you think that new learning may not be taking place. In a book called "The Shipping News" (1993), the author writes of the main character, "His thoughts churned like the amorphous thing that ancient sailors, drifting into the Arctic half-light, called the Sea Lung; air blurred into water, where liquid was solid, where solids dissolved, where the sky froze and light and dark muddled." I know that that's the way my thinking feels at times when I am learning and changing – maybe some of you can relate to that too.

Best regards,
Carmen

A Segment of a Student Response

March 15, 1996

My ideas have been challenged. I once thought that teaching and learning was only about reading a text and answering questions on the final exam. I now see that teaching and learning is more of a personal journey that each of us walks in the company of those teachers, students and classmates that care to walk by our side… What is clear to me now is that every person is an individual with their own unique understanding of the world. Each student has his or her own experiences, talents, knowledge, strategies and resources.

The challenge for me is to provide a classroom that allows each person to find a place in the community where their talents, abilities and skills are expressed in meaningful ways… I see that real learning must flow from real questions that exist in the minds of the learners… I am just now coming to understand my task as a teacher. My job is to facilitate learning, to help students make meaning, to support their exchanges with others, all to break through barriers to understanding…

It seems to us that the examples shared above speak to the importance of attending to the continuity of experience for ourselves and for our students. As with any art, we understand that making meaning takes time. Threads from past events and situations take time to merge with new material, making it possible for us to re-interpret what we thought we knew in new ways.

STUDENTS IN CURRICULUM COMMONPLACES

For us, choosing to ask students to stretch themselves in ways they may not have in their past studies provides us with a way to engage them in understanding curriculum as comprised of all of life's experiences. In course dialogue and assignments, we encourage connections between the personal and the professional, linking past and present using story, poetry, art making, and other activities as a means of opening possibilities for new understandings of what it means to be a teacher. The following examples are representative of students expressing themselves in new ways.

JOHN DEVELOPS A COURSE: ARTFUL JOURNEYS TO TEACHING

I wrote an elective course for the B.Ed. students. The course was initially offered in the summer to students in the 16-month program. At the beginning of the ten-session (each 3.5 hours) course, after each had written their own individual artist statements, the students researched and presented in groups on the various art forms (including dramatic, movement, musical, spoken, textual, and visual). Each student then had to select an art form they were comfortable with, and give a representation of their own artful journey to teaching. The course was among the most moving experiences of my teaching career. The artwork was stunning and the engagement was full. Students sang, played music, acted, drew, painted, took photographs, constructed displays, wrote songs and poetry, told stories. There were tears. There was laughter. There was connection. Some students and I presented on the work at an academic conference.

For me, it was important to provide students with opportunities to connect their learning to their lives…past and present, and possibly future. Presenting their work to their colleagues, and subsequently being invited to present their work at an academic conference, provided opportunities for further connection…with each other and with their own journeys.

CARMEN SAVES A POEM

Many times over the years, I have been surprised at the quality of work students have given me when they have embarked on a new medium of expression. The following clip from a four-page poem was the first attempt at poetry this student, already in her forties, had ever attempted. The assignment invited students to share a memory box,

which is a place to store either a tangible object or an intangible memory of an object that holds special meaning over time.

My Father's Cupboard

My father's locked cupboard
Seemed tall and very wide,
I could never look in it
Unless he was by my side.
He seemed to work extremely hard
And was gone from dawn to dusk,
But several times a year
I would ask him without fuss-
If I might spend a little time,
If we could take a look.
He was always happy to comply
No matter how much time I took.

The time itself was precious
As I had him to myself,
He would open the cupboard
And would move from shelf to shelf.
I remember all his suits and ties
As they hung side by side,
I remember the extreme orderliness
Which was so unlike mine.

I would stand in front of the doors,
And sniff my father's odour
It always seemed so clean and fresh
And still as I get older,
If today inside his closet
I stand and take a sniff,
I can return to childhood days
Which will often give a lift to my sagging psyche
With much responsibility –
For a moment I am young again
A child – naïve and free.

(P. Resnick, M. Ed. student, 2004)

Through class conversations following the sharing of such work, many links between the quality of remembered experience and curriculum development emerge and touch on the four aspects of curriculum noted by Schwab (1962/1969), in

particular the aspect of milieu. Even years later, when meeting again with students from particular classes, stories shared in the form of poetry, art pieces, or stories in those classes come up again in conversation and remembrance. We see that the passion former students speak of for their continued learning often springs from these rich classroom encounters that they carry with them into their personal and professional lives.

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT AS AN ONGOING ART

Contributing to the curriculum research community that engages in narrative and poetic inquiry has been a staple for us in our own, ever growing, understanding of teaching and learning. Over the years, joining with research colleagues across the country and beyond our national borders has provided us with a wealth of conversations about teaching and learning and has given us the confidence to understand teaching as an act of facilitation between ourselves and our students; we are not the only teachers in any classroom, but especially in graduate work in education. Knowing what we can learn from students if we create a milieu for sharing from the heart continues to kindle our passion for our work.

We believe, too, that our research writing is also a key factor in supporting new visions for engaging students. To write together or with others involves us in artful conversations, critique, and new depths of understanding for one another. It is both humbling and rewarding to share connections from the past with others who listen with care and kindness to our stories and poems about our own evolving understanding of our selves and our ways of being in teaching.

JOHN PONDERS POETICALLY ABOUT TIMES WHEN TEACHING IS DIFFICULT

Nobody Told Me It Would Be Easy

I show my open heart,
and nobody walks in;
nobody says anything,
nobody moves.

What is this fear of connection?
Wounded in what they call the battleground,
the trenches,
I wonder how to remind them
that teaching is not a war,
but an act of loving.

How can I gain trust
when threat is the perceived landscape

and judgment is my call?
I leave my heart open;
if I am vulnerable, what is to fear?

But there are no safe spaces;
risk is a choice,
a loving response to love.

Language changes the world we live in,
the world we create,
the world we offer.

Advance is an offering of trust,
not an armed charge,
and retreat is a space for sacred reflection,
not for battle weary rearmament.

I was called to teach.
No
No
No
was my answer
until a healer
asked me to listen
to myself.

We die when we don't listen.

Those sounds we are hearing
are not bombs;
they are the heartbeats of those who would know us.
We do not hear well inside armour;
a breeze cannot be felt on a cheek hidden,
protected.

We do not walk alone
when palms are open
exposed
offered
accepted.

CARMEN RESPONDS TO AN INVITATION

A Lesson from the Past

As I was nearing the end of my doctoral studies, a visiting professor from the United States who was spending a month in our department invited several of us to

contribute a proposal to an annual women's conference. Two of us joined together to write a paper and travel to the conference. I remember the warm welcome we received from seasoned professors who were eager to include us in their group and hear our work. We were invited to the festivities of the conference, which included a final dinner at the home of the professor who had encouraged us to come. There was much laughter and friendship offered to us that night. As we travelled home, we remarked that this invitation had opened a door for us to understand our work in a new way. In that warm and inviting group, we found the power of sharing our work with others as a tool for teaching and learning from one another.

This long ago lesson provided me with the insight to offer the same openings to others across the years of my own career. I have often invited former graduate students to present papers with me at conferences, and I also encourage them to present together. And following the above example, I have found that one of the joys of teaching graduate students has always been to share food. In the past, students came to my house several times a year for informal suppers. In more recent years, finding myself teaching at a distance from my home, I have ended every course with an invitation to join together for dinner at a restaurant that the class chooses. Many relationships have been cemented during these informal times.

A THOUGHT ON PRESENT CURRICULUM LANDSCAPES

As we end this chapter, we reflect on the juxtaposition of curricular boundaries being pressed outward by researchers and teachers interested in widening the conversation to include different visions of curriculum, such as those discussed by Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman (1995), and the resurrection of more quantitative aspects of curriculum that were prevalent in years gone by with such concepts as benchmarks, aims, objectives, and outcomes that we are asked to complete for the courses we teach. It seems to us that simultaneously, while the culture of inclusion of multiple voices is heard in curriculum research, more stringent guidelines are being instituted under the guise of accountability and reform in institutional practice (Pinar, 2012).

Nonetheless, for us, Schwab's four commonplaces are useful in drawing us back to the importance of the individuals we are as teachers and the individuals students are who come to us to continue their learning. As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, the milieu we create can "shine a light or cast a shadow" (Palmer, 2000) over those we work and study with, and the subject matter we are dealing with in that milieu. For us, personal connections and the building of relationships provide an artful way forward in our own ongoing personal and professional meaning making and in the lives of our students. Ultimately, the relationships formed, as well as the kindness, care, and love offered and modeled in our classrooms is what we remember long after the courses have ended.

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CARL LEGGO

12. A TEACHER'S CREDO

Confessions of a Faithful Agnostic

I am sixty-three years old. I have been in school since I was four years old. I have been a student or teacher all my life. That is a lot of life and a lot of school. Growing old is a complicated affair. Like David Whyte (1994) knows, "whatever graceful tension we have achieved between innocence and experience, midlife seems to come upon us unawares" (p. 181). I am grateful I am still alive. Some of my friends didn't live very long, certainly not as long as they hoped to live. But at the same time, I am daily startled by the image in the mirror. How did I get to be this old? Especially since I can't remember where the years have gone, can't remember how the years passed so quickly. Nevertheless, I think I have learned some valuable lessons about life and teaching and learning. I offer my words in twenty-six fragments, one fragment for each letter of the alphabet. (I have always loved the alphabet.) This is not all I know, but it is a beginning, and we really only have beginnings, at least until the end which is likely another beginning, too. Whyte (1994) claims that "the task of midlife" is "finding the difficult, often dangerous road" to an "eldership of love" (p. 210). I like that phrase, an "eldership of love," because it reminds me that love is the heart of all living and learning and teaching.

When I consider wise words of advice, I remember three words of advice from my father:

- Always take your garbage home.
- If you don't know a word, look it up in the dictionary.
- Never hate anybody.

And my mother, though much less garrulous than my father, actually offered eight words of advice:

- Always remember to forget.
- What you don't know won't hurt you.
- Always remember somebody nice.
- Kindness somehow stays with you.
- Be open to new ideas.
- We're getting older like everybody else.
- Be nice to want nothing.
- Everything is good.

S. Wiebe et al. (Eds.), Ways of Being in Teaching, 103–114.

As I continue to reflect on my parents' store of advice, as I conjure imaginative stories of memory around my parents' words of advice, I think how so much significant advice for learning to live well in the world can be expressed in aphorisms and proverbs, like refrigerator magnets for guiding us in the challenges and possibilities of each day. So, I offer my twenty-six lessons, fragments of advice gleaned from a long sojourn in the earth, maxims for muddling in mystery. On the journey, I am always encouraged by Roland Barthes' (1977) observation that his texts are "disjointed, no one of them caps any other; the latter is nothing but a *further* text, the last of the series, not the ultimate in meaning: *text upon text*, which never illuminates anything" (p. 120).

After nine years as a secondary school teacher and twenty-seven years as a professor of education, I am convinced that the culture of education is generated (or perhaps more accurately enervated) by a fundamentalist fervor for idolizing senseless speed, boisterous busyness, nagging noise, and calamitous competition. In a series of poetic ruminations, I linger with my credo (with what I believe) as a teacher who knows I am, at heart, a faithful agnostic—convinced that I can still learn to sing, even in the unruly midst of an education culture that is both my home and not my home. I offer twenty-six words of advice. You might not agree. You might not like my advice. You might think my wisdom is more wishy-washy wit than valuable advice for guiding daily journeys. But I offer these words anyway, and you can respond to them any way you want. With hope, I release my words as gifts that might be received or rejected. I will likely never know. Much like all my teaching.

a

Ask lots of questions. Teachers don't really have the answers in the back of the textbook or any place else. Teachers are always inquiring. They are exemplars of living in the world with magic wands like question marks. Inquire about everything. Just don't always expect answers.

b

Be kind to yourself. I began my teaching career in September, 1976, at R. W. Parsons Collegiate in Roberts' Arm, Newfoundland. I taught there for two years. When I recall my experiences as a beginning teacher, I generally remember that I did not feel like I was a very good teacher. I felt ill-prepared. I didn't know enough to be a teacher! I felt like I needed a lot of practice and support. Of course, the only way to get the practice was to teach, and there was little support in my first years of teaching. Typically, the beginning teacher is thrown into the chaos of the classroom with the millions of demands regarding planning, curriculum, strategies for instruction, time management, discipline, and evaluation. Charles Ungerleider (2003) notes that "teachers are mired in a morass of demands impossible to fulfill in the limited time that students are in school" (p. 155). I was eager to be a good teacher, but the challenge of teaching is always how to live creatively amidst the myriad demands.

c

Communicate with colleagues and parents and students. Schools are the places where all the challenges of families and local communities and society converge and have nowhere else to go. Schools are the places where we expect miracles. Schools are like hospital emergency rooms where we expect everything will be healed. Schools can offer hospitality, but they are not hospitals. We need to communicate with one another in order to learn how to commune and create community. Christina Baldwin (2005) claims that "story heals" (p. 42). Teachers need to communicate in stories, lots of stories. Life writing is about seeking the themes and threads that hold our complex and tangled lives in some kind of textual integrity. What is perhaps most important is that we need to be willing to question and challenge the stories we tell in order to remain open to new stories.

d

Don't underestimate your creative authority. Teachers are poets in their classrooms. As a teacher, I have often wavered between feeling powerless and powerful, but the responsibility for inventive planning rests on the teacher's shoulders. I know from frequent experience that change in education does not happen only because of new research, new theories, new approaches, new strategies, new textbooks, and new ideas. Individual teachers must learn about new theories and approaches, and they must assess them, and determine how they will or will not use them in their classrooms. From my perspective, teachers are always the primary authors of creative change in education.

e

Embrace ambiguity. There are always multiple perspectives and possibilities and positions. There is no reason to defend one point of view as if it is the head of an arrow shot accurately from a bow and guaranteed to find its target. The world is full of ineffable intricacies. I am concerned that teachers are often reluctant to adopt innovations because they perceive innovations to be faddish, idealistic, unworkable, and demanding. In my frequent conversations with teachers I am reminded that teachers are overwhelmed with innovation and novelty. Teachers need support in order to research and practice the innovative ideas.

f

Face failure. It is hard to avoid the sense of failure. I make numerous mistakes every day. I have finally stopped beating myself up about mistakes. Véronique Vienne and Erica Lennard (1999) remind us that "there are practical benefits to not being perfect" (p. 9) because "our faults, weaknesses, and unlucky breaks work to our advantage by making us more resilient, more inventive, and ultimately more efficient" (p. 9). They recommend that "random acts of blunderism" (p. 14) might actually hold "a hidden pattern" (p. 9). I once invited a class of Grade 10 students to bring in some of their

favourite lyrics and music. One student brought in a song that was clearly offensive, and then a few students offered favourites that were clearly intended to out gross one another. The experience did not go the way I had planned, but I was able to use the unpredicted turn of events to discuss censorship. Consequently, the class became something else. The students made some decisions that changed my decisions. There is always risk, of course. But all decisions have risks.

g

Grieve. Teaching is often traumatic. We must never forget the real world of schools. Teachers bear many wounds. We can never please all the people all the time. Some of our students will grow ill; some will die; some will fall into depression; some will hate us. It doesn't matter how hard we work, how much of ourselves we pour into our teaching, we will grow weary and frustrated. And we will often feel underpaid, unappreciated, and overlooked.

h

Hear. As a poet I am a listener. I listen for stories and rhythms and insights. And I listen to silence. I listen to my heart beating. I listen to the rain and snow and wind. I listen to the seasons. There is so much to hear. I am learning to listen, as well as to be heard, and I am learning to breathe with a conscientious attention to the balanced integrity of the heart's systolic and diastolic rhythms. I am learning to laugh with rowdy abandon, and I am learning to speak about grief and sadness with more than the heart's weary sigh. I am learning to listen for echoes of light that resonate in the complexity of each day's demands.

i

Improvise. Woodruff (2001) recommends that "the most important example a teacher sets is by learning—by showing the curiosity, industry, and open mind that learning requires" (p. 191). Teaching is dangerous work and requires a hard hat and steel-toed boots. Teaching is a verb, always tense, past or present or future, sometimes active, sometimes passive. Teaching is not what teachers do, but what teachers are. So, teaching is really a form of the verb "to be." In one Grade 10 class, I invited students to work independently and most of the students collaborated creatively on rehearsing and performing lively dramatic interpretations of poems. Most of the groups worked wonderfully well and presented puppets and poetry and dance. One group did not work well. The group's efforts were scuttled by one belligerent, bumptious boy. Sad, but a recurring reminder that teaching is always improvisation.

j

Joke joyfully. There are many reasons to justify a jocular, jovial, even jubilant *jouissance* as a way of being in the world. I recently lost a chunk of a tooth, a molar that was suddenly more hole than tooth. This calamity was followed by an emergency

visit to the dentist, and the persistent recurring feeling that I am falling apart, and eventually the realization that I *am* falling apart, have always been. When I told colleagues at a meeting about my dental adventure, we all laughed, not because losing the molar was funny or because getting old is all that funny, but because I chose to relate the story as comical. We ought to tell one another our funniest stories, and we ought to enjoy the comedy that resides in so many experiences that compose much of our daily lived stories. To joke is to yoke experience and meaning-making with the heart's ineffable and indefatigable optimism.

k

Keep your spirit supple. Instead of a calling to teaching, I have spent my life falling into teaching. I am falling into my calling. Perhaps we don't so much learn and teach, as live our learning and teaching. I am always asking, what does it mean to be a teacher? What does it mean to be a human being? What does it mean to live on the earth? How should we live? What are the possibilities for human life? What are my responsibilities? I seek to treat people like human beings, the way I want others to treat me. As a teacher I think I am on a journey, a journey of becoming, and I like participating with others in their journeys.

l

Love. We need a curriculum of love in schools. We need to love ourselves and then we can love others. We learn to love ourselves and then we can love our partners and families, and then we can love our communities, and then we can love others who are not our partners, families, or communities. But to learn love we need to acknowledge that we are not alone, independent, autonomous. We live in a world that is creatively connected, ecologically and inextricably connected. Jean Vanier (1998) claims that "we have disregarded the heart, seeing it only as a symbol of weakness, the centre of sentimentality and emotion, instead of as a powerhouse of love that can reorient us from our self-centredness, revealing to us and to others the basic beauty of humanity, empowering us to grow" (p. 78). Love is a practice. Love is a commitment. Love is a daily devotion.

m

Make magic and meaning. Whyte (1994) notes that "natural systems tend to move toward and find their most vital form at the *boundary* between chaos and order" (p. 221). Perhaps this boundary is akin to the backyards where we live. In the most familiar landscape and homescape of the backyard, we are located in the midst of the local and the global, the personal and the public. Located in our familiar backyards, we attend to the whole world. Informed by a sociocultural perspective, R. Keith Sawyer (2004) claims that "the most effective learning results when the classroom proceeds in an open, improvisational fashion, as children are allowed to experiment, interact, and participate in the collaborative construction of their own knowledge" (p. 14).

Therefore, according to Sawyer, "teachers are creative professionals, requiring not only pedagogical content knowledge but also creative performance skills—the ability to effectively facilitate a group improvisation with students" (p. 17).

n

Network with kindred spirits. I have often felt alone like I am on the edges, tangled up in liminal spaces, always longing to belong, but never staying anywhere long. I have often felt marginalized, not content or able to play the game, whatever the game might be. But in the midst of all this not belonging, I have spoken truth, at least as much of it as I could muster the courage to speak. And I have learned I am part of an extensive network of relations, friends, and colleagues who call out to one another with encouragement and admiration and love. We need to recognize and nurture our kinship with others.

o

Open up to the surprises of vocation. I never planned to be a teacher. Yet, I have always been a teacher or learner, really a combination of both. For so much of my life I have been restless. Only when I learned to stop calling, did I hear a whisper, a breath, a warm light that filled the cracks. When I speak about regret regarding vocational decisions, I am not so much wishing I had made other decisions as acknowledging that the decisions I made were really the only ones I could have made. I could not have done anything differently. Occasionally, I speak about regret as a way to remind myself, and to be reminded, that the ways of living I have pursued are the ways that call me. I am just responding.

p

Proceed with process. Educators are always in process, not afraid of change and conflict. Educators live in the dynamism of transformation. Teachers and learners live in the space of the ecotone. Ecologists describe the place where two ecological habitats such as a meadow and a forest meet as an ecotone, a place of tension (from *oikos* or habitation, and *tonos* or tension). The ecotone is the place where two habitats meet and overlap, where they extend into one another and create a place of richness and fruitfulness that is only possible because of the overlapping. In other words, the ecotone is a space of productive tension where life can be more complex and intense than in either of the distinct habitats. I like the notion of the ecotone as a way of building on community. I do not want to see tension as competition, but that is the way that school constructs most pedagogical enterprises and experiences. So, the writing of one student is compared to the writing of another student in a process of grading that has little to do with finding one's way in writing and a great deal to do with putting people in their places. Ecotone suggests that the classroom will always be a place of difference where any experience of unity will be known in the midst of diversity. Instead of seeking ways to iron out differences, teachers need to find ways to acknowledge and support the differences.

q

Question everything. For example, does God exist? The Canadian novelist David Adams Richards claims that God is. The British physicist Stephen Hawking has decided that God is unlikely, definitely not needed for understanding the universe. I prefer to keep the question open. Indeed, I like to keep all questions open, just in case a little wonder wants to wander in. From my comfortable chair in my study in my home in Richmond in the south of British Columbia in Western Canada in the Dominion of Canada in North America in the western hemisphere in the earth in the Milky Way, one of one hundred and seventy billion galaxies in the observable universe (shaking tales beyond the physics of my imagination), I like to keep all questions open.

r

Respect one another. A classroom needs to be a community. In my classrooms I have one basic rule: When one person is speaking, everyone else listens. The rule is based on respect. Students in the teacher education program express their big fear that they will not be able to manage their classrooms. They want skills and techniques for operating a smoothly organized and functioning classroom. I give them the one rule. They are not satisfied. Surely there must be more. Based on my experience the rule works.

s

Slow down. Lately I have been arriving at meetings, late, already weary, feeling like the day might be more than I am ready for. We live in a culture that idolizes speed and competition and busyness and noise. All of our daily life's experiences, events, and emotions can be attended to with a creative commitment to revision, seeking new positions for vision, in a parallax of plural possible perspectives.

t

Take risks. In order to learn we must be willing to take risks and lean into learning. I have always enjoyed being a teacher. I have always enjoyed engaging with students in reading, writing, and questioning. I am now Facebook friends with a few of the first students I taught in the 1970s. They were twelve or thirteen years old when I taught them in Grade 7. I was twenty-two. I often wonder what we learned together. I remember the copious worksheets and the scrawled notes on the blackboard and the endless lists of rules, facts, and definitions. I was always seeking to control the curriculum and the classroom. I needed to take more risks when I was a young teacher, but I was fearful. It took a long time to understand that I could only teach in the creative and poetic ways I wanted as I learned to take risks. Like Hélène Cixous (1998), "I advance error by error, with erring steps, by the force of error. It's suffering, but it's joy" (p. 22). Cixous' wisdom now guides my teaching and my living.

u

Understand how little you understand. The heart of agnosticism is acknowledging that you do not know, at least not very much. I have always been full of questions. In spite of the many privileges of years of formal education and opportunities to read thousands of books, I have always lived with more questions than answers. I am committed to questioning every view, belief, commitment, and conclusion. I understand a great deal, but I also understand that there is much I do not understand.

v

Vivify learning and living. Relax into your body. We spend too much time in our heads. We need to feel our bodies more; we need to connect with our senses more; we need to attend to our muscles and blood and breathing, knowing again that all learning begins in the body, is traced in the body. Just watch a child's learning.

w

Wander and wonder. We need to meander more.

x

Xerox as little as possible. And not just because you want to be environmentally conscientious, but because you do not want students to conform to the models and paradigms that are already available. A classroom is not a locomotive which can be driven along prescribed rails. A classroom is like a family; it is about relationships and maturing in relationships, about commitment and struggle, about caring and communicating. How successfully a family progresses depends on the people involved. The essential business of the classroom is to provide a place for reflection, for gathering together to discuss the experience of the world, to discuss what is being learned about life, a place conducive to sharing and growing.

y

Yearn. Let's begin each day with a question that is as simple and profound as life itself: How am I going to live the gift of this new day?

z

Zigzag with abandon. Education is artistic, bountiful, creative, dialogic, engaged, fecund, gregarious, hopeful, imaginative, joyful, kinesthetic, liminal, mysterious, noumenal, open, poetic, querulous, reflective, sensual, transformative, urgent, vital, wordy, X-rayed, youthful, and zesty. It is foolhardy to try and explain how teachers should teach because teachers will always teach out of the intersection of their experiences, personalities, education, beliefs, and gifts. Teachers are not

functionaries, and they are not puppets. Teachers are like poets or artists. They improvise, explore, experiment, and practice. Above all, they live their vocation.

What's after z?

As I draw this offering of advice to a kind of temporary close, I add a disclaimer, a final confession from an agnostic imagination. For all my claiming, even declaiming, about wisdom for teachers and teaching, I am mostly convinced that teaching is impossible. Like life. So, I end with a poem about life, and the complexity of life, as a final testimony to the impossibility of pedagogy. In spite of my agnostic's credo, my imagination still winds flexibly around and through all impossibilities with steadfast hope.

LIFE IS LIKE

Snakes and Ladders:
some go up ladders
some go down snakes

Scrabble:
some get j, x, z
some get q without u

Marbles:
some of us lose them
some of us win them

Monopoly:
some of us get Boardwalk
some of us get Baltic

Crossword Puzzles:
some get words
some get crosses

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