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To Stay and To Change: Beginning Social Justice Educators Creating Collaborative Third Space(s)

Teresa Renae Fisher

ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, TO STAY AND TO CHANGE: BEGINNING SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATORS CREATING COLLABORATIVE THIRD SPACE(S), by TERESA RENAE FISHER, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chair, as representative of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Education concurs.

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ABSTRACT

TO STAY AND TO CHANGE: BEGINNING SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATORS
CREATING COLLABORATIVE
THIRD SPACE(S)
by
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Beginning teachers committed to social justice and emancipatory education often experience isolation and discouragement and need communities for intellectual, social, and emotional support as they learn to teach, and sustain their commitments to transformative pedagogy.

This qualitative inquiry followed recent graduates who demonstrated personal commitments to a more just world through their lives and their studies and who began their first year as teachers in a variety of settings. Framed within a theory of transformational learning, third space, and Adler's concepts of social interest and encouragement, the participants and the participant researcher co-created a virtual community to reflect upon and problematize this complex stage of their careers. Guiding this inquiry were the following questions: (a) What are the individual experiences, tensions, and perceptions expressed by social justice educators during their first year of teaching? (b) How does an online community created to develop a support network influence the experiences of these beginning educators during their initial year in the field? Data collection for this individual and multiple case study

included autobiographical information, postings, interviews, and extant data from the teachers' preservice training and the beginning of their first year. Data were inductively and iteratively analyzed. Trustworthiness was established through attention to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Exploration of the life histories of these women indicated that justice and equity have been their ontological way of being in the world, and that commitment extended through their preservice training and into their first year of teaching. These women approached curriculum in critical ways, problematized simplistic explanations of student apathy, deconstructed the one right answer myth, and worked to democratize education, liberating both their students and themselves. The co-constructed community provided multiple venues for reflection, discussion, collaboration, and support which were used by the participants to meet their unique goals and needs. Participants resolved to continue and expand the community beyond the data collection period so as to remain inspired and focused on issues of justice.

Implications for teacher education programs, school districts, and beginning social justice educators themselves were discussed. Possible questions for future research were also explored.

TO STAY AND TO CHANGE: BEGINNING SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATORS CREATING COLLABORATIVE THIRD SPACE(S)

by

Teresa Renae Fisher

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Twenty-five percent of beginning teachers leave the classroom within the first two years of their professional career (Gold, 1996) and nearly 50% leave the profession within the first five years (Ingersoll, 2003; Zumwalt & Craig, 2005; *Who should teach? Quality Counts,* 2000). Clearly, new teachers are not being supported in the ways that are necessary to promote success and longevity in this essential profession. Teacher attrition is often depicted through the use of the *revolving door* metaphor; however, such a metaphor does not adequately describe the experiences and anguish of those who dedicate years and fortunes to the professional preparation needed to become teachers and then leave disillusioned and disavowed (Sherff, 2008). Despite calls from all levels for more qualified and dedicated teachers, this crisis has not been ameliorated.

Research has demonstrated that multiple contextual issues contribute to this crisis, including low salaries, inadequate preparation, lack of administrative support, lack of parent involvement, issues with student discipline, limited opportunities for decision making and leadership, and unhealthy working conditions (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Hirch, 2006; Ingersoll, 2003, 2004; Weiss, 1999). Hirsch (2006) found that over 55% of teachers who decided to leave teaching cited student testing as a contributing factor to their decision. Chubbuck and Zembylas (2008) argue that

teacher emotions, such as stress, alienation, and burnout due to stressful working conditions are among the most salient factors leading to teacher attrition.

These issues contribute significantly to the failure of our educational systems to retain new teachers. Determining factors which promote teacher retention is crucial if we are to provide the types of support structures and systems which enable teachers to remain in the profession. Scholars such as Flores (2006), Bergeron (2008), Cherubini (2007), Darling-Hammond (2003), Ingersoll (2003), Nagy and Wang (2007), Smith and Ingersoll, (2004), and Weiss (1999) have found that administrative support, a positive school climate, and the quality of interactions between beginning teachers and their more experienced colleagues contribute to longevity in the teaching profession.

The tensions and ambiguities experienced by all beginning teachers seem to be exacerbated for individuals who have left their teacher education programs especially committed to teaching for equity and social reconstruction (Cantor, 1998; Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2008; Timmons Flores, 2007). Chubbuck and Zembylas explain that beginning teachers, “are confronted on a daily basis with a variety of emotions, such as anger, bewilderment, anxiety, caring, and excitement, that are inextricably linked to personal, professional, relational, political, and cultural issues,” (p. 277) and that these varied emotions are “only intensified by the added goal of socially just teaching” (p. 287). Timmons Flores further argued that the tensions and traumas that beginning social justice educators experience when they enter the conservative contexts of public schools raise “the question of whether it is ethical or wise to rely on individuals who

have the least experience and power in the setting to change school culture and practices that are remarkably resistant to change" (Timmons Flores, 2007, p. 399-400).

For beginning teachers committed to justice, their seeming failure to make desirable changes in the social structures of school and society can often leave them feeling personally devastated, as if they have failed to enact the identity and ideology they have claimed for themselves (Cantor, 1998; Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2008). These new teachers are often shaken by the impossibilities of transforming structures that are firmly in place, which in turn affects their self-perceptions and self-concept as educators at this very crucial stage of development (Curry, Jaxon, Russell, Callahan & Bicais, 2008; Kelchtermans, 2005; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Kuzmic, 1994; McNally, Blake, Corbin & Gray, 2008). This point in their career is often characterized as a time of vulnerability, and the developing identities of these educators are particularly shaped by the emotions they experience during this time. In some studies, participants described the agonizing and debilitating experience of feeling as if they were failures and complicit in the perpetuation of the status quo (Cantor; Chubbuck & Zembylas). These individuals felt extremely alienated and isolated, not only from their colleagues and their students, but even from themselves, their own beliefs and ideologies. Thus, they felt alone in their attempt to survive the beginning of their career.

The beginning of one's first year of teaching is often a blur filled with long days, short nights, planning, grading, learning processes and procedures, finding out (occasionally the hard way) the norms and climate of the new school, meeting families, building relationships with students, and of course, teaching. Often the time goes by so

quickly and so many emotions are felt in rapid succession that beginning teachers barely have an opportunity to reflect on their processes. Many teachers (and researchers) cite the beginning of the first year of teaching as the most difficult part of the induction process (Curry et. al, 2008; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Moir, 2004; Scherff, 2006). However, this harried time is a particularly important stage in the career of teachers as they are beginning to shape their professional identities. Gold and Roth (1993) and Hebert and Worthy (2001) emphasized the critical nature of this beginning stage, stating that one's first teaching experiences have a strong effect on future practices, job satisfaction, and longevity in the profession.

Due to the importance of this transitional time, both schools and universities must engage in a more comprehensive and compassionate approach to teacher induction that will support and nurture teachers through the beginning of their career. Similarly, Scherff (2008) argued that

> …the exodus of new teachers is of particular interest to those responsible for their preparation and induction. If the time and money that pre-service teacher invest in their education, is, essentially, thrown out after 1 or 2 years in the classroom, then those are wasted resources indeed. Teacher educators, to address this crisis, might begin to examine the conditions their graduates face in the first year(s) of teaching. (p.1318)

In order to ensure that the financial, personal, emotional, and intellectual resources of teacher preparation candidates as well as of teacher education faculty are not wasted, some processes must be established to support beginning teachers and to help them remain in the profession. Much research has indicated that the confidence, efficacy, morale, and career commitment of beginning teachers can be positively influenced by school climates and induction programs which provide emotional and

instructional support (Gold,1996; Weiss, 1999), including mentoring, shared planning with others who teach the same subject matter (Dalgarno & Colgan, 2007; Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008), opportunities for autonomous decision making (Cantor, 1998), involvement in a community of beginning teachers (Chubbuck, Clift, Allard, & Quinlan, 2001; Curry et al., 2008; Featherstone, 1993; Fry, 2006) and engagement in personally and professionally relevant learning opportunities (Bergeron, 2008; Feiman-Nemser,2001b; Fry, 2007; McCormack, Gore, & Thomas, 2006; Nagy & Wang, 2007).

As the beginning of the induction period is a particularly challenging, traumatic and transformative period for teachers working toward equity and social justice, it is particularly essential that the institutions that worked to prepare those individuals continue to support them as this transition "is not entirely safe but is full of ambivalence" (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2008, p. 310). Cantor argued that "beginning social justice educators need even more intensive support in order for them to overcome the overwhelming obstacles that they face as change agents attempting to confront the status quo" and "struggle to simultaneously learn their profession as well as change its norms" (p. 6).

Rationale for This Study

My personal and professional sense of responsibility for students who graduate from our programs has been deepened by comments such as this: "I am just really concerned about leaving here, the support system I have created, the people that know what I am about, and going and trying to do this work in another place. I will really miss the community, the encouragement, the critical conversations that I have had. I just

hope I can keep this focus on social justice with the pressures of a new place and all of the day to day responsibilities." After hearing this sentiment in several iterations from multiple recent graduates of our program, it became clear to me that this fear of isolation in their new positions was not idiosyncratic. Students were leaving our graduate Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) initial certification program (which is centered around themes of social justice, particularly in urban settings working with immigrant English Language Learners) struggling with the knowledge that they would be "on their own, trying to figure things out, and trying to stay true to their beliefs."

The frequency of these comments troubled me as I considered their implications. In truth, after a year of intense relationships and close collaboration with a small cohort of students in our program, we were basically pushing them out of the proverbial nest and into their separate teaching contexts without providing them with a system of continued support. As adults who were entering this career after years of living abroad, working for social justice organizations, and clarifying their ontological visions, they came to education with a clear sense of its political purpose, which had been distilled and strengthened by their engagement with colleagues, faculty, students, and families in their educative experiences. Particularly interesting was the fact that those individuals who had come to our program with such a strong commitment to social change were expressing this concern as they began their careers. This led me to explore the research which has been conducted around the issues of attrition and different models of teacher induction specifically related to individuals committed to social justice. These comments also led me to explore the possibility of establishing an

online collaborative space with some of my former students during the first year of their teaching careers.

When I discussed with some of my former students the potentialities of creating such a collaborative space during their first year of teaching, I received enthusiastic responses. Comments like, “This makes me feel like I won’t be on my own but like I’ll have a kind of support group and people that can help me as I am writing and reflecting on my practice and trying to be the kind of teacher I want to be and that my kids deserve.” Another individual who considered participation sent me an email the day I asked him what he thought about the idea of creating an online collaboration saying,

> This has totally motivated me... Thank you SO much for helping me re-focus. I've been kind of in a funk...what with the emotional stuff around the move...and this is helping me get straightened up. I *need* this work...it has saved my life, I believe, and given my life a focus where I use my skills and passion in service to others...and to myself. I am excited about teaching, and this new project is giving me a much-needed boost. Always learning, always growing. We are blessed to have the ability and resources to do these things.

The enthusiasm displayed by these individuals indicated their belief that engagement in this project could help them through the next stage of their journey. They have not only encouraged me to consider the import of this work, but also have sustained, enlightened and inspired me as we continued together.

Potentiality for University Involvement in the Induction Processes of Graduates

Teacher education programs and teacher researchers must find and create mechanisms to support our recent graduates in order to ensure their personal and professional success in a field for which we have *prepared* them. Teacher education programs, and thereby teacher educators, are necessarily implicated in the successes

and struggles of beginning teachers and thusly are ethically responsible for working to build supportive, collaborative communities, in order to “sustain new teachers’ hope and idealism while transforming the practice of education through collaborative action” (Timmons Flores, 2007, p. 398). Cantor (1998) argued that university faculty can and should work to sustain caring, attentive, and responsive relationships with beginning teachers that may help mediate the cognitive dissonance experienced as they navigate between university and school cultures.

Professional development schools, teacher inquiry and study groups, and new teacher groups can provide a space for collective inquiry, professional development, and sustained idealism in schools; however, it is not possible to ensure that each of our graduates will enter a school with this type of climate or have access to these initiatives. Paulus and Scherff (2008) posited that informal self-created networks may be another way of supporting beginning teachers in addition to formal induction and mentoring processes within the context of their own schools. Tang (2003) explained that supportive interaction helps beginning teachers feel valued, safe, and connected, enabling them to find meaning in their professional lives, take more risks, and claim their inherent agency for their own thoughts and actions. Research has demonstrated that beginning teachers depend more heavily on their colleagues for emotional and psychological support (Curry et. al, 2008; Chubbuck et al., 2001; Kelchtermans, 2005; McNally et al., 2008; Paulus & Scherff) than for instructional or content area information. However, on-line groups were found to be informal networks where “just

in time" instructional learning did occur, in addition to psychological support (Dalgarno & Colgan, 2007; Scherff & Paulus, 2006, p. 367).

The importance of community for beginning teachers working for social change cannot be overstated, because a safe environment to talk about issues and emotions "helps beginning teachers deal with cognitive dissonance and continue to work for social justice" (Cantor, 1998, p. 32) despite the difficulties and loneliness that often characterize this stage in their career. Timmons Flores (2007) explained the importance of such collaborative and supportive settings stating that "impassioned struggles, whether fought for social change or the success of a child, are easier fought collectively with others who share the commitment" (p. 398). Therefore, the engagement of university faculty and beginning teachers in such informal communities, providing personal, professional, and emotional encouragement, holds much promise for helping beginning teachers through this challenging yet crucial part of their careers.

Graduates from programs often relocate to different areas to gain employment, thusly, informal networks with university colleagues are often not feasible due to geographical constraints. In the past decade, the ubiquitousness of computer-mediated technology has opened possibilities for communities of support to exist across time and space, meeting asynchronously. These groups can provide the types of psychological, social, emotional, and instructional support that can help members motivate, sustain, and inspire each other. Universities and schools can help facilitate these supportive groups by creating networks of collegial contacts (Chubbuck et al., 2001; Curry et. al, 2008; Featherstone, 1993; Hammerman, 1995). Scherff and Paulus (2006) encouraged

other teacher educators and researchers to examine the ways in which novice teachers engage in informal online spaces, where they take “ownership of what matters to them and respond to each other in kind” (Scherff & Paulus, 2006, p. 369).

Not only do we need to consider the creation of such dialog groups for beginning teachers, but also we must consider additional tangible support systems for them. The available research on teacher conversations (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2008; Clark, 2001; Ellsworth, 1989; Swidler, 2001) between educators indicates that talking to other committed individuals is somewhat helpful but also frequently distressing and disillusioning. As new teachers engage in discussions with their friends and colleagues they are forced to come to terms with the widespread injustices which are pervasive and systemic. Faced with the enormity of these issues, teachers can easily become despondent, feel overwhelmed, and lose hope. Often, conversations between teachers discussing the conservative pedagogies and practices of their context or the issues of inequity in schools do not move past the stage of commiserating to the stage of acting. Chubbuck and Zembylas explain that the emotional experiences of beginning teachers cannot be mitigated by dialogue alone. This finding corroborates the experiences of Ellsworth (1989) that conversation alone may in fact heighten the emotions as it increases the awareness of the status quo and the injustices in society.

Swidler asked whether narrating their own stories is “sufficient to encourage or induce members to work toward making change, to work toward their stated values, aspirations, and goals as educators” (p. 134). He wondered if telling and retelling stories simply takes for granted and reifies the “unchanging hostile school worlds,” thereby

limiting the potentialities, the alternative worlds and interpretations, that could be created and thereby narrated, or narrated and thereby created. He cautions against dialogue that reinforces “teacher inertia” (Swidler, 2001, p. 134) and instead recommends a dialogue that promotes teacher development and the re-imagining of the possible. This type of dialogue, that moves past reifying social structures to deconstructing and recreating them, can truly and fully support the development, the commitment, and the social interest of teachers.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative inquiry focused on both individual and multiple cases as I sought to understand what happened when beginning educators, who identify themselves as being committed to social justice, enter the classroom. Additionally, this study sought to explore the impact which engagement in an online community of support with university colleagues and a faculty member may have on the experiences of these beginning teachers. This inquiry was created, however, with the expressed intention of co-creating a community of support for these educators during their induction process, a community in which they could mutually support the development and maintenance of their commitment to social justice and educational equity.

Research Questions

- What are the individual experiences, tensions, and perceptions expressed by social justice educators during their first year of teaching?
- How does an online community created to develop a support network influence the experiences of these beginning educators during their initial year in the field?

Introduction of Methodology

Beginning teachers experience a great deal of disillusionment and many cognitive dilemmas as they transition between being students of teaching and being teachers of students. This transition is often accompanied by feelings of isolation, alienation, stress and discouragement. These feelings are particularly salient for beginning teachers with a high commitment to transformative education and social justice as they meet the conservative socializing organizations present in schools. Extant research suggests that beginning teachers need communities which offer them emotional, intellectual, and relational support in order for them to navigate their beginning experiences, learn to teach, and develop their professional identities.

The creation of an on-line community was an attempt to provide supportive structures for these beginning teachers during their induction period. Participants met in asynchronous time in a discussion board format, posting and replying to their friends and colleagues in different states and school contexts twice weekly. This space was available to them to use as they desired, for help, camaraderie, ideas, or to whatever end they determined.

This inquiry was a qualitative study of three beginning teachers committed to social justice who engaged in an online-community and in personal reflections through their first months of teaching. Framed within a theory of transformational learning, third space, and Adler's concepts of social interest and encouragement, this project encouraged the participants and the participant researcher to engage in reflection and critical discussion as they navigated this complex stage of their personal and professional careers. Participants included recent graduates from year long teacher certification/Master of Arts in Teaching programs who had demonstrated specific and personal commitments to a more just world through their lives and their studies. These participants were first year teachers in a variety of school settings and contexts. Data sources for the study included autobiographical information in the form of poetry and artifacts, reflective writing (daily and weekly), postings to the on-line community, email correspondence with the researcher throughout the data collection process, and interview data, as well as extant data from the participants' writing during their graduate studies and from the beginning of their first year. A beginning interview and closing interview were also conducted with each participant in order to gain a more complex understanding of salient concepts through the words of the participants.

Every participant was treated as an individual case study. Consequently, I examined the multiple data sources for each participant to gain a complex understanding of each individual not only as an educator, but also as a person. In this way each of the data sources of each participant were analyzed vertically (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This study was also designed as a multiple case study in which I

looked between cases (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995;Yin, 1994) and horizontally compared the cases through the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). All data were inductively and iteratively analyzed through the use of constant comparative method. Trustworthiness was established through attention to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Findings from this investigation increased understanding of the potential for university engagement in the induction processes of beginning teachers through an exploration of the experiences of three beginning teachers through their first year of teaching. Additional information about the utility of supportive online networks was gained from an analysis of the ways that these beginning teachers chose to engage with their colleagues and former faculty member in a virtual asynchronous space during the first year of their teaching career.

The remainder of this dissertation will present (a) a review of relevant literature (Chapter 2), (b) the framework for the study and the methodology for data collection and analysis (Chapter 3), (c) a detailed description of the individual participants in this study as individuals and as educators and an examination of the ecological context of their work (Chapter 4), (d) the results from the first research question related to the first year experiences of educators who identify themselves as social justice educators (Chapter 5), (e) the results from the second research question related to the co-creation of a supportive community of educators with this commitment (Chapter 6), and (f) a discussion and the implications of this inquiry for universities, districts, schools,

administrators, and educators who identify themselves as individuals committed to social justice and structural change.

Definitions of Key Terms and Concepts

Individuals committed to social justice are defined in the context of this study as those who exhibit high levels of social interest (Adler, 1998). These individuals approach their daily lives with enthusiasm, friendliness, and a feeling of belongingness and connectedness to others and to the world. Those committed to social justice engage courageously not only to improve themselves, but also to encourage others and to work cooperatively (Adler; Dinkmeyer & Sperry, 2000; Dreikurs Ferguson, 1984; Sweeney, 1998) alongside those who are oppressed in an effort to "create a world in which it is easier to love" (Freire, 1970, p. 40).

Professional educators committed to social justice recognize that education is inherently political and can be used to emancipate or to perpetuate an inequitable status quo (Freire). Based on this belief, social justice educators work to deconstruct the "asymmetrical power relations of society that are reproduced in the schools, and the deficit view of minority students that school personnel uncritically, and often unknowingly, hold" (Bartolome, 1994, p. 173). Instead these educators "respect and use the reality, history and perspectives of students as an integral part of educational practice" (Bartolome, p. 173) as they acknowledge "the social and political contexts in which teaching, learning, schooling and ideas about justice have been located historically and the tensions among competing goals"(Cochran-Smith, 2008, p. 3).

For the context of this study, *social justice educators* are teachers who have lived experiences and personal histories which demonstrate commitment to working for justice in a variety of contexts and who self- identify as change agents, naming equity and advocacy as a significant part of their ontological purpose and teaching philosophy. This means that social justice educators (a) demonstrate a remarkable care for others and a sense of mutual responsibility and accountability; (b) critique aspects of schooling and society that they view as inequitable and often speak about and reflect upon the need to change the way things are and their desire to work alongside oppressed populations; (c) relate with and advocate for students, particularly those they believe are being oppressed because of the hegemony of English in our schools, the assessment measures that students are subjected to, and the biases of their instructors; and (d) work in their school contexts to create more equitable educative opportunities for all learners.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To support the research questions driving this investigation, I reviewed relevant literature regarding (a) the experiences of beginning teachers; (b) the induction support and engagements provided to beginning teachers by schools, districts, and universities; and (c) the research related to beginning teachers committed to social justice.

Three specific areas of investigation are included in Part One and are organized around the three dimensions of learning posited by Illeris (2002), cognitive, social, and emotional learning tasks. Part Two of the review is an examination of the literature specifically related to social justice educators in each of the three learning dimensions: cognitive, social, and emotional. In Part Three of the review, I look across the studies at the teachers who are considered by the researchers to be most successful. Part Four of this review attends specifically to studies that are methodologically similar in many ways to the inquiry I have constructed. In these studies, as university faculty continued to engage with beginning teachers in supportive relationships, self-study, and online support groups, they often attended, at least in part, to the cognitive, social, and emotional needs of the beginning teachers. This section concludes by looking across the literature reviewed and analyzing the theoretical and methodological gaps in the field and the new questions to which they give rise.

Part One: The Cognitive, Social, and Emotional Learning Dimensions of New Teachers

Illeris (2002) has synthesized significant learning theories from North America and Europe in order to create a comprehensive model of learning attending to the cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions of learning. In a discussion of his text *The Three Dimensions of Learning – Contemporary Learning Theory in the Tension Field between the Cognitive, the Emotional and the Social,* at the Nordisk Förening för Pedagogiska Forskning/ Nordic Educational Research Association Congress (NFPF/NERA), Illeris (2001) posited that

> …all learning includes two essentially different types of process, namely an external interaction process between the learner and his or her social, cultural and material environment, and an internal psychological process of acquisition and elaboration in which new impulses are connected with the results of prior learning. Secondly, that all learning includes three dimensions, namely, the cognitive dimension of knowledge and skills, the psychodynamic dimension of motivation and emotions, and the social dimension of communication and cooperating- all of which are embedded in a socially situated context (Abstract, ¶ 1).

For beginning teachers striving to develop their professional identities working with students and colleagues in a specific school and community, the importance of learning contextualized in a specific situation, time, and social structure is very relevant.

A review of the literature related to beginning teachers, induction processes, and supportive interventions can be organized based on the three dimensions of learning posited by Illeris, the cognitive dimension, emotional dimension, and the social dimension. First, I present studies that emphasize interventions that support the cognitive learning tasks of beginning teachers, including the need for beginning teachers to develop their professional identities by finding answers to their own questions

through co-thinking with mentors and by participating in professional development opportunities based on their contextual and personal instructional needs. Second, I explore literature that emphasizes the social learning tasks of beginning teachers. This includes a discussion of the ways in which the socially situated context, the school climate, and the collaborative nature of colleagues and peers have implications into the development of beginning teachers' professional identity and commitment to the profession. Concluding Part One is an examination of the singular study focused on the emotional learning dimensions of beginning teachers.

An exploration of the literature related to the learning and development of beginning teachers demonstrates that the vast majority of studies have examined the cognitive learning dimension and development of beginning teachers. However, throughout the literature, the voices of teachers are clearly emotive as they discuss the social structures and the relationships (or lack thereof) in their local school context.

I have organized this review of relevant research according to the learning dimension that was the primary emphasis of the discussion and implication sections constructed by each researcher. Though the dimensions of learning (cognitive, social, and emotional) are simultaneous and interconnected, researchers overwhelmingly focus on one primary dimension in their discussion, implications, and results. Many studies included quotes by participants that clearly referred to emotional or social learning tasks, but the implications of the article were cognitive; therefore, I have discussed these studies in the cognitive section of this review. Illeris's (2002) framework and theory of learning is particularly helpful as it emphasizes the very limited attention that

is given to the social and emotional learning tasks of novice teachers. This framework is also informative as one explores the types of external interactions that supported all three learning dimensions in the experiences of beginning teachers who were considered by researchers to be successful in their vocation.

Cognitive Learning Tasks for Beginning Teachers

Beginning teachers have multiple needs for cognitive learning to which they must attend even as they experience the immense pressure of being "expected to fulfill all of the roles of a teacher with 10 years of experience with little consideration of [their] novice status" (Cherubini, 2007, p. 8). Feiman-Nemser (2001a) stated that beginning teachers are required to construct their practice by demonstrating the understandings and abilities they are simultaneously attempting to develop. Most of the research discussed in this review of literature explores supportive engagements for beginning teachers aimed at developing their cognitive skills and understandings during the induction period.

Feiman-Nemser outlined the five Central Tasks of Learning to Teach (CTLT). She postulated that in completing the essential learning tasks of the induction year a teacher will have (a) learned the context; (b) designed a responsive instructional program; (c) created a classroom learning community; (d) enacted a beginning repertoire; and (e) developed a professional identity. This emphasis on the cognitive learning needs of beginning teachers was apparent throughout the literature. Two predominant findings were salient: (a) the efficacy of rhetorical questions posed by mentors and peers in order to aid beginning teachers in the process of developing their own reflective and

student centered practice, and (b) the need for beginning teachers to engage in professional development experiences that specifically attend to their individual and contextual needs.

Two studies, Feiman-Nemser (2001b) and Athanases and Achinstein (2003) emphasize the role of mentors, colleagues and other novice teachers as co-thinkers and collaborators who aid in the cognitive development of beginning teachers through asking rhetorical questions. Feiman-Nemser conducted a qualitative case study and observed a mentor teacher working with 14 novice teachers. She found that the mentor was successful because she acted as a co-thinker with her mentees. The mentor helped novice teachers focus on instructional issues and student learning and aided them in connecting theory to practice by asking questions. Feiman-Nemser argued that this type of scaffolding that was contextualized in the classroom and responsive to the instructional needs of novice teachers supported beginning teachers as they worked to find their own answers and develop their professional identity instead of relying on answers from others.

Similarly, in a survey of 37 teacher induction program coordinators, Athanases and Achinstein observed mentor-novice conversations, and interviewed two mentor-mentee pairs. They found that successful mentors acted as co-thinkers, asked rhetorical questions and used follow up probes as they worked to help new teachers consider options for student centered learning and the needs of struggling students.

Other studies emphasize the need for beginning teachers to engage with others in relevant, timely, professional development tailored to meet their individual,

contextual needs (Cherubini, 2007; Clark & Hollingsworth, 2002; Fry, 2007; Hammerman, 1995; Luft & Cox, 2001; McCann, Johannessen, & Ricca, 2005; McCormick et al., 2006; Nagy & Wang, 2007; Weiss, 1999). McCormick et al. documented 16 early career teachers through their first year of teaching to understand the learning tasks they undertook in their new roles and the factors that helped or hindered their learning. They noted that beginning teachers struggled as they attempted to negotiate their professional identity while they worked to develop their teaching skills and perform as if they are veteran teachers. They worked to build and maintain relationships with others in the school, and mediate the cognitive dissonances they experienced as they discovered that their own ideals and beliefs conflicted with the culture of their school. Findings further indicated that as participants engaged in informal networks of supportive peers and the formal support of professional development, gained experience, and increased in knowledge of their context, they became increasingly able to develop a curriculum responsive to student needs. Beginning teachers indicated that their learning was supported through their engagement in professional learning opportunities that introduced them to needed resources or individuals and aided them in the building of connections with other early career teachers. The participants also felt that mentoring was helpful when it was not supervisory in nature, and they particularly valued informal conversations with colleagues in which they could share ideas and concerns. Participants found their former peers from their preservice training to be particularly supportive. In conclusion, McCormack et al. recommended that new teachers have an opportunity to engage as active participants in professional learning

activities that provide them with an opportunity to engage with others through shared narratives as they extend their teaching repertoire and develop their professional identities. McCormack et al. (2006) argued that induction processes should include meaningful and flexible professional learning programs in which beginning teachers could set their own agendas for continued learning based on their personal and contextual needs.

Through a multiple case case study design, Fry (2007) followed four beginning teachers she had supervised in their student teaching experience through their first year of teaching to explore the ways these individuals interpreted their professional learning and induction processes. Through monthly phone interviews, Fry found that participants struggled with varied aspects of teaching during the beginning of their career and identified specific areas of need for support and professional learning depending upon their unique contexts. They found that general professional learning opportunities rarely met their identified needs. Fry argued against county or system wide professional development and induction processes for new teachers that may be irrelevant or repetitive rather than engaging experiences which inform their own work and teaching. Fry called instead for induction experiences which are differentiated in order to meet the specific needs of beginning teachers in their own context.

Similarly, Weiss (1999) drew implications from the findings of her research (discussed at more length in the *social relational* section) emphasizing the need for collaborative leadership structures which build upon and encourage the idealism and energy of beginning teachers in a supportive environment. When beginning teachers

were allowed to contribute to the shaping of their professional learning and evaluation, their autonomy and morale increased. Weiss (1999) also argued that schools need to respond to the aspects of professional learning and development that beginning teachers themselves identify as their professional learning needs.

In a survey of 155 Alternative Certification secondary teachers working in 35 high schools in New Jersey, Nagy and Wang (2007) found that 61% of the participants were teaching subject matter outside of their field of previous employment, 43% outside of their masters' certification, and 25% outside of their undergraduate majors. Nagy and Wang argued that though the districts provided preservice, induction and staff development support programs, the professional and academic background and personal histories of beginning teachers must be considered in order to ensure that learning opportunities meet the varied cognitive and instructional needs of alternative route teachers.

Cherubini (2007) examined learning logs of 173 beginning teachers working in two school districts in Ontario, Canada who participated in comprehensive induction programs including "orientation sessions, a mentoring program, mentor training, in-services, release time, networks with university faculty, and data collection mechanisms to assess the success of these components" (Cherubini, p. 3). Participants particularly noted the importance of structured release time with their mentors in which they could problematize the issues that were a priority to their own work in their classroom contexts. Cherubini found that participants gained confidence and were able to develop professional identities as they actively engaged in identifying the areas in which they

wanted to develop professionally through collaboration with other educators. An additional finding of the study was that many beginning teachers felt frustrated that in-service development days were disconnected from their practice with little connection to their actual teaching and the needs of their students.

Through a complex, six stage process of data collection and analysis, McCann et al. (2005) investigated the concerns of beginning high school English teachers and their processes for coping in order to identify some of the challenges that cause high rates of attrition in beginning teachers. Through analysis, it became clear that "a common source of concern and frustration [was] the radical mismatch between the expectations that beginning teachers had for teaching before they began teaching, and the actual experience of teaching when they began their careers" (p. 44). They found that practicing teachers were significantly more confident than preservice teachers about several aspects of their work, including: (a) having positive relationships with students (including classroom management); (b) having sufficient content knowledge and preparation for their job; (c) having autonomy in their classroom; and (d) having the ability to asses students' performances and competency in grading. No significant differences were found between practicing and preservice teachers in their expectations for positive relationships with supervisors and the parents of their students. Notably, preservice teachers were significantly more confident than practicing teachers that they could handle the workload without having negative effects on their physical, emotional, and social wellbeing. Preservice teachers did not have a realistic view of the workload of teaching and were generally unprepared for the "fatigue factor" (p. 47) that they

experienced when they began their teaching career. One important implication noted by the researchers was the need for differentiated structures of support to focus on beginning teachers' identified areas of concern rather than a generalized development or support network that assumed the homogeneity of teachers.

McCann et al. (2005) found that individuals who were likely to leave the profession spoke about the "unreasonable and hopeless" workload, their inability to effect change related to the "inherent" problems of teaching. These teachers with short lived commitments to the field spoke more about their own needs than the needs of their students, viewed teaching as a "career compromise" due to their limited choices, and talked about their hope to "'escape' from teaching" (p. 35). Conversely, beginning teachers who were likely to stay in teaching recognized their growth as teachers as well as the factors that contributed to that growth, they expressed an interest in continuing to develop their skills as teachers, had strategic plans for bettering challenging situations, discussed "disturbing episodes in the school year as shared experiences between students and faculty and not as personal obstacles, aggravations, or attacks"; viewed bad experiences in the school as indicative of the need for strong teachers, and felt a "sense of duty to help the young people who can benefit from the teacher's instruction" (p. 35).

Additional insights offered by these beginning teachers included advice for others entering the field. They recommended that beginning teachers have a firm theoretical foundation and an extended opportunity for immersion in the schools during teacher training. They found mentoring and professional development programs that

were not tailored to meet their needs but were mandated and time consuming to be a burden rather than a support. They also recognized the need to have personal connections and frequent contact with their peers in order to receive non-threatening support and empathy.

Case studies were conducted in order to discern the critical periods of the teachers' first year in order to inform teacher preparations programs, to provide beginning teachers with clear and accurate expectations related to the overall patterns of their first year, and to supply mentors and university supervisors with information so that they might intervene and provide additional support during critical times. Through problem posing scenarios and interviews with veteran and novice teachers, notable differences were apparent between new and veteran teachers in several key areas. While new teachers felt that classroom management was about the imposition of rules and punishments, veteran teachers emphasized positive relationships through high expectations for student success, support and scaffolding to enable that success, and an articulated expression of the inherent value of the course. Beginning teachers created an extraordinary workload by demanding many and frequent written assignments and evaluating each with great detail. They placed great faith in the numerical grade and felt that those assessments were both accurate and reliable. Veteran teachers were deliberate about focusing on the process "rather than the accumulation of finished products" (McCann et al., 2005, p. 88). They had few key assessments and flexibly considered multiple factors when assessing. While novice teachers worried about the opinions of their supervisors and were hesitant to share difficulties, experienced

teachers were confident about their own strengths and about their working relationship with supervisors. While both novice and experienced teachers felt confidence about their curricular autonomy, novice teachers were generally less likely to make contributions to the department as a whole, while experienced teachers could connect curriculum to the larger program and could identify contributions they have made to the work of others. Lastly, while beginning teachers were concerned about physical characteristics that might support or hinder classroom success, veteran teachers relied on shared sense of mission and respect for the goals of individual class members.

In conclusion, McCann et al. (2005) found that most frustrations "derived from the significant mismatch between their expectations for teaching and the actual experience of teaching" and from the struggle to "shape a teacher persona" (p. 158) and recommended that universities and schools collaborate in order to support beginning teachers in several ways. They posited that,

> Working as partners, universities and schools should help prospective teachers to experience the realities of teaching through extensive clinical experiences, case study analyses, and visits from practicing teachers…Teacher training programs should support prospective teachers in developing a teacher persona, a "public self," by allowing them to experience numerous occasions to assume the role of teacher: among peers, in schools, in various community settings…In schools, beginning teachers should focus especially on building positive relationships with students, without preoccupation about imposing order… Supervisors, mentors, and other colleagues in schools should help new teachers anticipate and ease debilitating fatigue… Trainers at the universities, and mentors and supervisors in schools, should encourage beginners to imitate the practices of skilled experienced teacher… (p.158-161)

They indicated the importance of intelligent and supportive mentors who can engage with beginning teachers in ways that foster success and commitment to the

profession and peers to whom beginning teachers can go for alternative explanations and options for action and who can offer safety and support.

While this study offers much insight into the challenges, experiences, and needs of beginning educators, the research does little to provide support or a network through the induction processes. While McCann et al. (2005) offered implications for universities, schools, and the beginning teachers themselves which can inform a variety of stakeholders, the design of their study was not one that worked to mitigate those frustrations or to support the beginning teachers. In my inquiry, we have worked to offer meaningful mutual support and encouragement in order to encourage teachers and their commitment to the vocation.

Over a period of two academic years, Hammerman (1995), a university educator, met with two teams of 7-14 teachers meeting biweekly after school. The participants in this study had shared development opportunities and similar theoretical conceptualizations based on these learning opportunities. Every two weeks they collaboratively analyzed classroom data, student work, transcripts, or field notes from one of the participant's classrooms in order to explore a question about practice and pedagogy posed by that individual teacher. Hammerman found that this socially contextualized professional development based on teacher questions and student work provided teachers with an avenue for generating multiple and alternative hypotheses for action, exploring the purposes behind teacher moves and expanding the repertoire of potential actions. Through this experience, teachers were able to generate their own

hypotheses, reflect upon their own questions, and examine their own actions, processes, and pedagogies through relevant professional learning opportunities.

Luft and Cox (2001) found that new teachers particularly valued collaborative observational practices in which they had opportunity to reflect upon their own teaching through their interactions with others. Similarly, Featherstone (1992) engaged with six novice teachers in a beginning teacher study group through their first two years of teaching. Featherstone explained that novice teachers attempt to “stitch a personal education out of the fabric of a year of teaching experience.” (p. 17). She found that beginning teachers learn about themselves and develop as teachers in four distinct ways in their first years of teaching through: (a) absorbing conservative and traditional school norms, (b) glimpsing their own behavior through the eyes of a colleague, (c) applying old advice in a new experience, and (d) struggling with their own teaching problems. Featherstone argued for the need for continued relationships between novice teachers and their university through a five year program that would provide support. She posited that “experience poses more questions rather than providing answers” (p. 13) implying the benefits of continued collaborative conversations as beginning teacher “recreate themselves even as they learn new skills” (p.13). Featherstone posited that new teachers need to have the space and audience to tell their stories and share their experiences, but only “a fortunate few are lucky enough to have the time and audience for storytelling” (p. 3). The narratives of her beginning teacher study group members demonstrate that through storying their lives for their colleagues those novice teachers were able to make sense of themselves and their experiences. As they viewed their

experiences differently, they storied their lives differently because “the story changes as our understanding of it changes” (Featherstone, 1992, p. 3).

The research reviewed in this section informed my inquiry in a number of ways. First, in many of the studies, mentors or coaches used open-ended questions. I employed open-ended questioning so beginning teachers engaged in this inquiry could gain confidence in their own abilities to find answers to their own questions and determine potential solutions to their own challenges. Because I was engaged in many of their preparation experiences, I also reminded them of particular readings, discussions, and common experiences that helped them connect what they learned in their preparation programs to their current teaching context, enabling them to more clearly make theory to practice connections.

Secondly, many of the previous studies emphasized the need for professional development to be based on beginning teachers’ own identified needs and co-constructed with other peers with whom they have established and collegial relationships. My intention in the design of this study was to encourage participants to share aspects of their practice that were puzzling or exciting and to receive support in the areas they themselves identified, finding support for their own learning needs from a community of individuals who were similarly engaged in learning and with whom they could share commitments to emancipatory educative practices.

Social Learning Tasks for Beginning Teachers

Schools are organizations with social norms, expectations, alliances and tensions that are part of any organization. This political context is necessarily the venue in which

beginning teachers develop. Research reviewed in this section will discuss the ways in which all beginning teachers learn from and influence the social contexts in which they work. The importance of the social context and milieu into which new teachers enter and the ways that learning about this social context aids or disrupts the development of their professional identities is evident in a review of literature. Several studies (Flores, 2006; Flores & Day, 2006; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Sivell & Yeager, 2001) demonstrated the degree to which beginning teachers are occupied with issues related to their social setting as they try to navigate and understand the norms and ways of being in their new context. Other studies (Colaric & Stapleton, 2004; Eick, 2002; Rolheiser & Hundey, 1995) indicated the importance of collaborative relationships both with other teachers in the school context, and with other beginning teachers who were colleagues from a teacher preparation or teacher development program. Still another body of research (Gold, 1996; Nagy & Wang, 2007; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Weiss, 1999) explored the role of the social context, school leadership, and school climate on the learning, morale, and career commitment of beginning teachers. This larger body of research indicates that many new teachers experience a cognitive dissonance when they enter contexts that are not philosophically or collaboratively structured in ways that they believe will support student learning.

Through a two year qualitative study with a cohort of fourteen new teachers, Flores (2006) documented the preservice practicum year and first year of teaching of her participants in a variety of isolated schools in northern Portugal. Results from this research were also discussed by Flores and Day (2006). Flores explored the ways in

which the cohort members developed, changed, and learned through their first two professional years. Flores (2006) found that the understandings participants had held of what it meant to be a teacher “were challenged, and altered as they negotiated their institutional roles in the workplace” (p.2047). Beginning teachers who were working in negative school climates often felt they had been idealistic about their abilities and their autonomy and discovered that they were not prepared for the various roles and duties of a classroom teacher. They also were surprised by a lack of collaborative and cooperative attitudes among teachers. The mismatch of their expectations and reality forced them to unlearn the unreal theories acquired in college and relearn from their own practical experiences in the classroom. Half of the teachers surveyed in this study found the beginning of their careers to be a de-motivating and frustrating time. Flores and Day (2006) found that 10 out of the 14 participants reported that in response to classroom management and control issues they had become less student centered and inductive and more traditional, teacher-centered, and task oriented. They became socialized into the school cultures, felt isolated and criticized, experienced feelings of low morale and commitment, and felt that they had given up much of their past idealism. Flores and Day found that the teachers who struggled most with these challenges specifically cited the mismatch between their own beliefs about teaching and the socialization and roles they adopted as beginning teachers.

Other teachers were located within supportive and collaborative school cultures that encouraged leadership and success from the beginning teachers. Flores and Day found that four teachers self-reported that they became more flexible, responsive,

student centered, and “more concerned with the pedagogical and moral aspects of their job” (Flores & Day, 2006, p. 228). This was corroborated by their students who said they became better teachers over the year. Five of the 14 teachers described their first years as a very positive experience due to relationships with students, a collegial and supportive school climate, and autonomy and freedom coupled with a supportive team of colleagues. Flores (2006) found that these supportive school communities encouraged enthusiasm, dedication, job satisfaction, and high levels of teacher self-efficacy and self-motivation. She argued that beginning teachers must be supported by mentors and teacher educators if they are to bridge the “classic divide” (p. 2048) between theory and practice and to develop “a clear framework of what it means to be a teacher” (p.2048). She also argued that induction processes must not focus on socialization or on providing simple answers to complex questions, but instead must provide opportunities for beginning teachers to reflect and question their own practices and the “values and norms underlying the educational settings in which they work” (p. 2049) so that they may become empowered to develop themselves and their learners. Beginning teachers who were most happy and successful in their positions were those who had intrinsic and personal connections to teaching and who had built strong relationships with students. Their research has explored the pertinence of both personal histories and contextual influence in the success or failure of beginning teachers.

Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) engaged 14 Flemish primary school teachers who had taught between three and five years in retrospective questionnaires and semi-structured interviews in order to identify the ways they had worked to negotiate,

establish, and maintain their professional interests during the beginning of their careers. These teachers spent much of the first few years working under temporary contracts and attempting to secure permanent teaching positions. These teachers experienced tenuous relationships with their school context and most of the overtures they documented during their first years were not attempts to change the structures of systems but rather efforts to gain permanent entrée into those systems. Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) found that participants' micropolitical actions, or "actions that aim at establishing, safeguarding, or restoring the desired working conditions" (p. 108) primarily centered on working to develop their professional identity and to be seen as creating, hardworking and competent teachers and to simultaneously build and maintain relationships that would ensure their future employment. Though participants viewed the setting and climate of the schools as very significant factors, they did little to transform them or challenge their norms. For these participants, "desired working conditions" (p. 108) simply meant being employed.

Other studies have investigated how those who feel more secure in their beginning teacher positions are able to engage in collaboration, specifically considering ways in which they may collectively navigate and potentially alter their context. Sivell and Yeager (2001) explored five hours of conversations between five beginning career (3-7 years of teaching) English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors working in a private for profit English acquisition program as they met every two weeks during the winter term of 2001. Researchers found that though teachers felt well prepared for the linguistic, theoretical, and pedagogical demands of their teaching, they experienced

reality shock (Veenman, 1984) as they discovered that "certain interpersonal or subjective dimensions [made] unanticipated and very troubling demands on them" (Sivell & Yeager, 2001, p. 2). The teachers spent a great deal of energy trying to teach well in spite of political and social realities of their context that made their instruction less than ideal. They felt that their former training had not prepared them for these challenges. Researchers found that these teachers experienced a lack of empowerment and did not have the ability to make changes in aspects of their teaching, such as physical locations or lack of resources provided by the administration, which were not amenable to learning. These teachers felt that the organizational decisions of their context impinged upon their abilities to meet the needs of their students. Teachers rarely cited issues of their own pedagogical training or orientations as the cause for these difficulties. A particularly cogent aspect of this research was the finding that the beginning teachers were able to understand, support, and advise each other in relevant and important ways due to their similar theoretical training and access to a common professional discourse.

Similarly, some studies (Colaric & Stapleton, 2004; Eick, 2002; Rolheiser & Hundey, 1995) indicate that teachers are apparently aided by opportunities for collaboration with colleagues that may serve to mitigate their feelings of frustration and isolation as they struggle with school environments and cultures that are counterproductive. Eick explored two first year middle-school science teachers who co-taught throughout their induction year. Through 16 classroom observations, teacher journal entries, and two interviews, Eick found that the teachers struggled with

classroom management, felt pressured by evaluation, were challenged as they attempted to maintain a student centered curriculum in the face of a conservatively socializing school culture, and had to work to negotiate their own differences in personality. In spite of these struggles, the beginning teachers were able to build upon their shared philosophy which had been established in their preparation program. Participants also experienced increased success due to the collaborative modeling, support, shared praxis and reflection with the teaching partner.

Additional studies have shown how individuals who established collaborative relationships during their candidacy stage continued to benefit from those relationships during their induction years. Rolheiser and Hundey (1995) analyzed questionnaires, interviews, journals, and observations of group discussions of fifty of their students during their preservice and induction stages. They found that the collaborative relationships and dispositions formed and strengthened in the preparation program enabled novice teachers to engage with peers within and between schools, even if they were teaching in schools with individualistic or negative cultures. Because individuals had developed shared visions and theoretical understandings during their teacher preparation, they were disposed to seek out and maintain relationships for collaboration and support as they learned to teach in their individual contexts.

Colaric and Stapleton (2004) surveyed 370 new teachers working in eight rural north eastern counties of North Carolina to determine the most challenging aspects of their beginning years. Results of the survey indicated that beginning teachers struggled most often with classroom management issues and only 53% of the respondents felt

prepared to handle the challenges they faced. They indicated that they primarily went to experienced teachers, mentor teachers, or administrators for advice and support (91.4 % 87.3%, and 72.4% respectively). Additionally, 19.5% and 16.7 percent of the respondents indicated that they spoke with colleagues from their university or a professor from their university for support or suggestions regarding the challenges they experienced. Ninety one percent indicated that they were satisfied with the answer they received when consulting these resources.

Much of the research emphasizes the role that administration and school leadership play in the creation of a positive school climate and social atmospheres in which new teachers can develop professionally and personally (Nagy & Wang, 2007; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Weiss, 1999). The social systems and leadership in place in a school are significant factors in the ways in which new teachers are supported through their induction period. Principals specifically play a significant role in the types of induction support beginning teachers receive, because they generally make decisions about much of the social context of the schools, including common planning times, staff development opportunities, and formal mentoring procedures.

Utilizing a nationally representative sample of first year teachers working in public and private schools in the 1987-1988 school year and the 1993-1994 school year, Weiss attempted to determine the factors that contributed most significantly to teacher morale, career choice commitment, and planned retention in education. By analyzing data from the Public School Teacher Questionnaire and Private School Teacher Questionnaire from the Schools and Staffing Surveys (SASS) sponsored by the National

Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Weiss (1999) was able to create a proportional sample based on grade level, school enrollment, geographic location, and public and private school settings. The sample included 2,676 first year K-12 full time teachers working in public and private schools in 1987-1988 and 2,412 in 1993-1994. Results indicated that first year teachers find the social-organizational structures of teaching extremely important. First-year teachers' perceptions of school leadership and culture and teacher autonomy and discretion shape the extent of their willingness to do their best work, to commit to teaching as a career choice again, and to plan to stay in teaching. Workplace conditions were central factors in their morale, career choice commitment, and planned retention. Perceived autonomy and discretion along with perceived school leadership and culture were the most significant variables, as new teachers wanted to play an active role in decisions about curriculum and discipline.

Principals were a crucial part of school leadership, and their ability to communicate expectations, support teachers through the enforcement of student rules and conduct, provide materials and necessary guidance, and fairly evaluate and recognize the contributions of beginning teachers were significant in the morale, career commitment, and retention plans of new teachers. Weiss's findings include the need for schools to improve their communication processes and to increase the engagement of beginning teachers in school leadership, in decision making, and in professional interactions. She also argued that genuine dialogue was needed between teachers and with administrators in order to encourage new teacher commitment, increase morale, and prevent teacher attrition.

In a survey 155 alternative route secondary teachers in 35 high schools as well as 35 principals and assistant principals from a variety of high schools in New Jersey, Nagy and Wang (2007) attempted to identify issues related to teacher preparation, induction support, and retention in the profession. In the context of Nagy and Wang's study, "alternative route teachers" are defined as "individuals who have earned college degrees and have worked in their chosen fields but had no prior training in teaching" These individuals do not engage in "traditional teacher preparation" but move directly into classrooms and are provided with "simultaneous mentoring and support" (p. 98). However, those support structures are not described within the article. Findings indicate that many of the alternative route teachers were working in a field that was outside of their experience and expertise (which would seem to indicate significant cognitive challenges for these beginning teachers). Surveys demonstrated that participant satisfaction with principal support correlated to their commitment to the profession. The results of the survey indicated that principal and mentor helpfulness level was the best predictor of teacher satisfaction followed by the frequency of contacts with these individuals. Results also indicated that opportunities for collegial contact, support, and assistance by departments and other novice teachers were very important to their success. Alternative route teachers indicated several ways principals could better support them, including frequent and short visits with constructive feedback, scheduled time for curriculum conversations with experienced teachers in the subject area, and the presence of a certified teacher in the classroom for support at the beginning of their experience. The suggestions that participants offered to potential alternative route

teachers included several specifically related to the social aspects of the environment, including selecting a supportive school, observing the processes other teachers use for management and planning, and ensuring that they like students as well as the subject matter. Principals indicated that they respected and appreciated the social and emotional aspects of beginning alternative route teachers due to their life experience, collaborative abilities, and dedication. However, they noted that many lacked several essential cognitive understandings due to their limited preparation in teaching, specifically classroom management skills, an understanding of adolescents and their development, a complex understanding of teaching and learning, and strategies for differentiation and instruction.

Smith and Ingersoll (2004) explored the impact of various forms and combinations of induction support and the corresponding affect of each on the attrition rate of beginning teachers. Smith and Ingersoll used the 1999-2000 results from a national survey including approximately 52,000 elementary and secondary teachers, the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). Through this quantitative analysis, Smith and Ingersoll controlled for school and teacher characteristics and found that without any induction support the attrition rate of beginning teachers was 40%. The most common aspects of support during induction periods included mentoring, supportive communication from department chairs or administration, a common planning time with faculty members teaching the same content or grade level, and/or beginning teacher seminars. Teachers provided with any one of these interventions alone were not significantly affected and were as likely to leave the field as those who received

nothing. Basic induction, including a combination of mentoring and administrative or department chair support, lowered the attrition rate by one percent, to 39%. Those who had this basic induction plus a common planning time and beginning teacher seminars had a predicted attrition rate of 27%. Individuals who received all of these supports and also had a reduced number of preparations, or a teacher's aide, or participated in an external network of teachers, had the lowest predicted attrition rate of 18%. This study also makes it clear that school administrations are extremely influential in the social experience and development of beginning teachers. Because principals have significant latitude in the support structures, schedules, and collaborative planning opportunities for beginning teachers, as well as the power to assign mentors and teacher's aides, the school administration plays a significant role in beginning teachers' morale, career commitment, and retention.

Through a review of literature on new teacher attrition, induction, and mentoring, Gold (1996) explored the issue of teacher burnout. The research reviewed indicated that as beginning teachers work to build and maintain collegial and professional relationships, navigate the social and political aspects of the teaching context, and develop more fully a professional identity, they often experience social struggles which challenge the process. The literature reviewed by Gold (1996) indicated that negative school environments significantly impacted beginning teachers and their long term commitment to teaching.

The research on beginning teachers indicates that they expend a great deal of energy in social learning tasks and political negotiation as they try to navigate and

understand the norms and ways of being in their new social setting. Beginning teachers need to be seen as competent and capable within that setting even while they are trying to learn the norms and expectations of the context. As the beginning teachers in the studies attempted to disentangle the myriad relationships, expectations, and tensions of the social milieu of their school, having a safe place to discuss and make sense of their experiences was helpful. By engaging with individuals in different school contexts, the participants in my study had opportunities to explore the role of their own social context, school leadership, and school climate in a collaborative yet safe space. This enabled them to discuss tensions without the fear of exacerbating them and to explore multiple potential courses of action with other beginning teachers engaged in a different set of social negotiations.

Many new teachers experience cognitive dissonance as they transition from the more collaboratively structured processes in place in many colleges of education and enter into the conservative and often isolating contexts of public schools. I hoped that by maintaining relationships with peers and colleagues who have come from the same preparation processes and philosophical training, the participants in my inquiry might find a social milieu that was congruent in many ways with their own understandings.

Emotional Learning Tasks for Beginning Teachers

Very few studies have attended specifically to the emotional needs of beginning teachers. Though many have published reflections of their participants that included emotively charged language indicating the feelings of isolation, frustration, alienation, vulnerability, anxiety, and being overwhelmed that new teachers often experience

(e.g. Curry et al., 2008; Flores, 2006; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; McCormack et al., 2006), few have emphasized the emotional needs and experiences of beginning teachers, particularly in their findings and implications (Chubbuck et al., 2001; Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2008; Dalgarno & Colgan, 2007; DeWert et al., 2003; Fry, 2007; McNally et al., 2008). Instead, these researchers have primarily explored this issue within a social or cognitive framework, suggesting interventions that will support the development of teacher knowledge and skill, or the need for school climates that are more supportive. The following study attended specifically to the emotional learning of beginning teachers in general. Most of the research that explored the emotional learning of beginning teachers specifically explored the experience of beginning teachers committed to social justice. Therefore, I will be reviewing those studies later, in Part Two of this review of the literature.

Chubbuck et al. (2001) did address beginning teachers' need for emotional learning. These researchers were university partners in a tri-county Novice Teacher Support Project (NTSP) that supported 77 teachers from a range of school districts, grade levels, and content areas over the course of two years. Chubbuck et al. examined the needs of these novice teachers and the ways in which those needs were met through a novice teacher support project that was not connected to the schools of the individual teachers. By analyzing written surveys, focus groups interviews, notes from planning sessions, responses to written questionnaires, and evaluative surveys related to the effectiveness of the project, the researchers concluded that gathering beginning teachers in an out-of-school environment provided a safe space for emotional support

and alleviation of feelings of isolation. This research also indicated that beginning teachers needed practical, logistical information about the workings of their schools, practical subject-specific strategies that could be implemented immediately in their own context, opportunities for reflection and discussion with others, and an opportunity to engage in non-coercive, non threatening conversations for emotional and cognitive support.

These beginning teachers valued not only the cognitive reflections provided by their engagement with peers, but also the emotional support they felt as they discussed their challenges in a non threatening, non-evaluative, and non-coercive environment. The sense of safety that they gained from this group provided them a space to explore their own ideas without the need to seek approval or maintain relationships with people with whom they worked. Many beginning teachers described the difficulty they felt attempting to maintain their individuality in their schools. They valued the common framework and pedagogies discussed in the group and appreciated finding that they were not alone in the challenges they experienced as beginning teachers. The authors posited that this type of engagement in a community prevented beginning teachers' tendency to close their door and engage in calcified practices that might not best meet the needs of students. They did caution, however, that these conversations could easily turn into a defeatist, complaining session, in which teachers came to view themselves as victims, blaming students and families for lack of success without critically examining the role their instruction may play in the learning of their students. In that case, the groups could contribute to diminished agency and self efficacy. The authors suggested

that a “complementary balance” must be found between the support and the challenge that novice teachers need in order to explore and expand their practices.

This study informed my own inquiry because of the emphasis on the need for beginning teachers to feel safe as they experienced the emotional and cognitive dissonances inherent to the beginning of one’s teaching career. Support structures for beginning teachers must value and attend to the emotional needs and learning tasks of beginning teachers. In my own study I specifically attended to collaborative support and encouragement. One of the primary ways that I engaged with individuals was through emotional support and encouragement. I have had long term relationships with these individuals and care deeply for them. While the collaborative space attended to the emotional needs of the participants, the space was not merely a place to complain and commiserate. Instead, dialogue intentionally led to productive and empowering discourse through the use of open ended questions and encouragement.

Summary of Part One

The research presented in Part One demonstrates that most of the attention to the development and support of beginning teachers focuses on the cognitive dimension of learning. Feiman-Nemser (2001b) and Athanases and Achinstein (2003) primarily emphasized the need for beginning teachers to have individuals who pose questions to them so they may begin to find their own answers to classroom dilemmas and focus on student needs. Other studies (Cherubini, 2007; Clark & Hollingsworth, 2002; Fry, 2007; Hammerman, 1995; Luft & Cox, 2001; McCormick, Gore, & Thomas, 2006; Nagy & Wang, 2007; Weiss, 1999) pointed to the importance of professional development

opportunities that specifically focus on the self-identified needs of beginning teachers based on their own background and their specific teaching context. The literature that emphasizes the social learning tasks of beginning teachers and the ways in which the socially situated context, either collaborative and communicative, or individualistic and negative, has specific ramifications for the development of a professional identity and beginning teachers' commitment to the profession. These studies (Colaric & Stapleton, 2004; Eick, 2002; Flores, 2006; Flores & Day, 2006; Gold, 1996; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Nagy & Wang, 2007; Rolheiser & Hundey, 1995; Sivell & Yeager, 2001; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Weiss, 1999) indicate a positive social climate of the school, the support of principals and mentors, and engagement with other beginning teachers, either from their university training or in their new context, provide beginning teachers with necessary social support as they work to develop their professional identities. The very limited literature and research surrounding the emotional dimension of learning in beginning teachers (Chubbuck et al., 2001) demonstrates the ways in which cognitions have been privileged over emotions, specifically in the examination of the experiences of beginning teachers. However, a complex understanding of the development of beginning teachers' professional identities and competencies cannot be gained without attention to all of the three dimensions. Therefore, the community which the participants and I co-created gave equal weight to cognitive, social, and emotional learning.

Part Two: The Cognitive, Social, and Emotional Learning Dimensions of Beginning Teachers Committed to Social Justice

Another body of research is more specifically focused on the experiences of beginning teachers committed to social justice. Much of this research corroborates the findings discussed in the previous section, however, these studies speak specifically to the needs, tensions, and struggles of beginning teachers who are hoping to transform the system and the schools in which they work. The following studies will be organized by their emphasis on the cognitive, social and emotional learning tasks.

Cognitive Learning Tasks of Beginning Social Justice Educators

Much of the research and scholarship regarding the cognitive domain primarily focuses on teacher preparation programs. Scholars in this category include Ladson Billings (2001), Darling-Hammond, French, Garcia-Lopez, and Paloma (2002), and Timmons Flores (2007). Research and scholarship related to preservice educators is overwhelmingly designed to focus on the pedagogical strengths of their teacher preparation program. Ladson Billings, in *Crossing to Canaan* interspersed her own stories and voice as a teacher educator, teacher researcher, and former classroom teacher with the work of eight participants in the Teach for Diversity program. In this qualitative, longitudinal ethnographic study of the structure of the program she has created, Ladson-Billings used initial interest statements, participant observations of classrooms, lesson plans, seminar notes, masters papers and an ethnographical interview with each participant to craft an overall exploration of her program and its effectiveness for developing culturally relevant pedagogues. Rather than focusing on

individuals, Ladson Billings intentionally narrated the development of the collective and the strengths of her program.

Similarly, *Learning to Teach for Social Justice* (Darling Hammond et al., 2002), is a text written collaboratively by individuals in the Stanford Teacher Education Program (STEP) which emphasizes the development of an equity pedagogy. In this text, 20 student teachers reflect on issues of diversity and social change through personal stories, case studies, and discussions of curriculum and teaching methods. These chapters describe the tensions of these teacher candidates as they strive to meet the needs of diverse learners and also to be agents of social change. Through this text, the co-authors share their questions, concerns, dilemmas, and lessons learned through the program. This text focuses on the effects of a teacher preparation program with an emphasis on equity pedagogy and the ways in which teacher training can be a transformative process for future educators.

Timmons Flores (2007) conducted a year-long ethnographic study of four new teachers who had graduated from her teacher preparation program and who had been identified by their professors and peers as individuals with a strong commitment to equity and diversity. Two of the teachers were in their first year of teaching and two were in their third year. Timmons Flores observed in each teacher's classroom for one day a week during the first six months and one day per month for the remainder of the year. She used field notes, her own reflective journal, student and teacher work samples, and three formal ninety minute interviews with the teachers. She also interviewed university faculty members, select colleagues, and 10 students. Through the

use of grounded theory, Timmons Flores (2007) attempted to gain an understanding of the following questions (a) how does teacher education for social justice influence the new teachers' identities and practice in urban schools? (b) how does the school's context influence teacher identity and practice? (c) how does a situated view of learning and development inform efforts to develop educators' ability to teach for social justice? Timmons Flores found that the first working years of these teachers eroded their idealism, confidence, and sense of purpose and that they often "worried about sustaining their ideals" (p. 388). Timmons Flores found that teachers experienced tensions between the communities of practice of the university and those they encountered in the school setting. Specifically, Timmons Flores found multiple tensions which resulted in cognitive and emotional dissonances experienced by the participants: the difference between ideal understandings of teaching and learning and those which were represented in their urban schools; beliefs about differentiation and individualization conflicting with school wide assessment mandates and accountability measures; tensions with more experienced teachers as they challenged and/or changed school practices; and their own struggles with hope and hopelessness as they struggled to maintain their ideals in the midst of school cultures with ways of working that conflicted with their own sense of self and purpose. The cognitive tensions that these participants experienced were closely connected to their social contexts.

Social Learning Tasks of Beginning Social Justice Educators

Many of the studies of beginning teachers committed to social justice focus on the social context. Among these researchers are Curry et al. (2008), Cantor (1998), and Kuzmic (1994).

Curry et al. explored the types of discourse and topics beginning teachers discussed in a bi-weekly university sponsored induction program for groups of novice teachers working in the same school. This program engaged 25 teachers in five separate school based inquiry groups. These teachers had an average of 2.5 years of teaching experience, and 72% of participants were in their first or second year of teaching. The authors found that the inquiry projects chosen by 40% of the participants were micropolitical in nature. Researchers chose to focus on one teacher in each group whose inquiry project was most focused on micropolitical issues. These individuals became the focal cases of this multi-case qualitative study. The transcripts and field notes of the weekly inquiry meetings captured "the dynamic and situational interaction of participants' conversation and learning" (p. 664). Then focal teachers were analyzed in order to record the development of their micropolitical awareness within the social context of their peer-based inquiry group, "tracking how the conversations of the group came to shape and influence the understanding of the focal teachers" (p. 661).

In this article, Curry et al. report the findings of the cross case analysis of the focal teachers. Each of these teachers' inquiry projects indicated a commitment to the socially just goals of equitable and inclusive education. Four out of five of the focal teachers graduated from preservice programs with a social justice emphasis and a

“cultural-ideological” stance toward exploring and deconstructing the “normative values and ideals about ‘good’ teaching” (Curry et al., 2008, p. 662). Rather than being socialized by conservative school cultures, these teachers “embraced and actively pursued alternative/ transformative visions of teaching and/or schooling throughout their inquiry” (p. 665) and viewed themselves as agents of change working to alter structures of schooling and society. Each worked within his/her own context to gather data, to reach out to other teachers and administrators, and to bring about change. The focal participants utilized the inquiry groups as a space to make sense of and respond to the micropolitical issues that arose in their school contexts as they worked to reconstruct the policies and procedures that were in place. This type of action in which beginning teachers were attempting to alter the processes of an organization often met a great deal of resistance. Such action required a great deal of “self-conscious practice” and attention to the micropolitical aspects of the context as beginning teachers attempted to grapple with “school related dilemmas” (p. 665) and experimented with ways to negotiate the cultures of their schools. These school based groups of teachers provided a forum for such practice.

Curry et al. found that the groups varied in their conversational and discourse patterns. Conversations tended to be reactive if a teacher experienced a micro-political dilemma and enlisted the help of her colleagues to determine a course of action. Others were more proactive in that the teachers identified an area of concern and brought it to the collaborative group in order to gain a more clear understanding and determine a course of action which would alter the situation in positive ways. Conversations were at

times centrally connected to the inquiry projects of teachers, and at other times they were only peripherally related. The groups employed formal sharing protocols and informal sharing time. The researchers worked to gain an understanding of the formal or informal ways that the inquiry topics were introduced in the group setting. Lastly, researchers attended to the reactions and responses of the group to see if they were validating (expressing agreement, sympathy or support), or challenging (debating, offering alternative positions, interpretations, or potential solutions).

Curry et al. (2008) determined that most conversations between beginning teachers were reactive in nature and served as *teachable moments*, as participants attempted to deal with dilemmas that occurred in the extra-classroom environment of their schools. They found that these conversations were often highly emotive and engaging for all participants. The majority of these reactive conversations included strategizing for future actions to resolve the dilemmas. These conversations also occasionally redirected the inquiries and actions of the teachers. As teachers discussed the micropolitical concerns of their schools, their inquiry projects were found to be central to the conversation at times and only peripherally related on other occasions. Each meeting, participants shared in a discussed the highs and lows of their teaching weeks. Issues of micropolitics often surfaced in these discussions. However, researchers found that 80-85% of the meeting time was devoted to inquiry consults, in which teachers attended to the issues posed by their inquiries through discussions of data and evidence from their classroom or school context, getting feedback on their processes, questions, data collection and analysis, and providing guidance and mutual support.

One important finding of this study was the overwhelming use of affirming and validating comments rather than challenging discourse structures. Curry et al. (2008) state,

> Given the vulnerability of novice teachers and their heightened need for social and emotional support in the face of perceived threats and/or micropolitical dilemmas, this trend was not surprising. Teachers tended to unite around members through an assortment of affirmatory or protective discourse moves. (p. 669)

Researchers found that the sense of isolation and alienation often experienced by new teachers who are committed to educational reconstruction was mitigated in the supportive social environment of the groups. That atmosphere was indicated by use of the pronoun “we,” expressions of praise and encouragement, the corroboration of stories, and agreement about potential courses of action. The only significant challenge that was presented within the groups related to one focal participant who decided to focus on the racial identities of the kindergarteners in her class. The peers in her group often questioned her decision to have these discussions with such young children. She viewed these conversations with the individuals in her group as an opportunity to hear the feelings of others who did not share her belief and she felt that the conversations made her able to articulate her position to others more clearly.

The focal participants explained that the social relationships built and strengthened in these groups also served as sources of emotional support. One participant who was not given a renewed contract at her school due to the political differences she had with her grade chair stated that these relationships were “critical in helping [her] complete an exceptionally difficult, disheartening year of teaching with

most of [her] spirit intact and enthusiasm for this career undiminished" (Curry et. al, 2008, p. 671). The members of her inquiry group not only supported her through the crisis, but also worked to have her reinstated in her job. "Through their enactment of micropolitical literacy practice, these teachers carved out a space on the margins of their school from which to critically engage themselves in efforts to transform their school and sustain their ideological commitments" (p. 672).

Curry et al. posit that these findings indicate that the development of micropolitical literacy can be accomplished socially rather than through individualized and privatized practices. The knowledge that was co-constructed through a shared context enabled participants to explore their own practices and the norms in their schools in ways that helped them consider alternative actions. These site-based discussions were contextualized, authentic and instrumental for the participants. Curry et al. argued that the findings

> …highlight the complex and micropolitically precarious process of teacher socialization, as well as how the provision of time, space, and a structure for novice teachers to explore together their induction experiences and questions helped mitigate the vulnerability, intensity, and isolation traditionally associated with entry into teaching. (Curry et al., 2008, p 672)

They further argued that these social networks enabled the participants "to craft political action and in turn forge identities as change agents, advocates for social justice, and professionals" (p. 672).

Cantor (1998), in the paper he presented at AERA based on his dissertation, described the longitudinal case study he conducted on four individuals enrolled in the teacher preparation program at UCLA's Center X through their first two years of

professional preparation. These individuals were admitted into Center X because they were “favorably disposed to social justice education before admission” (Cantor, 1998, p. 25). Though this is a study of beginning teachers, because of the nature of their program participants were still engaged in coursework with support and mentoring from the university. During the first year of the study, all participants were placed in Professional Development Schools engaged in inquiry and exploring issues of equity. During the second year, individuals found jobs working in urban schools with a high percentage of students on free or reduced lunch.

One of the participants was able to remain at the same school both years, a school that was extensively engaged, both philosophically and academically, with the Center. This individual felt extremely supported throughout the two years, participated in many collegial activities, and gained surety in her own professional practices. She felt as though she was accomplishing something positive with her students and continued to push herself personally and professionally. Of the four participants in the study, she was unique in that she was able to meet her own goals, felt supported, professional, and happy throughout her extended preparation program. Her context and supportive relationships with mentors, coupled with a school climate that was progressive and focused on social justice, contributed significantly to this feeling of accomplishment.

Two of the participants were in a neighboring district, grappling with student behavior and with traditional pedagogy and classroom management styles. These two novice teachers struggled extensively through the year with feelings of anger, isolation, hopelessness, and worthlessness. Through this experience, they determined that they

were not social justice educators. They found that they could not be agents of change and work for social justice in schools where they were alone and where there was a conservative socialization and pressure to conform.

The fourth participant was in a more structured environment utilizing a phonics based scripted literacy program. Her context provided limited engagement with issues of justice or inquiry, and she struggled with the cognitive dissonances between her university training and the school context. Though she "reverted to conservative beliefs and practices," (Cantor, 1998, p. 17) she still stated that she subscribed to social reconstructivist beliefs but felt constrained by the curriculum and the school climate. Her realization that she had compromised her values and had been socialized into practices that were antithetical to her own beliefs caused a great deal of anxiety and self loathing. Her identity and understanding of herself as a teacher and a person were affected.

Like Ladson-Billings (2001) and Darling-Hammond et al. (2002), Cantor (1998) focused his research on the strengths or weaknesses of the university teacher education processes. His implications included the need for more professional development schools and university structures that can contribute to the success of all beginning teachers graduating from the Center.

Kuzmic's (1994) research emphasizes the need for teacher preparation programs to focus specifically on the development of beginning teachers' *organizational literacy*. Kuzmic conducted an ethnographic case study of a kindergarten teacher in her first semester of teaching, in order to "explore the teaching perspectives of beginning

teachers as they are formed, developed and changed over the course of time and within the context of their lived reality" (Kuzmic, 1994, p. 16). This study was a part of a larger ethnographic study which took place in two stages. Preservice candidates were selected as potential participants for phase one based on willingness to participate, case history interviews, previous enrollment in particular coursework, and interviews with their university supervisors during their early field placements. Through this early screening process, researchers identified ten preservice teachers who were "potentially empowered teachers" and examined their experiences during their student teaching semester. These preservice teachers believed that

> …teachers should be active decision makers, ... wanted to promote self-discipline among children,.. saw knowledge as open to question and related to a particular source,... viewed student diversity within a given classroom as an asset, .. thought schools should be responsive to unique community needs, and ... thought schools could play an important role in making society more humane. (based on Goodman's 1988 definition of an "empowered teacher," Kuzmic, p. 17).

During the second phase of the project, three of the ten student teachers were followed into their first semester as beginning teachers. This report documents the experiences of one novice teacher, Kara, through her first semester teaching kindergarten.

The data collected for this study consisted of field observations for two days at the beginning and two days at the end of the semester. These totaled 32 hours of observations during both teaching and non-teaching duties and responsibilities. The researchers used these observations in order to "discover what actually occurred in Kara's classroom, how the days' activities were structured and organized, what information and messages Kara gave her students, what was taught, and what type of

relationship existed between teacher and students" (Kuzmic, 1994, p.18). Information gathered in initial observations served to focus the observations at the end of the semester. Additional data sources utilized to gain insight into Kara's perceptions of her experiences were formal interviews (conducted at the beginning and end of each observation day) and informal interviews (conducted during breaks and recess during observation days and weekly over the phone). While initial interviews were open ended, later interviews were often more focused in order to explore developing categories, clarify Kara's perceptions, and gain a clearer understanding of her areas of concern.

Findings indicated that Kara had a set image of what type of teacher she wanted to be and the types of engagements and relationships that she would create in her classroom context. She was committed to small group work, differentiation, and promoting students' feelings of responsibility for their own learning. She valued her own autonomy as a teacher and wanted to promote student autonomy and choice. She had a clear and well developed self-image and identity as a strong beginning teacher well prepared to make a difference in education and in the educational lives of her students. Kara's image of good teaching and learning came into existence largely decontextualized and had not been tested in a specific classroom with unique student needs. Though Kara's instructional strategies for small group work and student autonomy did not work well in her kindergarten context, her view of good teaching and classroom structure persisted in spite of questioning from the researcher. Her image of good teaching and learning conflicted with the classroom experience she shared with

her students. Kuzmic (1994) postulated that her strong commitment to this image "limited her ability to examine critically [her] realities and to explore possible solutions" (p. 21).

Kara felt pressured to complete workbook pages at the same rate as her colleagues and felt the difficulty of trying to make time for the things she believed in while trying to complete the tasks she felt obligated to do. She dealt with discipline issues superficially in order to be able to continue teaching the content. She became more conservative in her ways of teaching and more traditional in the content she chose to teach. Kuzmic posited that Kara began to internalize external constraints and assumed that the difficulties in creating a classroom reality that matched her *imagining* was due to her own personal limitations or faulty abilities. This threatened her identity as a teacher and her self confidence and she began to blame herself and her students for her inability to bring into reality her imaginings of the type of teacher she wanted to be and the type of learning engagements she hoped to create for her students. She was not prepared to see how these factors were related to the realities and constraints of her context or to create more appropriate approaches for the age and developmental needs of her students.

Kuzmic found that with time Kara gained an understanding of the ways that the expectations in place in her school context and her view of herself as a teacher were often conflicting. She became more reflective of her teaching and her context and began to loosen up and modify her image of herself as a teacher "in subtle ways to correspond to the exigencies of her situation" (p. 23). She stopped feeling pressed to keep up with

the curriculum pacing of other teachers and instead began to take more time for the types of learning and teaching engagements she valued. She also modified her classroom organizational structures to incorporate more whole group activities in order to improve behavior and management.

Kuzmic (1994) posited that teacher candidates must be given opportunities to develop *organizational literacy* in their preservice and induction years. He argued that it is not enough for teacher education programs to help candidates learn how to teach but that beginning teachers must "'learn about teaching' by exploring how schools as bureaucratic organizations function and the limits and possibilities this affords those who work in such institutions" (p. 24). Kuzmic argued that failing to examine and challenge existing structures of education perpetuates current problems and limits possibilities for individual and collective change. He stated that new teachers need opportunities for

> …developing an awareness of schools as organizations, an understanding of how this affects the lives of teachers, a basis for examining ones *[sic]* own views about teaching, the impact on ones *[sic]* teaching and ones *[sic]* ability to control those aspects of ones *[sic]* life within an educational organization, challenge existing practices, and struggle for meaningful organizational change (Kuzmic, 1994, p. 25).

Kuzmic believed that this type of critical analysis of the organization of schooling can aid teachers in reformulating their role in their classroom and in schooling in general. He stated that teaching and teachers should not be *deskilled* assuming that their role is merely technical, but should recognize that teaching, learning, schooling, and teacher preparation are "moral, political, and personal activities which foster reflection, inquiry, and engaged practice" (p. 26). He argued that the development of this *organizational*

literacy and disposition can empower the individual teacher and the professional collective to engage in "reflective action and meaningful change," (p. 26) to reconstruct existing organizational practices and policies.

Emotional Learning Tasks of Beginning Social Justice Educators

Few studies explore the emotional learning tasks in which new teachers must engage during their first year. Chubbuck and Zembylas (2008) have contributed much to our understanding of the emotional struggles, challenges, and ambivalences experienced by beginning social justice educators.

Chubbuck and Zembylas conducted a qualitative ethnographic study exploring the connections between the teaching and the emotions of a beginning social justice educator attempting to engage in socially just teaching in a multicultural environment. The participant, Sara, a 23-year-old recent graduate of a religiously affiliated private college in the Midwest, was recognized by faculty and supervisors for her "strong beginning" as a teacher who had "verbally articulated a firm commitment to socially just teaching practices as well as a fairly complex description of what that might mean in practice" (p. 287). One researcher had been Sara's instructor and had previously established a strong relationship with her. Sara was employed as a long term substitute for in a high school English class at the school where she had completed her internship the previous year. Sara traveled between classrooms to teach her course. Since the school used block scheduling, Sara had the same students for only nine weeks.

Chubbuck observed Sara for 80 minutes (one class period) daily for nine weeks (a quarter). She also conducted six 2-3 hour semi-structured interviews related to Sara's feelings about her efforts to enact and implement practices of socially just teaching in her classroom, her vision of socially just teaching, and how she developed that vision. During these interviews, Sara also talked about the ways she was or was not meeting her goals for herself as a social justice educator and the conditions that helped or hindered her in that goal. Chubbuck also collected student work, Sara's plans and reflective journal, and notes in her research journal from her almost daily after school conversations with Sara. At the end of the school year, Chubbuck conducted another three hour observation and an 80 minute debriefing interview in order for Sara to describe the rest of the academic year. Sara was then given an initial written report of the findings and her responses were incorporated into the final report (p. 292).

Sara felt alienated and alone even though she was supported on a daily basis by a university faculty member and had daily after school conversations with her. Her commitment to social justice further alienated her from her colleagues who thought she was "so moral" (p. 298) that they didn't speak much to her. Also, she in many ways alienated her students as they came to believe she thought she should be "that white lady from *Dangerous Minds* and come save all of us poor kids in the ghetto" (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2008, p. 302). She became alienated from herself when she punished herself for not being the type of teacher she "should" be or covering all of the things she "should" cover. When she felt as if she wasn't doing well she considered herself a "perpetrator of injustice and complicit with the system" (p. 299). This was personally

destructive because she had identified herself primarily as a person who worked against the status quo. The words that she uses when she discusses this dissonance are clearly emotive: bleak, like a failure, feeling tremendous anxiety and guilt, and being caught in an agonizing cycle that debilitated her and her planning.

Part of the way through the year, Sara sought professional help to deal with her anxiety and her expectations of herself. She began a “lengthy journey inward, finding things out about [herself]” (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2008, p. 301), started to attend a nonviolent communication class to stop the oppressive violence she was inflicting upon herself, discovered she did not want to view herself as a “white savior” (p. 301), and learned that her students needed to examine justice in their own lives but also that they needed to “connect with [her] through other elements than just the sorrow of, the sadness of social justice” (p. 302).

Sara left the teaching profession after only 18 months in the classroom and spent 12 months volunteering in a developing country at an orphanage and school. When she returned to the US, Sara took a job serving first generation college students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds as an academic counselor in a university. She feels that her current position is aligned with her goal of being an educator committed to pursuing social justice. She is not certain about the potentiality of returning to public education. Chubbuck and Zembylas further argued that “to the extent that emotionality affects novice teachers and leads them to exit the profession, it is extremely important to investigate the delusional orientation of teacher education programs that social

justice orientations could actually work in the real world of public education" (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2008, p. 312).

This research does lead one to a conclusion that teacher education programs that are encouraging the development of social justice priorities must be structured in such a way that the graduates are prepared and supported as they continue to develop their professional identities and engage cognitively, socially, and emotionally in the act of teaching.

Summary of Part Two

Part Two details the three learning dimensions of social justice educators, including the cognitive, social, and emotional learning tasks. Research in this section indicates that while all beginning teachers struggle with cognitive and emotional dissonances during the beginning of their career, these tensions are even more pronounced in beginning teachers committed to transformative pedagogy (Cantor, 1998; Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2008; Curry et al., 2008; Kuzmic, 1994; Timmons Flores, 2007). Additionally, these beginning teachers often feel, and experience, isolation and alienation as they separate themselves from the conservatively socializing context of their school and distance themselves from their colleagues (Cantor; Chubbuck & Zembylas; Timmons-Flores). Several studies reviewed in this section (Cantor; Chubbuck & Zembylas; Curry et al., 2008; Kuzmic; Timmons Flores) indicate that beginning teachers with commitment to structural change and equity are even more likely to struggle with social and emotional learning tasks in the situated learning environments of their school context.

The research in Part Two is particularly relevant to the work that I engaged in with these beginning teachers. While it is evident that all beginning teachers need a safe space to develop their professional identities and to accomplish the three learning tasks, the literature reviewed in the previous section indicates that this need is even more significant for teachers committed to systemic change. This research informed the design of my collaboration as I considered ways to engage with beginning teachers in the creation of a community where they could work to make sense of the tensions they might experience in the first year of their career. I hoped that a shared space might help to mitigate feelings of isolation and alienation through relationships with colleagues who had similar commitments to equity and justice.

Part Three: Situated Learning Contexts of Successful Teachers Across the Literature

In Part Three of the review, I look across the studies at the teachers who are considered by the researchers to be most successful. These successful beginning teachers experienced strikingly similar support through the cognitive learning opportunities afforded them, the social context and relationships experienced by them, and the emotional support provided to them.

The following study is particularly salient to my query because it evidences the cogent factors (cognitive, social, and emotional) that seem to be uniformly significant in the success or failure of a beginning teacher.

Norman and Feiman-Nemser (2005) explored the relationships between two pairs of mentor/ beginning teachers over a two-year period. The beginning teachers were working with ELLs in the fourth or fourth and fifth grades in a system known for its

supportive induction program. Extensive data collection and analysis procedures were employed for this study including: observations of teaching, debriefing, conversations with mentors and mentees, lesson plans, curriculum ideas, descriptive notes from meetings, and a host of other data from each member of the pair. The teaching assignments of the two beginning teachers were similar, their own dispositions toward teaching and learning, the school context in which they worked, and the types of relationships forged between the mentors and beginning teachers all influenced the types of growth that were possible for these teams over their two year collaboration.

The first teacher, Vanessa, had graduated from a one year alternative preparation program. She viewed her first year of teaching as a time when she had much to learn as she thought that most of her training had been largely irrelevant. Her view of teaching as a technical skill encouraged her to believe that as she gained experience teaching she would have less and less to learn. Throughout the two years she emphasized *getting through things* and often stated that she didn't know how to help her students focus on comprehension or make meaning from text. Vanessa's mentor often explained that she needed to focus on comprehension as well as fluency and she demonstrated lessons with an emphasis on meaning making. However, the mentor teacher's modeling, reflective listening, and avoidance of giving direct answers and advice were not effective in leading Vanessa to change her practices. In fact, Vanessa stated that she realized that her mentor would not be able to answer her questions so she turned to other teachers for instructional advice. She came to see her mentor primarily as an empathetic and compassionate listener. Vanessa's school and

grade level had experienced significant change, and as a result there were no mentors or experienced teachers from whom she could gain ideas, personal or professional support, collaboration, or the "wisdom of practice" (Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005, p. 696). Though Vanessa appeared to have high levels of confidence, she had many vulnerabilities and ways she needed to improve as a teacher that she did not seem to know how to address. Her isolation and lack of understanding of the big picture led her to give up on promising practices that seemed difficult and she began to rely on whole group instruction which resulted in letting a few students slip through the cracks. She did not know how to make abstract concepts accessible or to help her students increase their comprehension. She was overly focused on management and paid less attention to learning. Her mentor acknowledged many things that Vanessa was doing well, realizing that she was Vanessa's only support and attempting to keep her engaged in the profession. She continued trying to redirect Vanessa's practices by offering advice and modeling. These continued to prove to be ineffective in changing Vanessa's practices.

The other beginning teacher in Norman and Feiman-Nemser's research was Anna. In contrast to Vanessa's alternative certification program, Anna had earned a masters degree in teaching and had completed her student teaching experience in the professional development school in which she was later hired. Anna's mentor during her first two years had also been her student teaching supervisor. Her mentor was also the PDS coordinator of the school and in this capacity worked with Anna's 4th and 5th grade team on the creation of a curriculum based on literacy development. This highly collaborative and collegial environment provided Anna with many collaborators in

addition to her mentor. Anna had a highly developed theoretical stance toward teaching and learning and felt that she had much to learn and had chosen teaching in order to be a lifelong learner. Her sessions with her mentor differed in many ways from the sessions between Vanessa and her mentor described previously. Though they did debrief the lessons that Anna taught, she and her mentor spent the majority of their time creating curriculum and planning both for the larger units and for the specific ways of introducing daily instruction. Anna's mentor focused on helping her with things that Anna identified as needs and interests and viewed their work as a joint creation intended to support "their students." Another difference in the mentoring sessions explored in this research is that Anna and her mentor co-collaborated, asking and answering direct questions. Anna's mentor served as a colleague and an expert, learning and teaching at the same time.

Norman and Feiman-Nemser (2005) concluded that the impact of induction programs, specifically mentoring, depends not only on the skill of the mentor, but also on the school climate and circumstances, and on the personal factors related to the training, attitude, disposition, and beliefs of the beginning teacher. They emphasized that all new teachers are learning to teach and must have opportunity to engage in experiences and relationships that not only offer support, but also enable them to learn and develop professionally.

This review of research indicates that all of the beginning teachers who were successful in their first year were supported in their cognitive development through

social engagement that encouraged their emotional wellbeing. These factors converge to aid in the development of a professional identity.

Hebert and Worthy (2001) found that the most influential elements contributing to success in the first year of teaching were “a match between expectations, personality, and workplace realities, evidence of impact, and using successful strategies to manage student behavior and enter the social and political culture of the school” (p. 230).

The successful teachers described in Flores and Day (2006) were influenced by: (a) their own experiences as pupils, (b) their intrinsic and personal connections to teaching, (c) their ability to link their learning and practice, (d) and the strong and caring relationships they built with students. These teachers worked in supportive collegial environments and had autonomy and freedom in their curricular choices.

The successful teacher described in Bergeron’s (2008) research experienced a multilayered support system which included peer, collegial, administrative, and university support. She found congruency between her own philosophy of holistic curriculum and constructivist learning, her preparation program’s guiding principles, and the practices of her new school context. She had autonomy to plan her own curriculum, and simultaneously found supportive colleagues with whom to collaborate. She was able to choose professional development opportunities based on her own identified needs. These aspects enabled her to take risks in her setting, as she had the support, the climate, and the knowledge to implement practices to meet her students’ needs.

The successful teacher in Cantor's (1998) study found congruency and stability in the progressive, social justice emphasis in place in her university training and in her school context. She felt supported and was able to participant in many collegial activities. She felt that she was contributing to the lives and learning of her students and colleagues and gained confidence from that experience. She continued to push herself to meet her own goals. She felt supported, professional, and happy throughout her extended preparation program and was able to succeed in her work for social justice.

Summary of Part Three

The discussion in Part Three is focused on the situated learning context of teachers who were found to be successful in the beginning of their teaching career (Bergeron, 2008; Cantor; Flores & Day, 2006; Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005). The similarity of the context and support for these teachers was remarkable when explored through the cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions of learning. Each was given professional development centered on her own identified needs, had the support and advice of colleagues and administrators, taught in a school context that was philosophically congruent with her own ideologies and those of her institutions, and had opportunity to engage with caring individuals to mediate the emotional difficulties of the beginning of her career. All were able to negotiate their professional identity while developing in each of the three learning dimensions.

All of the successful teachers in this review were supported in their cognitive, social, and emotional learning tasks. This exploration of the support structures that were in place for individuals throughout this body of literature indicates that beginning

teachers must have support in all three of the learning tasks if they are to successfully develop their professional identity. This has strong implications for the way in which I constructed the engagements for this inquiry as attention was paid to the cognitive development, the social support, and the emotional experiences of these beginning teachers committed to social justice.

Part Four: University Engagement with Beginning Teachers: Methodologically Similar Research

Part Four of this review consists of a summary and critique of several studies which are methodologically similar in some ways to the inquiry we conducted. In addition to describing these studies I will emphasize the ways in which each study leads to further questions for inquiry.

Several studies describe induction and professional development communities that convene online. These discussion groups were found to provide social, emotional, and occasionally cognitive support for beginning teachers. The type of support varied largely based on the parameters set by the researchers in the creation of the space.

DeWert et al. (2003) engaged twelve beginning teachers, four experienced teachers, and eight professors in an online asynchronous message system for six months to determine (a) the efficacy of such communities in providing social, emotional, practical, and professional support to beginning teachers; (b) the issues that would be discussed and the impact those discussions would have on the lives of beginning teachers; (c) the ways that experienced teachers and university faculty would be affected by the process. The data collection period for this study occurred before use of

such tools were ubiquitous, and therefore technical issues and training needed to occur. In addition, all participants went through training for content, determining the three potential roles for participants: consultant, consultee, and peer; and developing a protocol for problem solving process which would be followed through the conversation. Messages were grouped and counted based on the topic of the discussion. Participants were interviewed by phone to determine the impact of the message board on their knowledge, skills, and attitude as a beginning teacher, and to obtain feedback on the project. Topics, participant postings, and discussion thread lengths, and percentages of individuals discussing particular aspects were enumerated. Three factors call the findings into question: over reliance on enumeration, oddly constructed Likert scale measurements, and a failure to discuss the ways in which the protocol for roles and participation and problem solving processes may have unduly manipulated the construction and use of the online space. DeWert et al. (2003) asserted that online communities could effectively provide beginning teachers with social, emotional, professional, and practical support while decreasing feelings of isolation. They also stated that these networks had the potential to increase reflection, confidence, enthusiasm, and problem solving abilities. However, the data do not clearly support these findings as participants described the effectiveness of the interventions as only moderately supportive of their development.

Fry (2006) examined the impact of virtual meetings on the reflective practice, emotional and curricular support, and the maintenance of collaborative and supportive connections for a cohort of 15 preservice teachers who were student teaching in

isolated parts of Wyoming. Fry (2006) created a Technology Supported Induction Network (TSIN) in order for participants to engage in weekly discussion board postings and five video conferences with faculty, a university facilitator, and other student teachers. She had originally asked each participant to engage in the discussion board weekly and to participate in each of the compressed video sessions. The discussion board was rarely used and less than half of the participants stated that it had any impact on their practice. Participants cited lack of time as their reason for limited participation in this intervention. Instead, participants primarily relied on their mentors, emails with their peers and faculty, and the video conferencing for instructional, emotional, and social support. Contrastingly, the participants saw the cognitive merits of the compressed video conversations and felt that they gained valuable and useful information, professional information, and action plans for dealing with relevant situations in their own teaching contexts. These video conversations were spaces where colleagues provided instructional and emotional support and created a virtual community.

Scherff and Paulus (2006) and Paulus and Scherff (2008) analyzed two data sets of preservice teachers engaging in asynchronous communication on a discussion board during their student teaching. In “Encouraging Ownership of Online Spaces” (Scherff & Paulus, 2006), the researchers primarily enumerate the ways in which individuals who were working together in professional development school contexts and taking courses together weekly also communicated asynchronously. Scherff, the instructor of one of the courses made weekly participation in the discussion board a course assignment. She

did not structure the space or provide the topics to be discussed but informed the students that she would be “lurking in the space” (Scherff & Paulus, 2006, p. 357), and would only reply to student posts when necessary or when directly asked. Scherff and Paulus hoped to discern how and whether these eight preservice teachers working at two PDS schools chose to use this unstructured asynchronous space.

The researchers counted and charted the messages that were exchanged over the 18 week course. They determined that 91% of the messages addressed the psychological needs of the participants, while 38% addressed instruction support themes, mostly issues with the university coursework and program. Only 9% of the messages were asking for advice or ideas regarding teaching. Since the preservice teachers engaged in this discussion board were also together in class, were working in a school with other research participants, and in many cases were directly across the hall and engaged extensively with each other offline, Scherff and Paulus acknowledged the impossibility of determining the types of exchanges and interactions that were occurring in ‘real time’ off line and therefore outside of their purveyance as the researchers. It is important to acknowledge that the power inherent in Scherff’s position as instructor. Scherff’s self announced “lurking” may have in some ways changed the shape of the interactions that occurred on the space or altered the ways that the space unfolded. Had she not been a professor or engaged in the discussion board as a reader, the engagement of participants may have been different. Though she did not provide structure for the space, her very presence may have affected the content of the

discussions and the negotiated purposes that were created. Unacknowledged power structures necessarily detract from the credibility of our work.

In “Words of Encouragement,” Paulus and Scherff (2008) described what seems to be the same procedure but with a different number of participants (n=14 preservice teachers and 1 first year teacher enrolled in the course by permission of his advisor). Student participants in this discussion board generated 360 messages and Scherff sent 15 messages. In this analysis, Paulus and Scherff sought to understand the topics that interns discussed, and the ways they made meaning through their online dialogue. Though the researchers explained that they conducted open and axial coding, they also stated that emergent themes related to the research questions were explored and data were analyzed using literature to bind the data. Though the researchers provide the coding manual, their analytical processes utilized in discerning the codes seems to lack internal coherence as one cannot conduct open coding when one is bound to the themes found in literature.

Findings from the study are quite similar to their findings from “Encouraging Ownership of Online Spaces” (2006) in which they enumerated messages by individual and topic. Paulus and Scherff (2008) found that psychological support was requested more than instructional support and that micropolitical issues such as concerns with parents and other staff members was the lengthiest thread in the discussion. They determined that interns emotionally engaged with each other and were similarly responsive through predictable discourse patterns (p. 128). They also found that interns made sense of their experiences through talking with each other in a safe space.

The power structures inherent when a professor is reading the posts, the heavy reliance on enumeration rather than interpretation, the fact that the individuals were required to post once a week in order to earn credit for their course, and the additional consideration that participants were still in classes and schools together and therefore interacted extensively off line, does not provide a fully accurate picture of the ways in which beginning teachers in various locations will chose to create a space for mutual engagement. A consideration of these potential confounding factors may lead to a more complex understanding of the ways that online communities can provide a space for novice and beginning teachers to engage in ways that are mutually beneficial both personally and professionally.

Missing from these analyses are meaningful descriptions of the participants as individuals. Though the data does a good job contextualizing them as teachers, readers are lead to assume that their identity before and outside of the classroom is less than relevant to who they are as beginning teachers. In these analyses, Scherff and Paulus (2006) and Paulus and Scherff (2008) are constrained by enumeration as they counted the times that issues came up in order to determine the salience of ideas. It is possible that a salient point will not be the most often discussed for a variety of reasons. Counting is not enough to gain a qualitative and rich understanding of the complexity of the lives and work of teachers.

With the continuation of the Blackboard asynchronous communicative processes in which Scherff and her students engaged through their practicum and internship experiences, Scherff (2006, 2008) was able to continue to engage her graduates across

thousands of miles and multiple states in their first years of teaching. These new teachers were graduates from her alternative preparation English Education Masters program and finished in the spring or summer of 2004. The message board continued for 10 months from July 2004- May 2005, and 607 messages were exchanged. In May 2005, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the participants at their respective high schools. These interviews were used as secondary information sources. She also has had follow up conversations, emails, and discussions with participants as they co-constructed the analysis of their data and narratives.

In "Starting the Journey Together," Scherff (2006) and two of her former students engage in a self study of their processes in their first year. Scherff returned to the high school English classroom just as the beginning teachers she had worked with entered it as teachers for the first time. She engaged along with them in the discussion board. During the second semester, two students and Scherff engaged in a self study retrospectively reflecting on the feelings and experiences documented in the postings they had shared on the discussion board during their first semester. Three themes were specific to the beginning teachers which were not salient in Scherff's postings. These included (a) "the pressure to be perfect," (b) reality or praxis shock (Veenman, 1984) or the cognitive dissonance between one's expectations of the job and the reality one encounters in the schools, and (c) the transition into adult roles and the "teacher persona." Other themes were consistent for both the beginning teacher and Scherff herself as a teacher educator returning to the classroom after several years. These included (a) the difference between their perceptions of the school and/or the students

and the reality, (b) the frustration of high stakes testing and the extensive paperwork, and (c) the feelings of stress and a desire to quit.

Scherff (2006) returned to teacher education after just one semester and was significantly affected by her engagement in public schools during the time of high stakes testing. She determined that she would prepare future teachers for the high stakes context in which they will work, address issues of accountability and school politics, emphasize practicality over theory, and argue for full year internships. She also became a vocal proponent of the need for teacher educators to return to public school classrooms in order to remain grounded in the realities of teaching and adequately prepare future teachers for the political contexts of schools.

Scherff (2006, 2008) is unique in her engagement of the beginning teachers in the telling of their own story through the use of self analysis. She explained that as teachers own voices are often the missing paradigm in educational research, she was giving primacy to their own interpretation of their words, voice, and story. As this data is rich in information, Scherff has continued to analyze it in different ways.

In “Disavowed,” Scherff (2008) utilized a qualitative case study design from a narrative paradigm to explore the ways two beginning teachers who left the field of teaching just over a year into their career narrated their experiences to their friends through the message board. Scherff took a participatory stance and worked alongside the participants to reconstruct (through polyvocality and the integration of multiple postings) the events and experiences that lead up to their eventual exit from the profession. In this analysis, Scherff and the participants explore their lived experiences

in narrative form, constructing a plot structure of their short lived professional teaching career and marking the climax and falling action that lead to their "disavowal" and decision to leave teaching a little after a year into their career. Scherff and her former students were attempting to understand how the professional, social, and emotional factors of their schools influenced each teacher's decision to leave teaching and what support mechanisms could have been provided for them that might have enabled them to stay.

In their postings and communications, participants described feeling unsupported and unsuccessful as a teacher. Because one's personal and professional identities are inextricably linked, when beginning teachers felt unsuccessful in their classrooms they also began to question their basic self worth. As one participant looked back at her reflections over her short teaching career, she stated that it was "being alone [that] ultimately did [her] in" (Scherff, 2008, p. 1326) and that she was isolated, snubbed and "thrown to the wolves" (p. 1327). In the posting in which this participant shared with her friends her decision to leave teaching, she explained,

> I'm walking away. I'm walking away from all the time I spent in school, all the files and supplies I have, many sweet students, health insurance, all of it. Teaching is just not worth the constant stress and pain that crushed my very soul and being (p. 1327).

Though these individuals were engaged in collegial communities of support with colleagues and faculty from their university, their supportive dialogue was not enough to mitigate the stresses and trials many of them experienced.

A particularly salient study for my exploration was conducted by Dalgarno and Colgan (2007) who explored how graduates of a bachelor of education program might

be supported during their early years of teaching by engagement with a faculty member through an asynchronous technology resource. A faculty member served as the group facilitator on the site, collected and vetted lesson plans that supported the standards, sent weekly group emails to the 245 members of the online community, and facilitated the conversation. This online forum was created and sustained through the personal connections between individual participants. Dalgarno and Colgan (2007) postulated that this sense of ownership contributed greatly to the personal efficacy of the participants. The research here was an attempt to discern the needs of novice math teachers and the efficacy of an alternative web-based professional development model.

Twenty-seven novice elementary school math teachers (with between one and five years of teaching experience), who were graduates of the same B.Ed. program and who had gained employment in a variety of school contexts and locations, engaged as members of an online math education community. The data collection procedures occurred over a two month period and included two ninety minute focus group sessions attended by five or six participants or a telephone interview. Each collection strategy was semi-structured using a script "designed to elicit information about the supports deemed important to novice teachers and how (the online community) offered a vehicle for meeting those needs, if at all" (p. 1057).

Results from these interviews and focus groups indicated that the novice teachers found that the online community served as an authentic professional development experience centered on the needs and issues they encountered in their own teaching. They explained that this model was different from the school sponsored

professional development in that it did not employ a mandatory workshop, one time, decontextualized approach to teacher support but was instead teacher driven, based on choice, and “catered to the specific needs” (Dalgarno & Colgan, p. 1059) of the teachers. Novice teachers found these “self-selected, self-directed, and contextualized activities” to be “useful, practical, and applicable to the realities of the classroom” (p. 1059). Two thirds of the participants in the telephone interviews explained that they learned a great deal from their colleagues and were able to share resources and bounce ideas off of each other. The focus groups emphasized the ability to ask for help during stressful and challenging times. Teachers who had taught for more than two years were able to draw upon their own experiences as teachers whereas teachers earlier in their careers needed significant relationships with others to be able to learn with, from, and through. Teachers engaged in this community sent the facilitator lesson plans which she evaluated. After the plans were found meet the established criterion, the resources were posted on the site. These resources were found to be a significant resource as they were created by new teachers who shared much of the same ideological and pedagogical training.

Another finding that was significant was the role of communication. Members of the community who lived abroad were found to value the connectedness that was offered through the community as well as the content offered, while individuals who were more able to engage face to face found that the references, ideas, and resources available on the site were particularly helpful to their professional development. The access to colleagues and professors on the site made it a safe space where participants

were able to find support when they encountered problems. The study indicated that this group of novice elementary mathematics teachers utilized this space for self-motivated and self-selected ongoing and long term access to professional development which was found to be relevant to and supportive of their own teaching experiences. The online connections provided a safe space for beginning teachers to share resources, access knowledge, obtain pedagogical and curricular support, seek help when needed, prevent feelings of isolation, and maintain significant emotional and personal connections. This type of community facilitated by a faculty member with whom participants had a personal link was found to provide beginning teachers with opportunities for cognitive, social, and emotional learning and growth.

Singer and Zeni (2004) engaged in practitioner inquiry in order to explore the medium of an electronic listserv as a powerful part of the collaborative supervision model at their university. The listserv was created in response to limited human and fiscal resources and increasing student enrollment in programs. Singer and Zeni hoped that the listserv could help to provide the amount and quality of support they hoped to offer their student teachers. A listserv was created which consisted of the English, Speech, and Drama student teachers as well as the university supervisors and methods faculty. These listservs occurred over the course of five student teaching semesters (Fall 2001-Fall 2003) and consisted of 64 student teachers. Students were required to submit evidence of their process and reflection either on the listserv, over email to the supervisor, or in written form. Most opted to use the listserv to demonstrate their reflective practices and all used it to some degree. Over the course of the five

semesters, 2,152 messages were posted by students and 644 by university supervisors. Additionally, Singer and Zeni (2004) took field notes on the face-to-face and online seminars and "conducted open-ended interviews with individual student teachers, informal interviews during classroom visits and seminars, and a group focus session at the end of each semester" (p. 33). During the focus sessions they returned to each student teacher his/her postings from the semester and used "cued retrospection" asking the student teachers to complete an "emotional barometer" to self-assess his/her highs and lows across the fourteen week student teaching experience. Singer and Zeni then employed grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to analyze the online narrative discourse for content, discourse types, and affective states. Singer and Zeni then "used a theoretical sampling (Glaser, 1978) in which key informants [were] sought to explicate and elaborate on emerging themes" (p. 34).

They found that the student teachers used the listserv to "talk their way into a teaching identity, examine the balance between theory and practice, and frame their own teaching philosophies" (p.41) and as a space to "connect backwards and forwards as they draw together what they have learned in their university education and apply it in a real classroom with real kids" (p. 37) This aided the student teachers in the construction of their own theories of practice. Through this reflective process, student teachers were able to be mutually informed by theory and practice and to deconstruct binaries to create their own understandings of learning and teaching. This opportunity to see themselves as competent and able to help others was particularly important for the student teachers in this study since student teachers often feel scrutinized by too

many helpful experts. They seemingly benefited from the opportunity to be altruistic (Yalom, 1985) and to contribute to the lives of others. These communities also provided opportunities for the student teachers to see each other, and themselves as a source of knowledge.

The second critical function Singer and Zeni (2004) found in the analysis of postings was the ability for members to find and provide encouragement. Participants valued the opportunity to see that they were not alone, but that others were there to help provide them with needed emotional support. The listserv offered them a safe space to acknowledge their vulnerability in a community where someone would listen and respond encouragingly.

The student teachers in Singer and Zeni's study found that the listserv fostered their growth through providing a variety of perspectives and opportunities to ask for help from an immediate audience across time and location. This forum provided for student teachers a level of support that could not be offered during supervisory visits or student teaching seminars. Researchers noted that this type of collaboration may encourage student teachers to begin to "see themselves less as passive technicians and more as reflective practitioners who can make real and lasting improvements in their teaching" (p. 46).

While Singer and Zeni found the listserv to be a venue for cognitive and emotional support for student teachers, the participation of supervisors and others who would ultimately assess them likely had some impact on the forthcomingness of the participants. Additionally, the study focused on preservice teachers without particularly

attending to educators with shared ideologies and ontologies. Lastly, the design of this study allowed for critical conversations but little opportunity for solitary reflection. This increases the possibility that the participants 'storied' their lives in ways that they felt would be valued by other participants.

Swenson (2003) engaged in a network of practicing teachers and university colleagues who collaboratively focused on engaging adolescents in "composing, comprehending, interpreting, reflecting, and acting- an active conception of what it means to be literate" (p. 269) as students worked to see and influence "structures, hierarchies, and patterns of authority" (p.270). Throughout the five year collaboration (1993-1998) the 39 participants exchanged over 10,000 messages documenting their "aspirations, agonies, and activities" (p. 276). The participants who lived in ten different states also met for discussion and relationship building semi-annually at the fall and spring conferences of the National Council of Teachers of English. Throughout her engagement in the network, Swenson became increasingly interested in the ways in which the teachers were "teaching one another on the project listserv" (p. 264). She began to analyze the *dialogic web* of the conversations in order to identify essential characteristics of a transformative online teacher network which supported authentic professional development.

Swenson argued that,

> As a profession, we have *not* been remiss in funding professional development nor in staging it, but we have far too long and bleak a history of subjecting teachers to professional development that simply doesn't work- professional development that is offered as an *event, mandated* by someone other than a classroom teacher and facilitated by an *outside expert* rather than embedded in the daily practice, the daily

> lives of teachers who are actively in service to students and communities. (Swenson, 2003, p. 263)

Instead she proposed that the daily events in the life of a teacher can become the "occasions and exigencies for professional development" (p. 264) and that expertise and assistance can be sought from individuals on an asynchronous network "*at the point of need* whether the need occurs during the school day or on a weekend night, in the school setting, or elsewhere" (p. 263). She found that "teachers and teacher educators who participated in [the initiative] created an online 'transformative teacher network'" which enabled "idiosyncratic events to become occasions for authentic professional development, resulting in transformations in teachers' beliefs and practices and in student learning" (p. 265). She was able to locate very few instances in which the professional literature examined the transformative experiences of teacher networks and their effects on teaching and learning and even fewer who explored the potentialities of this type of on-line teacher network.

The teachers and teacher educators in Swenson's network discussed a broad range of topics and their conversations were "never…decontextualized [but were] always grounded in the lived experiences of particular teachers and particular students in particular settings" (p. 276). They

> …articulated their questions, concerns, and observations and were almost immediately engaged in conversation with their peers. They cited theories and professional texts for one another than had influenced their own understanding; they shared pedagogical approaches, they commiserated and celebrated one another's personal and professional triumphs and travails… and rather than orally converse with one another about these subjects as one might in a school setting, their conversations were written…(p. 275)

Swenson (2003) argued that the complexities of teaching "*real* students in *real* classroom and communities during real time, drove the dialogue to be something more than a professional academic exercise" (p. 276). She identified four primary characteristics of this community which could inform the creation of transformative on-line teacher networks. The participants "made regular and strong commitments to the network's named purposes" (p. 284) and validated each other for their commitment to those collective goals. Participants were highly committed to the collaboration and to each other, forging and strengthening connections through the listserv, broadening and expanding each others' frame of reference beyond the local context, and providing an element of "political protection" by creating a site for individuals to explore and share thinking which "might be considered problematic in their local culture" (p. 289). Participants found in their collegial community "validation, consolation, and encouragement" (p. 300) and a mitigated sense of isolation. Swenson posited that effective transformative teacher-networks must establish feelings of safely, engagement, and stimulation so that members can develop "enough trust to express disagreements and try to understand why [they] disagreed" (p. 300) and to feel safe enough to "share their fears about their teaching and classrooms- a place where they can express their discomforts and frustrations and receive, in response, not only empathy, but also advice for ways to respond to difficult situations" (p. 300). Members of this community attributed their ability to share in this way to the "relationships with each other away from the listserv" (p. 306).

Lastly, Swenson (2003) believed that transformative teacher-networks were ones in which teachers exhibited changes in their practices and beliefs which enhanced student learning which they attributed to their involvement in the network. In the context of her teacher-network this was demonstrated as teachers engaged in self-sponsored professional development and began to see themselves as reflective practitioners and teacher researchers. She found that the listserv provided several opportunities for teachers to learn with and from each other by soliciting information through direct questions, sharing resources and references, and composing “classroom windows” or vignettes through which they invited others to learn vicariously through their experiences in the classroom. She found that authentic professional development seemed to occur “when teachers have opportunities to share their practices with one another” and through “active conversations and idea exchanges with excited educators” (p. 314).

Participants in Swenson’s network named distinct advantages and disadvantages of the online network. At least one participant found that she was much more comfortable participating once she had met with the other members face to face (p. 293). Many expressed a preference for meeting in person and having the additional cues of body language to support communication. However, the advantages of asynchronous meeting for this group of educators who were located in ten different states were significant. The availability, affordability, and ability to provide support for each other “at the point of need” in a way that was “fully integrated into teachers’ daily practice" (p. 317) was critical to the success of this network. Swenson felt that the network was

taken up to such a great degree by the participants because the rewards of participation were seen to be greater than the cost of time, because the technology was “as simple as possible” (Swenson, 2003, p. 317), and because the group was fluid, changing and evolving over time in its own fashion. Another important factor in its success was that the members agreed to keep challenging conversations public rather than removing them from the listserv and effectually closing off the opportunity for reflection and discussion with other members. This courageous involvement was supported by members of the community and provided a forum for all members to grapple with challenging aspects of practice.

Swenson found that this type of on-line network “can be fit into teachers’ busy, programmed schedules, and [can] bring geographically distant colleagues together” (p. 299). Through the collaboration she became convinced that inquiry-based listserv conversations can provide authentic opportunities for professional development and posited that these networks have the potentiality to “address teacher isolation and to function as a support group for teachers- particularly new teachers” (p. 299).

Swenson and her suggestions for teacher networks as helpful spaces for professional transformation served as a model for consideration at the inception of my inquiry. Attempts were made to account for and provide opportunities for participants to collaborate in authentic professional development through collegial and collaborative community focused on a shared collective purpose and providing support at the” point of need”. We strove to create a community that was safe, engaging, and mutually

inspiring while we worked to support each other in our practice, our pedagogy, and our commitments.

While the vast majority of research is related to the online support of graduates by a faculty member, Susi Long, a professor at the University of South Carolina, and seven graduates from the early childhood masters program she instructed also continued to meet and collaborate over a seven-year period. These beginning teachers and their former professor conducted a collective self-study on the *Tensions and Triumphs in the Early years of Teaching* (Long, Abramson, Boone, Borchelt, Kalish, Miller, Parks, & Tisdale, 2006). In this text, they describe the growth and the changes that they experienced professionally and as a group over their first several years in the classroom. It is particularly notable that of the seven teachers, one left the classroom for three years to stay home with her young children, one is now teaching in a small private day care, and another is a university liaison, teaching undergraduate reading courses and leading professional development. The rest of them are still classroom teachers. The fact that all of the teachers are still engaged in teaching, albeit in different capacities and with much more confidence and skill, is notable as it varies significantly from the statistics about teacher attrition. In this text, the eight teacher-researcher-authors describe the struggles they had enacting the idealism of their teacher education program, living up to their visions of the teachers they hoped to be, dealing with the micropolitical and socializing pressures of teaching as others taught, becoming less judgmental of others who teach differently, and finding their voice and becoming

political in ways that formed and transformed their teaching and schools into the types of places where they would want to work.

The storied development of their respective careers and their collective research demonstrates implicitly the transformative power of a long term collaborative relationship in which individuals support each other personally and professionally. The voices and reflections of each author are used throughout as they narrate their collective and personal experiences. Emphasis in this text is on the micropolitical and emotional aspects of teaching, the power of collective support, and the development of professionalism, voice, and empowerment in the classroom and in the field. The authors do not attempt to make themselves seem flawless, nor do they assume that they have tied up all the loose ends. They do work, however, to emphasize the ways that other school stakeholders and university faculty can best support beginning teachers' growth and development.

One unique but important aspect of this work is the attention paid to the ways in which group participation also shaped the faculty member in her teaching and engaging with future teachers. Rather than sending students out believing they can change the world tomorrow, she discusses with them the trials and triumphs of real teachers, their trials and triumphs as they develop. Long delves more deeply into issues of language and cultural diversity in her coursework. Additionally, she is intentional about spending much more time in schools and with teachers so she is aware of the current trends and issues that affect teaching and learning.

This text is contributory and in many aspects similar to my research. It does not, however, emphasize social justice or the sociohistorical and cultural biographies that shape a commitment to social justice. Additionally, the teachers are all female, monolingual, early childhood educators. Aside from one teacher of color, all of the teachers engaged in Long et al.'s (2006) research are white.

These explorations of on and off-line support systems provide insight into the ways that engagement with colleagues and professors can enhance cognitive, social, and emotional learning while beginning teachers develop their professional identities.

Summary of Part Four

Part Four explores the research that was methodologically similar to the inquiry in which we engaged. In these studies (Dalgarno & Colgan, 2007; DeWert et al., 2003; Fry, 2006; Long et al.; Paulus & Scherff, 2008; Scherff, 2006, 2008; Scherff & Paulus, 2006) university faculty engaged with graduates in communities which offered mutual support in the development of some or all of the three learning tasks. Research in this section, while informative, still indicates the need for further research.

Need for This Study

The research presented in this chapter supports the need for my inquiry in several ways. First, few studies attend to all three of the learning tasks, and therefore they are not exploring all the ways beginning teachers should be supported. Second, there is a limited amount of research describing successful social justice educators and the factors that can support the development of their professional identity. Lastly, in the research exploring the beginning professional experiences of social-justice educators,

attention to two important factors is notably absent: (a) the social, cultural, and historical factors that have shaped them as individuals and cultivated in them a commitment to teaching and learning for justice and equity, and (b) the ways in which they narrate the beginning of their career.

Several methodological questions become salient through this review of the literature. The research that I have reviewed focused either on the individual participants or on the group interaction while none discussed the inextricable nature of the two. Secondly, though many of the induction processes were interventions, only Scherff (2008) had an advocacy/participatory stance toward the construction of her research and the treatment of her participants. Thirdly, none of the research explored the development of a liminal and subversive professional identity that may be negotiated and nurtured through mutual engagement in a transformative third space.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

In the previous chapter, I reviewed literature regarding the cognitive, social, and emotional developmental challenges of beginning teachers as they strive to negotiate a professional identity. I also explored research related to supportive induction programs for teachers and the specific needs of beginning teachers committed to social justice. In this chapter, I will discuss the theoretical and epistemological foundations and the methodology of this study.

This qualitative inquiry focused on both individual and multiple cases as I sought to understand what happens when beginning educators committed to social justice entered the classroom. Additionally, this study sought to explore the impact which engagement in an online community of support with university colleagues and a faculty member may have on the experiences of these beginning teachers.

Research Questions

- What are the individual experiences, tensions, and perceptions expressed by social justice educators during their first year of teaching?
- How does an online community created to develop a support network influence the experiences of these beginning educators during their initial year in the field?

In this chapter several related aspects of the study will be discussed and described. Firstly, I will explain two epistemological paradigms that are congruent with my understanding of knowing and interacting with others: constructivism and an advocacy/participatory stance (Cresswell, 2003). I will discuss the ways in which these knowledge claims informed and influenced the methodological orientation, strategy of inquiry, underlying assumptions, and purpose of this study.

Secondly, I will discuss the three theoretical frameworks that have informed this work: (a) third space theory (Bhabha, 1990, 1994; Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995; Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Turner, 1997; Soja, 1989, 1996); (b) transformational learning theory (Mezirow, 1998, 2000); and (c) individual psychology (Adler, 1998; Dinkmeyer & Sperry, 2000; Dreikurs Ferguson, 1984; Griffith & Powers, 2007; Sweeney, 1998). I will define each theory briefly, with an overview of primary proponents and their contributions, then I will discuss how each theory separately has informed the creation of this research project. I will then explain how related strands of these three theoretical frameworks are woven together as the foundation of this research project, informing its design and methodology.

Next, I will describe the context, the participants, and the participant researcher role for this study. Then, I will describe the methodology for the study, including the data sources, collection, and analytical procedures. I will provide charts, timelines, and other supporting documents so that my reader can better understand the complexities of the method. Finally, I will show how I have been attentive in this methodology to

aspects of trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, as defined by Lincoln & Guba (1985).

Knowledge Claims and Philosophical Paradigms

Any research query is shaped, either explicitly or implicitly, by the philosophical assumptions and knowledge claims of a researcher. The types of queries, the design and procedures, the process of analysis and interpretation are shaped by the ways in which we believe knowledge and understanding can be gained. Cresswell (2003) explains, "philosophically, researchers make claims about what is knowledge (ontology), how we know it (epistemology) what values go into it (axiology), how we write about it (rhetoric), and the processes for studying it (methodology)" (p. 6). Therefore, ways that we shape our queries, the roles that we claim as researchers, and the means that we adopt in order to go about processes of gaining understanding are deeply rooted in philosophical constructs. Lincoln and Guba (2000) use the word *paradigms* for those constructs which are the foundation for the work we do as researchers, teachers, and individuals living and learning in a collective space.

The four knowledge claims that Cresswell delineates are *postpositivist, socially constructed, advocacy/participatory,* and *pragmatic*. These terms are helpful articulations of larger ontological understandings that shape our work in our world. The descriptions of two of the knowledge claims, *socially constructed* and *advocacy/participatory*, are helpful to explore at the beginning of this methodology, as they shape and inform all of the decisions that have gone into the creation of this study and the larger understandings that will be evident throughout this work.

Socially Constructed Knowledge Claims

Primary assumptions of the socially constructed knowledge claim are the following: (a) individuals seek to understand the world in which they live and work; (b) meaning making is a social activity, occurring through interactions with and connections to other individuals, (c) meanings developed from experiences are subjective and interpreted based on an individual's social, historical, and cultural perspective; therefore multiple and varied meanings and interpretations of a single event are possible (Cresswell, 2003; Crotty, 1998). Working with the assumption that knowledge and learning are socially constructed, a researcher will build a methodology in which the complexity of ideas and concepts is expected and explored. Open ended, general, and broad engagements will be created in order for the participants to have great flexibility in exploring, constructing, and interpreting the meaning of their own circumstances. Attention to the ways that individuals act and interact in their own settings is an important part of this paradigm, and very often researchers will address the interaction processes of individuals.

Researchers with this paradigm give specific attention to their own socially, historically, culturally, and emotionally contextualized interpretations of events and conversations. The researcher acknowledges explicitly the role of his or her own history in the interpretation and making sense of experiences and makes significant effort to develop, through induction rather than deduction, a theory or pattern of meaning based on the meanings that others have interpreted about their world.

Though I resonate in many ways with aspects of this paradigm, I also experience some significant unease with the process of storying and interpreting the lives of others. Schwandt (1999) explains this tension as a

> *…claim to know the other from the Other's point of view, and even to understand the Other better than she understands herself...* The immediacy of the Other's claim... is co-opted from the standpoint of the interpreter. This can be understood as a form of sympathetic listening in which we interpret others in our own terms and refuse to risk our own prejudgments in the process (p. 458).

I find this aspect of social constructivism problematic in many ways and am not convinced of the right of the researcher to co-opt the experiences of another and interpret them *for* the participant. This type of storying the life of another can become marginalizing and colonizing. Also, I believe it is the ethical responsibility of the researcher to actualize a methodology that not only contributes to the knowledge of the field, but also contributes to the lives of the participants who so graciously share of themselves in the research process. This obligation is not addressed in this paradigm, and in many ways I find that an ethical deficiency. Freire (1970) argued that "any situation in which some individuals prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence" (p. 85). Though I would argue that few researchers within this paradigm are intending to perpetrate acts of violence against their participants, the implications of research in which the researcher is the sole interpreter of truth needs to be carefully considered. When we story and interpret the lives and experiences of the other, assuming that we can understand their purposes and behaviors with more clarity than they can themselves, we are in many ways turning them into objects or at best "informants," even if we do use the politically correct term of participants. Individuals,

as part of the process of storying their own lives, become agents, creating, constructing, and interpreting their lives, and in many ways claiming their truth through the articulation of their story.

Advocacy/Participatory Knowledge Claims

The second philosophical paradigm or knowledge claim that resonates with my own ontological and epistemological ways of being is *advocacy/participatory*. In many ways this stance addresses my concerns about the *socially constructed* paradigm. Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998) explained that participatory and advocacy forms of inquiry focus on bringing about change and helping individuals free themselves from constraints in relationships of power in educational settings, work procedures, language and in media. Kemmis and Wilkinson further stated that advocacy/participatory research makes participants active partners in the inquiry through collaboration and recursive and dialectical processes to engage *with* others rather than *on* or *to* others. Researchers with this philosophical stance aim to politicize and create a climate of debate which will ultimately disrupt oppressive structures. Cresswell (2003) explained that "for advocacy/participatory writers, there is undoubtedly a strong personal stimulus to pursue topics that are of personal interest- issues that relate to marginalized people and an interest in creating a better society for them and for everyone" (p. 23).

This paradigm is also very much a part of who I am and what I see as my purpose. However, there are some aspects of this construct with which I am apprehensive at best. The tendency for researchers in this paradigm is to go into the research already having a clear idea of what they hope to change or assumptions about

the stories they will hear. This paradigm can often be distorted into a *great researcher hope* of the paternalistic researcher going to the people and imposing a solution upon them, rather than going to the participants and finding the aspects of their own lives they themselves hope to transform and building a movement based on the true experience of the oppressed. Too often, externally created interventionist research fails to return to individuals that which is already their own. This type of *banking methodology* is far from a liberating practice in which the "action and reflection of men and women upon their world [enables them] to transform it" (Freire, 1970, p. 79). One safe-guard against such a negative possibility would be the use of a problem posing methodology. Research can be truly participatory and liberatory if researchers employ a problem posing methodology, in which the participants become critical co-investigators in dialogue with the researcher and in which the researcher is not only attempting to find the story that he/she wishes to tell, but also is working to allow the stories of the participants to be interpreted authentically and compassionately through the engagement of the participants themselves.

Researchers working within this paradigm often engage with the participants in the forming of design, questions, data collection, and the process of analysis. This type of research, at its best, has the potential to "change the lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher's life" (Cresswell, 2003, p. 9-10).

Socially Constructed and Advocacy/Participatory Knowledge Claims in This Inquiry

These two knowledge claims are implicit and explicit in my design of this inquiry and both are used to mutually strengthen and balance the aspects of the other which seem to be in some ways lacking. I engaged *with* the participants in inquiry as they worked both individually and collectively to understand the worlds in which they live and work through interactions and connections with each other, with their students, with their colleagues, and with their situated communities, and to interpret those meanings based on their personal, social, historical, and cultural perspectives. Even as they constructed and interpreted these meanings, they were developing a professional identity and co-creating third spaces where they focused on bringing about change, and freeing themselves and each other from conservatively socializing mandates and processes in their own educational settings and work procedures. I continuously evaluated my role as a participant researcher, realizing that my own positioning influenced my engagement, and I worked to ensure that I was not leading the participants down a path I hoped they would go, but instead, walking alongside them and endeavoring to encourage and challenge them at this exciting and crucial stage of their professional development.

As a researcher whose goal is to make changes in how first year teachers are supported, I have selected participants, collected data, analyzed the data from a certain perspective, made choices about what gets into the dissertation and what does not, and crafted the text of this narrative. As an individual who is specifically committed to the success of the specific individuals in this inquiry and whose goal is to support and

encourage them in ways that meet their expressed and implied needs, I have met with, shared, mentored, collaborated, coached, provided resources, empathized and encouraged. These two roles coexisted comfortably and were neither independent nor mutually exclusive.

Similarly, both of the knowledge claims which I espouse, socially constructed and advocacy/participatory, exist quite comfortably in qualitative research and require that participants are treated fairly, are engaged in the research, and are offered opportunities to respond to their statements, actions, and my observations. The inherent tensions between these two knowledge claims are indicative of the broader tensions between advocacy and research. I feel that in many ways the strength of each claim about what knowledge is and the role of research fills a gap left by the other and that taken together, they create a space for liberatory research. The advocacy participatory and socially constructed understandings of knowledge strengthen the other and compensate for areas in which each alone is lacking. The advocacy/ participatory stance guards against the tendency for socially constructed research to become a marginalizing process to the participants by encouraging them to story their lives and interpret their experiences even while they identify potential ways of deconstructing hegemonic processes. The open-ended, general, and broad engagements in socially constructed research enable participants and researchers to flexibly explore, construct, and interpret the meaning of their own circumstances which guards against the tendency of many advocacy/participatory researchers to enter an

inquiry with assumptions about what will be found and what is needed to 'liberate' the oppressed participants.

Throughout this query I have attempted to engage in research which provided a space for the participants to advocate for themselves, their needs, and to negotiate the tensions of their practice. While my broader questions about the experiences of these beginning teachers and the potentialities of a collaborative community have driven my exploration of this engagement, my desire to engage in such a process comes from my ontological purposes and belief that all of us, teacher educators, teachers, parents, and students alike can re-imagine our ways of acting and interacting in the world in order to make it more of the place we hope it will become. Thusly, in my mind, the tension between researcher and advocate is assuaged by my own understanding of purpose. My primary purpose has been to support these teachers. I have worked diligently to record our collaborative processes so that they can be recounted. I have not intended to enforce the methodology or to standardize my relationships with the participants, rather, I strove (and continue to strive) to support and encourage these teachers in their unique context, with their unique successes, challenges, dispositions, pedagogies, and personalities. I acknowledge the tensions in researching the Other and strove throughout the inquiry to maintain their voice and keep the authenticity of their identities. I have found, as Cresswell (2003) noted, this process has, in significant ways, changed my life as a researcher and a teacher educator.

When a liberating methodology is employed, the borders between advocacy and inquiry are made problematic. This type of research has potential not only to forward

our knowledge base, but also to support and transform the lives of those who engage in such an inquiry. It is that duality which should not be seen as mutually exclusive, and it is within that tension that this research is intended to reside.

Design of the Study

This qualitative case study focused on multiple cases, which is particularly appropriate for researchers who come from constructivist or advocacy/participatory perspectives, or both. In this approach, emerging methods and open-ended questions are appropriate. In qualitative designs the researcher positions herself, her subjectivities, her engagement and her personal values within the study, collaborates with the participants, collects participant meanings, focuses on a single concept or phenomenon attending to the context or setting of participants, validates the accuracy of findings, and creates an agenda for change or reform. All of these aspects of design are integral to my view of research and its purposes.

Case study, specifically a multiple-case study design, was an appropriate way to think about this study and these participants for a number of reasons. Ann Dyson (1995) explained the importance of case study thusly,

> What can be done with thousands of children but count them? In mass, children- and the challenges they present- are faceless, nameless, and overwhelming. But these massive numbers of children are not isolated individuals; they're social participants included, or so we hope, in particular classrooms and schools, in particular institutions and communities (p. 51).

The astounding statistics associated with teacher attrition troubled me, not only because of their sheer enormity, but also because they failed to take into account the emotional anguish, financial loss, and personal detriment of leaving a field one has

prepared for after less than five years of employment. It seemed to me that these statistics made the issues of induction and teacher support “faceless, nameless, and overwhelming.” As an individual, I rarely believe that sweeping statements speak much truth about the experiences, trials, triumphs, and realities of individuals. Additionally, I intended to work with specific individuals with whom I had personal relationships and who were teaching in a variety of contexts.

Yin (1994) posited that case studies not only serve the purpose of exploration, but also can describe and explain a phenomenon. Case studies utilize purposeful sampling to select “information rich cases” (Patton, 1990, p. 169). I was specifically interested in collaborating with specific individuals with whom I had worked closely. Case studies employ complex methodologies, multiple data sources, and often do not present “a singular conclusion” but rather “deal with the complexity of the results” (Barone, 2004, p. 24) which was appropriate for the complex contexts, experiences, tensions, and celebrations experienced by the participants, as well as the co-creation of a collaborative community. Barone further argued that when a case study researcher “assumes a critical stance… he or she can use what is discovered during the research study to improve the conditions…and therefore change the environment that is being investigated while the study is occurring” (p. 23) This construct is particularly salient with my own participatory/advocacy stance. Lastly, this inquiry was “applicable to real life as it relates directly to the reader’s experiences and facilitates understanding of complex situations, understandings that cannot be made explicitly in most other research designs” (Barone, p. 25). All of these characteristics of case study design in

general were significant aspects of the work that I hoped to engage in alongside my participants.

Merriam (1988) explained that case studies are “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit” (p. 16). She further stated that case studies share four specific characteristics in addition to their bounded nature: (a) they are particularistic, focusing on a particular person, event, program, situation, or phenomenon; (b) they are descriptive as a primary role of the researcher is to richly describe the case; (c) they are heuristic, enriching the understanding of the reader; and (d) they are inductive, as all understandings emerge directly from the data. These characteristics were all congruent with the inquiry I hoped to conduct, making case study a viable methodology for this work.

Yin (1994) explained that researchers engaging in case study work must attend to several issues during the data collection, analysis, and write up. Researchers should utilize multiple data sources in order to make a case for the results and conclusions reached through the analysis. Researchers also need to attend to the creation of a chain of evidence in which data is presented in a linear fashion to make clear to the reader how the data collection and analysis lead directly to the conclusions. Finally, participants should review the manuscript before it appears in print.

Merriam cautioned researchers to attend to issues of credibility by spending an extended time with participants both to decrease researcher distance and to ensure that observations or occurrences are not an aberration but indicative of a pattern. Merriam also called researchers to consider several ethical implications of their work,

including the confounding influences of researcher bias, the close involvement with the individuals or phenomena under study, the maintenance of confidentiality, the ownership of data, and the challenges of distinguishing between data and the interpretations of the researcher.

Stake (2000) described a collective case study or multiple case study as one in which researchers hope to understand a condition, phenomenon, event, or group. Through the use of multiple cases, I hoped to develop a complex understanding of the experiences, tensions, and perceptions of beginning social justice educators and the potentialities of a collaboratively constructed community of support. Yin (1994) explained that multiple-case research enables researchers not only to find similarities across participants (literal replication), but also to explore the reasons for contrasting results (theoretical replication). I hoped to develop such a multifaceted understanding of the queries in order to consider a range of options for providing support for beginning social justice educators during their induction years.

Multiple case studies have been criticized by Wolcott (1994) due to the emphasis on comparison at the expense of the meticulous description and attention to rich detail. Instrumental and multiple-case studies often value participants as a sort of means to an end, as a way to acquire the larger knowledge the researcher hopes to gain. Frequently the unique voices of participants are not maintained, the differences (or similarities) of the specific participants are washed out in order to come to a generality across participants. This inquiry maintained the voices of individual participants throughout, due to my belief that the varied contexts and particularly the rich stories of the

participants themselves held intrinsic value as well as explanatory potentiality. It was important to me to honor each participant, her story, her contributions, and her pedagogical practices by maintaining her individuality rather than lumping the three of them together. If I had merely taken the three together, some of the reasons for the contrasting results may not have been as evident as they became throughout the exploration. Additionally, I feel that the participants themselves provided rich detail and I have attempted throughout this research to describe them as the colorful, expansive, complex, and amazing women that they are.

Since I was particularly interested in exploring in depth the experiences of three individuals committed to social justice in their first year of teaching, this research was a bounded engagement in which I collected "detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time" (Cresswell, 2003, p. 15) in a "close examination of people, topics, issues, and programs" (Hays, 2004, p. 218) in a context with "clear delimitations" of time, space, geography, and participants (Barone, 2004). While I had two specific questions guiding my data collection and analysis, I had a longer list of potential questions that stemmed from my review of the literature, which I considered and pondered, accepted or rejected, as new questions arose from the data.

Each participant was chosen because she was a revelatory case, met my criterion, and was identified by her professors, her instructors, her peers, and herself as an individual committed to social justice and educational transformation. Each was treated as an individual case in which I explored the participant's themes, growth, struggles, patterns, and processes. Themes were found and narratives of each

participant's experiences were crafted through vertical analysis of the case (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Additional analysis between cases was conducted horizontally through comparative analysis of the individual cases (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin 1994). The exploration of the similarities and contrasting results of the participants were also revelatory.

Unique to this design was the fact that an intentional space was created in which the participants who constitute the disparate cases would interact with each other. This between case interaction was an area of particular interest, as I attended to the ways that these individuals co-constructed and negotiated this asynchronous virtual space and their participation in it over the course of their first year of teaching.

Theoretical Framework

Third Space Theory

Third Space is a construct that has been interpreted and reinterpreted in a variety of disciplines. Across disciplines it is conceptualized as a potential space of resistance in which social structures, interpersonal relationships, and individual identities can be embraced as ambiguous and liminal, and where these conflicting aspects of truth can be held, examined, and deconstructed simultaneously. Three theorists have explored the concepts of third space from a variety of frameworks and disciplines: Soja (1989, 1996), Gutierrez et al., 1995, Gutierrez et al., 1997, and Bhabha (1990, 1994).

Soja, an urban geographer and scholar on postmodern geographies and metropolises, explored the inherent tensions within social and geographic structures

and interactions using critical social theory. Soja (1989, 1996) defined the *first space* or *real* spaces of our lives as those locations, such as our homes, classrooms, workplaces, churches, etc., in which we have highly structured and constrained social interactions and ways of being and acting. He further defined the *second spaces* or *imagined* spaces of our lives as those created by individuals outside of the first spaces, in order to establish orderly, purposeful communities (such as those plans created by curriculum planners, legislators, or government officials to dictate how schools will be run.) Brooke, Coyle, Walden and Meyer (2005) explained that there is necessarily a constant inherent tension between these first and second spaces, since first spaces can never truly replicate the imaginary space created by the plans of others external to the context. Soja argued that a *real-and-imagined* third space always exists as an ongoing and creative response to this tension. He posited that our experiences in that in-between space cause us to act and live differently in our first and second spaces, and those spaces are consequently reorganized. Soja explained that the creative response to the conflict between the real and imagined worlds may range from a change in priorities, to a quiet redefinition of ways of being, to an outright rebellion. The ways in which an individual may view this change is dependent upon many things, including his or her attachment to the historical patterns and routines of the *real* world or to the constructs and principles of the *imagined*. These liminal, *real-and-imagined third spaces* are ones of resistance, creativity, and engagement with "alternative possibilities for self and social organization [and are more open ended than both the] control of Firstspace's

expectations for behavior, and the controlling force of imagined cultural planning in Secondspace" (Brooke et al., 2005, p. 374).

Soja's (1989, 1996) concept of *third space* is applicable to my inquiry, because it is the place in which alternative possibilities can be constructed, possibilities that are subject neither to the controlling forces nor to the planning of the first and second spaces. It was my hope that through intentional engagement in *real-and-imagined* spaces, participants in this project would necessarily re-imagine ways of organizing, behaving, and interacting not only with their students and colleagues, but also with the socializing structures of schooling and legal mandates.

Gutierrez and her colleagues (1995, 1997) constructed the third space paradigm from an educational perspective informed by Bakhtin and Bourdieu, exploring the power structures between teachers and students which often keep them living and coexisting in "multiple, overlapping, and sometimes conflicting communities" (Gutierrez et al., 1997, p. 376). They deconstructed the *transcendent scripts* which are societal explanations or paradigms for ways of being, living, interacting, and teaching. Gutierrez et al. (1995) explained that though local scripts "are often reflective of the larger transcendent scripts of society, because of human diversity and the complex nature of interaction, they are never simply a reproduction" (p.449). They conceptualized the third space as a radical middle created by the tension surrounding the "juxtaposition of relative perspectives involving struggle among competing voices" (p. 467). In their work she explored the tensions between teachers and students and the resisting underlife created by individuals in order to "rupture the transcendent script" (p. 469) and to

engage more fully with each other. Gutierrez et al. (1995) argued that the "disruptive nature of the third space allows for the commingling of various social and cultural perspectives, the existence of multiple scripts, and the potential to contest the transcendent scripts" (p. 467-468). They argued that this can result in the "radical restructuring of classroom practices... [in which] teacher and student scripts and the politics of identity can be addressed" (1995, p. 467). Gutierrez et al. (1997) posited that it is this third space in which "two scripts or two normative patterns of interaction intersect, creating the potential for authentic interaction and learning to occur" (p. 372).

In my study, as participants co-created a space to explore normative patterns of interaction and the politics of identity, that space had the potential to become a radical and disruptive middle. I hoped that the collaborative deconstruction of multiple scripts would enable beginning social justice educators to carefully consider their beliefs and how their actions may or may not reflect the type of professional identity they hoped to negotiate.

Homi Bhabha (1990, 1994) approaches the construct of third space from the discipline of cultural studies employing postcolonial and post structural theories. Specifically, he explores the construct of identity that is negotiated in a third space. He situates the construction, reconstruction, and negotiation of identity within the ambiguous and multiple spaces, cultures, and ideologies which seem to be mutually exclusive yet which are simultaneously held. A helpful explanation of the liminal spaces between is provided by Aoki (1996) as the AND in "East and West" or in "yes and no." Aoki explained that through the concepts of "both this and that" and "neither this nor

that," two seemingly binary or contradictory truths can be held simultaneously in a space of ambiguity and ambivalence (Aoki, 1996, p. 6). He argued that the "and" and the "not-and" allows for both conjunction and disjunction. To further explicate this argument, this liminal space calls for the potentiality of living in the tension between two "truths" or "realities" without privileging one, but instead deconstructing, evaluating, critiquing and translating both.

This description is further explored through Bhabha's (1990) concept of hybridity. He explains that a third space "bears the trace of those feelings and practices which inform it, just like a translation, so that hybridity puts together the traces of certain other meanings or discourses" (p. 211). It is a third space "which enables other positions to emerge" (p. 211) and where identity is destabilized, fluid and nonstatic, "in order for life in all its ambiguity [to be] played out" (English, 2002). Bhabha explained that "hybridity is precisely about the fact that when a new situation, a new alliance formulates itself, it may demand that you should translate your principles, rethink them, extend them" (p. 216). Through this process of hybridity, translating what was seemingly incommensurable to a more fluid and liminal examination of reality, and exploring the negotiating, "shifting, contradictory, and dynamic" (Khan, 2000, p. 130) nature of identity, one is able to "become neither this nor that, but our own" (English, 2002, p.109).

Though pockets of discontent, discouragement, and disillusionment can be heard in teacher break rooms across the country, they are seldom very productive. A third space paradigm, in which the teachers and I collectively and individually re-imagine

the possibilities for reshaping our real-and-imagined worlds, would be a productive and transformative engagement for all teachers. Third space could be a place to deal with the tensions between one's image of an effective teacher and the instructional mandates that are often constraining.

Considered together, these theorists position the third space as a fluid, disruptive, ambiguous space where ways of being and living are negotiated in the context of disparate and varied social structures, behavioral expectations, and moral dilemmas. This theory, in all of its iterations and complexity, is particularly relevant to my research as it brings to the fore the experiences of living in the tensions, exploring and deconstructing obvious ways of acting and interacting, and creatively considering ways of becoming "beings for ourselves" (Freire, 1970).

Routledge (1996) described third space as a place of resistance, a place "imbued with intent, that attempts to challenge, change, or retain particular circumstances relating to social relations, processes, and/ or institutions" (p. 415). This framework is particularly relevant for my research with beginning teachers committed to social justice as they experience the disorienting dilemmas and the transformational learning experiences inherent in working to learn to teach, to develop a professional identity, and to create a more just world in the midst of conservatively socializing first and second spaces.

Transformational Learning Theory

Transformational learning theory was posited by Jack Mezirow (1998, 2000) and influenced heavily by the work of Paolo Freire (1970). Mezirow postulated that learning that is transformative often includes these four components:

- The experience of a *disorienting dilemma* which causes an individual to reconsider her previously held assumptions and principles;
- Engagement in *critical reflection* upon the experience and the ways in the disorienting dilemma challenges her paradigms and her understandings of the way things are or should be;
- Participation in *reflective discourse* in which she shares with others her experience and receives their critical reflection;
- Enactment, in which she acts upon her circumstances based on transformed understandings of her situation, relationship, or roles.

The disorienting dilemma or incongruous experience is the first component of Mezirow's (1998, 2000) transformational learning theory. These incongruous experiences are an opportunity to reconsider a paradigm or a way of being. Heidegger (1927/1996) explained that individuals generally develop unchallenged and unchanging, with *unfolding circularity* in a predictable and repetitive pattern. In this process people do not reframe their belief systems but merely clarify what they have already understood, interpreting encounters and experiences within their previous and current frame of reference. I investigated potential disorienting dilemmas which occurred when

beginning teachers encountered incongruence between their beliefs about teaching and learning and the practices of public schools.

A second component of transformational learning is critical reflection. By including daily jottings and week in reviews, I hoped that beginning teachers participating in this inquiry would reflect upon their experiences and understandings in an intentional manner, examining critically their experiences and the ways in which they narrated their experiences.

A third component of transformational learning theory is that of reflective discourse. Through reflective discourse the new understandings and incongruous life experiences are discussed and pondered with an intimate or group of confidants who help the learner make sense of this disorienting experience. The message board utilized in this methodology was designed to provide participants a space to support and encourage each other and to engage in reflective discourse as they negotiated the specific contexts and challenges they encountered. This stage is particularly important and is notably missing in many models of adult learning (Kolb, 1984). Collaborative problematizing introduces alternative understandings, perspectives, and viewpoints and decreases the likelihood of merely unfolding circularly. This reflective discourse is also beneficial to those not experiencing the same disorienting dilemma, because their collaboration with others provides opportunities for vicarious learning and growth (Adler, 1998; Bandura, 1986; Dinkmeyer & Sperry, 2000; Sweeney, 1998). It is this dialogue, “rooted in [our] incompletion, from which [we] move out in constant search- a search which can be carried out only in communion with others” (Freire, 1970, p. 91).

Most studies and interventions with beginning teachers that I discussed in my review of the literature incorporated either the second or the third stage of transformational learning, but not both. Instead, they focused either on the development of an individual or the discourse structures of a group. None focused on both the personal reflection and the critical conversation. Both stages are explicitly included within my own methodology because each stage is necessary if teachers are to make sense of their own lives even while they work and live along side others. These two stages, critical reflection and reflective discourse, are the embodiment of the third space, the liminal space between realities and choices in which we weigh and disentangle our realities and become neither one nor the other but our own (English, 2005). This "open ended imagining" (Brooke et al., 2005) is one of tremendous potentialities and is one I attempted to co-create with the participants in this research through their first year of teaching.

A fourth potential component of transformational learning is the action in which individuals, who have experienced a disorienting dilemma, critically reflected, and engaged in reflective discourse, determine to move into praxis. Freire defines praxis as "the reflection and action which truly transforms reality" (1970, p. 101). While each component of transformational learning theory is connected to the third space paradigm, this component of enactment is often the product of engagement in a third space. Brooke et al. (2005) argued that this third space is created "any time we act inside an existing space to create a different way of acting" (p. 368). The actions taken

as beginning teachers negotiate the tensions between their ideals and their context are, indeed, transformative.

Yalom's Theraputic Process of Groups

Jacobs, Harvill, and Masson (1994) stated that there are several potential purposes for which groups may be created. I had several purposes for co-creating a supportive group comprised of beginning social justice educators including: (a) to provide a place for contact with others similarly committed to equity and structural change; (b) to increase commitment, both to the vocation and to working for justice and equity in the classroom; (c) to be informative and thought provoking; (d) to build trust and to mitigate feelings of isolation and alienation; and (e) to accomplish a task (i.e. to write my dissertation).

Yalom (1985) cited eleven different factors that "constitute both the 'actual mechanisms of change' and 'conditions for change'" (Gladding, 1995, p. 4) These factors include (a) altruism, or the act of giving to other members; (b) group cohesiveness, which is the extent to which participants feel connected to each other; (c) interpersonal learning where participants learn from other group members; (d) guidance as they receive help and advice; (e) catharsis as they release feelings and emotions; (f) identification as they benefit from the modeling of other members and leaders; (g) family reenactment as they recapitulate habits from their family of origin to reframe them in more positive ways; (h) self- understanding as they gain personal insights through their engagement with others; (i) the instillation of hope; (j) a sense of

universality as they realize they are not alone; and (k) existential factors as they come to terms with the ebb and flow of life.

Jacobs et al. (1994) explicated several factors of therapeutic groups which informed my methodology. They explained that productive groups shared a clear and relevant purpose. To this end, I resolved to begin our inquiry discussion group with a conversation about our shared and individual goals for the collaboration and for our work as social justice educators. Other factors that Jacobs et al. noted as crucial to the beginnings of a supportive group such as the voluntary nature of the collaboration and the level of trust and goodwill present were considered in the creation of the collaborative group process. Both Gladding (1995) and Jacobs et al. emphasized the importance of group size for group cohesiveness and efficacy. While they recommended a group of five to 13 members, our collaboration only included three beginning teachers as there were only three beginning teachers who met each of the criteria for participation. Gladding noted, however, that groups smaller than five members place too much pressure on each member to contribute and provide participants little opportunity to sit out of the conversation. While I acknowledged this tension in the design of our collaboration, I saw no recourse and determined to proceed with the three teachers who met the criterion for participation.

Yalom (1985) posited that group members could become “helpfully responsive to others” (p.17) and that the group itself could become an agent of change as members provide for each other “support, universality, advice, interpersonal feedback, testing, learning, opportunities for altruism, and hope.” (p. 115) According to Yalom, groups

function best and are most effective when (a) members assume responsibility for the group's functioning through self-monitoring; (b) members come to recognize it as a rich reservoir of information and support; (c) member realize that they can provide valuable help to one another; (d) members strengthen their relationships with each other; (e) members consider the group important; (f) the group procedures are "unstructured, unrehearsed, and freely interacting"; and (g) continuity between the content of meetings is maintained. Additionally, members of a group must perceive the community as a safe and supportive environment, and must highly value the group, particularly if they are to feel comfortable expressing divergent viewpoints. Yalom (1985) also believed that, in order for a group to positively support each of its members, individuals should non-judgmentally accept others, and engage actively, spontaneously, and honestly in the group. I hoped that this type of community would grow as participants came to value the group and the support they found as they engaged with other teachers sharing a common purpose of teaching for equity and structural change.

Yalom explained that most groups only become mature and fully productive after a significant amount of time when members are highly committed to each other and to their individual and collective goals. He noted that group members in the initial stages of membership are often working to understand norms of behavior in the group setting, negotiating group purposes and boundaries, and working to understand and articulate the purposes and goals of the group. According to Yalom, groups are often comprised of strangers who were previously only connected to the leader and therefore mutual caring and concern often does not develop until late in the lifespan of a group.

Jacobs et al. (1994) stated that support groups particularly need to be a safe environment where members feel a high level of trust, commitment, and care for each other since they are sharing challenging parts of their lives. They noted that during the first few sessions of a support group, participants generally do not share personal and intimate aspects of themselves, but that later as mutual care and relationships have developed, the level of trust and openness increases significantly. They did find, however, that in "groups whose members have goodwill and commitment, trust will usually develop over time if the group is moving in a positive direction" (p. 42).

I recognized that the relatively short time frame of this inquiry and the fact that participants did not know each other well and were meeting asynchronously might mean that the group would take longer to get to a stage of intensive work and mutual trust and support. I hoped, however, that the collaboration would begin to be a productive and supportive community for all involved. The factors of a productive and supportive group were attended to in the design of this research project as I created a platform through Moodle for a purposeful online asynchronous community. I hoped that the three participants and I would gather in order to offer and receive guidance, to give to other members of the community, to express ourselves in honest and open ways, to be inspired and to inspire, and to create a community of like minded educators.

My role in this group was informed by literature on group leadership which has explored the characteristics of effective and ineffective group leaders. Effective group leaders were described in the literature as individuals who were: (a) warm and supportive (Gladding, 1995); (b) empathic and non judgmental so that they may help to

establish a gentle and accepting group culture (Yalom, 1985); (c) genuine, accepting, concerned, consistent, and able to create positive relationships (Yalom); and (d) able to accept and admit personal fallibility (Yalom). Gladding (1995) stated that leaders must promote "sharing on the affective as well as the intellectual level" (p. 56), act as an "interactional catalyst" promoting interaction between group members, and facilitating communication, reflecting the content and feelings of members (p. 66).

While I was quite comfortable with this list of characteristics and responsibilities, others were more challenging such as Yalom's instruction for leaders to resist the temptation to interpret for others but instead encourage group participants to "achieve self-knowledge through their own efforts" (Yalom, p. 169). I recognized that I would need to create self-monitoring resources and accountability measures for myself so as to curb my tendency to provide answers in an attempt to support others. Gladding, described group leaders who adopted a transformational leadership role, sharing the power with other members of the group and working to empower them and to renew the group). He described this type of leadership style as a democratic process through which leaders engage in less directive ways, facilitating group centered processes and trusting that group members can and will develop themselves and each other. Leaders who embrace this perspective cooperate, collaborate, and share responsibilities with other members of the group. Groups with democratic leadership can interact openly and often experience high levels of trust and comfort with risk taking since all members share power and responsibility. This was the type of leader I hoped to be both inside and outside of this inquiry.

I believed that the participants could and would engage with each other in mutual support and encouragement. I acknowledged that I would necessarily play a leadership role in the collaboration but resolved to claim a democratic, transformative, and facilitative role in the community. I hoped that the longstanding relationships of mutual respect and encouragement I had with these women would facilitate the collaborative processes of this community. I also anticipated that participants' voluntary engagement and their expressed enthusiasm about the possibility of engaging with other social justice educators in a community of mutual encouragement would be significant factors in the creation of a productive and supportive collaboration.

The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler

Adler (1998) is particularly relevant to my work for a number of reasons. Adler's work resonates strongly with my personal ideology. Adler's theory is based on his desire to bring about a more equal and compassionate world, to strengthen the spiritual, and to focus on the emancipation of others from oppression. As an outspoken advocate for women's rights, he worked for equity and opportunity. His lens is particularly valuable to me as he emphasized the need for commitment to and work for social interest and equity. He emphasized that our world and our lives are not fatalistically determined but are a product of our daily, moment to moment choices. Adler believed in the capacity of human beings to live fully, "learn new knowledge and skills throughout life, enjoy new perspectives on themselves, life and others, and learn from experience how to appreciate what they have, who they are, and what is essential to experiencing satisfaction with their lives" (Sweeney, 1998, p. 33).

Adler and his student, Dreikurs, worked for change “through social institutions that affected the quality of life of all persons but particularly the underprivileged and disadvantaged” (Sweeney, 1998, p. 23). They explained that society is preoccupied with control and influence, self interest and competition rather than social interest. Dreikurs further explained the need for a reformulated set of philosophies, personal characteristics and values in order to create a more equitable and democratic society (Table 1). He explained that individuals are currently motivated by ambition, righteousness, obligation, conformity, perfection and rugged individualism. Instead he proposed that individuals in our society should be encouraged and supported to gain an increased sense of enthusiasm, friendliness, understanding, belongingness, participation, self respect, self improvement, courage, mutual help and cooperation. Dreikurs stated that “any system predicated on a lack of social equality… was doomed to be unstable at the very least and unjust, oppressive, and disrespectful of individuals and groups at its worst” (Sweeney, 1998, p. 24).

Table 1

Values Inherent in a Competitive Society Versus a Society Focused on Social Interest

Values Present in a Competitive Society	**Proposed Values for a More Just Society**
Ambition	Enthusiasm
Righteousness	Friendliness
	Understanding
Obligation	Belongingness
	Participation
Conformity	Self respect
	Self improvement
Perfection	Courage
Rugged individualism	Mutual help
	Cooperation

Adler aimed to build trusting relationships with his clients and to understand the motivation behind an individual's choices, actions, and decisions. When individuals experienced some psychological difficulty, he felt it was because they found their patterns of being were not serving them well in a specific life task (work, friendship, intimacy), or because they had become discouraged and were not experiencing significant connections with others or working to better society. Adler felt that the way to help these individuals was to reorient them toward a more healthy and contributory way of being and belonging.

There are five primary aspects of Adlerian theory which must be understood in order fully to understand the breadth of individual psychology (Dinkmeyer & Sperry, 2000; Dreikurs Ferguson, 1984; Griffith & Powers, 2007; Sweeney, 1998). These aspects are: (a) the holistic and indivisible nature of a person, (b) the purposefulness of behavior and choices, (c) the primacy of phenomenology (the perception of an event by an

individual is more relevant than the actual facts of an event), (d) the formulation of a lifestyle, (e) and the concept of social interest.

Adler believed that the *person is holistic* and that one's motivations, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are consistent and function together and therefore cannot be broken apart and examined in isolation. He firmly believed in the *purposefulness* of the emotions and behaviors of individuals. Individuals have their own goals (though they might not be conscious ones) and work toward them. This understanding of goal directed behavior makes it clear that the behavior and actions of an individual are indicative of her beliefs, values, priorities, and goals, though they may be unconscious or unexamined.

Another important aspect of Adlerian theory is an emphasis on *phenomenology*, defined by Adler as the perceptions of a phenomenon (as opposed to the actual facts of any event) based on an individual's unique orientation toward life. Adler posited that the fictional finalism, or the way that an event is interpreted by an individual through his/her own private logic, is one among countless interpretations; however, it is the individual's own perception and interpretation of the event that holds value. Adler stressed that memory is projective and purposeful in that we remember events and experiences that support our current truth and lifestyle.

One's *lifestyle* is one's core personality, the core underlying beliefs and purposes that guide one's life and decisions. Adler strove to understand the way that our perceptions of our early social worlds support and create who we become, and therefore Adlerian theory places significant emphasis on one's earliest memories from

childhood. He posited that individuals are projective and remember aspects of earlier times that hold explanatory truth and relevance in the current day. When counselors working from an Adlerian framework ask about specific scenes from one's' childhood, themes are likely to emerge that inform the listener about what the individual still values.

Generally, an individual's lifestyle is formed between the ages of 5 and 10, as young people look at their lives and determine what they need to be, to get, or to do in order to belong. During this time young people also determine what must not happen if life is to work well. Individuals create their own expectations of how life will treat them and how they will respond based on their own lived experiences. Then individuals filter new experiences through these expectations and create new experiences that reinforce these self-fulfilling prophesies about themselves, others, and life. This significantly influences individuals throughout their lives as they form/ reform perceptions of themselves, others, and the world. Unchallenged and unexamined, these understandings of ourselves and our world unfold with circularity (Heidegger, 1927/1996) and guide our thoughts, beliefs, motivations, emotions, and actions throughout our lives. Therefore our early life experiences provide a great deal of insight into future successes or lack thereof in our life tasks (work, friendship, intimacy, spirituality, and leisure and self care).

Though these aspects are essential in understanding Adler and each has informed my inquiry, I am focusing specifically on the crux of Adler's Individual Psychology: social interest.

The crux of Adlerian theory is the concept of social interest, evidenced by individuals who are working to be contributory. Adler, a socialist and an egalitarian, believed that the crux of a person's health was social interest, or her/his desire to belong and to contribute to the common good. Adler had a hopeful view of human nature and believed that society was the impetus for individuals to channel social interest in productive ways. Hall and Lindzey (1957) explained that Adler offered a more satisfying, complementary, and hopeful depiction of humanity as he "restored to man a sense of dignity and worth that psychoanalysis had pretty largely destroyed" (p. 125).

Specifically, Adler viewed all personal and psychological issues (depression, anxiety, and alienation) as symptoms of discouragement and a lack of social connection, rather than a deterministic pathological issue. He believed that reorientation toward relationships with and service toward others was the solution to these issues. He believed that those struggling with feelings of depression etc. needed to explore the purposefulness of their choices and receive encouragement in order to increase their social interest and connection to others. He was not interested in diagnosis but in treatment, not in illness but in encouragement, not in the development of a competitive society, but in the development of a society based on social interest, compassion, and justice.

Alder believed in democracy and equality and moved the client from the psychoanalytic couch to a chair like his own. He viewed therapeutic relationships as a partnership and believed that his role was to walk alongside and come to understand clients in their purposeful behavior, and then work to help them gain an understanding

of their motivations and to encourage them to return to the useful side of life with a new and increased sense of social interest. Adler saw himself primarily as a teacher. He believed in the universality of issues (discouragement and decreased social interest) and would often conduct a therapy session in front of an auditorium, using what he called spectator therapy and hoping that all in the audience learned something about their own relationships and context from witnessing the exchange.

Third Space Theory, Transformational Learning Theory, and Individual Psychology

I am interested in the ways that social justice educators engage in their own liminal spaces, individually and collectively, through the course of their first years of teaching, how they learn to live in and explore the hyphen in Social Justice-Educator. This framework is particularly relevant to beginning teachers who are committed to social justice because these liminal spaces "create openings for counter hegemonic activity" (Gutierrez et al., 1995, p. 451) and transformative learning opportunities. While beginning social justice educators attempt to negotiate this complex professional identity, they must also work to make sense of the seeming binaries of university/public school, idealism/realism, hopefulness/hopelessness, student needs and interests/school and national mandates, cognitive reflections/ emotional expressions, and fitting into a context/reforming a context. These dualities do not fully or adequately express the tensions and triumphs that are experienced in the beginning years of teaching for social justice. In this research project, participating in an individually and socially constructed third space enabled all participants, including the participant researcher, to explore the

more fluid, contextualized, and nuanced identities and positionalities that these new social justice educators claimed and negotiated as they entered the profession.

Beginning teachers, particularly those coming to teaching with a commitment to social justice, need a caring and compassionate community of support in which to negotiate the tensions inherent in teaching. The creation of a third space is imperative as these beginning social justice educators must have a space where they can hold the tensions and the seeming binaries, examine them, and choose how to reconstruct them in meaningful and contextual ways. I hoped that through reflecting, reorienting, and rhetorical questioning participants would claim their own courses of action, negotiate their own identities, and find their own ways of engaging in the first, second, and third spaces of their individual contexts.

Context of the Study

This study was conducted from December through March using virtual meeting places such as a discussion board, list serves, email, telephone conversations and personal interviews and conversations. The ways in which this space became a dialogic encounter was determined by the participants as it was organically created to meet their needs. Because the participants had taken jobs in different parts of the state, a methodology that leaned heavily upon the virtual meeting place, email and telephone communications, was established.

The participants and the participant researcher were given space to interact with each other on the list serve. Participants also compiled daily jottings and weekly reflections which they sent on a weekly basis to the researcher. Bronfenbrenner's

(1979) ecological model of development was helpful as I attempted to define the context for this study, because it aided in the location of the participants in their interpersonal relationships, their classrooms, and in the wider context of their schools and communities and the political and historical context in which these organizations are located.

Bronfenbrenner (1979), in his influential ecological model of human development explained that all individuals are situated and develop within a larger social context which has significant impact on their ways of being. His model is one of concentric circles which situates individuals within multiple *microsystems* (the family, the classroom, the circle of friendships). The second layer of the ecological model is the *mesosystem*. This is literally the spaces between the microsystems. It is the connection between peers and work, university connections and school context, friends and classroom. This space between, and the ways in which our different contexts and communities can be mutually informing, is an important part of the framework of this study. The third layer of the ecological model is the *exosystem*, which is often considered the influence of the political structures, national priorities, and collective ideologies that necessarily shape the context in which individuals in a society grow and develop. The outer layer of the circle, that which is often neglected by those using his theory, is that of the *chronosystem*, this contextualizes individuals in a particular time, generation, politic, and era.

Each layer of the ecological model is necessary to understand if one is to grasp the complexity of the social dimensions in which individuals live and grow and

specifically in which beginning teachers construct their identity as teachers for social justice. Participants are all engaged in multiple spheres of location, their own classroom context, school, the philosophical and political aspects of their school, county, state and national climate affecting their teaching, and the chronosphere of the times in which they are located. Since the participants themselves identify and/or alluded to the salience of each of the contextual layers of Bronfennbrenner's concentric circles, each was considered in this research as an important element of the context of the study.

Participants

Participants were purposefully selected (Merriam, 1998) from the pool of beginning teachers I have worked with as a beginning teacher educator. The individuals invited to participate in this study were determined to have a strong commitment to educational equity and systemic change based on the following order of criterion. I found that with each successive criterion the pool remained extremely relatively stable, confirming that the individuals were consistently acting (or viewed as acting) for justice in a variety of contexts.

Firstly, I considered carefully the individuals who in the context of my courses often critiqued aspects of schooling and society that they viewed as inequitable and who spoke and wrote often about the need to change the way things are and their desire to work alongside oppressed populations. Seven students met that criterion. Three of those individuals were not yet ready to graduate and thusly would not be first year teachers the following year, which narrowed the potential participant pool to four.

Secondly, I considered these four potential participants in order to determine which individuals who had shared portions of their life stories with me in the context of class assignments and/or informally in conversations had personal histories which demonstrated a lived commitment to working and walking alongside those who have been socially disenfranchised. All four individuals met that criterion and had opportunities and experiences that encouraged their commitment to equity and caused them to identify themselves as change agents.

Thirdly, I reflected upon their engagements with others in my classes and the observations I had conducted or reflections I had read about their work during student teaching and internship experiences in the classroom. Through observing them in the field and working alongside colleagues in the program, I determined that these individuals demonstrated a remarkable care for others and a sense of mutual accountability. The ways in which these individuals related with and advocated for students, particularly those they believed were being oppressed because of the hegemony of English in our schools, the assessment measures that they were subjected to, and the biases of their instructors, made it evident that they were working in their school contexts to create more equitable educative opportunities for all learners.

Fourthly, I considered the final teaching philosophies, reflections, and ontological statements implied and expressed in the writings of the potential candidates. All four individuals named advocacy and issues of justice as the driving forces in their career choices. They self identified in these documents as change agents, as beginning educators dedicated to social and structural change. The stability of the

potential participant pool through the multiple criterion prompted me to invite each of them to participate in the inquiry.

The last criterion, of course, was their agreement to engage in this type of inquiry. Ultimately, one of the invited teachers decided that he would not be able to engage in the project due to his time constraints. Thusly, the pool of potential participants was narrowed to three beginning teachers who self identified as social justice educators and who were similarly identified as such by their faculty and peers.

The participants were all first-year teachers who had completed a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) in Reading, Language, and Literacy and English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) or in English Education at an urban research institution in the Southeast. After graduation, these three persons accepted their first teaching positions in a variety of school systems, content areas, and grade levels.

These participants were the antithesis of Sleeter's (2001) findings that the majority of preservice teachers bring very little cross-cultural knowledge, experience and understanding to their teaching and have little knowledge of racism, discrimination, and cultural aspects of inequality. As individuals who have worked in various national and international contexts for equity, these adults had already demonstrated their commitment to the creation of a more just world. The participants ranged in age from 28-38. All were bilingual and biliterate individuals who were particularly interested in working with immigrant populations and English Language Learners (ELLs). All had lived abroad and had significant relationships across lines that are often used to demarcate groups of people.

Language usages and dichotomous identity categories such as *Caucasian/Hispanic/* or *African American* are often problematic, limiting, and constraining. Participants in this study expressed salient aspects of their identity that are rarely included in a demographic survey instrument. Therefore, I chose to utilize an "I am" poem written during their initial interview to explore and express the categories and identities participants wished to highlight for the purposes of our work, instead of using a categorical demographic format in which the participants bubble in an aspect of selfhood that they may feel does not fully represent them. Chapter four is dedicated entirely to an in depth description of each of the participants and an exploration of the context in which they live and work.

Researcher's Role

I have been previously engaged in multiple contexts with the participants of this study. I have at one point been the course instructor for each of them, some of them in multiple courses. I have served as an advisor, informally and formally, to each of them on different occasions. While the specific nature of my collaboration with each of the participants varied and is described in Chapters Four and Six, I engaged with each of them in reflections on their own practices and pedagogies during the year in which they completed their preservice program. My relationship with each of the individuals was one of a professional nature, but through our long term engagement and after their matriculation from my program we became connected to each other on a much more personal level. They called me and shared with me the struggles and successes of their job search, their decisions, and their next steps. Our relationships across the time of this

study were thusly in a transitional stage, where I was no longer an authority in any way, but was a trusted colleague who was called upon for advice and conversation. Because of our shared history and experiences and our mutual memberships in university-based communities of practice, we enjoyed critical and challenging conversations that were enriching and stimulating. We connected over issues of advocacy in multiple contexts.

I must also say that the participants were some of the first graduates of cohorts that I have been engaged with and, therefore, the first new teachers that I have helped to prepare. I was vested, not only in their professional success, but also their personal success, as I believe these individuals specifically were the type of innovative, creative, brilliant, compassionate, and dedicated teachers we need in this field. Each child deserves such a teacher. My reading of the research on new teachers committed to social justice significantly affected me, as I realized that I had not set up structures of support, nor had I explicitly discussed with these future educators the emotional aspects of teaching in a space of cognitive and ethical dissonance. I read all of the indictments of colleges of education that supported the idealistic and transforming dispositions of beginning teachers and then sent them into school systems in which they often felt isolated, unsupported, and disavowed.

This project was conceptualized in order to provide a space for dialogic exchange for these new teachers in which they could engage with each other and with me, reflecting on and refracting their experiences. I hoped that this collaboration would provide a space for them to support each other and help each of them sustain their dedication and commitment as they transitioned from preservice to practicing teachers.

Noddings (1988) challenged teacher educators and researchers to engage in research *for* teaching which "would concern itself with the needs, views, and actual experiences of teachers rather than with the outcomes produced through various instructional procedures" (p. 227).

By listening to and focusing on teachers' own expressed needs, this co-constructed research process became not just collaborative and participatory but indeed the type of work that, according to the participants, had the potential to improve the lives of the teacher participants and the students they serve.

Though the course of this specific inquiry was bounded within the first year these women were teachers, specifically from December through March, at the conclusion of this study the participants and I expressed our intention to continue and develop this dialogical community long beyond the boundaries of this data collection period.

Data Sources and Data Collection

Multiple data sources were employed to create a convergent line of inquiry and to gain a complex understanding of each of the participants both individually and collectively. In order to explicate the various data sources, purposes, and analytical processes, charts were created (Appendix A). Additional charts were created to delineate the week roles of the participants (Appendix B) and the participant researcher (Appendix C) over the course of the data collection, analysis, and writing periods. The following table (Table 2) explicated the data sources that were used to address each of the research queries.

Table 2

Research Questions and Data Sources

Question	Data sources
What are the individual experiences, tensions, and perceptions expressed by social justice educators during their first year of teaching?	Initial Interview Life history "I am…" Poem Personal Artifacts Artifacts from MAT Artifacts from the beginning of the first year Daily Jottings Weekly Reflections Discussion board Emails, telephone conversations, and/or meetings with participants Closing Interview Researcher memos
How does an online community created to develop a support network influence the experiences of these beginning educators during their initial year in the field?	Initial Interview Daily Jottings Weekly Reflections Discussion board Emails, telephone conversations, and/or meetings with participants Cross data source analysis of engagement Closing Interview Analysis of participant researcher engagement on the discussion board Researcher memos

Open-Ended Initial Interview

At the beginning of the bounded period, I conducted individual interviews using an open-ended protocol. The interviews took place either in the classrooms of the participants or in a coffee shop, depending upon the preference of the participant. An

open-ended protocol was particularly appropriate since the primary purpose of the interview was for the participants to share their life histories and to recount their experiences from the beginning of the academic year. Having few specific questions such as, “Tell me about yourself” and “Tell me about your year so far” provided much opportunity for the participants to disclose aspects of their life and work that were salient to them and that they felt comfortable disclosing to me. A few additional questions were asked in order to ascertain the definitions, purposes and understandings of my participants surrounding essential concepts of my study (Appendix D). These interviews were recorded and transcribed.

“I am” Poem, and Selected Artifacts

Data sources included multiple opportunities to learn more about each participant and her sociohistorical and cultural history. During the initial interview, each participant was asked to craft an “I Am” poem in order to provide a more complex, personal, and holistic description of their identity. These were largely inspired by an engagement Tatum (2003) describes in her book *“Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?” A psychologist explains the development of racial identity*. Participants were asked to write “I Am” at the top of a page and then list any words, phrases, or ideas that described them. These poems have been used as introductions each participant in Chapter Four. Aside from centering the poem in the document, they appear exactly as they were written by the participants during the opening interview.

During the initial interview, participants also had an opportunity to share and describe the significance of any artifacts that would better help me understand her

history, beliefs, values, and sense of self. Artifacts shared included poems, prayers, and selections from texts important to the participant.

The “I am” poem, the personal artifacts and their description, along with life histories which were shared during the initial interview provided entre into the social and historical experiences and the personal beliefs, understandings, and values upon which the life of each participant is constructed. The narrative of each individual’s first year of teaching is necessarily built upon that larger personal autobiographical construction of self. The inclusion of these pieces was an attempt to contextualize these individuals committed to social justice within their unique and personal histories that have helped to shape their commitment. The participatory and liberationist aspect of their storied lives is particularly important, both in content and in form, to this study. These documents were used for the creation of the individual narratives, so to the extent which it is possible, the participant herself storied her life and her history, providing a situated context for her experiences as a social justice educator in her first year of teaching.

Artifacts from MAT

At the beginning of the data collection period, the participants shared writings and reflections from their MAT program which indicated their commitment to social justice and structural change. These were formatted on Livetext and were artifacts from their coursework and their culminating portfolio in order to create a description of the ideological stance of each participant during her preservice training.

Portions of these documents were incorporated into Chapter Four and shared with the participants when a draft was completed, ensuring that each was represented in the research in a way that was authentic to her.

Artifacts from the Beginning of the Academic Year

During the initial interview, participants had the opportunity to share lesson plans, teaching resources, and written reflections from the portion of the academic year prior to the inquiry. All artifacts shared and described provided additional insight into the teaching context and experiences of the teachers during their first year. When provided, this information was used to inform the writing of Chapter Four, describing the context of the teacher's first year.

Intertextual biographical narratives (which comprise nearly the entirety of Chapter Four) were based on the words of the participants from the before mentioned data sources After a draft of Chapter Four was completed, each individual was sent her section to make any alterations, deletions, or additions.

In the *daily jottings*, participants briefly noted their "high" and "low" experiences of the day at the completion of each school day, quickly describing both the highlight and the challenge that were most significant in their work. These brief documents provided insight into the experiences of the participants through the inquiry and also served as a tool for the educators themselves. The "high/low" format also enabled the participants to document the affective and emotional aspects of the beginning of their teaching career. These jottings were sent to me at the end of each week.

In the *week in reviews*, participants had the opportunity to write a brief reflection on their week. This was a helpful exercise for two of the three participants as they considered the experiences of their past few days. Participants were not given guiding questions or parameters for these reflections; however, participants were accustomed to writing these types of weekly reflections from their preservice teaching experiences. These reflections were shared with me weekly for analysis.

Discussion board

The online discussion board was created with specific purposes in mind. Specifically it was created as an asynchronous online meeting space so that teachers who were in different locations could gather with each other and with me across time and space in order to give and receive the type of support and encouragement that could enable them to develop and sustain positive professional identities as social justice educators. It was my hope that we would collaborate to provide cognitive, social and emotional support for each other during the participants' induction processes.

This cognitive support could have included providing resources, making connections to shared learning experiences from preservice training, asking rhetorical questions, and/or acting as a sounding board for colleagues as they shared and reflected in order to find their own answers to questions of practice. I postulated at the beginning of the study that cognitive dissonances might arise for the participants due to tensions between what they believed was best for students and what actually occurred in their school contexts. I had anticipated that participants would actively seek this help by

soliciting it from their fellow participants, ensuring that it would be based on their own identified needs and interests for their own professional development.

The second purpose of the discussion board was to provide a space where beginning social justice educators could find social and emotional support in a safe, extra-school environment which was non-judgmental and non-coercive. It was my hope that this community could decrease feelings of isolation, depression, and frustration, providing feelings of universality and altruism, and supporting teachers in their social interest and connectedness to others.

It was my hope that the discussion board would serve as a collaborative support structure which would help these beginning teachers navigate the complicated and often treacherous contexts of schools. The four of us met in asynchronous time and the space was available for use as individuals desired, for help, camaraderie, ideas, or to whatever end they determined.

Moodle was a learning technology which was utilized for the online portion of this collaboration. In many ways it shares the same capabilities as WebCT or Blackboard programs. The primary difference in the technology available with Moodle and WebCT is that Moodle is more easily manipulated by all of the members engaged in the virtual conversation. While WebCT is structured for direct instruction and the primarily one-way transfer of information, Moodle is created so that there are many more opportunities for collaborative creation of the space (S. Harmon, personal communication, September 5, 2008).

One of my purposes was to determine how mutual engagement in this space was organically negotiated, therefore only limited guidelines or parameters were set for their participation. I did not dictate the types of responses or create a protocol or screening process for this interaction. I did, however, model encouraging interactions and support through my own engagement in the third space. In a later section I will delineate my own engagement on the discussion board and the roles which I claimed and enacted in our shared space. Participants were asked to post to this space at least twice a week. Chapter Six is comprised of analysis of the uses of the discussion board and the community created through this project, as well as barriers to the collaboration and our plans for moving forward in the development of our community.

Participant researcher engagement in the discussion board. Though my engagement with the participants and my investment in their personal and professional success may be seen by some as a confounding factor that interferes with objectivity, I argue that objectivity is not what is needed for these teachers. Rather, these beginning teachers were asking for mutual engagement in a supportive collaborative community in which they could participate in critical reflection and reflective dialogue. Qualitative research, particularly case study, depends on the ability of the researcher to establish trust and rapport with the participants. The care and empathy which had been long present in the relationships I had with the participants was a significant asset to my work with them in this inquiry and was a necessary prerequisite for the collaborative creation of a space for problematizing the feelings and events encountered in their first year of teaching.

My engagement and investment is based on my social constructivist and advocacy/participatory stance and an ethic of care (Noddings, 1988). It would not have been ethical for me to watch their engagements and silently "lurk" (Scherff & Paulus, 2006) in the discussion board when participants were asking for help or needing encouragement. Any space that offers encouragement is likely to be helpful to participants, but a space that offers encouragement along with an opportunity to reflect, converse, and potentially act in new ways has the potential to become a transformative community.

In an attempt to clarify the role that I was claiming for myself in the discussion board, I wrote this memo on October 21, 2008 and shared the larger ideas with each of the participants during their initial interview.

> I DO intend to engage in this group in the following ways:
>
> - By providing *emotional and social support*- helping them see that they are not alone
> - By providing *alternative hypotheses or ways of doing things …* However I want to use this very sparingly as I want them to find their own answers and move toward their own action-"in my classroom I..." or "in the same situation I might consider..."- More often I plan to ask other participants what they think so others provide scaffolding and multiple alternatives for action
> - As an *encourager*- See Adler's definition
> - As a *resource*- aiding these beginning teachers in connecting their practice to the theory they have learned in their training
> - As a *connector between participants and our shared past experiences* - "that makes me think of X experience you had in your first practicum" and the learning/ knowledge we shared in their coursework
> - As a *connector between the participants*- "this makes me think of – X that Ava talked about last week- Ava would you be willing to share that with the group?" Or – "I want to throw that question out to everyone- What do you all think about what Milagro said?"

- As a *coach*- asking empowering questions (coaching model) with a social justice turn to encourage them to find their own answers- asking them to consider them further- etc....
- As a *group facilitator*- corralling them, keeping them on track with the topic we are working on together, and working to keep the conversation going and participants talking to each other.

I recognize the complexity of the multifaceted roles that I am assuming in this research and will be cognizant of each of them as I craft my postings and engage in the third space with my participants. I will be working to create a template of question frames and will also create a checklist for each of my postings- monitoring the role that I believe I have taken and the stances I have chosen in each response. Though this will be time consuming, I believe it will keep me grounded in my own intentions and accountable to myself and my own methodology for my engagement. Certainly, there may be times in which I decide I must deviate from these assumed roles and I will note that as well on the analysis form. I will continue to work on creating a list of potential prompts---- a cheat sheet for me as continue to I read more about group facilitation and coaching...

As a participant in the discussion board, I did not *solve* issues. Instead, I was a co-collaborator in the space. I engaged with them in the dialogue, asked clarifying questions, and encouraged participants to find their own answers to questions of practice. I asked open ended questions provided potential readings and resources, and offered personal, emotional, and psychological encouragement.

Emails, Telephone Conversations, and/or Meetings With Participants

Several exchanges with participants took place outside of the venues and original parameters of this inquiry. Emails, telephone conversations, and personal meetings with participants all occurred at some point during this query. Neither Moodle nor Livetext provided the needed space for dialogue where I could respond to the expressed needs of participants or offer encouragement or support. Also there were times when the needs of the participants (pedagogical, social, or emotional) necessitated a more personal contact and more direct support. As my primary purpose

was to support these teachers in whatever way I could, I engaged with each of them in a variety of ways. These meetings and conversations were documented and reflected upon and also, when appropriate, used as data sources. If a more extended meeting took place, I requested that the participant write a brief description of the event or meeting.

Closing Interview

At the end of the bounded period, I individually interviewed each participant in an open-ended interview format. I invited participants to bring self selected writings from their MAT program to the interview in order to conduct a retrospective discussion and "debrief" the contents of their selected writing/s. The parameters for this were quite open; participants were able to share with me a writing or set of writings from their graduate schooling and discuss why they are significant to them at this point. Two out of three of the participants chose to do this.

During the closing interview I had a list of potential questions (Appendix E) about our shared engagement and asked each participant to select questions she would like to speak to, even as I selected questions about which I was particularly curious. I engaged with each participant in a conversation about the ways she had experienced membership in the research project. The participants' description of the experience of engagement in this inquiry not only contributed to the discussion of a secondary research question regarding the ways they interpret their engagement in the inquiry (Chapter Six), but also provided information that will contribute to the design of future supportive engagements with these beginning teachers.

Data Analysis

Cresswell (2003) explained that qualitative data analysis "is an ongoing process involving continual reflection about the data, asking analytical questions, and writing memos throughout the study. It is not sharply divided from other activities in the process, such as collecting data or formulating research questions" (p. 190). This view of data analysis as an integrated and iterative part of the process was congruent with my understanding of reflexive research and my design of this methodology. I began the analytical processes as soon as the first data sources were collected.

My analytical processes, driven by systematic exploration of the data, utilized the constant comparative method (Glasser & Strauss). Each item was compared with all other items in order to identify and compare all aspects of the data set. Every participant in this inquiry was treated as an individual case study. Consequently, I explored each participant's experiences through a vertical analysis of each of her data sources (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This study is also designed as a multiple case study in which I looked between cases (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994) and horizontally compared the cases through the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In the primary stage of data analysis, the data were "cooked" (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). I pasted each participants' reflections and postings into a within case-cross data source chart and added my own reflections, interpretations and beginning categories in the margins of the data sources and throughout the transcripts of the initial interviews. I began the process of open coding (Cresswell, 1998) in which data

were examined for initial categories through an item analysis (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 68). The secondary stage of analysis was axial coding in which I "[assembled] the data in new ways," (Cresswell, 1998, p. 57) sorting the topical codes and beginning themes into initial categories looking for patterns and collections of items that seem to be related (LeCompte & Schensul). I created beginning coding manuals and data charts (LeCompte & Schensul; Miles & Huberman, 1994) in order to examine emerging themes both within and between cases. This enabled me to begin to organize emerging codes into a more hierarchical structure and to discover the emerging patterns of the data. As additional data were collected, the coding scheme was revisited, revised, and refined. All new data were compared to these emerging categories using the constant-comparative method in order to condense, collapse, and reconfigure the emerging themes.

Analysis of daily jottings and week in reviews

I explored the weekly submissions of the *daily jottings of highs and lows* and the *week in review*. This iterative process of data analysis occurred in order to explore both within case and across case findings and consisted of continuous clarifying and collapsing of the data from the variety of data sources to a flexible framework with examples and exemplars which were then reorganized and manipulated.

Within case analysis of jottings and weekly reflections. I conducted within case analysis for each participant, each week, through the use of open coding and analysis of themes and ideas, salient points and perspectives (Appendix F). These weekly summary charts were juxtaposed in order to determine recurring issues and themes which

emerged over time. In this way the coding schemes and manual for each case was updated weekly based on emerging ideas and tentative findings. At the end of each month, these coding schemes were examined over time and larger themes and instances of their appearing were documented creating an overall chart analyzing the themes and ideas which emerged across weeks (Appendix G).

Between case analysis of jottings and weekly reflections. I analyzed all data using the open coding and the constant comparative method. At the beginning of the process I constructed an instrument to compare the three participants week by week. After the second week it became clear that this was not sufficient, as there were themes emerging, but they often occurred during different weeks for different participants. At this point, I began to construct a chart with larger themes that were beginning to emerge. In the rows I indicated the themes, and created a column for each participant in which I noted the week and a short indicator of corresponding comment. In this was I was able to see at a glance emerging patterns both within and across participants. As new data were collected, I added to the organizational framework in order to facilitate between case analysis and to explore related experiences and categories. I reordered, folded, collapsed, and reframed categories when needed in order to find more salient constructs and those which were salient for more than one participant or were seemingly unique to individual participants. A coding matrix was kept which included the preliminary names of codes, locations of their occurrence in the transcripts, and a short excerpt or phrase to facilitate my recollection of the content (Appendix H). This matrix provided a visual organization of between case ideas and enabled me to look

across the categories for topics that were related and larger categories that were evident. When the codes were reorganized through this repetitive and iterative process, it became clear that some were more salient and needed more exploration, while others were redundant or unnecessary and needed to be collapsed or dismissed.

Analysis of the Discussion Board

My analysis of the discussion board occurred at the end of January and then at the end of the data collection period, which were times in which there was a natural topical break in the discussion board conversational strands. The primary topics of the discussion board, (a) the goals for a community, (b) the challenges of ethical assessment, (c) the integration of sacred texts into content area curriculum, collapsed into the ongoing analysis from the *week in reviews* and *daily jottings* and were added to the within and between case data matrices discussed above.

Cross Data Source Analysis of Uses

Each participant chose to engage in unique ways in the various aspects of the collaboration. While there were structures in place for participant engagement, each chose to participate in them in ways that met their expressed or implied needs. The unique uses of the space became salient in the second week of the study and I began to document the uses of the highs and lows and the week in review and the purposes each participant ascribed to each. This expanded to an analysis of discussion board uses and engagement with me in emails, telephone conversations, and personal meetings. I created a chart to analyze and record the practices and processes of each participant in

each aspect of the shared space over time (Appendix I). This analysis was discussed with the debriefer and the results were incorporated into Chapter Six.

Analysis of Participant Researcher Engagement in the Discussion Board

I documented and monitored my own participation in discussions through the use of a previously crafted menu of empowering questions and a chart created to analyze and monitor the roles I claimed through my participation in the discussion board (Appendix J). I acted with significant intentionality on the discussion board. I worked to code and explore my own engagement in our shared context. Two surprising roles emerged through the discussion board: (a) technical support, and (b) encouraging participation. By documenting and monitoring my own engagement in the space I worked to be transparent in my involvement with these individuals and my engagement in the process and the results.

Analysis of Closing Interviews

These exit interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to help discover the participant's views of the inquiry process, potential ways to improve the collaboration, and ways that the participant feels she has changed and developed in the transition from a preservice to practicing teacher.

Researcher Memos

I brought to this inquiry the recognition that I necessarily filter data through my own subjectivities, which are rooted in my lived socio-politically and historically situated experiences. Personal interpretation and subjectivities are a necessary part of our humanity, and thusly, also a part of qualitative inquiry. Therefore it is necessary to

problematize the ways that “our theoretical frameworks are our life” (S. Motha, personal communication, February 25, 2008) and the ways that those frameworks might make some aspects of a situation appear to be more salient even while it makes other aspects seem less significant. Throughout the research inquiry, I systematically reflected upon and was sensitive to who I am in the research study and how my own biography, biases, and experiences shape the study (Cresswell, 2003, p.182). I wrote memos and reflected throughout the study to document my own thoughts and ideas, and reflexively examine my biases, values, and interests, and to document my negotiated role in the shared spaces of our dialogical encounters. I also documented my feelings in the collection and analysis stage and my thoughts and reflections after each interview or telephone conversation.

I was intentional about making my own processes transparent in all stages of this inquiry, in order to insure that my biases are not the driving factor in the interpretation of the data (Merriam, 1988). Due to the participatory and advocacy stance that has informed the creation of this design, multiple aspects of the methodology have been included in order to insure that the interpretations of the lives and work of these individuals authentically represented their own lived experiences. This was done through multiple discussions with participants, extensive member checking, and debriefing, as well through the engagement of a peer debriefer.

Throughout the study I documented my engagement and thought process, my thoughts, reflections and ideas. Charmaz (2005) described memo writing as a “space to become actively engaged in your materials, to develop your ideas, and to fine-tune your

subsequent data gathering" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 72). My researcher journal contains these types of analytical memos. It also contains the coding processes and iterations of the coding manual, my correspondence with participants, and notes about discussions and conversations with them. My own analysis of my engagement in the discussion board was also included. Stake (1995) argued that expertise in case study work is dependent upon the researcher's reflective practices. This journal was for me a place to reflect and refract, deconstruct and re-assemble my work within this case study.

In addition to the analytical function of the researcher journal, I also used it as a place to "think through writing" (Cresswell, 2003) in which I expressed my own conflicts, growth, and engagement in the process. Often times I would stop and reflect in the text of a transcription in a different font color to make connections between participants, to reference other data from the participant which was related in some way, or to make a connection to my own processes or experiences. This data collection/analysis tool aided me in exploring the ways that my own subjectivities have shaped the study and also the ways that I have been shaped in and through this engagement with beginning teachers. This was a valuable tool enabling me to describe thickly the research process and also my role as a participant researcher in the unfolding of the process. In addition to being a data source documenting my thoughts, reflections, queries and emerging understandings throughout the inquiry, the researcher memos and journal serve as a clear audit trail which adds to the credibility of this work.

Participant Member Checking

Participant member checking occurred at the completion of the study when participants were given drafts of chapters to read and provided feedback for revisions, additions, and deletions. This ensured that participants were represented in ways that were authentic to them and also served to promote the trustworthiness and rigor of the study.

Data Management

This methodology was complex, multifaceted, and incorporated large amounts of data. These multiple data sources built a "converging line of inquiry" (Yin, 1994, p. 92) which helped me construct a chain of evidence with which to describe the cases.

All digital data for this inquiry were compiled and saved on the hard drive of my computers and on my portable hard drive. Coding of message board discourse was compiled chronologically and stored in a separate digital file. All paper documents and artifacts, including transcriptions of interviews, developing coding schemes, and researcher memos, were stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home. All data sources and emerging coding structures for individual cases were recorded, labeled, and stored chronologically by participant in separate files both digitally and in hard copy form. Each data source was grouped by participant, chronologically, and included the iterative coding and emerging understandings as they developed. Analytical documents related to the discussion board were stored both digitally and in hard copy and organized by data source and chronology. Due to the large amounts of data acquired in this study,

much attention was paid to the organization, processing, and filing of the data sources and analytical documents.

Establishing Rigor/Trustworthiness for the Inquiry

Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined trustworthiness in qualitative research as determined by four characteristics: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility is the extent to which the results of the research as interpreted by the researcher accurately represent reality as seen by the participants. Credibility is not only the believability of the study to outside readers, but also the extent to which the findings and interpretations of the research reflect the truth of the participants' experiences. This study was crafted with multiple procedures to increase the credibility of the design, namely extensive member checking and debriefing, attention to referential adequacy, diverse case analysis, triangulation of data sources, exposure of researcher's subjectivities, minimized researcher distance, prolonged engagement, and persistent observation.

Extensive member checking. As this research is designed in a liberatory, participatory, and interpretive way, the participants were actively engaged in member checking. In attempting to participate in liberatory research, I took the stance that my participants were co-creators of this work and that the purpose of this qualitative research was to come to understand their viewpoints. Therefore, it has been my ethical responsibility to check with the participants in my study not only through the data

collection and analysis stages, but also throughout the reporting of the results. My "findings" must be salient to the individuals who have actually lived the experiences I am attempting to interpret. Therefore, member checking and debriefing were utilized in order to provide participants an opportunity to challenge, reframe, and reconstruct analyses.

Referential adequacy. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described referential adequacy as the ways that the perspectives, perceptions, and language of the participant are clearly reflected in the construction of meaning throughout the inquiry. This concept of trustworthiness was addressed thoroughly in this methodology. Member checking, extensive use of individuals' quotes, discussions, interviews and artifacts, and the participatory nature of this methodology has ensured that the meaning that participants have given to events and experiences is evident in the data.

Diverse case analysis. It was imperative that I include multiple perspectives in the study, particularly those that depict perceptions and experiences that are contrary to emerging themes, or ways in which the experiences of one participant differ significantly from the other two educators. These divergent findings were informative as they provided opportunities to explore the data in a very different way and opened new avenues for further exploration. Because of my intentionally including that which did not fit into prior or emerging conceptions, the findings were richer and more authentic. I attended to negative cases, disconfirming evidence, and/or that which was absent, both within and across cases, in my analysis of data.

Triangulation of data sources. Through multiple sources of data, and through multiple theoretical lenses, trustworthiness and credibility were strengthened. Multiple data sources were utilized to gain an understanding of the experiences of beginning teachers during their first year (interviews, daily jottings, weekly reflections, on-line postings, email, telephone, and personal meetings). This use of multiple data sources provided the opportunity for a fuller and richer understanding of the phenomenon. The multiple theoretical lenses employed in this study contributed to a multifaceted and complex understanding of the experiences of these teachers, both individually and collectively.

Exposure of the researcher's subjectivities. Merriam and Simpson (1995) explained that "the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (p. 98) in a qualitative study, and all interpretations and findings are filtered through the subjectivities and theoretical lenses of the researcher. Therefore, I examined, explored, and articulated my participation in the process and my prior and emerging relationships with the participants with the recognition that any interpretation of reality is shaped by the interpreter.

Minimized researcher distance. The participants in this study are all individuals with whom I have had significant personal and professional interactions. These individuals are all people about whom I care deeply and who have shaped my own work as a beginning teacher educator in significant ways. Although some would say that this is a limitation of the study, researchers who have conducted life histories of women have done so with their intimate friends and acquaintances (Bateson, 1990; Ellis, 1995;

2007). This minimizing of the researcher distance is particularly necessary if one is to gain access to the intimate and personal details necessary for an inquiry such as this one. This prolonged engagement with the participants was an essential part of the research design.

Prolonged engagement. Merriam (1988) posits that the credibility of a case study is largely determined by the length of time spent in the field. Although the length of the data collection only spanned from December through March, my personal and professional relationships with the participants, built over the past two years, and my prior engagements with them in their own reflective practice, have given me deeper and more open access to their thoughts, opinions, successes and struggles than the study period itself would have allowed. This type of prolonged engagement with the participant researcher was a critical aspect of this inquiry.

Persistent observation. Engagement with the participants during their first year of teaching through varied and multiple interactions and opportunities for data collection ensured persistent observation during this inquiry. The analytical processes employed in this research were iterative and recursive with analysis beginning from the first data collected. Since I was engaged with individuals as a participant observer, attending to their own emerging themes and experiences, which informed my interactions with them, I was able to support them in their own self-identified needs. The types of questions I asked, the ways in which I offered support, and the resources that I provided were shaped by and also shaped my emerging findings.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which findings may be relevant to or informative for individuals in different contexts working with different populations. Hays (2004) argued that while the specific purpose of any case study is "to discover the uniqueness of each case" (p. 218), the methodology and the research processes should be clear to readers so that they may determine how the findings were derived. Additionally, other researchers should be able to read the manuscript and determine if parts of the method could be adapted in order to inform their own research agendas. The issue of transferability was addressed through the use of thick descriptions and the use of participant voice, direct quotations, and intertextuality.

Thick description. Geertz (1973) explained the importance of a thickly described presentation of the result and findings. Through the audit trail documenting my coding system and analytical processes, as well as transparency in my research notebook and memos, I described clearly the processes which occurred throughout the study. Thick description is utilized extensively in the presentation of the results in Chapters Four, Five, and Six in order to aid a reader in determining the extent to which my findings may be transferable to his/her own context.

Use of participant voice and quotations as intertextuality. The participants have spoken for themselves through my extensive use of quotes and intertextuality across data sources. When the participants' own voices and statements are used to demonstrate and document findings, the results of a study become more clearly linked to the lived experience of the participants. The voices of the participants in this study

have been utilized across multiple data sources. For example, if a participant spoke about a certain event in her daily jottings, in her weekly reflection, and/or in an on-line posting, the participant's own words have storied the event. An intertextual narrative may be created using the participant's own words and narratives from a variety of data sources. These quotations are overlapped and interwoven in order to story the lives and experiences of the participants in their own words as much as possible. In this way, I ensured that the participant's own interpretation of the experience was authentically represented in the analysis.

Dependability

As the researcher, I must clearly define my processes and be open to scrutiny from others critiquing or replicating my design. I must also be accountable for the interpretations and results that are stated directly and implied in my research. This researcher accountability was addressed through use of a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of all portions of the research. A researcher journal and audit trail documenting all decisions and iterations of analysis, including the coding manual, charts that describe main themes, and analysis of schemes in tables and data matrices, are included in the researcher journal. (Charmaz, 2005; Cresswell, 2003; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995). Additionally, several data collection and analysis frameworks are included as appendixes. In this way the systems of coding and the conclusions drawn from data have been made easily discernable to the reader. I discussed my interpretations, emerging understandings, and thoughts through the research process through the use of researcher memos. This window into my thinking

processes and engagement throughout the research inquiry increases the dependability of this research. Through the memos and attention to my own role and subjectivities, I acknowledge that I play a role in the construction of understandings and the way that the research is shaped, because of who I am and how I have gone about this work.

As multiple data sources have been utilized, all have been discussed and situated around themes or sub-questions for clarity. Negative cases and disconfirming data has been given specific attention, providing me with opportunities to have a deeper understanding and to entertain surprising potentialities, simultaneously strengthening the credibility and dependability of the inquiry.

Confirmability

Confirmability of research is the extent to which the findings are derived from the data. Through the use of member checking, triangulation, memos, extensive use of participant quotes to explicate themes and findings, the use of an audit trail, and attention to my own subjectivities (as described previously) aspects of confirmability have been addressed.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout this inquiry I have been intentional about remembering that this is neither my data, nor my story alone. Instead, it is the story of three remarkable educators dedicated to structural change, both locally situated and broadly constructed. In order to insure ethical procedures, I have provided each participant with a statement of informed consent which outlined the processes of the study and indicated her right to withdraw at any time. Due to the participatory and interpretive nature of the

research design, each participant has had multiple opportunities to shape the collection and interpretation of data, protecting her from any harmful risk and providing her with an opportunity to member check all results and findings. I have crafted a participatory design that includes multiple opportunities for the participant to be liberated from the constraints of the data and to discuss with me the interpretations, ideas, and understandings that have been developed in order to ensure that her storied life is indeed representative of her reality.

Throughout the creation of the manuscripts I have worked with great intentionality to story the lives of the participants as accurately as possible and to work to the extent possible to lessen the hegemonic potentialities historically and currently afforded to the individual who in fact crafts the first and last word. I have been diligent about maintaining participant voice and the authenticity of the identities of each participant. However, I acknowledge the tension which is inherent, because even when one has every intention to research *alongside* the participants, it is also the case that the researcher is necessarily in a position of recounting, choosing, reordering, and recapitulating the words of another and as such, is in a position of relative power. This power deferential continues to exist in spite of the fact that I have worked hard to mitigate it. Indeed, it necessarily exists whether or not the researcher is comfortable with that position. Paul Atkinson (1992) has described this inherent tension thusly,

> The social world does not present itself to us in the form of a thesis, monograph, or journal article. The data that we accumulate day by day, week by week, and month by month do not automatically yield an understanding that is organized in terms of themes and chapters. We all have to struggle to turn the dense complexity of everyday life into a

> linear structure- an argument that starts on page one, and progresses through a logical sequence, and ends on the final page. The transformation of cultural life into 80,000 words (or whatever) and a series of more or less uniform chapters is achieved through the imposition of some major- more or less- arbitrary- frameworks and constraints… Writing up, then, is not the mechanical collation and reportage of raw data. It is part of a complex layering of textual production. (Atkinson, 1992, p. 5)

I do believe, however, that by acknowledging the role of the researcher/ creator of the textual production/reproduction, that I have an ethical and personal responsibility to my participants and have been striving and will continue to strive to acknowledge that responsibility and honor my participants in all possible ways. While I understand that I am writing from my own perspective, I have worked to remain as true to my respondents as possible, but I simultaneously acknowledge that these decisions are all fundamentally mine. These women have been remarkably gracious with me in sharing their lives, their work, their dreams, and their struggles. It has been and will continue to be my sincere attempt to represent them in ways that are authentic to them, their experience of the world, and their work within it to be the change they want to see.

CHAPTER FOUR

PARTICIPANT LIFE HISTORIES, COMMITMENTS, AND CLASSROOM PRACTICES

Milagro, Ava, and Jayne are women committed to creating a world "in which it is easier to love" (Freire, 1970). They are actively engaged in work for justice in their lives and in their teaching. This stance is more than a theme; it is an ontological way of being for these three individuals. Ava's life experiences and work have shaped her into an individual who feels that she has "SO MUCH and [that she needs] TO DO SOMETHING WITH IT... to use it to do something good" (Ava, initial interview, 12.18.08). Throughout Jayne's writing and reflecting and laced through her conversations is the expressed desire to do more in order to support those who are oppressed, both in her own school setting and in a much more global context. In Milagro's initial interview she argued that "the wealthy [are] particularly responsible for the poor of their country" and that "If you attain that wealth, your job is to SHARE it, because that's why we're here on this planet to uphold and uplift humanity- not to exploit and pull down" (Milagro, initial interview, 12.16.08). These three women take seriously this desire to do something good with their lives, and this commitment shapes how they engage in their work and their world.

In this chapter, I attempt to portray the ways in which these women have made justice and equity a part of their ontological way of being in the world. The data from this chapter come from several sources, and, to the extent that it was possible, the words of the participants themselves have been used to story their lives. During the

initial interview, each participant crafted an “I Am” (Tatum, 2003) poem in order to describe her identity in a more authentic way, honoring the complexity of identity rather than assuming a identity of binary construction, that we are “either this OR that” and assuming instead that we are “our own” (English, 2005). The life histories of the participants, unless otherwise noted, were shared during the initial interview as well. The examination of each participant’s commitment to educational equity and transformation demonstrated during her MAT, the primary factor which shaped the invitation to participate in this study, comes primarily from each person’s portfolio completed at the end of her MAT. Lastly, the exploration of social justice in the life and classroom of each participant has been gathered from postings, interviews, and the discussion board. I have attempted to demonstrate the growth of these women over time and to make clear that the commitment, the dedication, and the avocation of these educators has been an extension of their personal and educative experiences, values, and beliefs. This chapter ends with a discussion of the role of context, both politically and socially constructed, in the experiences of these beginning teachers.

Ava

I am
Spanish Speaking
English Speaking
Language loving
A traveler
An animal lover
A dual citizen- Guatemala & the U.S.
The oldest of four
Seeker of truth
Pursuer of wisdom
A teacher
White
Middle-class
Well-educated
A reader
An artist
Laughter loving
Music loving
People loving
Justice oriented
Compassionate

Ava's Life History

Ava, the daughter of missionaries, was born in Guatemala and lived there until she was nine years old. Relationships with her parents and her three younger siblings have been and continue to be very close. Ava attributes that in part to the fact that as a family unit they were very mobile and the only people who were consistently present in each other's lives. She also attributes this closeness to that fact that her parents were extremely supportive and "excited about whatever we wanted to do even if it was probably a crazy idea or whatever! They were supportive of just who we are [and] who we wanted to be… "

Her father, a sociolinguist, conducts surveys of languages and dialects, particularly attending to which languages are used and how they are used, and which languages and dialects are dying. Missionaries in their non-denominational organization often go into communities where there is no written language, and they develop an alphabet and literature, "helping to develop literacy in those languages with the ultimate goal being to translate the Bible" (Ava, opening interview, 12.18.09). His scholarly work is largely focused on understanding the connection between identity and language use and studying the maintenance of language in marginalized communities.

In Guatemala, Ava's mother worked to coordinate the schooling of her four children. The missionary children and their families traveled to the city and lived in apartment complexes three weeks out of every nine so that the children could attend classes in the city missionary school. During these periods, the Canadian- and US-based missionary families, who were otherwise living in remote villages across Guatemala, gathered and provided encouragement and friendship for each other. For six weeks out of every nine week term, Ava's mother home schooled her children. Additionally, the teachers would periodically travel to the homes of the missionaries, stay with them for a couple of weeks, and tutor the children individually.

"Growing up in a Christian home…was a huge part of {Ava's] upbringing." While neither of her parents was concerned about things like denominations, both were "concerned with central issues like 'who is God' and 'who is Jesus' and those…core issues." She was taught that "God is trustworthy and he is good and he is involved in our lives and Jesus is his son." Ava remembers her mother being very verbal "about the

ways that she saw God doing things for us." She saw God as very present and involved in her life and the lives of other people.

Ava grew up speaking English and Spanish, and her family was closely connected to members of the community. They attended a small indigenous church in their village. As relatively wealthy members of the community they were "expected" to have a housekeeper and gardener. Ava's family became close with another family whose older children took on those roles. Ava would often play with the youngest children of this family. She remembers going to their home to spend the night with the younger daughter and realizing, even at a young age, that she and her family had more than they did. Ava and her family lived in a big cement house built by missionaries in the 1970s and this family lived in a "little adobe house with a tin roof and two bedrooms [with] all of the kids in one bedroom." She said "I remember as a kid not really thinking anything of it but just that it was very different from our house." She says that while her family had a good relationship with this family and continues to be in touch with one of the older sons, "looking back I can see the fact that we had more money and we were Americans and they were working for us" affected their relationship. She explained, "I feel like we were friends and we still keep up with them but there was always… that sort of – I don't know- power difference."

She described that power difference as a symptom of the larger oppressive system that was rooted in colonization and the privilege of Spaniards over the Mayan people. She described language, race, and background as markers of division that have been perpetuated across centuries. She explained that many people who live in the

villages speak dialects and are very, very poor and have little opportunity for social mobility because “if you don’t speak Spanish you really can’t get a good job or move up.” Ava remembers driving by and seeing “shanty towns on the sides of hills” where Mayan people lived in “little houses put together with pieces of tin and wood” and knowing that people lived in the dump so that they could find food.” She also described being affected when she was in third grade and realized that the family gardener had dropped out of school in third grade because there weren’t really schools in the villages that offered higher grades. While he had gone as far as he could educationally, she knew that she was just at the beginning.

Ava was too young at nine to fully understand what she was seeing and experiencing and the differences of opportunities offered not only to her but also that “people from Spanish lineage were more perceived like white people and have maids or gardeners and live in the cities and have better jobs…” She began to think about these inequities and later recognized that the whole country was not lacking in opportunities for advancement. Instead, “there are certain people that live in the country that have access and that CAN move up or get an education or get a good job- and then there’s certain people that can’t, or that it’s MUCH, MUCH harder for.” She recognized early that that access was “connected to race and to language.” While she "wasn’t aware of all of that as a little kid” she began the process of seeing this oppression for what it was at an early age. Growing up witnessing discrimination against the indigenous people and issues of structural and systemic oppression shaped Ava, and while she did not have the

capacity to fully understand what she witnessed as a child; it undoubtedly influenced her commitments today.

During the middle of Ava's fourth-grade year her family drove up from Guatemala to Washington State where her grandmother lived. They then moved to Maryland the following year so that her dad could pursue his Ph.D. in linguistics while she attended a private Christian middle school. Her family moved back to Guatemala for her 9th and 10th grade years. Ava briefly described her linguistic history to her colleagues on her blog in the following way, "I spent most of my childhood in Guatemala where I learned Spanish. I spent portions of my childhood in various parts of the United States, where I forgot much of my Spanish" (Ava, Moodle profile, 1.11.09). Her family moved back to the US for 11th and 12th grade and she attended a huge public high school in Dallas. Ava described this huge transition and her "struggle to come to terms with her cultural identity" in the following way:

> Having spent the majority of my life outside of the U.S., I went through culture shock and a complete loss of equilibrium when we moved to the United States and I began my junior year of high school in public school for the first time. I remember the internal struggle as I waded through issues of identity. I longed to fit in, yet knew I would always be different. There were too many experiences my peers and I did not share. It took a long time for me to come to terms with these issues and begin to recognize that my experiences, though different, were equally valid and provided me with a rich source of knowledge. My experiences both inside and outside of the United States have influenced who I am today. (Ava, portfolio, cultural identity standard)

While these years were challenging in many ways, Ava eventually did find her footing and built close friendships. Upon graduation she attended a religiously affiliated university but did not feel challenged and "didn't feel like [she] was connecting with

people" and so she decided to regroup and attend community college for a year. She then enrolled in an academically rigorous, religiously affiliated private university, where she majored in psychology and became close with a group of artistic friends. She described the university as a "very interesting...bubble." It is "a white rich school in the middle of a very poor city" with "something like 80% low income and…a HUGE homeless population" She says that while she was at that university she didn't "DO a lot, but it was a lot to think about and just to see."

After college she "really wanted to do something in [a] city and with low income [people], but [she] hadn't figured out what." She was particularly interested in moving to Atlanta because she had heard about different ministries with the homeless in the city and thought that might be interesting. She heard about Mission Year from a friend and applied.

> Mission Year is a yearlong urban ministry program focused on Christian service and discipleship. We take teams of people, place them in an area of need, and help them to serve people and create community. We are committed to the command of Jesus to "love God and love people," by placing the needs of our neighbors first and developing committed disciples of Christ with a heart for the poor. (www.missionyear.com)

Mission Year has teams in Philadelphia, Chicago, and New Orleans but Ava elected to come to Atlanta for her experience. During that year, Ava lived in a small house in south-east Atlanta with five other girls. They received a stipend through the program and raised additional support to supplement their living expenses. Ava volunteered in a special education classroom at a high school in the community for three days a week, partnered with a church across the street, and spent a day a week meeting with her roommates for structured discussions related to urban issues,

systemic oppression, and racism. In addition, she spent Saturdays out in the neighborhood getting to know people, and Sundays working in and with the neighborhood church with which they were partnered. She had Mondays off. She described that experience as life shaping and intense,

> …living with a bunch of strangers in close quarters and then living in a low income neighborhood where there's a lot of crime and you see a lot of poverty and then getting to KNOW those neighbors and really caring about them- and kind of seeing the way that their life is different from mine and recognizing just the way that my background had given my so many privileges. Just the fact that my parents are educated and that I had gone to college and that was EASY for me to do.

Her work at the high school further shifted her understanding as she was able to witness the types of challenges her students had and "the way that the school system worked." Through her experiences, relationships, and reading during Mission Year, Ava came to know and name many of the issues she had been grappling with since she was young.

Mission Year not only helped Ava more deeply understand issues of oppression but also challenged and reshaped Ava's faith and her understanding of purpose. She explained,

> When you think of God as good and really caring and involved and then you watch people that are going through a lot of horrible stuff and hardships, you have to step back and ask, "What is really going on here? And "How does that still work, or does it still works?" "What do you do with those things?" I think that's kind of an ongoing process and I more and more have been convinced that God works THROUGH people and that he takes it pretty seriously that we should be doing things for one another and that we should be loving each other and giving each other things. I think a LOT of a lot of [the hardships we experience and inflict on others] is because people aren't giving or they aren't CARING for each other. I don't know that that fully answers or solves [those] issues- but to an extent that's helpful to me. All of that has definitely shaped who I am today, especially post mission I [have] felt the weight of the responsibility

> of [knowing that I] have *so much* and [that I] need to do something with it…to use it to do something good.

Mission Year provided a space for Ava to really unpack her own beliefs through conversations with others who were coming with and/or coming to different understandings of faith. Ava believed that these conversations were very helpful because "it's too easy to just decide what you think and let that sit there and not really question it or dig through it." When she talked with others who questioned her or thought differently it provided her with an opportunity to really articulate what she thought and why, and she occasionally realized that she was "not really as sure of that as [she] thought." Ava felt that every time she engaged with others in these types of conversations they would "both move or shift a little bit" and while they didn't end up "in the same place at all… that is okay."

Another important result of Mission Year was that the opportunity to volunteer in a classroom helped her build confidence to seriously consider teaching as a career. She had planned to do a master's degree in counseling but her work in a classroom convinced her to become a teacher. After a year of volunteering, Ava was hired by the high school, and she worked as a teacher's aide for three years.

Her work as a teacher's aid was "really intense" and "took a huge portion of her life" because the kids they were working with had so many issues, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, and emotional/behavioral issues. During her third year, the structure of the school shifted and many of the kids she had worked with for three years were sent to other schools. Ava and the lead teacher were to work with three different populations: (a) long term with students with severe emotional difficulties, (b)

short term students who were passing through her classroom as a step back to the home schools which had expelled them due to behavior issues, and (c) academically struggling “kids [who] had not passed the CRCT but were 16 and were in limbo until they could pass” and who needed individualized instruction to learn how to read and were likely to drop out of school. She described that year as “the most intense year there” because they had students with “so many issues” and just couldn’t make any headway because she and the teacher just could not meet the variety of needs of their students. Ava explained that that year “really showed me a lot of like what I DON’T like about the educational system and the major problems with it” and really made Ava “very frustrated with it all by the end of that time.” Immediately after that year Ava began a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) in Reading, Language, and Literacy in preparation to teach English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

While Ava took classes at the university, she worked in an alternative job training program in conjunction with an urban school district. This program partnered trainers with people with disabilities and facilitated their getting a job with a livable wage and insurance. Ava worked as an aide to the teacher supporting six students and providing life skills, job skills, and some academics. The students were trained in different departments of a partnering bank and Ava and the teacher rotated around to train and support them. She described that year as the total opposite of the year before, because the students were really motivated “because it was REAL LIFE.” Ava found it very rewarding because two of her students obtained (and still hold) jobs that they feel good

about, that support them financially, and help them feel contributory. The experience was rewarding both personally and professionally.

Ava came to view teaching as a complex endeavor, which went "beyond just basic skills to like preparing them for life and college and jobs and just how to navigate the world and the systems that are there." While she did not feel that this responsibility lay solely on a single educator, she did believe that many of those things were learned through schooling. She also recognized the complexity of determining whether you provide students with education "so that they can be really successful and make it in the system and hold down a good job; or do you teach them to challenge [those systems]." She found it difficult to establish a "balance between those two things."

She was particularly empathetic to the experiences of English language learners because she really valued "other places, other cultures, and other languages and [didn't] feel like the United States has the corner on the BEST things [in the world.] " She felt that the fact that she did not come from a "super patriotic, 'GO U.S.!' background" could be helpful because she recognized that other places had a great deal of value. She felt that growing up in Guatemala had made her "a little bit more open to other ideas or ways of doing things and able to say 'You can do it differently and that doesn't mean it's wrong!'" She also felt that she could understand, to some degree, the cultural differences and the culture shock that immigrant families feel upon their arrival. She said "When [students] are talking about HOME, it depends on where they are FROM, but to an extent, having lived in a third world country I can sort of have an

understanding of how things ARE" and how students might be feeling about their own transition.

Ava's life history culminated in a set of priorities and passions that she briefly summarized in her introduction to colleagues on the list serve. She said, "I love teaching, language, children, books, and people in general. I am passionate about justice, equality, sharing resources, education, diversity, and simplicity."

Ava's Demonstrated Commitment To Educational Equity During Her MAT

I was introduced to Ava at the beginning of her MAT program when she was assigned to me as an advisee and I got to know her on a personal level during a mini-mester online/in class hybrid course I taught on the integration of literacy strategies in ESOL classrooms. She was a rather quiet participant in a class with many flamboyant personalities, but the hybrid format of the course provided an opportunity to get to know Ava's commitments to her students and to social and structural change through personal and written discussion. Throughout her program, in her coursework, and with her students, Ava's commitment to justice became increasingly apparent to her faculty and supervisors. The portfolio submitted at the end of her program further evidenced this obligation to marginalized students, advocacy, and emancipatory education.

Ava explained that "a critical stance is absolutely essential in teaching, especially when teaching English language learners." She explained that this stance means that educators "must be aware of the ways socio-political forces, educational policies and language learning are interrelated." She defined that stance as one in which people confront "their own cultural, linguistic, and racial identities and come to terms with the

ways power interacts with language learning and use." She argued that educators of ELLs must be reflective in order to "be self-aware, critically examine their own teaching practices and the practices of others, and work towards teaching in a way that will bring about change." Ava believed that it is necessary for teachers to develop a disposition toward challenging "the status quo and hegemonic forces which have shaped the way society works" and that "the gravity of this issue is enhanced by the fact that failure to do so will inevitably perpetuate hegemonic forces which place students of color at a disadvantage." Ava strongly asserted that "teachers of English do not have the luxury of ignoring or avoiding these issues. Instead they must be prepared to face them head on, continually working to advocate for the needs of their students."

Ava felt that "teachers are responsible for instructing students and preparing them to become active, knowledgeable, and capable citizens in a constantly changing world. In order to do this, teachers themselves must be knowledgeable about that world…" She explained that "although awareness is an essential first step, [educators] must not stop there." For example, they must "take action to advocate for what is truly best for ELL students." Teachers should empower their learners "to be able to navigate the complex cultural and social systems they have stepped into" and simultaneously "help ELLs maintain their unique cultural identity and sense of cultural pride." Ava discussed how this could be accomplished, saying

> Teachers must come to understand how their actions within the classroom may perpetuate societal inequalities and look for ways to combat this. Because of the social, political, and historical context of English teaching and learning, it is impossible to look at it as a neutral concept. Students coming into U.S. Schools must be equipped with English if they are to become fully participating members of society. In

> order to achieve academic success they must learn English and also learn how to navigate the sociocultural aspects of American society. I believe that a part of teaching ESOL is helping students learn both of these things. At the same time I adopt a stance of additive bilingualism and feel that the students' home language(s) should be honored and valued as well. Each student should be encouraged to maintain his or her cultural identity even as he or she learns how to navigate American culture. In exploring the issue of how to be an effective ESOL teacher without perpetuating hegemonic forces within the current socio-political context I have yet to come to any satisfactory conclusions. This seems to be an incredibly complex issue and one without any easy or clear cut solutions. I truly believe that languages are valuable resources and should be treasured and encouraged. English is becoming more and more a symbol of status and power and a language needed to access power and wealth. Because of this, other languages become less valued and may become endangered or even die out completely as individuals stop speaking them in favor of English. I want to assist students in learning English because I want them to have access to power and be able to achieve their goals. At the same time I do not want to devalue their first language. My philosophy is that the ESOL classroom should be a place where the student feels safe and experiences a sense of belonging. As a teacher I hope to foster a sense of cultural pride in my students. Because I am still figuring out how to navigate the issues of how to effectively teach English and value home languages and cultures within the context of American society with its leaning towards English Only movements, I plan to pursue the knowledge and tools that I still need. I plan to become an advocate for these students and push for policies which will provide them with better and more educational opportunities.

She firmly believed in a democratic classroom and pondered questions such as "who decides what gets taught, whose voice is heard, and who is viewed as the authority on any given subject?" and the related question of whose knowledge is valued in the classroom. Ava felt that all students brought significant funds of knowledge into her classroom and that it was her responsibility to create curriculum that was "engaging and relevant" to students lives and which took into account both "cultural and linguistic backgrounds." She asserted that "students and teachers alike are contributors to the

classroom learning environment," and that "every student has certain strengths" but that "many of these strengths simply go unrecognized within the classroom setting." Consequently, she considered carefully how to build a classroom curriculum that validated and built upon the strengths of each student.

Ava stated that she desired to create a classroom that was "a place of empowerment" where "every student has a voice and where students can express their opinions and challenge one another to expand their thinking." She posited that this type of environment requires that teachers establish caring and respectful relationships with students "by getting to know [them] and their families, honoring their home cultures, and showing an interest in and care for them," in order to "establish a precedent of mutual respect." She felt that curriculum should be created taking into account students' "cultural backgrounds, learning preferences, and levels of ability."

To Ava, this space of empowerment was one that valued the whole student, as a "complex and multifaceted individual whose needs go beyond just academic instruction" to the cultural, social, historical, emotional, spiritual, and cognitive being. She stated that it was imperative for students to see "how their lived experiences at home can be applied to what they are learning" and also "that what they are learning in school can be applied [to] and directly affect the rest of their lives".

She also intended to conduct home visits and engage with the families of her students, in order to build relationships and find "ways for the parent to be involved in classroom learning, and to incorporate the parents' expertise into the curriculum." She felt that this would also help mitigate strain that is often placed on immigrant families

when children become brokers of knowledge and English for their parents, disrupting familial roles by building “the child's respect for his/her parent and further [strengthening] the connection between home and school and creating an environment conducive to learning” for ELLs.

Throughout her program, Ava expressed her strong support for additive bilingualism, explaining that she views “languages as rich resources which should be treasured and protected.” In her practicum and student teaching experiences, Ava actively sought ways to facilitate students' knowledge of both English and their first language, encouraging literacy and vocabulary development in both English and Spanish (the first language of her students). In spite of the fact that her school-based colleagues discouraged the use of Spanish with her students, she “pushed to be allowed to do so because [she] felt that it was extremely important that they develop proficiency in both languages.”

Ava explained that as an educator “who values professional development and life-long learning” she will be “taking initiative to ask questions and pursue answers.” As Ava worked with students she began “to wrestle with some of the complex issues involved in being a teacher of ESOL students.” She stated that “the complex issues surrounding culture, language, literacy and the social and political context within which we all function have all come to the surface.” Ava grappled with pragmatic pedagogical questions such as “How can I best facilitate the language and literacy development of my students?” She also struggled with more complex questions like “In what ways does my cultural and linguistic identity affect the way I teach?” and “How can I effectively

teach English to my students and at the same time honor their linguistic and cultural backgrounds?"Ava's clarity about the type of teacher she hoped to become and the type of classroom she would create positioned her well for the beginning of her career as an educator committed to social and structural transformation. She also clearly indicated her commitment to continued personal transformation and exploration of herself as an individual and as an educator. She ended her teaching philosophy in this way,

> I would like to become a teacher who is informed and constantly pursuing further information, an advocate, who teaches in culturally relevant ways, and provides classroom instruction which is empowering. I would like to help students achieve their full potential and excel in academics and in life. I know that in order to do this I must continue to assess, analyze, and reflect on my cultural, racial and linguistic identity. I also need to learn more about government policies which affect my students and continue to become more educated about second language learning so I can better advocate for my students both within the school and at the higher levels of the state and federal governments. I hope to be able to use this knowledge as effectively as possible to bring about change so that my students will be better served. I also need to do further thinking on ways to make my teaching more culturally relevant…I need to be open to sharing ideas and changing my methods when necessary. I must learn to be more flexible and be a constant learner. I also need to be willing to share my classroom space with others and allow my students to teach me even as I teach them. I am sure that my philosophy of teaching will continue to evolve as I gain experience and grow as a professional. I look forward to continuing to learn how to make my classroom a place of learning, empowerment and growth.

Ava's commitment to justice, structural change, and the creation of a more just world shaped both her personal and her professional life.

Social Justice In The Life Of Ava And Her Classroom

Ava had always been committed to community, and to "living and sharing things and using what you have as a group to benefit the wider community" (Ava, closing

interview, 12.18.09). At the time of this inquiry, Ava lived in a house with four other people. These five "moved in together… intentionally trying to build community and share life together [to] see how doing that can be a positive thing for the neighborhood and for each other" (Ava, closing interview, 12.18.09). She explained that none of them were employed in very lucrative fields but, instead, they were working alongside and in service to members of their community, which was economically struggling and politically underrepresented. They shared one roommate's vehicle and were authentically sharing resources and living in community. These individuals were particularly connected to the young people in the community. They ran an active youth group, coordinated a community summer camp, and coached basketball and flag-football teams for kids from the community. One of the roommates had collaborated with another member of this close-knit community to start a community coffee shop which employed only people from the neighborhood and worked to create a space for authentic communication. This coffee shop also had a Christmas store with donated gifts that families could purchase at very reasonable prices, and the proceeds went to support the youth organizations in the community.

Ava and her roommates were active members of their community and were working to create an atmosphere of mutual care and mutual responsibility. I was inspired by the work that they did and the intentionality with which they labored to be the change they wanted to see in the world. Ava's faith was foundational in this sense of purpose. She shared that more and more she had been convinced that "God works THROUGH people and that he takes it pretty seriously that we should be doing things

for one another and that we should be loving each other and giving [to] each other... I think a LOT of [the misery and oppression in the world] is because people aren't giving or they aren't CARING for each other" (Ava, initial interview, 12.18.08).

Ava was the only teacher in a newly formed private Christian community school focused on servant leadership. Lori, her principal, was a long term friend and mentor, and they were ideologically very similar. Ava's students were two eighth-grade students, sisters who had recently arrived in the United States from Mexico. The girls were working to develop their language, literacy, and content in preparation for entry into a public English only high school the following year. Ava taught English, Language Arts, Science, Health, Social Studies, Bible, and Art. In the fall semester these subjects were addressed in rather disparate ways, but through the course of the spring semester Ava created a coherent and comprehensive curriculum that incorporated all of the subjects. Ava's extraordinarily close relationship with the principal, based on mutual respect and similar ideologies, made it very easy for Ava to approach her with curricular changes or aspects of the school plan that needed to be revisited. While there was some discomfort in this process because Ava did not want to seem to be critical of the structures the principal had put into place in her conception of the school, their relationship made these conversations not only possible, but also productive. Ava was able to reshape the processes of schooling for her students in ways that helped students develop English proficiency, literacy, and content knowledge, while putting issues of justice and equity at the fore of the curriculum.

Across her first year, Ava served in many ways as an advocate for and a resource to her students and their family. She talked with the parents of her students regularly and visited their house. The parents were comfortable sending Ava “things that they get from the bank or whatever if they don’t understand what it is and ask [her] to explain” (Ava, closing interview, 3.13.09). Ava was able to help them navigate unfamiliar systems, helping them get a library card and explaining how other public structures work. Ava also served as a cultural broker to the girls and to their family as they often came to her asking for help understanding what people had said to them and what something meant “or why [people] have said this to [them] at this place” (Ava, closing interview, 3.13.09).

In the school context, Ava was able to use her knowledge of language and literacy acquisition and cultural identities to help her principal understand the students and their family better. It is not uncommon for teachers to feel that parents who have been in the US for a decade ‘should’ know English and if they don’t they must not WANT to learn. Ava was able to help Lori understand that when you have left your home you work to maintain connection to it and that which represents it (i.e. the language) and also that the parents work a great deal and have limited opportunity or funding for English classes. Ava was also able to advocate for accommodations during administration of the standardized ITBS test that students must take. Ava’s knowledge of language learners and their needs enabled her to negotiate for her students to have a longer test taking window and also to have the test read aloud to them.

Ava felt that part of her role as an advocate for her students was to see them holistically. She posited that it was critical for all teachers to have a “holistic approach to

learners, and especially to language learners because there is such a push for them to become academically competent and then other aspects get kind of forgotten or left behind" (Ava, closing interview, 3.13.09). Ava felt strongly that she needed to attend not only to the academic needs of each student but also to the cultural and psychological wellbeing of each of them. She explained that "being aware of the fact that this is their first year in a US school and a lot of things are different for them" and trying to help them make connections that were not just academic, was supporting the girls in their transition and was an important part of her work. Ava defined viewing and serving a student holistically as seeing a student as an individual with "different levels and different facets and wide interests and as beyond just the student at the school." She explained that this construct was particularly relevant *in h*er work with language learners because her students were "connected to other countries, to other people, to their family, to home, to their neighborhood… AND to the school. They have interests and experiences and all of those things." She said that often in classrooms, teachers falsely demarcate that knowledge which is for school and that which is outside of school, implying that the learning of the classroom is not relevant to the world outside of school and that the outside world and knowledge from it has little to contribute to the learning valued in school.

Ava believed that language learners must be viewed holistically because "their home culture and… where they're living is really different" (Ava, closing interview, 3.13.09). Because of these differences, Ava felt that it was very important to create curriculum that connected school learning both to their current community and to their

own culture " so that those two things don't become separate and compartmentalized [but can be more] integrated" (Ava, closing interview, 3.13.09). Ava viewed additive bilingualism in the classroom as a means of advocating for her students through using Spanish as an additional language of instruction. She explained,

> …when you look at it holistically I think it's really important that they be able to [speak their first language in an academic context, at least part of the time]. When I think about kids that come and they go through the silent phase and they can't express themselves and sometimes you can't help that but I feel like if you CAN give them a venue to be able to share what they're thinking or some of the things that they KNOW then I think that's really important.

Ava's knowledge of her students as complex and holistic people enabled her to focus on their cognitive, social, and emotional needs throughout the year, rather than privileging the academic content over the validation of their cultural, linguistic, and historical identities. This stance was a critical aspect of her practice and was a pivotal reason that her students made such strides, holistically speaking, during the academic year (Ava, closing interview, 3.13.09).

Ava and her students not only made significant progress academically during the year but also engaged in several projects that integrated learning and service to the community. In February, Ava's students hosted a group of Latino second graders from a nearby city who came to Atlanta to learn about Dr. King and the Civil rights movement from Ava's students. In the days before the visit from the younger students, Ava and the girls spent days researching and setting up a scavenger hunt at the King Center for the students. The girls felt "really good about what they did" and were able to use their own learning in authentic ways to teach others. (Ava, Livetext, week 3, third week of January)

As Ava had described herself in her “I Am” poem, she clearly was a *people loving, justice-oriented seeker of truth* working for equity and transformation of our world. Her liminal identity, her *dual citizenship*, her *multilingualism*, and her experiences seeing the world from a variety of perspectives had provided her with opportunities to reimagine ways of being together in community that were more grace filled and *compassionate.*

Milagro

I am
A mother
A daughter
A sister
A friend
A TEACHER
A lover of English
A spirit
Tenacious
Bold
scared
Sometimes nervous
Dispenser of comfort
A wild flower
A non-conformist
A rule breaker
ME

Milagro's Life History

Milagro was born in Washington DC, to two Cuban immigrants. Her mother "came to this country dressed as a nun trying to escape Fidel Castro's oppressive communist dictatorship." Milagro's maternal grandfather "was repeatedly jailed for his anti-communist ideological stance." Her father and her uncle were trained by the CIA and fought in the Bay of Pigs invasion, parachuted into Cuba, were captured, and spent 22 months as POWs. Castro traded them to the United States in exchange for medical supplies. In a reflection on race and privilege in my culture course, Milagro examined her own sense of privilege as the daughter of immigrants. She explained that

> One of the reasons Cuban Americans do so well in the United States is because the majority of the immigrants that fled Cuba during the Communist Revolution had white skin, were highly educated, and could already speak English. We assimilated better than the people from Central America because our parents looked and sounded more "white."

> We spoke the language of power, albeit with a slight accent. I am aware of the advantages I have and that my parents had because of the color of our skin, our education, our social behavior (or manners that we were taught), and most importantly our language skills. (Milagro, culture course reflection)

Milagro further explained that she had come to this realization because of the readings and conversations we had in class, and she came to understand "very clearly now that there were doors open to us that were not open to others. We did experience racism, but we were protected from the worst of this oppression because of our skills, our appearance, and our education." During another reflection Milagro simply and profoundly stated, "We were lucky, were privileged. We still are" (Milagro, culture course reflection).

Milagro was raised in Georgia and went through elementary and middle school in the county where she worked during this research project. She attended a private Catholic high school, made several close friends and then attended Catholic University in the District of Columbia. Her major was English literature; however, she laughingly admitted that she "was not the most serious student" but did have a lot of fun. She described her college self as "pretty lackadaisical about a lot of things in life" until she fell in love during her senior year of college, got pregnant and "managed to graduate by the skin of [her] teeth." She soon began a thirteen year marriage and had three sons, each five years apart, and was primarily a mother during her young adult years. Realizing that the secretarial work that she did after the birth of her first son was not what she was supposed to be doing with her life, she went back to school and studied computer science. While she excelled in her coursework and got into a highly ranked

university for computer science, she also had her second son, and she and her growing family moved back and forth between Atlanta and DC. Her husband began to work in diplomatic service and she went to school.

When her husband was stationed in Kiev, Ukraine, she dropped out of school and moved with her family to Europe. This time was important to Milagro for a number of reasons. She explained that she had lived this very sheltered suburban life in the United States, volunteered for the homeless, did clothing drives, volunteered at a translator for schools because she spoke fluent Spanish, and donated to a variety of causes. However, she explained that "you never know like what real poverty means until you go outside of this country and you live in a developing nation." During her time in Kiev, Milagro and her family lived in a beautiful apartment above a street famous for high end shopping where she regularly saw children living in the street. When the Soviet Union collapsed, all of the social services collapsed, so the young and the elderly were without care and support. She was there for the tent city political protests and the demands for the prisons, which had not been updated since the time of the czars, to be renovated. It was a time of political and economic upheaval which Milagro described as "quite different from visiting the homeless shelter!"

During this year and a half time she also "traversed the globe by [herself] with [her] kids" taking them to Yalta, Odessa, Prague, and London. In 2000, the family moved back to DC and her husband was scheduled to be stationed in El Salvador. Milagro spent her days tutoring him in Spanish and volunteering at her sons' school.

After his training they moved to El Salvador where they lived for three years. She was employed by the Embassy as a community liaison traveling around the country to meet local artisans, plan craft fairs, and work in the schools. She acted as the liaison between the embassy and the schools. When the education officer came down to El Salvador from DC, Milagro took him to the five area schools where the embassy children attended. While the job was not fast paced, she enjoyed it a great deal and found it very interesting. During her travels around the country she went to "schools with dirt floors and no materials and no infrastructure" and to villages with "no roads or transportation to the school for children." She met people who lived in villages on the side of a volcano where a bus traveled only once a week and understood the impossibility of having a job "if you can't even get off of the side of the mountain where you live." She further explained that a child who is four years old and working on a coffee plantation "never asked for that job but finds him or herself in that position due to [the] political and economic circumstances…It's either eat or die." She referenced Maslow's hierarchy of needs and stated that "if you're worried about things on your table, you're not going to be worried [about much else]."

Milagro was particularly troubled by the amount of wealth of some of the people in the Ukraine and in El Salvador. She came to feel strongly that the wealthy are "responsible for the poor of their country." She continued, saying, "if you attain that wealth your job is to share it, because that's why we're here on this planet, to uphold and uplift humanity, not to exploit and pull down." To care for and share with others so

that everyone has enough and to uphold and uplift others is for Milagro what it means to live justly in the world.

Around that time, Milagro had her third child, and her husband announced to her that he was v*olunteering* to go to Iraq. She interpreted this decision as his way of saying, “I don’t want to be married to you anymore- I am volunteering to go to a war now” and he left. Milagro explained that he “promptly took off with a 29-year-old girl and left [her] with three kids.” She moved back to the United States and was “crushed” and “massively depressed,” not knowing what she wanted to do with the rest of her life. She struggled to find employment and couldn’t eat due to stress. Her ex-husband wanted custody of the kids, and while she wasn’t exactly sure how she would provide for them, she was certain that she could not let that happen.

Milagro moved in with her parents and they started helping her with the kids, and she got a job as a Special Education paraprofessional and had four other part time jobs, working as a tutor, as a security person for another high school, as a ticket seller for a high school, and as a fifth-grade tutor. She had “five jobs, three kids, [and] made about a thousand dollars a month plus child support.” As she worked with students she realized that teaching was something that she enjoyed and that it used many of her gifts. As a paraprofessional, Milagro found that she connected with her students who were recovering from traumatic brain injuries. One of her students who refused to speak to anyone began to talk with her, “completely blossomed,” became verbal, and was eventually mainstreamed. Participating in the growth and development of these

students was life changing for Milagro. She had found a vocation that she really loved. She said that this discovery “was [her] saving grace.”

Milagro decided that teaching English was a perfect vocational choice since her “two real loves in… life [were] humanity and language.” She explained to her colleagues in the discussion board that “this love of education coupled with a moderate linguistic ability led [her] to teaching.” She applied to the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) degree in English and things began to go very well. She won a state award for exceptional dedication as a beginning teacher and was offered a position at the school where she student taught. In spite of the fact that she continued to have challenging times in her personal life, she “just kept focusing on teaching [and] thought to [herself], you can’t control all of these other things that are happening around you but you can control your mind and what you do with your time and what you devote your life to.” She recalled telling her professors that her program saved her life.

During her year-long placement as a ninth-grade Language Arts teacher for English language learners at a historically low performing high school, Milagro realized that her relationships with students made a significant impact. She shared times when parents of her students came to the school and expressed their appreciation that their child was for the first time excited about school and about learning and never stopped talking about Milagro and her class. Milagro felt that “when things like that happen in your life you have to pay attention.” To Milagro, that meant devoting “[herself], [her] time, [her] energy, [her] mind, and [her] being to educating people.” Milagro’s “sincerest deepest longing and hope for [her] students is that they live the lives that

they were meant to live and that they find happiness and… fulfillment." She prayed every day, "Lord it's not about the score- it's not about this – it's not about that – it's about what these children truly need for their lives and their future."

She also explained that while she didn't consider herself a "traditional Christian, by any means" her faith was very important to her and was a significant part of her healing. Milagro often looked at her life and felt like the phoenix, like she "rose from the ashes because everything was burnt and then [she] found this [life] and it was beautiful!"

On Milagro's classroom wall was a poster that she named as her mantra. It said, "Live simply. Expect little. Give much. Scatter sunshine. Forget self. Think of others." It was with this disposition that Milagro approached the classroom, her students, and everyone else within her sphere of influence. She also firmly believed that "a small group of people can change the world we live in" and she knew that she was and wanted to be "one of those people."

Milagro's Demonstrated Commitment To Educational Equity During Her MAT

I met Milagro toward the end of her program when she decided to take my course "Cultural Issues for the Bilingual/ESOL teacher." While this class did not count toward Milagro's program or certification, she decided to take the course as she was grappling with issues of culture and language in her year-long placement in one of the most diverse high schools in the Southeast. Through my course Milagro was very vocal and open about struggles she had with the content and the readings as we worked to unpack our own biases as educators and to confront issues of systemic oppression.

While Milagro was open in small group and large group, she also disclosed a great deal to me through her weekly reflections. Through the course of that semester it became clear to me that Milagro was grappling with some aspects of herself and her privilege and moving toward a different way of acting and being in the world. At one point in the semester after reading about neo-liberalism and the effects of the past decade on the working poor, particularly single mothers, she wrote in bold "I AM NEVER VOTING REPUBLICAN AGAIN!" Other written reflections on her teaching, her classroom, her students, and herself indicated that Milagro was in a time of political and ideological transition.

Milagro realized through her reading and reflection that she had several biases that she had not previously considered but that impacted her work with students. She came to see that she came to curriculum from a western Christian Cuban American context which would not necessarily resonate with her student from Kazakhstan who was coming from a very atheistic former Soviet background and who spoke Russian as his first language. She recognized that it was not only the language difference that kept him wondering "what the heck {she was] talking about" but also their very different socio-historical, political and cultural frames of reference. She came to see herself as an individual who had a very specific and situated frame of reference.

She realized through an exploration of other religions and the relevancy of issues of faith on curriculum and learning that she was "not even aware" of the fact that she used Christianity as her point of reference "all the time while teaching literature and while referring to holidays." This recognition was the beginning of her intentionality as

she worked to incorporate teachings and texts from other faith backgrounds into her curriculum. She also was aware of the discriminatory and disparaging remarks that many of her students made to their Muslim classmates and was more able to confront those issues head on in her classroom context. She came to believe that religion is - intrinsically connected to one's identity and stated that she had not been fully conscious of this. She explained,

> I had compartmentalized myself in that I thought I had left my Christianity outside the classroom and, therefore, outside of large parts of my identity -- but I truly see now that this can never be the case for me or my students. Religion is a lot like culture, it seeps into every pore or facet of a person's being. That is not a negative characteristic -- it's just another thing to be cognizant of while educating children.

Milagro was realizing that her own stance, her history, her faith, and her culture shaped her engagement with others and in the world. She came, over the course of the year, to recognize that her racial and linguistic background, coupled with her status as a legal citizen, had created a set of expectations about the world that did not reflect the opportunities her students found.

At the conclusion of her MAT, Milagro explained that "one of the first things [she] had to do when [she] started the program was to confront [her] own personal and educational biases" as she worked to understand that her students were coming with experiences "outside of [her own] context." At the beginning of my course, Milagro reflected often about how education was a certain path for social advancement. In one of Milagro's earliest reflections she exclaimed, "We need to make sure these children know that they have the power to change their futures for the better. We must somehow break through all the racism and stereotypes and project the value of

education. I will be a living and breathing example of this to my students." Milagro was speaking to her students based on her own educational experiences "growing up in middle class suburbia in the United States." She explained that her

> …litany became, 'Obtaining a higher education translates to a higher salary and financial advancement for you and your family. Higher salaries translate into home ownership, financial stability, a more peaceful life, and better educational opportunities for your children. Use the language skills you are learning while in my class to further your academic and professional careers.'

Milagro reflected that she had failed to realize that the pathways that brought her success and had worked for her were not options for her students, because as undocumented immigrants "they did not have access to the same systemic privileges that [she] had access to." Many of the students where Milagro student taught were not legal citizens and therefore were excluded "from important privileges such as in-state tuition rates and domestic scholarship opportunities." Retrospectively, she realized that she was in for a huge shock because she had

> …foolishly believed that it would be as simple as telling the students that they needed to go to college. I thought if I told them this and then told them about myself and my success at school; then they would see the light and immediately start applying to universities.

One Thursday evening Milagro came rushing up to me before class began. She explained that her students had, as she later described, "responded with as much complacent head nodding as possible [to her *inspirational* speeches] until one day they finally lost patience with my ramblings." She explained to me that her students told her that she was not them, did not have the same barriers that they experienced, and that they would never be her. Her students "began hurling" the following questions at [her]:

> How can we fund our educations when we can barely pay the electric bill and put food on the table? How can we get into universities without important legal documents establishing residency in the State of Georgia? Do you know how expensive out of state tuition is? Where can we go to study? If I go home, my language is not strong enough for me to pass my college classes and by the time I graduate, if I graduate, my English will not be good enough for college yet either! What can we do?

She felt "the walls between [her] students' worlds and her world [finally tumbling] down" as she "began to understand a few of the difficulties that went along with having an illegal immigrant status in the United States." At the end of her reflection upon this day in relation to the creation of a more just and equitable classroom, she stated simply "I was making progress."

Engaging with Milagro as she grappled with these tensions and with her view of self in the world was awe inspiring. A variety of factors converged in her life at the same time in ways that shifted her paradigms dramatically. Reading her reflections, as we discussed hegemonic processes in our society and their effects on ELLs and as she considered these issues in light of the students about whom she had come to care deeply, made a significant impact on me as a beginning teacher educator, and I began to more seriously consider the potentialities for transformation in the context of teacher education programs.

Milagro's commitment to equity and justice was apparent to her other faculty and supervisors as well. In fact, the depth of her commitment and dedication prompted some concern from her closest faculty member that she would get into a school and not be supported enough, become discouraged and isolated, and become disillusioned with education. My commitment to Milagro, concern for her success, and recognition that a

community of support was essential for sustained commitment became a significant catalyst for this collaborative inquiry.

Social Justice In The Life Of Milagro And Her Classroom

During her first year after graduation, Milagro taught eleventh-grade American Literature at one of the most high performing and competitive schools in Georgia. She had hoped to teach immigrant students at one of our lowest performing high schools, where she student taught and was originally hired. However, because of the significant drop in ESOL population at that school, she was displaced and hired at the competitive high school in a very wealthy community. Milagro was well supported and mentored at the beginning of the year when teachers openly shared their resources and plans with her. This was particularly appreciated since Milagro "had not studied American Literature since 1989 and had purposely focused [her] graduate level courses toward the ninth-grade curriculum" because that is what she assumed she would teach (Milagro, Livetext, week 1, first week of January).

The content she did teach was extremely high stakes as her students took the graduation test, the writing test, benchmark tests, and End of Course Tests. Exemplary scores were highly valued in her competitive school, and there was a great deal of pressure and a strict pacing guide for curriculum that she had to follow. Milagro's content area (English/Language Arts) had the most high stakes tests, and eleventh grade had the most assessments that acted as a gatekeeper to student advancement. While Milagro did have opportunities to change her instruction, many of the assessments were standardized across the school or county and so she had to cover a standardized

content. While Milagro received stellar evaluations from her administration, several events culminated to make clear how tenuous her position was and to reinforce feelings of vulnerability. In response to this vulnerability, Milagro stopped engaging with her colleagues and chose to isolate herself as an act of self protection and preservation (Milagro, closing interview, 3.31.09).

Milagro displayed a clear understanding of larger systemic ills that manifested themselves in the lives of her students, both those she taught at the time of this study and those whom she served as a student teacher in a low performing high school with a large population of English language learners. Part of Milagro's desire to engage in this inquiry was not only to find support as a beginning teacher but also to begin a frank conversation about some of the challenges in education. She frequently shared aspects of her practice that she considered "pretty controversial" and recorded times when she did and did not think she handled her instruction as she would have wished. Her choice to be so vulnerable in this inquiry was a conscious decision aimed at trying to help the field. At the end of a challenging week, Milagro said, "I think if teachers are more honest about what really happens in their classrooms, it could really help better support the people in our field" (Milagro, Livetext¸ week 6, second week of February). Milagro was strongly committed to opportunities for young people and demonstrated this commitment in a variety of ways.

During her first year of teaching, Milagro spent her lunches in her classroom helping her students. She laughed that the cafeteria staff members were surprised and said, "Oh, YOU'RE Milagro de Dios!" when she finally entered the cafeteria for the first

time at the end of the third nine weeks of school. Previously the cafeteria worker had only seen Milagro's charge card. Milagro's students generally went to pick up her lunch while she stayed in the classroom and worked to give them feedback on application essays. When they returned with her lunch, she and her students ate, made calls to scholarship offices, and worked collaboratively on projects. (Milagro, closing interview, 3.11.09) Milagro's dedication to her students was unwavering both in and out of school.

On the day of my initial interview with Milagro she was triple committed. After spending her evening with me she needed to watch two of her three sons engaging in different sports (in different places) and had promised one of her students that she would go see her in the play that she was in outside of school. Milagro explained that "this is what happens when you are a single mom and you have three kids and then your students are like 'Please come see my play!'" (Milagro, initial interview, 12.16.08) Milagro's commitment to the many young people in her life extended far beyond the walls of the school.

Milagro not only felt strongly about engaging with her students in a positive way, but also was committed to creating curricular opportunities for students to provide a service to humanity, doing something with their learning that would better the lives of others. During Milagro's MAT she started to consider seriously the potentialities of alternative school engagements such as service learning, because she felt the need for students to have curriculum with depth, meaning, and connection to their out of school worlds and concerns. During our closing interview, Milagro shared that while she was not able to implement this initiative during her first year of teaching, she remained even

more convinced that this type of learning opportunity would “make a lasting impression” on students and might “hook them into academia” by making learning relevant, purposeful, and contributory. She felt that service learning would provide students with an opportunity for experiential learning that “will be applicable and useful later on for their lives” (Milagro, closing interview, 3.11.09).

Milagro envisioned asking each of her classes of high school juniors what type of service they wanted to engage in “because they’re so active in their communities and they’re so active in all their volunteer efforts that they have… far more of a reach than I do in terms of the [local] community.” Milagro noted that her students “all seem to be very globally oriented so it would be great if they could work with the State Department or the [state government].” Service learning resonated strongly with Milagro because she recognized that “not everybody wants to be an English major” and that engagement in service could provide students entre into an area that was interesting to them. Milagro was very excited about these possibilities and felt that this type of engagement could enable students to “develop something and run with it” (Milagro, closing interview, 3.11.09) from project conceptualizing to the completion of something that would benefit others. From her engagement with students it was evident to Milagro that “kids want to get out of the classroom and want to get into the REAL world.” She hoped to begin incorporating service learning into the curriculum the next year and said “if [we] can do that then- that would really be something” and exclaimed “what a tremendous impact it could make!”

As Milagro had relayed in her “I Am” poem, that *rule breaker, non-conformist* was *boldly* and *tenaciously* working for a more just world, in spite of the challenges that occasionally left her feeling *frightened* and vulnerable. She was indeed a *wild flower*, blooming and spreading joy and hope wherever she happened to be take root.

Jayne

I am a member of many unlikely communities
A listener
A puzzle piece fitter
A mentor
A seeker
A northern European mutt
A queer
A traveler
A teacher
A tree hugging dirt worshiper
A questioner
A shaper
A teacher who never wanted to be a teacher
An advocate for justice
A reminder of the compassionate
A dropper of curious thoughts in kids' minds

Jayne's Life History

Jayne grew up in Northern Michigan, the daughter of two former Peace Corp volunteers who were kind of the "back to the lander, hippie, mother earth news types" who "wanted to live off the land." When Jayne was almost four-years-old, her parents packed their belongings in their Volkswagen bus and moved her and her baby brother to northern Michigan in a "fairly unsuccessful" attempt to live off the land. Jayne's parents had experienced self-sufficiency and had lived that way for years at the beginning of their marriage when they were volunteering in Brazil, but upon their return and the birth of their children wanted to "live the dream" and purchased 38 acres in northern Michigan to set up their farm. Jayne laughingly explained that "no one should ever- ever try to live off the land in the north- I don't know what they were thinking."

At first they lived in a tent way back in the woods off a dirt road. The house was a “hundred and 50 year old school house…It didn’t have a roof, the walls were slanted, the floor was caving in, it was an abandoned building.” The building had been used in more recent years as a hunting camp so there were “big piles of beer bottles everywhere.” Her parents planned to restore the house and then set up the farm but had not accounted for the bitterly cold northern winter. Fortunately, their nearest neighbor was an old woodsman who “saw that [they] were going to freeze and starve to death so he brought a trailer to [them]. He just backed it in to [their] driveway.” She said that this man’s silent generosity saved their lives. Jayne explained that her parents “these middle class hippie Peace Corp volunteers” had to “take charity from a guy living in a trailer who ate by poaching” and explained that was an important lesson for her to “really learn to see people beyond the stereotype of who we think they are.”

After that first winter her family farm was more successful. They lived in the woods, raised their own vegetables and chickens and ate “a lot of rice and beans.” When Jayne was eight or nine they got electricity, and indoor plumbing when she was eleven. Before that time she and her family “used to have to haul water in” and used lanterns and candles at night. Jayne explained that she was raised by wolves and said, really in a way she was serious. Her description of her early years was idyllic, she explained.

> I used to KNOW time and seasons literally by smells and sounds. I used to know what time it was by the whip-o-will. I used to know when the seasons were changing cause there is a certain sound the ground makes when It thaws, and I used to know by the smell in the air, like literally that’s how I grew up, and it was, it was really magical in a lot of ways,

> there were no other kids around so… I basically entertained myself wandering around in the woods.

Jayne noted that while she grew up pretty differently from most people in the US she found "a lot of commonalities especially with people from other countries" because her early experiences were "not really that uncommon…If you go outside the United States." She explained that she didn't "freak out about needing to haul water or cut trees or things like that."

Her life as a student was a bit isolating as well. The nearest town had 800 people in it and "everybody who lived there was pretty much related. [and] had been there since the 1600s." She laughingly explained that "there were certainly NO HIPPIES! NONE! I was the ONLY ONE! I would show up to school in the 80s wearing bell bottoms and embroidered shirts and moccasins and… I was pretty different!" Jayne felt different in many ways from the kids she went to school with. She explained that most of them "had never left the county" while Jayne's parents had "lived in Brazil and traveled the world." In retrospect, Jayne realized that on a socioeconomic level she and her classmates seemed to be similar but Jayne always knew she would go on to college and "never thought that [she] would ever freeze or starve to death." She always knew that there were resources somewhere and that they had relatives who could and would help out if needed. Other kids in the community did not have that broader support network or the same types of opportunities. Jayne knew instinctually that in spite of the fact that her neighbors brought them fish and venison and vegetables, particularly at the beginning, that she was "at a higher class level than a lot of the people around." She grew up feeling pretty different and did not have many friends.

She “grew up hating school” experiencing it as an awful and boring place where “people yelled at you.” She had never been the type who wanted to learn just from a book, instead she “wanted to go meet people and talk to them and learn from them and travel.” She was always very interested in other cultures and places and “all [she] wanted to do was run away and travel the world and learn that way because…that was much cooler.” Similarly she could never understand why she was supposed to learn about science and the natural world “sitting in a classroom looking at somebody write on an overhead when EVERYTHING was going on outside!” She decided at an early age that unlike most of the women in her family, there was “no way” she was ever going to be a teacher.

When Jayne turned 13, her mother divorced her father and took the kids to Chicago so she could attend seminary. The move from the woods to the city was particularly challenging for Jayne who “spent about a month thinking [she] was gonna die” because she was so disoriented by the change from “knowing the time and the seasons by smells and sounds of natural things to CHICAGO!” After a short period of adjustment, Jayne “discovered that Chicago was an incredible diverse wonderful city with lots of things going on - and I had lots of friends and I LOVED it….” During high school she became very involved, was very supported and made “a strong circle of friends [with] artists and writers and different thinkers” and “people who liked to travel.” Jayne still remained close with many of those friends. During that time she joined a writing club where she “first fell in love with writing.”

Jayne considered herself a “northern European mutt” whose great grandparents emigrated from Germany. Her grandfather fought in World War II for the Allied forces against his German cousins. Jayne always knew about this growing up but it was “this thing that nobody could really talk about in [her] family” in spite of the fact that there “was the whole contingent of [her] family back in Germany who had been Nazis…. It was like one of those things in the room but nobody talked about it and… as a KID growing up… I just couldn’t wrap my head around it… how is this even possible?” Between high school and college, at the age of seventeen, Jayne took a year off and traveled Europe mostly by herself, and she spent a significant amount of time trying to “integrate” the fact that people who were somehow related to her could have been a part of such an atrocity. She explained that she “wanted to face it” and was driven by “a really strong urge to not just let it sit in the back and let it be the elephant [in the room that no one confronted]” During her travels, Jayne visited Germany specifically to meet her family members and to “figure out who the heck they were.” Since all of the men from her grandfather’s generation died during the war, she met their widows. Seeing the black and white pictures of the young men in Nazi uniforms on the mantles in their homes was a “pretty heavy thing to try to wrap [her] head around” because “on one hand you can’t begrudge someone mourning their HUSBAND and on the other hand HE’s WEARING A NAZI UNIFORM!”

While in Germany, Jayne visited Dachau. She had “never been so strongly affected by anything.” She recounted her experience saying, “I actually couldn’t go in. I made it to the gate and I just broke down, I couldn’t go through. I couldn’t go in. I got

physically ill. I kind of hung out by the gate for a while and then I left." She explained that her trip to Germany was based on a need "to go and confront it face on and see it for myself" While she didn't know that she "ever came to some sort of resolution about it, it really helped [her] to see it personally." Jayne further explained that this was "a very powerful experience" which significantly shaped her and which pushed her "not to be afraid of confronting things that are very difficult to confront." She explained that "in the classroom [whenever] stuff comes up about race or gender or oppression or whatever and it's a difficult conversation" she remembered that experience in Dachau. She reminded herself that she and her students were all safe and in a classroom, "not standing in front of some gas chamber," and they were not being persecuted for their beliefs but could engage courageously with each other in discussions about issues of oppression and hegemony.

After her year of traveling, Jayne attended Hampshire College where "they don't have grades." Instead, "you make up your own field of study." She explained that the lack of a very structured program meant that she "didn't get a lot of the core 'intro' classes [like Introduction to Economics or Political Thought], and instead went into classes that were really interesting, but didn't give… the basic building blocks to understand what was going on." She explained that she spent the first year and a half with "no idea what any of [her] professors were talking about." And while she was able to piece information together she still found "big gaps" in her knowledge base. She found that the professors were not focused on merely awarding grades but "acknowledged [her] strengths, interests, ideas, and passion for the subject" (Jayne,

Moodle, 1.28.09). She found that this structure provided “a lot of freedom for students to explore their interests and to be innovative in their fields. It also allowed students to be deeply invested in their own education.”

Jayne was particularly interested in International Studies especially related to Justice and Economics and Women’s Studies. She took classes like "Global Feminisms and Post-Modernism", "World Health Interventions", and "Reading US-Mexican Borderlands as Texts."

This curricular focus led her to study and live in Nicaragua for a semester when she was twenty. Since the civil war had ended not long before her arrival, Jayne found that nearly every building had bullet holes in it, and there were “just tons and tons of homeless kids who are orphans or abandoned who are just barely dressed and starving.” She recalled one of the first nights she was in Nicaragua when she was walking home and found a 2-year-old girl under a pile of newspaper. She explained that while it “knocked the wind out of [her] pretty hard” and she was constantly overwhelmed by it all, “that’s just… Nicaragua.” When she reviewed her journals from that time she noted that her entries vacillate from saying, “this is the most amazing inspiring place I’ve ever been” because of the incredible things people were doing for each other, and then the next day writing, “Oh my God! I’m gonna die! I gotta get out of here! This is insane! There [are] landmines! People are dying everywhere! Everything is blown up!”

Jayne anticipated that the experience would be challenging. While the program through her university offered her opportunity to chose between Costa Rica, Belize, and

Nicaragua, Jayne was one of the three students (out of a group of 100) that chose to go to Nicaragua. She said, “Belize and Costa Rica are beautiful and have great beaches…Nicaragua doesn’t sound like so much fun.” However, true to form, Jayne was “determined to go and see this kind of thing first hand.”

Her host mother, a tiny blind lady in her forties who looked like she was eighty, was one of the mothers of the Nicaraguan revolution and was recognized nationally with plaques and monuments. She showed Jayne her family album where she was wearing camouflage and holding machine guns and explained that the picture was taken when they ran off into the jungle to hide when their village was bombed for the fifth time. One of her sons had been executed in the town square a month before the revolution ended, and her host mother had to pay for the bullets. The family still had the US army issue shells. In spite of the fact that the US had played a part in all of the suffering that she, her family, and her country had endured, Jayne’s host mom welcomed her into their home, offered her the best of everything, had Jayne join her and her daughters chatting and drinking tea, and welcomed her to their family. This woman taught her incredible lessons and she again compared this openness and fearless compassion to that which she experienced in the US, saying,

> …here if somebody looks brown we lock our doors. There, her son was executed and… she STILL would welcome an American into her house. I mean if that’s not a wake-up call about the world I don’t know what is!

Jayne found the people of Nicaragua to be “the most generous, kind, brave, wonderful people [she] had ever met.” She recounted being taken to the farm of a very poor woman living in a shack in the jungle who had lost a foot in a landmine explosion.

This woman "was going to kill her last chicken" to prepare a meal to welcome Jayne to her home. Jayne said to her, "Please don't do that! Please, please don't!" to which the woman replied, "Oh, you don't like chicken?" Jayne quickly answered that she did not and the woman said "Oh, I'll give you fruit," and she scaled every tree "with one foot" and filled two garbage bags with fruit to welcome Jayne. Jayne encountered that type of extreme generosity and kindness from people who had almost nothing. She noted the striking contrast to attitudes of sharing and generosity in the United States where "people are like 'Oh, I can't give a dollar to a homeless person because they might buy alcohol or something.'"

Part of the reason Jayne loves working with immigrant students and families is that she felt "people who have been through so much more and have dealt with so much [have] a certain sense of perspective that most other people just don't have." She explained that most people don't understand that much grace. They "don't understand what it means to give that much." Jayne said that she preferred to hang out with people who have such incredible compassion and generosity of spirit.

While Jayne was in Nicaragua, she worked with an organization that was a union for street kids which was "basically a battered women's shelter" and "the only organization in Nicaragua that was gathering information about the impact of violence on Nicaraguans" at the end of years of civil war. This organization was working systematically to uncover the psychological impact of the turmoil. It was in this context that Jayne also had her first teaching experience working with teenage girls who lived on the streets. Her classroom was a courtyard; she had no curriculum or supplies, and

she was teaching in what she considers her “thoroughly mediocre” Spanish. She quickly realized that she needed to bring food to her classes since her students didn’t eat on a regular basis. She learned that if she brought food, they would always show up. This introduction to teaching was, as Jayne stated “trial by fire.” She also explained that seeing this kind of thing first hand really made an impact on her as an educator working with so many different communities. She says that few people

> …really have an understanding of what it means to be a refugee or what it means to come from a war torn country or what it means to come from that much poverty. Even if you are poor and you grow up in a violent environment, I still don’t think you have an understanding of what it’s like to live in a country like that.

Her experiences there made her much more connected to the students and families that she later served because she did have an idea about what they might be fleeing from. She also believed that the experience living, working, and building relationship in Nicaragua made her unafraid to enter places where she was not “the normal person there.” She was unafraid to stand up for what she believed was true and right, even if she was the only one in the room with such a stance.

Upon her return to Hampshire, Jayne was about to begin her independent research project, which is much like a dissertation and was the culminating work for her degree. Jayne was planning to go to Tanzania and was learning Swahili. She was also taking a Mexican American Studies Class in which they were discussing Luis Rodriguez’s text and discussing whether individuals who escape the barrio are obligated to come back. While Jayne did not remember what she said in the conversation, she remembered the response of a Mexican American woman in her class who interrupted

her, pointed at her, and said, “I challenge YOU to go back to YOUR barrio!” Jayne’s response was “Oh for the love of God! Please don’t make me do THAT! I don’t want to go back there! You don’t understand!” Jayne knew that this was her charge. She did go back to her barrio in Northern Michigan and found it to be a powerful and illuminating experience “to go back and turn the lens back to where [she] came from and talk to women” and to look at a microcosm of a population and to look at the intersections of race and class in the lives of women with whom she had grown up.

The women from her hometown shared with Jayne “pretty intense” stories of surviving in an area that had always been “pretty poor and dependent on the mining industry.” The year of Jayne’s study, the last mine in the Upper Peninsula closed down. She described that time as an “economic Armageddon” when everything was just completely falling apart and even “the GOODWILL in [the] town closed down.” Many of the women Jayne interviewed had struggled their entire lives and were now faced with this additional hardship. While Jayne had not thought much since that time about her official findings, she clearly remembered the stories and the fact that she was very impressed with the women. She realized that where she grew up

> …so many people were alcoholics, so many people were living day to day that you just kind of knew everybody had a hard time But I didn’t really think about it as a kid. My main thought was- “I’m gonna get outta here!”You know “I’m leaving- I’m traveling the world… I’m leaving THIS WORLD behind me.” and then to really go back and hear their stories and to think about what they had lived through and what they had accomplished with their lives really… forced me to see where I came from in a different way…and to really understand it… Everything isn’t just about the rest of the world. It’s also about where you come from. It doesn’t matter where you are talking about. Some things are kind of universal. When I studied about the struggles of the Nicaraguan people to overthrow their dictator and dealing with US backed violence and all of

> this stuff, it's obvious. It's immediate. I look at that and I see injustice and I know- I KNOW what it's about. Now when I look at the women that I grew up with I just thought – "I WANT OUT OF HERE- this is a mess I don't even want to think about it!" and so what [this research] forced me to do was to think about the fact that you don't have to go to Nicaragua to see injustice. You don't have to go to Nicaragua to do something about it. It can be anywhere. That was a big lesson from that. And I think I learned to see people in a much better light. I respected them much more than I think I had growing up.

While Jayne was in school in Massachusetts she also became a confirmed Quaker through her involvement in a community with an incredible group of people who were "really committed to social justice and they were committed to it in a way that [she] had never really found anybody do before." In college in the early 90s, Jayne was "involved in all sorts of activist groups" which took very direct action. She described their action as "loud and angry and out there" and while she valued that type of involvement as well, what she saw with the Quakers appealed to her on a deep level. The role of introspection and listening was "a huge reversal" for her since most "things are based on talking."

She was extremely affected by the ways that this Quaker community "dealt with very complicated issues in a really comprehensive fair way. " Jayne recounted one tension when a Cuban sister community which partnered with her community to break the blockade and bring medicine and food to the people of Cuba found out that her congregation not only were openly supporting gays and lesbians but also had gay and lesbian members. The Cuban community refused to partner with her congregation because of this. Many people were very upset about the issue and Jayne was very impressed with the fact that while they had many meetings to discuss the issue, "there

was never a consensus reached." Instead, as a community "they LET that exist. They let the complication exist." People had different ideas and opinions about how to proceed, some were so angry they left the meeting, others wanted to continue to partner with the community and attempt to educate them, others felt that they were at an impasse that couldn't be bridged. Jayne found it remarkable that

> …in the end everybody just got to do whatever they wanted and it still just went on – and people acknowledged what it meant for everyone to make those decisions – there was no like – "Oh, I'm right and you're wrong." There was, "That is the decision that YOU have come to."

Jayne described this as a process she found incredible. She had never seen people "take something that was so important and so painful and really allow it to be complicated and not have to have everybody agree." This ability was one that Jayne had not seen anywhere else since "generally there has to be some sort of consensus and somebody wins and somebody loses" but the way that this was handled they were able to remain a community, to not self-destruct, to remain friends, to care about each other, and to support each other, even while they "acknowledged that there were different decisions that everyone needed to make." While spirituality and Christianity are "not a big part" of Jayne's life, having and engaging in a "community of listeners was very important" to her.

After graduating from college, Jayne moved to Georgia and got to know communities, neighborhoods, and kids. She had been there long enough to recognize people and had seen kids grow up. She had had a variety of jobs as a naturalist. Her goal in those educational settings "was not to have people memorize the kingdom phyla whatever" but to help people really connect to where they were and to "develop a

sense of place." This work was really exciting to Jayne and fit with her personality. She found herself telling people that she could not believe she was being paid "to run around and catch bugs and like walk through streams cause that's what [she does] anyway." She worked with Outward Bound in 1999 and then worked with a number of different wildlife organizations and nature centers. Eventually Jayne created a curriculum for a major aquarium. She came to realize that her work with young people in these environments was necessarily a short term connection and that the impact she could have was limited. She "was interested in something that was more like you go through labor with them through the semester and then you see what happens." She applied to the Reading, Language, Literacy and ESOL program and "absolutely loved it and loved working with [English Language Learners] - they completely stole [her] heart."

Jayne's Demonstrated Commitment To Educational Equity During Her MAT

I was assigned to be Jayne's advisor at the beginning of her MAT program. I worked with her extensively in the fall semester as her instructor and as her supervisor in that semester's practicum. Jayne's fierce commitment to the ELLs whom she served in her practica, her reflections on her own learning and teaching, and the remarkable ways she inspired people around her to be their best selves were astounding. She was immediately recognized by her peers and her faculty as a brilliant thinker, a talented writer, and a critical pedagogue. I knew instantly that she was someone whom I wanted to know and understand better.

During her teacher preparation program, Jayne's relationships with language learners enabled them to trust her with the "myriad of issues" that her students battled daily. She explained,

> …if I listen, they will usually tell me exactly what [those trials] are. Immigration raids, immigration laws, family and friends in other countries, episodes of violence and political turmoil in their home countries, racist and xenophobic incidents and systems they encounter in their new country, unemployment or underemployment, custody battles, domestic violence and child abuse, drug and alcohol addiction, pressure to join gangs, and homelessness are some of the many battles my students have faced. I know this because they tell me, if not outright, then with quick questions whispered under their breath with worried faces. *What will happen to me if we are deported? At my school, in my country, the soldiers came and shoot and students running everywhere. I'm scared because DFCS is going to put me in a shelter.* These are the obvious cries for help I have heard. But there are also everyday sirens that become so common they are easy to miss, like the sound of car alarms in a parking garage. *I can't go because I have no transportation. I gave my mom the form in Spanish but she can't really read in Spanish too good. I was absent because I had to go to the hospital to translate for my mom's operation.* There is also the lonely silence of the newcomers, isolated by their language, those who are frustrated because their honest efforts still provide poor grades due to language. Or, teachers who do not understand how an English language learner (ELL) can speak English beautifully and still fail at reading and writing. There are those students who face the incredible obstacles of cognitive, neurological, learning, and/or emotional disabilities on top of learning English. And, there is the just plain exhaustion of negotiating so much new information, new languages, new customs and cultures, and unfamiliar expectations day in and day out.

Jayne recognized that her students "have too much brilliance to offer to allow them to be defeated by what they lack, or by the storms of inner and outer conflict." While Jayne firmly believed that "no one person can 'save' another, what we can do is become an advocate, encouraging ELL children to believe in themselves, forging a connection with their home life and families, and demanding fairness and equality of

services" for these students. Jayne founds this type of advocacy "especially important in an 'English-Only' state such as Georgia, in which state-sanctioned racism and xenophobia create an atmosphere of fear and suspicion in the form of draconian immigration laws, and ill-informed language policies." Jayne worked to inform other educators and those outside of education about the connection between the history of ESOL and "English-Only" movements.

As a preservice teacher, Jayne, committed to establishing "a pedagogy based on transformation" in her service to language learners, but she "[found] herself in a two-sided conundrum" attempting to provide students with "the tools they will need to negotiate the (usually unfair) power structures of their new society, while at the same time [resisting] the imperialist practice of forcibly replacing students' L1 with English." She believed that all ESOL teachers must "first and foremost fearlessly acknowledge that language is an essential component of identity" and that "requiring students to change the language they use to communicate profoundly changes how they are able to express themselves, thus affecting their core identities." She recognized that "shifting the primary language of communication does more than expand minds, it can also de-center a student to his or her core" (Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman, 2004). Jayne argued that "a forced L2 immersion can [leave] ESOL student[s] feeling as if their linguistic and cultural identity (ies) are illegitimate," and this fact makes it absolutely necessary "for ESOL teachers to find ways that communicate legitimacy to students."

Jayne, a self-reflexive and emancipatory educator, consistently asked questions about herself and her practice, in order to legitimize her students as agents and also to

call into question hegemonic processes that perpetuate their oppression both in and out of the school setting. Some of these questions included:

> How does my identity, complete with my own sources of power and privilege, as well as disempowerment and shame, affect my teaching? What is brought to the table by the identities of my students, including their own sources of power and powerlessness? How do I negotiate repeating the imperialist history of the English language itself, especially within the context of teaching ESOL in an "English Only" state, in a setting that requires mandatory attendance? …How can I, as someone who seeks to practice transformative pedagogy force the children of other countries to communicate in (specifically American, academic) English? My answer to what is perhaps the hardest question for any critical ESOL teacher to answer, is that in some ways, I am here to make the best of a difficult situation. English is currently a language of economic, social, and political power. Quite simply, if TESOL did not exist, there would be no opportunities for students who did not speak English to attain this power.

Jayne believed that in order to create a transformative educative space she must "generate an honest dialogue with [her] students about the political state of the classroom, as well as the society where they live." Her stance that "in a libratory [*sic*] classroom, curriculums can become a point of analysis, and English becomes a tool to express that analysis" situated her as an educator committed to engaging with students in critical and self reflexive conversations, not only about the world outside of their classroom, but also about the world that they are co-creating within their shared classroom community.

To Jayne, advocacy "involves making sure all… students receive adequate and useful instruction, something that shockingly doesn't seem to be provided by some schools." While a theoretical and political approach to teaching and learning are critical, this theoretical approach must be translated "into successful practice where students are actually connecting with the material, passing their tests, and getting good grades."

In her work in schools during her MAT, Jayne "met teachers who expressed a great deal of passionate commitment to their students." She found, however, that "these teachers were overwhelmed, frustrated, and frazzled, with little time or energy for reflection or professional development." Jayne stated that perhaps these factors left the teachers "largely unable to do more than express frustration towards the students at their apparent inability to learn, instead of asking *why* the students were not connecting with the material." She argued that all teachers "must be willing to let their teaching evolve through critical theory and self-reflection into practices *that work*" using a critical self analysis of practice *"* to examine *why* certain students might be struggling with a more 'traditional' approach, and then change what we are doing to something that *does* work." She felt that a significant part of meeting the needs of students required

> …turning the question "why don't you know that?!" away from students to an inward dialogue. Why don't they know it? What is it that is necessary to bridge the gap, and then to make it stick? What's the missing link in the connection, and how can I make this material relevant to my students' lives?

Jayne felt that questions such as these should be the basis for teachers' professional development.

Jayne, in her words, her deeds, and her lived compassion, was committed to justice. Her commitment served to inspire all around her, her students, her colleagues, and her professors. Her teaching philosophy which she crafted at the end of her MAT ended thusly, and was indicative of both her own commitment and her ability to lead

and inspire others in their commitment to a more just educational system and to creating a world in which it is easier to love (Freire, 1970).

> We must never fear letting our students know that we love them, and let that love be our strength as we confront not only the difficulties of the classroom, school, and educational system, but also the injustices of society which shape every interaction on the planet. Courage and love in this sense are not heroic feats meant to be undertaken by superheroes, but a commitment to a daily practice of how we as teachers will go about our day. It allows us the courage to critically critique *and change* our methods when our students are struggling. Within this practice, we know that the end result is nothing less than transformation of our world. As Paulo Freire writes, "A deepened consciousness of their situation (of oppression) leads men to apprehend that situation as an historical reality susceptible to transformation" (Freire, 1989, p. 73). Our duty to cultivate that consciousness, both in ourselves and in our students, is what it means to me to be a teacher in a potentially inequitable endeavor.

Social Justice In The Life Of Jayne And Her Classroom

Jayne had been involved in activism and education for a decade. Much of her work had been as a naturalist, creating curriculum for refugee and urban students that helped them develop an appreciation and understanding of nature. She and her group of friends were active in a variety of causes promoting justice and international equity. She explained that while she "never wanted to be a teacher" this career path was an extension of her commitment to activism. Her journey to the classroom was a choice to "give up activism and art [as a profession] because I felt that [teaching] was a better way to do it. It had a bigger impact and it was a better way for me to do things than standing in a street and holding a sign that everyone around me already agreed with and everybody else ignored. I [thought] this way I can at least have this engaging conversation with kids!" (Jayne, closing interview, 3.31.09).

To Jayne, being a teacher meant being “a puzzle piece fitter.” Puzzle pieces included each student

> …individually with [his/her] own individual stuff, how [each learns] and what [each cares] about, then there are the kids AS A CLASS which is another puzzle piece which is the dynamics of how they all fit together, and then there is the material that I somehow have to teach and I have to figure out how to fit it with all that stuff and then there’s me and how I’m comfortable teaching and what I am actually interested in teaching and the things that I am not interested in teaching And the things that I HAVE to teach And I have to fit this all together in a way that works! That’s what I love about teaching cause its endlessly creative and you never do it the same way twice ever! (Jayne, initial interview, 12.17.08)

In her initial post on the discussion board, Jayne shared that in her belief the act of teaching is not “a trick that can be formulated” like “riding a bike” but rather, “it's more like a journey down a highly variable road in which one uses alternately a pogo stick and a jet plane to herd dolphins, who, it turns out, are probably herding you” (Jayne, Moodle, 1.18.09).

Jayne accepted a position teaching Social Studies to sixth- and seventh- grade Talented and Gifted (TAG) students in a school where she had been an intern the previous year. While this was not her original plan because she was specifically committed to serving and advocating for ELLs, a scarcity of employment opportunities due to the sharp drop in the number of immigrant students in the metropolitan area the summer of her matriculation from the program at Georgia State University, made this her best option. In this context, Jayne worked with the highest achieving students in the school in a content area that she felt was not “taken seriously” (Jayne, closing interview, 3.31.09) and didn’t “really count” (Jayne, Livetext, week 4, fourth week of January) to administration or the test-creators. While her students did take the state’s standardized

test for Social Studies, it was not an area in which students had to pass in order for the school to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

Since Jayne taught two different grade levels, her planning periods did not coincide with any of her colleagues. This limited her contact with other teachers since she was unable to attend mandated planning meetings. This also provided her with extraordinary freedom to create curriculum (and assessments) that aligned with her understanding of what mattered, without significant oversight or influence from other faculty or administration.

When she did have to engage with other TAG teachers in her school, she found that they consistently treated her as though she was nineteen in spite of the fact that she had repeatedly assured them that she was not (Jayne, closing interview, 3.31.09). She learned that “as new teacher… one has to not only establish one's authority with the students, but also with the teachers” (Jayne, Livetext, week 3, third week of January). She became frustrated when she did have to attend meetings with other TAG teachers, because she found that certain individuals

> …take every possible opportunity to deliver a soliloquy about how overwhelmed they are with everything, or one of those "these kids today...". I want to scream at these moments, because guess what? Teaching is a lot of work and kids have issues, like they've always had issues. And meanwhile, precious time is slipping away to get classrooms and lesson plans in order for the new semester. It's not that these are bad teachers, but they don't seem to notice how they hijack everyone else's time and energy constantly. (Jayne, Livetext, week 1, first week of January)

Jayne officially “stopped eating in the teachers' lounge” after this meeting, determining that it did little for her teaching or her morale. (Jayne, Livetext, week 1, first week of January)

During Jayne’s first year, in spite of the fact that the language learners in her school were not her own students, many of them came to find solace, support, and encouragement from her. These relationships were very important to Jayne and she began volunteering in ESOL classrooms. She volunteered for, coordinated, and led a poetry workshop in ESOL classes and worked to support the ELL learners in spite of the fact that she did not have a curricular opportunity to engage with them. Her commitment to these students was evident in the relationships she built and the many ways she worked to serve them.

Jayne ended the academic year by giving her students a charge during the last month and a half of school to “take the knowledge that they have gotten and DO something!” Since her students studied Africa, Asia, and the Middle East they had spent much time considering and struggling with the amount of human suffering that comes from violent conflict. They had also learned about non-violent leaders in the countries that they had studied who helped to transform the world without raising a fist. They had considered the difference between revolutionaries and terrorists and had thought about the peaceful processes of Gandhi, Mandela, and King. Jayne’s students took this knowledge, synthesized and extended it, and organized and carried out a “Be the Change” festival which combined Barack Obama’s mantra of “Change” with [Gandhi’s]

“Be the change you want to see in the world” and focused on non-violent conflict resolution.

Jayne worked with students to make this a tiered activity so everyone would have a leadership role and make a significant contribution to the process. One group of students was the publicity team and designed a variety of products for the festival such as a logo, posters, t-shirts, and bumper stickers that promoted non-violent conflict resolution in the lives of students. They also selected the theme song for the festival. Another group of students designed a club for students that would help them “implement non-violent conflict resolution into their lives… and their families’ lives” (Jayne, closing interview, 3.31.09). The third group of students studied three different cases where non-violent conflict resolution has been used in the world: Northern Ireland, South Africa, and the Cripps and the Bloods truce in California. Students used those case examples, found a conflict somewhere in the world, and put together a written step-by-step plan and PowerPoint presentation about how non-violent “conflict resolution could be implemented to end that violent conflict” (Jayne, closing interview, 3.31.09). Jayne intended to submit the plans for conflict resolution on a local and global level and video from the festival to a public liaison for Barack Obama who is gathering evidence of positive engagement in movements of change as “a festival that can be implemented IN SCHOOLS around the country to promote non-violent conflict resolution- BE the change!”

Jayne was committed to the idea because it would help her students synthesize the content that they had learned and the knowledge they had gained and make it more

than just cognitive. She wanted them to use that knowledge to create empathy and perpetuate action. She recognized that much of the content she taught kids during the year was “DE- PRESSING” but that they had also learned about leaders who were committed to being the change. Jayne obviously believed that all of us, all of her students, have the capacity to make that type of transformative change in the world in both our local and our global context. Her life was a silent testament to this belief, and her teaching was certainly shaped by this stance. Ultimately, she explained that it was so important for her students to recognize that they themselves can be a part of the change that they want to see. She had chosen to do that by ending the year with “something positive where they can actually DO something that they feel has made the world better” (Jayne, closing interview, 3.31.09).

Jayne, who had described herself in her “I Am” poem as a *seeker* who reluctantly came to this profession in order to drop *curious thoughts into kids’ minds* and to be an active part of the creation of a more just world, was doing just that. That *tree hugging dirt worshiper* was indeed a *shaper* of both the present and the future, *a reminder of the compassionate*, a teacher who challenged everyone who met her, through her *listening, advocating*, and *mentoring*, to consider a world that is more equitable and just, and to work to make that world into more of a reality.

Similarities in Vocational Purposes

In summary, these three teachers in their lives, their words, and their deeds were creating a world in which it is “easier to love” (Freire, 1970, p. 40). In all of their spheres of influence they were working to be a part of the change that they wanted to

see in the world. That commitment was the reason that they had chosen the teaching profession. These educators recognized that the antidote for feelings of hopelessness is engaging alongside others in ways that help channel knowledge and commitment in service to the community. Jayne, Milagro, and Ava found it imperative to provide students with opportunities to “do something” in order to increase their social interest, their feelings of belonging, and belief in their own capacity to make a contribution to the lives of others. Having had educational and life opportunities that fostered their own social interest, these three teachers had a common commitment to create experiences that might prepare their students to become agents of transformation.

The Role Of The Ecological Context In The Work Of These Educators

Findings indicate the context in which these teachers were navigating the development of their professional identity was a salient factor which shaped the ways that they were able to be and to work. An ecological understanding (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) of the contexts of these participants is needed in order to consider the ways in which context shaped the data.

This study took place from December 2008 through March 2009 and was influenced by the political structures, national priorities, and collective ideologies of this particular time and era. Politically, economically, and socially, this was a time of significant change. The inauguration of the first multi-racial president and ensuing reconstruction of national priorities, the housing market crash, the economic recession, the dramatic increase of unemployment, the tightening of state and local budgets for education, teacher hiring freezes, university cut backs, and, for the first time in the

memory of the participants' generation, a feeling of uncertainty among academics regarding their employment security. The general sense of new possibilities coupled with the fear that marked this time of transition necessarily shaped the context in which these teachers began their work, particularly because these teachers strove to create curriculum for their students relevant in these times.

Aspects of the political narratives of accountability and high stakes assessment, discussions about teacher pay for performance on those tests, and the incredible pressure to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) also marked these times for all involved in the public school system. On a more local level, school districts were reeling from significant funding cuts from the legislative bodies. Milagro and Jayne frequently reflected upon the ramifications of those cuts on the work of public school educators. During the first month of our collaboration, Jayne wrote about an "email from the Principal about cuts coming to education. Part-timers and those hired this semester will not get their contracts renewed. Class sizes are increasing in order to decrease numbers of teachers. Raises are frozen. Benefits are disappearing. This is not good!" (Jayne, Livetext, week 4, fourth week of January). During our closing interview (3.31.09), Jayne explained to me that if she wanted to literally move to the room next door in her school to teach ESOL the following year she would have to "surplus" herself, opening herself up for any job in the county, or to the potential of not having anything at all. Instead, of course, she determined that the best thing was to stay where she was and do what she had been doing.

Milagro talked about “hearing that people hired this semester, both part-time and full-time, in [Jayne’s county] were fired. This was devastating news. People are getting laid off all over the place” (Milagro, Livetext, week 5, first week of February). That week the news hit her school as well, and she described the “pain in [her] principal's face when she had to announce that certain faculty members would have to be moved to other schools. She had to explain that the school experienced a five percent cut in their budget in addition to the loss of funding for certain stipends and other programs. The school had been hit financially in multiple areas of funding.” Thankfully, Milagro “managed to keep [her] position for the year without being reassigned, which was not a small feat -- other teachers in other departments had to move,” and eventually she signed her contract for the following year. This was, however a harrowing time, as she had to wonder whether or not she would have a job the following year and if “all that work in graduate school, would all of that go to waste…[and if she would] have to start over in a new field because of the political and economic climate of our nation…” (Milagro, Livetext, week 4, fourth week of January).

Clearly, all of these factors increased significantly the vulnerability of beginning teachers who were dedicated to creating a counter narrative and a subversive professional identity. In fact, in the closing interview, Milagro spoke openly about how terrifying it was to be a different kind of teacher during these political and economic times. When I asked her what she would need to be able to be the kind of teacher she wanted to be and that matched her ideology, without a second’s hesitation she replied, “Tenure!!! Does that even exist anymore?” (Milagro, closing interview, 3.11.09).

The first spaces (Soja, 1989, 1996) of the teachers, their particular schools, administrations, content and students were also extremely influential in the work and experiences of the teachers. As described in detail throughout this chapter, these beginning teachers taught in very different contexts. These teachers were very affected by their context. Notable, all three participants experienced either chosen or actual isolation. They did not feel supported by other teachers in their work and found themselves without a school-based community of support. Looking across these teachers, there was an inverse relationship between these teachers' ability to push back to school power and to alter the ways that school can be "done" and their feelings of (and actual) vulnerability. In other words, Ava, with her long established relationship with her principal (and her safe positioning as the only teacher at the school) was more able to leverage change on a structural and curricular plane than Milagro, who was highly vulnerable and whose job was in jeopardy due to the cut backs. Jayne, who was able to operate autonomously, was not highly vulnerable and was not beholden to others. Without a clear understanding of the context of each of these teachers and the unique hurdles and challenges they faced, it is impossible to appreciate just how much each of them was able to accomplish.

As evidenced throughout the chapter, these teachers live their commitment to justice both in and out of the school context. Ava, Milagro, and Jayne all grappled with ways to ensure that their students did not become so "depressed" by conversations about hegemony, inequity, and injustice that they felt powerless and ineffectual. These are emancipatory educators who courageously engage in critical conversations with

young people which enable these students to recognize and claim the transformative potentialities of their own lives. They worked to help students become more compassionate people by engaging alongside them “doing something” to serve others, both in their local schools and communities and as they work to consider justice, equity, and compassion on a more global scale. The experiences, engagements, tensions, concerns and triumphs of these educators as they engaged in emancipatory and liberatory educative processes during their first year of teaching will be explored in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

EXPERIENCES OF FIRST YEAR SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATORS

As social justice educators, Jayne, Milagro, and Ava had particular experiences, tensions, and perceptions during their first year of teaching which were related to (a) reconceptualizing curriculum, (b) problematizing simplistic explanations of *student apathy*, (c) deconstructing the one right answer myth, and (e) democratizing education, liberating teachers and students.

Reconceptualizing Curriculum

As educators committed to justice both inside and outside of the classroom, Jayne, Milagro, and Ava viewed equity not only as a topic of conversation, but also as a co-created classroom curriculum where justice was a critical part of their way of being in community. They enacted this belief in several unique ways, (a) by viewing curriculum, themselves as educators, and their students as non-neutral constructions; (b) by engaging with students in difficult conversations; and (c) by negotiating the line between "keeping it real and keeping it age appropriate" (Jayne, Livetext, week 5, first week of February).

Viewing Curriculum, Teacher, and Students as Non-neutral Constructions

These teachers were critical pedagogues and recognized that education is not neutral, nor were they, themselves, individuals with a neutral stance. They

problematized the construct of a single and simple truth, even as they offered their students a variety of options for interpretation and expression of their understandings.

Milagro grappled with the literature that was a required part of her curriculum and the absence of reading that was directly connected to the lives of her students. During our initial interview, Milagro critiqued the authors and selections that were a mandatory part of her American Literature curriculum and those who were missing, discussing the Eurocentric and hegemonic canon and E.D. Hirsh's idea that there exists a body of information and literature that "every American" should know (12.16.08). During our closing interview she critiqued the standard curriculum, saying, "Bring on the young adult literature!" She ruefully stated, "I catch kids reading, and as an English teacher never thought I would [be forced to] say this but 'Put that book away and come on and let's read this! Let's read what we're SUPPOSED to read' " (3.11.09). Milagro found it exceedingly problematic that she was not able to integrate texts students were passionate about into her curriculum. She did, however, find a way to support students' engagement in reading for pleasure. She explained that she became "a book pusher. If [she] heard [students] talking about a book it would magically appear in [her] classroom." She would return to that student in the next few days and say, "Hey did you look at the shelf?...I got a new book the other day…" and then the student "would prance off happy with their book. " Milagro recognized that while the literature she had to teach was occasionally less than accessible and less than engaging as it was a reflection of the Early American canon, she could come up with alternative ways to

provide students with reading material that was more interesting, relevant, and reflective of their lives.

At the beginning of the school year, Ava was attempting to use the various curricula that her school had purchased for the subjects she was to teach. She found that her discussions of justice were more "hit – or- miss" as she would help her students explore equity when it seemed to come up in or be related to the curriculum. As Freire (1970) noted, education is never neutral and a curriculum without an intentional inclusion of justice is, due to the absence of this critical orientation, a non-neutral construction as well.

When Jayne was preparing to teach a unit on the Gulf War and the Middle East early in her first semester, a colleague passed on to her a summary worksheet that was commonly used to cover the topic. The document said, "Experts everywhere agreed there were weapons of mass destruction [in Iraq]." Jayne described her reaction in the following way, "I just put it down I was like "I can't use this I CAN'T, CAN'T, CAN'T Teach it NO! NO! NO! NO! NO!" (Jayne, initial interview, 12.17.08).

Instead, Jayne explained to her students that they were going to study the involvement of the US in the Persian Gulf, and that since they were studying recent history (and in fact the present times) the interpretation of reality "at the end is really going to be up to [each person]". She explained that "we won't even know everything for 50 years probably." She asked students to write on individual pieces of paper everything they had heard about the two Iraq wars and the invasion of Afghanistan. Then the class tried to sort the papers as fact and opinion and then sorted the 'facts' as "things we know

for sure" facts, facts that the students believed were "50 to 99% sure" facts, and then "vague notion they might be true"- concepts that they were between 1 and 50% sure about. They then used these concepts as questions to answer and topics to discuss through the unit. Jayne explained, "we put everybody's opinion [on the wall] and there was a range of opinions and we had to talk about how you came to your opinion. What forms your opinions? Things like that" (Jayne, initial interview, 12.17.08). Jayne encouraged students to have divergent opinions and said "I just ask that you base your opinions on something that is reasonable. Other than that- it's up to you what to decide." What students believed to be true, and the opinions they had formed from a variety of sources and influences was taken seriously by Jayne as she began their exploration of a very heated and controversial current issue. Students themselves recognized that the curriculum they were most frequently offered was not a neutral construction. Upon learning that the next unit of study in Jayne's class was about Africa, one of her African students said, "Ms. Smith, we are going to learn more about Africa than animals and just the bad stuff, right?" This student had recognized the transcendent script (Gutierrez et al., 1995) of schooling that had limited the discourse about his culture and continent to an overly simplistic and essentializing narrative that he clearly recognized as representative of a hegemonic discourse. In fact, the curriculum that Jayne had conceptualized was remarkably complex and began with an exploration of "Africans who changed the world" including "a mix of historical and political figures along with some contemporary writers and artists" (Jayne, Livetext, week 1, first week of January).

This stance, and the stances that the teachers themselves took, represented, at least in part, their own ideologies as well as their epistemologies. The teachers recognized that the classroom was shaped not only by their larger socio-historical-political-ideological beings, but also by their personal preferences and interests. Jayne explained this phenomenon thusly: “I am learning that I have to be as exciting about the topics that I don't like as the ones that I do because this directly [affects] how my students learn” (Jayne, Livetext, week 4, fourth week of January). She stated that she is “conscious of the fact that [she is] biased as a social studies teacher towards history. It's what [she] loves the most about the subject [she teaches]. Unfortunately, the CRCT is much more heavily based on economics, geography, and civics” (Jayne, Livetext, week 3, third week of January). Similarly, Milagro admitted that she is excited about “covering literature from World War I to World War II. These are the Imagists and Modernists” because “these writings are my favorites to teach” (Milagro, Livetext, week 7, third week of February). Milagro also appreciated opportunities to discuss “AfroCuban Spirituals” in the midst of a study of African American spirituals, as her students “loved the lesson, and [she] loved sharing part of [her] culture with [her] students” (Milagro, Livetext, week 2, second week of January).

There were times that curricular conversations and topics were particularly challenging for the teachers on a personal level, and they worked to contain their own beliefs, at times more successfully than others. Milagro struggled with the Edith Wharton’s *Ethan Frome* (1970) and the overarching storyline of infidelity. At the end of a day of teaching this story that was personally painful to her she wrote:

> The low of today was really having to teach the adultery thing again. My ex-husband left me for a much younger woman that he met while serving abroad. I kept telling myself that my life was not a novel or a tragedy, and that I was not Zeena the evil hag from hell. But really, it gets tough and wears on you. (Milagro, Livetext, week 7, third week of February)

This text was particularly challenging to Milagro who struggled with it personally and had a very difficult time finding ways to support her students in their engagement with the text, until she found a Buddhist text on pain and suffering that both met her own needs and connected in remarkable ways to the text. In many ways this text was therapeutic to Milagro because it helped bring together universal issues of suffering, and it allowed the class to work together on imagining an antidote for anguish. While this text was probably the most difficult for her personally through the year, it became a cathartic process for her even while it was a transformative experience for her class. She was able to take her own stance and turn it into an opportunity that benefited all, because she was brave enough to personally embrace and grapple with her transaction with the text. As Milagro spoke about her struggle with this text in a variety of conversations and forums, it became clear that the text initiated curricular conversations, about the universality of suffering, which were transformative for the teacher herself, both personally and professionally.

Jayne was acutely aware of the fact that she had a strong stance about much of the subject matter she was to teach. In my initial interview with Jayne she explained,

> I'm very careful never to give my opinion and I mean I think that that's really, really important. The only thing that I will tell them is that I generally think that killing people is a bad idea (Laughing). That's as much as I'm willing to give them. I am like, 'I really kind of don't like that kind of approach- killing people- I think it's bad. Other than that I'm not telling

> you my political affiliations whatsoever" (Jayne, initial interview, 12.17.08).

On a daily basis Jayne taught content about which she had strong feelings and in nearly all cases she was able to maintain an extraordinary amount of decorum. On three occasions she shared some of the more challenging contexts for her to keep her own beliefs, understandings, and ideologies in check.

During a discussion of fossil fuels and renewable and non-renewable resources, a student asked Jayne where oil came from. She explained that it was from decomposing material from the time of the dinosaurs. A couple of her students expressed surprise, explaining to Jayne that dinosaurs never existed. Instead of arguing, she just told them that oil was non-renewable and moved on (Jayne, closing interview, 3.31.09). When she introduced ancient African history, she asked students to list anything they knew about it and she placed their answers in relative order on a time line she drew on the board. She described the ensuing discussion in the following way:

> When all they could come up with was slavery and "there's a lot of wars and like...genocide," I put that at the far end of the line. Then at the beginning, I wrote "first human beings". Circling the first 2/3 of the line, I pointed out that we hadn't written anything there, and probably a whole lot happened between the first humans and the beginning of the slave trade. At this, no less than 3 of my students replied with all sincerity, "You mean Adam and Eve were in Africa?", "But I thought Adam and Eve were the first people" etc. I have such a hard time with this. On one hand, I want to respect where all my students are coming from, on the other hand, we are supposed to have separation of church and state, and this is a public school. My standard response is that I teach history, not theology. I rely on facts, not beliefs. Of course, this is an over-simplified response, but after teaching ecology in the South for years and never even being able to mention the word "evolution", it's something I really resent. Today, in all honesty, I pretended I didn't hear them, and just went on talking. (Jayne, Livetext, week 1, first week of January)

At another juncture in the curriculum Jayne and her class were "studying Europe and the whole move from southern Europe being controlled by the Moors and the Muslims to it being controlled by the Catholics… and the establishment of Christianity really in Europe as the main deal." As a class they read primary sources from a variety of different points of view, specifically attending to the accounts of a Jew, a Muslim, a Christian, and individuals who were interested in exploration and science and art. As a class they "talked about how the Christians just pretty much drove all the Jews and Muslims out and if they didn't get driven out they ended up being tortured or killed or something like that." Jayne explained that this set in motion "this process of expelling and persecuting and killing through pogroms [the] Jews in Europe leading all the way up to the holocaust." Jayne recounted the rest of the conversation in the following way:

> I have this one little girl who's Jewish, and it was one of those moments that just breaks your heart absolutely in two you know, and she raised her hand and was really upset and she was like- 'Ms. Smith, I don't understand WHY! WHY do people want to kill Jews? I don't understand! What did we do? What did we do?' And she was really upset … and I'm… trying to fight back tears and I'm like 'No! You didn't do anything! People fear people who are different…and they WANT power and they do these horrible stupid things and it's just hate and stupidity. That's all it is. It's just blindness.' And this one other little girl who USUALLY says really astute things raised her hand and she looked like she was really processing so I called on her and she said 'um- I'm not saying that what the Christians did was right – but you know- the Jews DID kill Jesus…." And I LOST it! I lost it- and what I said was- "You know ACTUALLY the reason that Jesus was killed was that he was considered a symbol of opposition to ROMAN power and in opposition to colonialism and Roman imperialism over the Middle East. He was seen as a leader of his people who was going to rise up and defeat the ROMANS! It had nothing to do with JEWS but it had everything to do with CAESAR! And he was actually considered a danger and a terrorist because he was considered this power that was opposing this imperial power. And then I look out and the kids are like (huge wide open eyes- shocked and surprised) and I'll never forget- I'll never forget this one little boy raises his hand and he goes-

> 'Ms. Smith- that's NOT what I learned in Sunday school….' And then they just all stared and me and I was like that was not good! That was a POOR decision! I had to try not to laugh even though I was totally panicking… and I was like they're gonna go home and say 'Ms Smith said Jesus was a terrorist…" Oh goodness gracious! But nobody said anything! (Jayne, closing interview, 3.31.09)

Clearly the teachers recognized that their own power, even in a democratic classroom that "Freire would love" (Milagro, closing interview, 3.11.09), was still significant. Their political, ideological, and religious stances shaped the classroom community, though at times their acknowledgement of their influence occurred after the fact and too late for them to be intentional about keeping it in check. Milagro found that her own background as a Catholic was often her point of reference, and she became intentional about bringing in and valuing the religious texts of Buddhism and Islam.

This theme was also salient for Ava. She worked at a private Christian school based on constructs of servant leadership, and the integration of 'biblical truths' was an important part of the curriculum. The fact that this school was ideologically cohesive with Ava's own stance and that the students were attending this school because of the faith based emphasis made the necessity of maintaining a neutral posturing less relevant for Ava in her context. She often engaged with her students to challenge constructs of racism, which students stated overtly but had not critically deconstructed. In response to those unexamined biases, Ava shaped her curriculum with great intentionality to engage with students in critical conversations about racism, privilege, and discrimination and also the interconnectedness and interdependence of humanity. She too recognized that as a teacher she was "modeling a lot of things for young

people" and that since there is automatically "an aspect of power that comes with [teaching]" students are likely to " take what you say and …your opinions…more seriously than some other people," and she feels that that is essential for teachers to bear this in mind (Ava, initial interview, 12.18.08). She believed that as a teacher both the words she said and the curriculum she constructed for her students had a significant impact. She spent a great deal of time, energy, and creativity considering the types of content and curriculum she could implement to enable her students to engage critically with these issues and giving them opportunities to work out the "truths' as they saw them.

These teachers recognized that students were not, as Aristotle posited, *tabula rasas* coming without formed opinions, ideas, or constructs. They believed, rather, that their students came with a variety of influences, stances, and understandings about a multiplicity of issues. They similarly recognized that curriculum was not a neutral construction, if it was created by outside curriculum writers, in Soja's (1989, 1996) second space, or if it was the curriculum that they themselves crafted. This came from the constant recognition that they themselves had socio-political and historical stances that shaped (both implicitly and explicitly) the types of engagements they offered to their students and the types of conversations they privileged as part of the larger classroom discourse. They knew that they were not neutrally disseminating information, but rather that the curriculum, content, structure, and atmosphere of the classroom was shaped by who they are as individuals and how they view the world and themselves in it. Jayne explained this tension in this way, "it's always interesting!… I walk a very fine

line between pushing critical thought and pushing dogma. I try NOT to do the dogma- I try to do the critical thought!"

Engaging with Students in Difficult Conversations

The teachers in this study frequently challenged their students to recognize their assumptions and stereotypes, often bringing up topics such as racism, bigotry, discrimination, equity, and hegemony. These critical conversations are not easy and are not entirely safe, particularly for teachers who find themselves working against culturally-dominant structures and systems and encouraging students to re-evaluate concepts that are likely reflective of the opinions and stances of their families. While this courage to engage with students in difficult but critical conversations is a mark of the curriculum of these social justice educators, it must be understood that these teachers were grappling with their own privileged stances and becoming increasingly able to face their own biases. Teachers committed to social justice and structural change work to confront their own privileges and biases and encourage students to deconstruct their own assumptions that have been previously unexamined.

Milagro described a "pretty touchy" class session when the "whole race issue" and the concept of discrimination came up, particularly in relation to immigration and "who should be allowed into the country and who should not be allowed into the country." She said that she "could hear the parents' rhetoric shining through" as kids said things like, "we have to protect our jobs!" and "If we let everyone in here we're just going to be as poor as everyone else!" Then Milagro said,

> But what about the kids who are here and if you deny them services don't you think they should go to school? And if somebody's working in

> our society don't you think they should pay taxes like everyone else and have the same opportunities? We shouldn't create this subclass!

Some of her students countered. "but they're not here legally!" Milagro challenged further, "Don't you think it's funny that it's so easy for them to come over here?" After this comment, the conversation "got really tense" as her Latin American students shared their frustration saying, "This country – they say not to come in but then they make it so easy and they exploit the workers!" Milagro described her feelings during the discussion, laughing nervously in the retelling "and so I was like- oh my god!" In retrospect she described that conversation as "interesting, cause I didn't know if they would be able to do it" (Milagro, initial interview, 12.16.08).

The question of whether students were able to handle and deal with issues of race, discrimination, and oppression again became salient in the second week of our study. Milagro and her students read a piece of literature whose main character was overtly racist. Milagro found that her students "enjoyed" the story but was surprised that "the issue of racism did not come up as I thought it surely would." It is interesting not only that the students did not pick up on these "subtle hints," (Milagro, Livetext, week 2, second week of January) but also that Milagro on that occasion chose not to bring that aspect up for further deconstruction. Conversations about race are often difficult to broach. The courage to confront racism in text and in life often requires a community where one feels safe taking risks. The extreme vulnerability of first year teaching is again compounded in educators committed to social and structural change

when they constantly have to be the ones to bring up those constructs of oppression to students who might not find it problematic at first glance.

Ava and her students studied past and current immigration quotas which were set by the government and limited the number of immigrants from each country that would be admitted into the US. They recognized that there was a direct correlation between race and quota numbers, and those countries with populations that were primarily Caucasian were given much more opportunity for migration than countries whose populations were not Caucasian. The girls decided that this quota system was discriminatory and discussed perceptions and stereotypes based on race. Ava explained that the construct of race specifically continued to be an interesting conversation because the students' (immigrant teenage girls from Mexico) had judgmental perceptions of black people asserting that "a lot of black people aren't good." Ava engaged them in conversations, reminding them that they have many friends in the school community (a teacher, a substitute, the principal's husband) who are black. When Ava challenged their assumptions, they explained that "there are so many of them in our apartments and they always are doing bad things."

Ava reminded the girls that they "know OTHER people." She also explained to them that "whenever you're around a lot of people there are just as many white people or Mexican people or whatever that do bad things." The girls seemed to understand that concept and restated saying, "where WE are we see a lot of crime by black people," and then "they started listing all the people that they know that are not bad guys." Ava

felt that this discussion was productive and explained that she thinks “it’s easy… for them to just kind of settle into those perceptions” (Ava, initial interview, 12.18.08).

In response to this recurring conversation and the school’s stated vision of servant leadership, Ava constructed a curriculum for the year based on the overarching theme of community, “specifically looking at the ways that people choose to connect themselves to or separate themselves from one another, and the consequences of this” (Ava, Moodle, 2.26.09). She and her students explored constructs of discrimination and racism with a particular emphasis on the Civil Rights Movement, creating an inquiry that integrated literacy, history, art, and bible study in meaningful ways. This exploration also provided a context for having critical discussions related to peacemaking, justice, and honesty, and gaining insight not only into the actions and motivations of historical figures and fictional characters but also into themselves as potential peacemakers (Ava, Moodle, 2.26.09).

Jayne created her curriculum around critical issues, engaging with her students in conversations which provided students with opportunities to question and reframe many of the assumptions that they had previously held about the world and about themselves. One remarkable aspect of the classroom community that Jayne created with and for her students was the fact that students are given space and honored when their views are dissenting or less than equitable. This enables students to explain their feelings and thinking and often examine previously unchallenged assumptions. During the week of Obama’s inauguration, Jayne and her students had a conversation about other ‘firsts’ they would like to see. They listed the first woman president, the first

Latino president, the first Native American president, and a Jewish president. Jayne described the following exchange “at the suggestion of ‘first Asian president’.”

> …one of my students raised his hand and said he wouldn't want an Asian president. It caught me off guard, because the mood of the day was so focused on racial harmony. A number of the other students immediately accused the student of being racist, but I decided I wanted to hear him explain himself because I didn't want him to just shut down and not actually challenge his own thinking. I could tell he was uncomfortable, but as gently as I could, I asked him to explain. He stuttered a bit, but what I could finally gather he was trying to say was that he did not trust Asian people because of WWII. I responded that first of all, Asia is a big place and judging a whole group of people based on one particular group and one historical event didn't make much sense, especially when we weren't even making a distinction between "Asians" and "Asian-Americans". Also, I told him, I am of German descent- should that mean that I shouldn't be allowed to run for president?....Am I responsible for the actions of my ancestors? This developed into a class discussion about what it means to be negatively judged and excluded and MLK's quote about hoping that one day children will be judged "not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character" (Jayne, Livetext, week 3, third week of January).

Providing students with space to air their assumptions in safety, then to reflect on, unpack, and reconstruct their ideals, sets the stage for possible transformation of students and teachers and the world they inhabit and influence. . Jayne’s classroom was a place where she and her students engaged in this work on a daily basis.

On another day Jayne talked with all of her classes about Martin Luther King, Jr. In one class, one student asked her "who that other guy was, you know- the bad guy." She reflected on the ensuing conversation:

> I guessed she was talking about Malcolm X and I was right. I told my students that Malcolm X was the leader of the Black Panthers, and asked if they knew what their biggest achievement was. I got several shouted answers like "killing people!", "bombing people" etc. When I told them that it was starting the school lunch program, they were pretty surprised. I also told them that the Black Panthers did believe in the use of force to

> defend themselves, and gave them the context for African American communities and Civil Rights workers being targeted by violence, and how police refused to protect them. Most of my students agreed that the self-defense "by any means necessary" made a lot of sense, if being not quite as "nice" as Dr. King's non-violent methods. Many were shocked to hear how Dr. King had been beaten by police and taken to jail on more than one occasion and declared they would react violently if they were in a similar situation. Then we talked about the difference between "passive" and "pacifist", and how hard it is to react peacefully to someone who's not being peaceful to you. (Jayne, Livetext, week 3, third week of January)

In Jayne's reflection upon this conversation she said, "I dream about being able to make this sort of discussion a required part of the social studies curriculum...." These teachers all worked to engage in difficult conversations with students. This theme is particularly salient for them as teachers working for structural change. The courage to have these conversations, in spite of the fact that they are often painful and rarely safe, is a remarkable trait of these women. These engagements have inspired me as I have joined Milagro, Ava, and Jayne on this part of their journeys, and they have made a significant impact on the lives of the learners in their classroom context as they work to engage with students "in a way that helps [them] to become compassionate people" (Jayne, Moodle, 2.23.09) .

Negotiating the Line Between "keeping it real and keeping it age-appropriate"

All of the teachers grappled with the concept of "keeping it real and keeping it age- appropriate" (Jayne, Livetext, week 5, first week of February). Ava struggled with the tension of encouraging students to tackle "concepts and projects that really matter" (Ava, Livetext, week 7, third week of February) and also attending to the language,

literacy, and vocabulary needs of students. Milagro struggled with the tensions of teaching high-school students who

> …are capable of higher levels of understanding, yet they are still children at heart. What I have noted is that many of their emotional states have not caught up to their intellectual capacities. I believe that this is the inherent difficulty of teaching children this age. I am still looking for that balance. I am still developing that felt sense other educators talk about that is essential to teaching these hybrid children. (Milagro, Livetext, week 2, second week of January)

In Milagro's reference to Bhabha's (1990, 1994) construct of hybridity she recognizes the challenge inherent in working with students in this tension between cognitive capacities for critical thought and the emotional intensity that is appropriate if students are to avoid discouragement.

Jayne humorously described this tension of working with middle-school students and content that is very emotionally challenging. In our closing interview she told me about a child who had an emotional reaction to the injustices of Cortez and the conquistadores, the student who in many ways opened up the class to an emotional engagement with history. At the same time, this student was also a typical middle-school adolescent with age-appropriate interests and comments. Chuckling, Jayne told this story:

> Jennifer started this thing where she's decided that Montezuma's hot… and you know, she's kind of a popular girl so… they're all like "We like Montezuma- he's really cute- he has big muscles" (laughing) … I mean what can you do- you're middle schoolers. I 'm just gonna roll with it…. the things that happen to you when you teach social studies! I'm sure [Montezuma] would have appreciated that! (Jayne, closing interview, 3.31.09)

The majority of the tensions teachers felt to keep content age appropriate were not humorous. One particularly challenging day Jayne reflected that she felt like her lesson “was a hammer on their skulls with the message of ‘this is racism, and this is how much racism can destroy, and keep destroying,’ when they just wanted to be happy about their new president. Are they too young?” (Jayne, Livetext, week 3, third week of January). She reported that after an impassioned discussion of reparations on Friday and a weekend of considering her next pedagogical and ideological move, she returned to school on Monday to students who were “far more concerned with the Super Bowl than race.” She described her reaction as ”somewhat disappointed but not surprised,” stating that “sometimes you have to let these seeds sit until the kids are ready to handle it” (Jayne, Livetext, week 5, first week of February). That same week Jayne said,

> It's strange and it's not being the white teacher who talks about race. I don't feel defensive about it, but I do worry that I sometimes go too deep- that I put too much of a burden on kids so young. Still trying to negotiate that line between keeping it real and keeping things age-appropriate. (Jayne, Livetext, week 5, first week of February)

This tension may have been more pronounced for Jayne than for the other two teachers, not only because her students were younger than Ava’s or Milagro’s, but also because the content she was to cover in teaching social studies, or as she put it “more precisely, the world,” included “a whole lot of pain and suffering (in Buddhist terms).” She explained to her colleagues on the discussion board that she sometimes felt “overwhelmed by it.” She continued,

> I worry that my students are too young, and that they will shut down from my lessons, especially my 7th graders. In 7th grade so far, I have taught the Middle East, and Africa. Not happy histories. Really not happy contemporary stuff. While struggling to cover the part in the curriculum

> in which I am supposed to discuss genocide in Rwanda, I had to stop one night. It was too much. Too many stories and pictures of horror, and the message again and again, to quote one resource from PBS, "this, perhaps more than any other episode in modern history, is where evil triumphed."
>
> How can I tell this story to a bunch of 11 and 12 year olds? To do it, and do it right, I have to examine my purpose (besides it's on the CRCT). I am not doing this to traumatize my students, but the power of the story, the recognition of common human pain, and again in Buddhist terms, common human suffering, feels like the most powerful thing I can give my students. Why did the Hutus hunt down and massacre the Tutsis? Because of the intense resentment between social classes created by Belgian colonial power. Why did the world do nothing to stop it? Because we are the rich and powerful, shaking our heads at the horrific mess that is Africa THAT WE CREATED. Who are we? Humans who have been wronged deeply, and who have suffered, and who have harmed others. To live consciously with this seems to me to be the root of empathy. And through empathy, perhaps, transformation is possible. To tell the story, I have to somehow absorb all of this and pass it on in a way that helps my students to become compassionate people. (Jayne, Moodle, 2.23.09)

Jayne, Milagro, and Ava, in their own settings, worked to understand their students' level of maturity, cognitive, social, and emotional, and to discern appropriate exposure to and engagement with the harsh realities and difficult challenges of our world.

Problematizing Simplistic Explanations Of Student Apathy

When sitting in teachers' lounges one often hears conversations about students who are not succeeding in school due to apathy. This claim is comfortable for many educators as it absolves the teacher of the responsibility and places it squarely on the disinterest and lack of initiative on the part of the student. Jayne, Ava, and Milagro openly rejected such a stance; instead, they strove to understand the causes of student disinterest and to overcome those challenges through examination of themselves, their

practices, and their pedagogies. This self reflexive process and belief in the ability and interest of every student was an indication of an orientation toward students based on justice and compassion. These teachers made great efforts to overcome disinterest, to engage every student, and to provide each with opportunities to be successful.

Jayne, Ava, and Milagro reinterpreted much of what others often simply dismiss as student apathy as a manifested response to significant issues in the students' lives, both inside and outside of school. As the following discussion will indicate, these teachers worked not only to recognize but also to mitigate a variety of causes for behaviors which could too easily be interpreted as disinterest in education, including: (a) reinterpreting apathy as a manifestation of students' other life struggles; (b) creating a relevant and engaging curriculum; (c) sharing agency and relieving pressure; and (d) clarifying expectations and scaffolding student success. These teachers moved beyond simplistic explanations which would absolve them of responsibility and place blame solely on a student's lack of desire to learn. Instead, they viewed their students as competent, capable, and brilliant, and they worked to understand, support, encourage, and motivate them in authentic ways.

Reinterpreting Apathy As The Manifestation Of Students' Other Life Struggles

All three participants recognized the difficulty of students' lives outside of school. While they were not always certain about the specific challenges of their students, they realized that the out of school worlds of students had profound effects upon their ability to focus on learning. More than once participants made reference to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs and the struggles of some children to have their

basic needs, such as safety, food, shelter, and care, met. As the following data will indicate, these teachers listened to troubled kids, recognized the effects of traumatic experiences, challenging life circumstances, and personal pain, and engaged with them in compassionate ways, offering them whatever support that they could.

Milagro realized during her student teaching experience that her students had "personal responsibilities such as jobs, translating duties for parents, taking care of younger siblings for parents who work, and health issues due to lack of access to good healthcare, lack of funds, or insurance" (Milagro, portfolio, assessment). During her first year, she commented that while her current students did not share the same specific challenges as those in her student teaching experience, many did have situations outside of school that were painful and challenging. She talked about one child who came in to her classroom visibly upset with "so much anger and pain in his face." The student shared with her that his aunt had just died and his uncle was jailed. While he did not want to speak with a counselor, he did seek out her room as a safe space "to sit until the end of the day" instead of returning home after fifth period, which was his usual course schedule (Milagro, Livetext, week 3, third week of January). Milagro came to know and understand the outside world of many of her students and recognized the ways in which their academic performance was impacted by difficult life events. Looking over scores on the final exam for the first semester, Milagro tearfully shared the story of one of her students saying,

> You can tell how much lower his score is [than it was in the middle of the semester]. This child – his mom moved and is not with his biological parents- he was thrown out of his house during this semester and you can see... (showing the midterm and then the final) He went back

> down…it's heartbreaking for me to see these scores. (Milagro, initial interview, 12.16.08)

Milagro clearly realized that test scores could not adequately describe the learning that her student had accomplished, nor did they take into account the upheaval in his life during the semester that was a significant factor in those scores. She was not willing to assume that his declining grades evidenced increasing apathy. Instead, she recognized that there were other factors influencing his engagement and performance.

Jayne discussed the struggle that she felt losing three students who were being sent from her gifted social studies class into a regular social studies classroom even though she had

> …worked very hard to improve their grades. All three have just bombed miserably, and all three are failing because they are going through personal stuff. But I can't get them to do any work, turn in projects, or study for tests, no matter how many personal conferences, phone calls home, or check-ins. These are kids who need one on one instruction, or in the case of at least two of them, some pretty serious counseling/help. I wish I could do more. (Jayne, Livetext, week 7, third week of February)

This desire to 'do more' for these students who needed significant psychological and emotional support was evidenced by all three teachers. They realized that students were not simply isolated individuals who were in their class for part of the day, but that they were people in relationships, families, and circumstances that necessarily shaped how they were able to interact and engage during class time. Wisely, these teachers realized that they were not qualified to provide such support, and they referred students to those who were more suited to offer the counseling that was needed.

Overcoming Disinterest By Creating Relevant and Engaging Curriculum

The participants felt that the current practices of schooling and the often boring and irrelevant curriculum offered to students, which failed to attend to the lives of students, was a significant cause for student apathy. Recognizing this, they worked to create engaging curriculum and offer students opportunities to engage with content in personal and meaningful ways, to think and feel deeply about subjects of interest, and to see their lives and themselves reflected in the curriculum.

Jayne, Milagro, and Ava critiqued the process of schooling in which students were pushed through vast amounts of content without being offered opportunities to engage with the information in personal and authentic ways. These teachers found the *inch thick and mile wide* curriculum problematic and observed that students who were accustomed to this breadth instead of depth struggled at first when they were asked to engage with curriculum in meaningful ways. Participants found these very structures of schooling partly to blame for students who were less than engaged. Jayne explained this frustration in this way,

> I'm doing hands-on, group-based; real-world applicable lessons with all of my classes but many of my students really seem to not enjoy any of it. I have mentioned to them that I could chuck everything and just have them do worksheets and bookwork and a number actually said they prefer that. The reasoning is, as far as I can tell, is that they don't want to have to THINK or CARE. They want to do some mindless work very quickly so they can be done and don't have to learn anything. (Jayne, Livetext, week 7, third week of February)

These teachers realized that many students had come to see schooling in general as a less than relevant and engaging place with little to offer them. In other words, some students had virtually “checked out” of schooling. These teachers worked tirelessly to

engage students again and again in relevant and meaningful conversations and to provide them opportunities for re-entry into a different type of schooling. In order to overcome apathy, these teachers worked to create curriculum which could immerse students deeply in larger ideas by providing them with opportunities to make personal connections, to think and to care. One particularly challenging aspect for these beginning teachers was determining how to create interesting and relevant curriculum for students while balancing the sheer volume of content they needed to cover in an academic year. Jayne felt that in spite of the fact that she had been "pushing so hard" she was still "behind on the curriculum" (Jayne, Livetext, week 5, first week of February) and grappled with ways to "let [her] students 'own' their learning and still cover what needs to be covered" (Jayne, Livetext, week 3, third week of January). Milagro noted that the very intense pacing of her curriculum left her little time when she could "squeeze in" things, such as service learning, which mattered to her students (Milagro, closing interview, 3.11.09).

Jayne recognized that if her students were to be invested in the content she was teaching, she needed to help them understand conflicts and histories in ways that were comprehensible and based on more tangible constructs. Introducing the Israeli/ Palestinian conflict to her students she worked hard to "to balance [her] political leanings with what [she has] to teach and [to] make it understandable to seventh graders." Jayne often does so using metaphors and with scenarios that make sense to her students and make these distant conflicts much more clear. Jayne introduced the Israeli/Palestinian conflict to her class in this way,

> I didn't tell my kids what was up- I just divided [them]in half and I said, "I need you all on this side except for two kids – just leave your stuff and I want you to go over to that side of the room." So they did and [I said], "Okay- everything over here belongs to those two kids now. You can't go back and get your stuff. How are ya'll feeling??" I have… quite a few Israeli kids… [and so I said,] "Let's just talk about our emotions, about how this made you all FEEL"… [And] these kids over here [who had to leave their stuff and were crowded into a small space] were like "'we're gonna beat those kids up! " And then [I asked,] "Okay, you two over here- how are YOU feeling?" Those two students said, "Scared!" [I asked them]..."Would you like to have a whole lot of military protection from those people over there now?" "SURE!" There you have it… (Jayne, closing interview, 3.31.09)

Jayne believed this process also helped her Israeli students who did have strong feelings about the conflict see it in a different perspective and engaged all of her students, as they now had an emotional understanding of the tension and could apply their experiences and feelings to gain a deeper understanding.

Milagro grappled frequently with the relevancy of her curriculum to the lives of her students. She explained that her "biggest problem is combating student apathy. Student apathy, boredom, and talking. The best weapon against this, of course, is a fun lesson, but it's hard to entertain all the time." She was teaching American Literature from the 1600s and 1700s. During the year, Milagro reflected upon the mandated literature selections she was to teach as part of her curriculum saying that "a lot of it is really dry and it's really difficult for the kids to connect to" (Milagro, closing interview, 3.11.09). She explained that some of the literature and poetry that she had to teach "can be so cryptic… that they don't GET it" because it doesn't provide content which can "springboard" students to comprehension and meaning making. Milagro spoke often

about the need to "figure out how to teach this stuff so that it makes a difference." Milagro said,

> I guess what is truly important to me is to make sure that the curriculum is truly relevant for later on in their life. I think that there are so many things that you have to do in school and you just have to suck it up and you have to do it, and there's no real reason for you to do that. And that really bothers me because I think that TIME… is really something that you don't get back. (Milagro, closing interview, 3.11.09)

Milagro's desire to honor her students' time by engaging them in curriculum that was not only relevant for them at this life stage, but also potentially beneficial for them later in their lives was a driving force in her work. She had come to a conclusion which was frightening to her as a beginning teacher, that the way in which students deserve to be educated is "radically different" from what we are currently doing in schools. Milagro explained that if she could teach the way she wanted to teach she would incorporate "a lot of field trips [and they] would go out to where this literature took place [and] would have more contact with people who ARE primary sources." She joked that in order to teach that way she "would need a lot more money…several busses and maybe an airplane… [and] a time machine." Milagro's desire to make the curriculum "meaningful" and tangible to her students was a significant struggle for her, not only because of the content, but also because of her context.

Milagro found ways to overcome these constraints in order to make her content comprehensible and relevant to the lives of her students. She engaged in an activity that I came to see as an overt attempt to talk back to the canonic literature she was forced to teach. She and her students read and discussed E.D. Hirsh's work about the things that every American should know. They explored the writings of early European

immigrants juxtaposed with current writings with anti-immigrant sentiments. They pondered the characters in their readings and how they would react and survive in our current society. While Milagro was required to ensure that her students knew and could talk about the literature, she worked diligently to make connections to the current day. She recounted the first time that she did this, explaining that it took students a minute to make the connections between the current anti-immigrant reading and the early American text but explained that the conversation exploded "like a volcano" as students became engaged in the debate and conversations. Her inclusion of partner texts was particularly effective in engaging students "because [it was] modern day and it directly connected with something that was from the 1700s" (Milagro, initial interview, 12.16.08). Milagro was convinced that student disinterest was mitigated in her classroom by such overt connections between curriculum and the students' lives.

Milagro also worked to alter her instruction from class to class. She explained that, "Teaching is not a career where you can just sit and do one lesson plan and use it for twenty years. It just doesn't work like that and should never ever work like that…" (Milagro, closing interview, 3.11.09). Instead, Milagro worked to understand that each group of students and every single class period requires a restructuring of the lesson to meet students in authentic ways. She explained that each class has students "from different places, different contexts, [so] you're gonna have to structure your classes differently to answer to them" (Milagro, closing interview, 3.11.09). One of her class periods was filled with the school's performers and so she incorporated a great deal of performance and role playing. Another one had many of the school athletes and she

worked to engage them kinesthetically in their learning. Still another class was thrilled if they could just go outside to do their reading with her on the lawn. While Milagro did have significant constraints related to what she could cover, she differentiated between periods and students in order to provide them with learning engagements that were appealing to them.

Ava's context was significantly less constraining, yet she had other challenges that were unique to her context. At the beginning of the inquiry she reflected upon her work with ELLs who needed a great deal of time and repetition to make language, literacy, and content comprehensible. She said,

> I feel like there is an ongoing underlying frustration of always feeling like I am behind and not really doing as good of a job as I know could be done. I also feel like there are broader topics and issues I'd like to address with my students, and to an extent we do hit on these things. I really strive to make them think deeply about the concepts we are covering, and to explore various possibilities, make connections, etc. This would be far more effective, however, if it were done in a more cohesive and organized fashion, so that concepts, critical thinking skills, and broader topics were coordinated, and built on one another. Instead it's kind of a hit-or-miss system right now. These are all things I hope to work toward changing. In general I vacillate between feeling like I'm doing pretty well and just feeling very overwhelmed. (Ava, Livetext, week 1, first week of January)

Fortunately, Ava had flexibility in her curriculum and ability to navigate curricular changes with her administrator which enabled her to recreate structures that had been put into place at the beginning of the year. Ava and I met after the above posting to think through the curriculum that she was using and to see if we could find ways to integrate the subjects she taught to make learning more coherent, engaging, and comprehensive and to integrate some routines into classroom instruction that would

provide multiple and authentic opportunities for students to read, write, converse about, and to deeply consider and engage in their learning. We met for a day long retreat. The following is an excerpt from Ava's description of that session.

> Teresa and I met on January 17, 2009, to discuss my curriculum and work on planning out some units. We spent awhile at the beginning just talking through some of how the curriculum is structured, as well as what some of the things were that I hoped to accomplish this quarter, and semester. We discussed my students in depth, exploring the things they were most interested in, and thinking about both their strengths and weaknesses to see if we could tailor instruction to suit their interests, build on their strengths, and strengthen their weaknesses. We established that the students were very interested in their new community, and their family, as well as the environment – plants and animals, and the United States (its history, culture, etc). We also discussed their pressing need to learn English. Their strengths include a propensity toward deep thought, an ability to think critically, and a multitude of experiences they can draw from. They are both also strong readers in Spanish, which has been helpful in learning to read in English.
>
> One of the major challenges with this job has been teaching so many subjects and attempting to integrate them well so that they complement one another. We discussed starting from a theme and setting an inquiry-based reader/writer workshop structure. We spent some time talking about a theme that could connect Art, History, Bible, Reading and Language Arts, within this kind of structure, as well as compliment my students' interests and needs. We settled on an overarching theme looking at "lines – separating and connecting" - exploring the students' communities, and looking at the ways people within these communities and throughout history have used various things (socioeconomic status, race, etc.) to separate themselves, as well as looking at how people within our community and throughout history have been interconnected. We also looked over the Georgia Performance Standards, to decide which aspects of each subject were essential for the students to understand in order for them to be prepared for High School. By taking this theme, creating this structure, and then looking at the standards we were able to establish a solid framework for the rest of the curriculum planning. (Ava, write up of Jan.17 meeting)

Throughout the school year, Ava strove to provide her students with both a breadth and depth of curricular, language, and literacy knowledge realizing what was

required for her students to be successful the following year when they were to be immersed in a public, English only high school. Ava was committed to engaging with her language learners to "dig deep into topics that fascinate [them],…tackling concepts and projects that really matter, and doing things enough times that they master them and can feel really proficient in particular areas" especially since her students were "not very familiar at all with many of [the] concepts" (Ava, Livetext, week 2, second week of January).

Ava believed that her new curriculum made content more comprehensible for her students. However, she continued to grapple with the balance between breadth and depth, recognizing that covering a breadth of topics meant that she would not be covering them well enough for her students to fully understand the bigger ideas. She found that this structure, with routines for reading and writing and opportunities to make connections within and between subjects, made learning much more comprehensible and engaging for her students. She determined that she had to slow down and thoroughly teach content to be certain that her students engaged deeply with and made connections to "a few things, even if we won't get through everything" (Ava, Livetext, week 7, third week of February). She determined that curriculum joined by a larger and more coherent theme enabled her not only to support her students' learning but also to provide them with something meaningful, interesting, and engaging to read and write about, to talk about, and to act upon. In our closing interview Ava shared,

> I think back in September the goal [of teaching for justice was already] there, but it was a lot harder to tie [in]. If there was something [related to issues of justice] in whatever we were doing, then I could draw that out and we would talk about it, but it wasn't the overarching main piece that

> connected everything else together So NOW I feel more like with the civil rights movement and kind of talking about how people draw lines to separate themselves or how they are interconnected, that gives us something that's' overall meaningful and important to talk about. So that's like the main focus and then the other things come under that. It's kind of a shift and I think it works better this way. The other way [using the textbook curriculum for each of her six content areas and going through it as the book instructed]…the main focus is [to] improve your reading or learn this history information, which is FINE but then there's nothing overall that's tying it all together. When you have the THEME being the main thing that's something that is meaningful and important it gives you almost like hooks to hang this [academic] information on. I think it just helps them remember it and understand it on a deeper level. (Ava, closing interview, 3.15.09)

Ava recognized that making curriculum relevant and engaging for students "takes a lot of organization, planning ahead, flexibility and knowledge of your students" (Ava, Livetext, week 7, third week of February). Week by week, Ava evidenced these qualities as she shaped curriculum with her students in mind. The engagement, learning, and progress of her students in this semester was remarkable as her students made deep and personal connections to the curriculum. Ava was able to overcome disengagement by restructuring her teaching in ways that were also more authentic to her beliefs about learning and learners.

Jayne, Milagro, and Ava looked inside of their own curriculum and classroom engagements to find causes for and ways to overcome student apathy. By taking responsibility for the learning and engagement of each of their students and working to mitigate feelings of apathy which stemmed from an irrelevant or boring curriculum, these teachers reconstructed schooling processes in order to provide students with curriculum that mattered to them and which served a larger purpose than merely helping them matriculate. These teachers were committed to the learning and growth

of their students and therefore worked tirelessly to create curriculum that counted and which engaged them in sharing their own feelings, experiences, ideas, and beliefs.

Overcoming Apathy By Clarifying Expectations And Scaffolding Student Success

The participants also recognized that, at times, students exhibited behaviors that can be interpreted as apathy but are instead an indication of a low level of self efficacy about their abilities to reach such a goal or lack of clarity about the goals and expectations which are set for them. These teachers respond to these behaviors by clarifying their expectations and providing scaffolds to support student success.

On a test review day, Milagro's students requested that they play a game as a review exercise. This different type of classroom engagement provided a space for some of her struggling students to demonstrate their knowledge and to increase their self efficacy. The following is her reflection upon this engagement.

> To my surprise and delight, some of my weakest students performed the best and gave the deepest answers while playing the game. I was shocked. Their classmates even commented, "Where did you come up with that answer? Where is this coming from?" To which my reply was, "He's smart like that, he really is." Their reply was, "No he's not." My answer to their apparent disbelief was, "I bet you did not know it before, but now you do." I could see how proud this student was. He had finally stopped his classmates from teasing him…. It just worked out beautifully. (Milagro, Livetext, week 5, first week of February)

Milagro reflected upon this event in which she listened to her students and engaged with them in a low stress review opportunity. During this engagement, a student who did not see himself as a "knower" in the classroom was given space and opportunity to find success and to demonstrate his depth of understanding and academic achievement. As Milagro observed classroom dynamics, she concluded that by

supporting him in his success and increasing his self efficacy, that opportunity started respositioning him as “smart” and supporting him as he began to engage more authentically in the classroom community.

One of Jayne’s Talented and Gifted (TAG) students had a severe language processing disability. Jayne worked to individually tutor her and to create opportunities for her to demonstrate her knowledge in ways that were not tied to reading and writing. Jayne tried “to really differentiate the types of things that are going on so that she has ways [to demonstrate her learning and to be successful]” (Jayne, initial interview, 12.17.08). By creating scaffolds and projects which highlighted this student’s strengths, Jayne worked toward helping this student overcome doubts about her self-efficacy and ability in schooling and to scaffold her success.

At another point, Jayne saw that her students were not seemingly engaged or being successful in a lesson she had planned. She explained that her lesson was “really just bombing” Jayne stopped the lesson,

> …broke it down, and went through the fundamentals of what they were doing (creating criteria to select solutions to problems in South Africa) by switching it to examples from their lives (criteria for choosing clothes, colleges, a future career etc). I spent a lot of class doing this. They totally GOT IT. And they LISTENED. And they DID IT. (Jayne, Livetext, week 7, third week of February)

This lesson that originally was “bombing” became her high for the day as she realized that she needed to merely lessen the pressure, clarify her expectations, and scaffold student success.

Ava consistently attempted to make her context less stressful for her students, but the fact that her students were sisters and that the younger sister, Nayely, was

acquiring English proficiency at a much faster rate than her older sibling, Yasmin, caused additional pressure. Ava observed that in response to that pressure and to her own perceived and actual difficulties with language and content, Yasmin at times became very frustrated, saying that she knew nothing, remembered nothing, and had nothing to contribute to the classroom conversation. Ava described Yasmin as

> …a mystery…Sometimes she is so on target with wonderful ideas and answers full of depth. Other times it's like her mind has left the building for awhile. I guess we're all that way to an extent, but I wish I had some more clues as to what makes her tick and what really works for her as far as learning (Ava, Livetext, week 7, third week of February).

At times Yasmin would demonstrate depth of thought and interpretation, responding in meaningful and thoughtful ways to literature and curricular topics (Ava, Livetext, week 3, third week of January). On other days she would become very frustrated and upset, demonstrating "a low level of self-confidence and … a very low standard for her own success" (Ava, Livetext, week 5, first week of February).

Fortunately, Ava was acutely sensitive to the needs of her learners and recognized the link between Yasmin's occasional struggles and her sense of self efficacy. Ava felt that Yasmin's level of confidence really needed to be improved and that she desperately needed to "have success in answering questions and in understanding material. Otherwise it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, with her believing she can't do, and therefore not putting in sufficient effort to be successful" (Ava, Livetext, week 5, first week of February). In response to this need Ava made a concerted effort to discover and highlight Yasmin's curricular and personal strengths, and Yasmin began to

recognize how much she did have to contribute to her own learning and also to her sister's learning (Ava, Livetext, week 6, second week of February).

At other points Ava struggled to understand why her students weren't putting enough thought or effort into their work. At those times she worked to understand if her students were unmotivated or if they just did not clearly understand her expectations for their assignment. Ava usually found that what was needed was for her to spend additional time clearly articulating the parameters and providing examples so that students understood her expectations and could meet them (Ava, Livetext, week 4, fourth week of January; Livetext, week 5, first week of February; Livetext, week 6, second week of February; Livetext, week 7, third week of February, Closing Interview, 3.13.09).

These teachers believed that it was important to create curricular engagements that enabled all of their students to see themselves as efficacious and as individuals who knew things and who could add to the collective knowledge of the classroom community. Their experiences in the classroom convinced them that when students recognized their competencies and contributions and were provided with structures and supports that enabled them to succeed, they became engaged leaders in the learning context. Each of the teachers, Ava, Milagro, and Jayne, expressed the conviction that - when students were provided with the support and encouragement they needed to be successful, those falsely construed "apathetic students" truly did care, a great deal, about their learning. These teachers found that it was often easier for students who were struggling (or who felt that they were struggling) to act disinterested or apathetic

than to admit that they did not understand. These teachers concluded that when they created a variety of opportunities to demonstrate and communicate knowledge, even while they created academic supports to scaffold student success, their students began to thrive in the classroom. Students' successful classroom experiences began to disrupt the narrative that their peers, other teachers, or they themselves had created that could be interpreted as a lack of interest in learning.

Overcoming Disinterest By Sharing Agency And Relieving Pressure

Jayne, Milagro, and Ava also recognized that their students were under a variety of mandates and pressures from structures of schooling and from parents and teachers who expected academic perfection and student compliance with values and priorities that the students themselves had not necessarily claimed. These teachers recognized that students may be exhibiting apathetic behaviors as a retaliatory or self protective action in order to maintain and regain their autonomy in response to pressure from others and the imposition of others' will on their own agency.

Milagro began to notice this during her student teaching when an entire class of her students all "Christmas treed" a standardized exam , filling in the bubbles of the tests in a Christmas tree design, protesting the number of assessments they were required to take. Another time in her first year her students threatened to go on strike because she was working them so hard. Her students openly expressed their retaliatory actions. While Ava and Jayne did not have students overtly protesting, they did note students' negative responses to undue pressure from parents, and considered ways that

they were creating opportunities for student choice and autonomy in order to lessen pressure.

Jayne described one of her students who was under a great deal of pressure in this way:

> He's only 10 and in 7th grade. He's an excellent student, and definitely gifted, but I get the distinct feeling his mom pushes him WAY too hard, and I worry about him…TAG kids do not have the same issues for advocacy that ELLs do, certainly, but that doesn't mean their lives are always easy. For some, the pressure is really overwhelming, especially from parents, to always be at the top of academic achievement. I worry about these kids developing their own personalities and interests" (Jayne, Livetext, week 7, third week of February).

Jayne expressed her concern that students were conditioned to believe that anything less than perfection was unacceptable and that they consequently became less likely to take risks in the classroom. She worried that students were being stifled by an impossible standard for consistent perfection and that they did not view making mistakes as a part of the natural process of growing and improving, but rather as an indication of personal failure.

Milagro felt that her school places an "enormous amount of pressure [that] is unnecessary and counterproductive…" She thought that this is probably "a result of [her high school] being such a competitive school and having so many state championships and this record of excellence…I mean once you get to 98% I mean dang… when is it going to be good enough?" (Milagro, closing interview, 3.11.09)

Milagro argued that her students should have time to be social and engage with each other in physical activities instead of a mandatory "guided study" period. Milagro described this twenty-two minute class where students "are not allowed to speak and

are supposed to catch up on homework" as "a ridiculous waste of teacher and student time" (Milagro, Livetext, week 6, second week of February). She stated that this time would be better spent giving students some choices, time to socialize, exercise, and just be outside of the classroom. Milagro felt that this type of less structured time for students to make choices about who they socialize with and how they spend their time could help combat the constant pressure that these students feel from their families and their school to excel in all things at all times.

While there were unalterable aspects of Milagro's context such as the daily schedule and the highly competitive emphasis, she worked hard to provide flexibility and responsiveness to student suggestion within her own work. She was open to students' suggestions and ideas about where to hold class and how to review for tests. She made assignments such as the creation of a public service announcement in which students had a great deal of choice in topic and presentational style and other assignments where students had opportunities to express themselves and demonstrate their learning in a variety of modes.

Ava's students were under a great deal of pressure to learn not only content but also academic and social English in a very short period of time. The sheer volume of the content, language, and literacy that they needed to develop in preparation for entrance into a mainstream English only high school the next year was stressful for the girls, who thought a great deal about how they would perform in the coming year in a much less supportive academic environment.

In addition, Ava felt like the tiny class size also put undue pressure on her students to be ‘on’ all the time. She explained this tension as occurring because there are

> …only two of them in the classroom [so] it's much more noticeable if one of them is off, even just a little bit. If they don't both engage with all parts of the discussion I will notice, and try to draw them in. But I know we all have days where we just feel like checking out a little bit. (Ava, Livetext, week 4, fourth week of January)

Ava realized that there might be topics and discussions that are less engaging for her students, and she was working to find ways to be sensitive to this inevitable pressure to perform in such an extraordinarily small class. (Ava, Livetext, week 4, fourth week of January) This sensitivity was challenging for Ava as it was difficult to balance keeping her students engaged in developing language, literacy, and content knowledge and also giving them time to “check out” occasionally without pressuring them unnecessarily. Ava also worked to promote student choice. Part of her writing/reading workshop included a menu of options for engaging in a variety of literacy activities or responses to text. Her observation was that when she gave her students a routine for literacy engagement in which they had a great deal of choice, the students became more creative and engaged more deeply.

Jayne, Ava, and Milagro recognized that what might often be interpreted as apathy might instead be student-exhaustion from the high levels of pressure or open rebellion against the pressure to perform. These three educators worked to examine and mitigate student concerns and issues which were at the root of any seeming lack of engagement. These teachers found a variety of issues that manifested in ways that

could be interpreted by teachers as student apathy and actively worked to overcome those obstacles. This deeper exploration of the circumstances behind that veil of apathy helped these educators develop a more complex and compassionate view of learners and resulted in their being able to engage with them in learning and in community. This disposition toward problematizing overly simplistic answers such as “this child just doesn’t want to learn” and exploring ways to overcome barriers to student engagement is demonstrative of the extraordinary commitment these teachers have to their learners and to issues of justice and equity in the classroom.

Deconstructing The One Right Answer Myth of Traditional Testing Narratives

The struggle with assessing student learning and the tensions Ava, Jayne, and Milagro felt when giving assessments that were predicated on convergent thinking was the most highly discussed topic on the discussion board. Discomfort with the messages sent to students by the ubiquitous nature of assessments that touted one true answer also was significant in the artifacts of each of the participants. Through their individual reflections and their shared conversations, these teachers engaged (a) in identifying and countering the ways current testing narratives negatively impact students, (b) in identifying barriers encountered while striving to create equitable and meaningful assessments, (c) in taking beginning steps toward more ethical assessments, and (d) in identifying and countering the ways current testing narratives negatively impact democracy.

Identifying And Countering The Ways Current Testing Narratives Negatively Impact Students

While the teachers highly valued assessment as an opportunity to evaluate their own teaching and refocus instruction and to provide meaningful feedback to students, they recognized that standardized assessments often failed to represent authentically what their students knew and could do. They identified several factors that contributed to this misrepresentation and argued that giving children an overly simplistic and potentially inaccurate numerical score can de-motivate students and damage their sense of self- efficacy. These included, (a) assessments which fail to represent authentically what students know and can do, (b) assessments which fail to account for other factors such as language and culture, (c) teacher assessments which are too subjective or provide too little feedback, and (d) assessments which damage student's view of self and worth as knower.

Assessments which fail to represent authentically what students know and can do. Milagro, Jayne, and Ava found that many tests were problematically designed or not constructed in ways that allowed students to evidence their depth of understanding. They were troubled by assessments that were more broadly or more narrowly focused than the curriculum that students engaged in, and when the structures of assessments were not familiar to students. When assessment instruments from outside sources did not match the curriculum, they were not authentic opportunities for students to demonstrate knowledge that they had been offered or aspects of the curriculum that they found interesting or important.

During Milagro's student teaching, she found that student learning was being assessed by testing instruments constructed by people seemingly "completely divorced from the academic environments they are assessing' since the test covered material that was "outside of the curriculum." The mismatch between curriculum and assessment obviously invalidated the assessment, as it was not an accurate depiction of student learning and growth. Since that problem was not recognized by schooling officials who held teachers and students accountable for demonstrating learning in areas outside of the curriculum, the teachers were "left scrambling trying to cover material outside of the curriculum so students [did]not feel inadequate or develop a sense of hopelessness when reviewing their test scores."

Ava found that unfamiliar testing formats could also result in failure of the instrument to demonstrate the understanding of her students. During our closing interview she spoke about a science test she had recently given that she felt "wasn't quite fair." She explained that the test was in the short answer format and that when they turned in their tests she realized that they had not done well at all on information she was certain they knew. She considered this and realized that her students had not had "any practice in how to answer these kinds of questions." Because Ava realized that the assessment was not an authentic representation of her students' learning, and because she was able to reframe her assessments without county or school oversight, she graded the tests, passed them back, discussed potential excellent answers for the questions, and had them retake the test using their book. She then used the second test to modify their test grade. While Ava's students did know the material, they did not

know the testing format. This was the primary reason that the assessment was not an authentic representation of their learning.

Jayne's student revealed that while they had many interesting conversations and learned a great deal, many students had come to view assessments as the purpose for learning rather than a mere demonstration of their learning. Jayne described one day that her students "called her out," saying

> "Ms. Smith- you always start out telling us about something that we ask you about- and then you start dropping in all these other things that are very interesting but we have no idea what you're talking about- and then we get so caught up in what you're talking about that we don't even remember what the original question is which would be FINE except for the original question is on the test!" (Jayne, opening interview, 12.17.08)

Jayne found it problematic that assessments, which should merely be a demonstration of the depth of understanding her students had gained, could so easily become the point of learning and had so clearly become that point for some of her students. Jayne explained the tension that she felt as she balanced the desire to let students "own" their learning "but still cover what needs to be covered so they don't bomb the tests because they know everything about post-colonial struggles and Pan-Africanism, but not the blasted CRCT questions."(Jayne, Livetext, week 3, third week of January)

Assessments which fail to account for other factors such as language and culture. Milagro, Ava, and Jayne also realized that factors such as language and culture were as relevant in the assessment process as they were in the instructional process of students, and that failure to account for these factors made assessments less than authentic representations of student knowledge and abilities. Milagro argued that while standardized assessments "negatively affect all students, [they are] especially

compromising to the ESOL student population because of the very real cultural and language barriers these children have."

In Ava's work with newcomers developing English language and literacy while learning content, she worked to provide her students with ways to demonstrate understanding that were not limited to the written and spoken word. Through the use of Spanish as an additional language of instruction and assessment, Ava was able to determine more accurately what students knew and were able to do. She recognized that in a classroom context where students' first languages were not valued, this would be a much more significant hurdle.

While Ava's context was quite open, she was occasionally at odds with her principal on the assessment of student writing (Ava, Livetext, week 6, second week of February). With her extensive knowledge of language acquisition and literacy development, Ava focused on content and ideas while her principal was very was concerned with final presentation, grammar, and spelling. Ava worked to provide her students with the support and the emphasis on meaning and vocabulary development they needed, while at the same time creatively striving to meet her principal's somewhat contradictory expectations.

Similarly, Jayne was troubled by the effects of assessment measures on English Learners and described the damaging effects of the standardized testing procedures in the following way,

> Under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), ELLs have encountered an interesting conundrum. Because they are no longer exempt from mandated standardized tests, ELLs suddenly find themselves at the center of concern for schools who count on passing scores to receive their federal

> funding. However, the requirements for ELLs to pass these tests are laughably unrealistic. They are expected to pass an academically challenging test in a foreign language within one *academic* year of residence in the US. This means that a student who arrives in March will have to begin passing tests in the following Fall semester. As many researchers in the field of linguistics have pointed out, academic English, often referred to as Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), requires five to seven years to learn (Cummins, 2000). Additionally, many immigrant children may have fragmented, or no prior educational experience, and have not yet learned to read or write in their L1. Or, their L1 does not have a written form at all (Igoa, 1995; Verdugo, & Flores, 2007). Requiring ELLs to pass standardized tests within one year of school in the US is the equivalent of requiring toddlers to compete in hurdles when they are just learning to walk. (Jayne, portfolio, assessment narrative)

Jayne works to counter this inequity in the ways that she can, making a point to "share [her]own experiences of learning a new language in an immersion setting, and how difficult and exhausting that was for [her]." She also reminds them that "if the test was in Spanish, or Russian, or Bengali, they would probably do just fine." She feels it is critical to "acknowledge that their task is extremely difficult, while at the same time infusing in them a sense of accomplishment for what they have achieved." However she realizes that the testing procedures which constantly force students to feel like failures while barely acknowledging that which they do know make it "easy to see why motivation and perseverance can be hard to muster for the ELL student. Indeed, ELLs comprise the largest demographic of high school drop-outs in the nation" (Jayne, portfolio, assessment narrative).

As strong advocates for English language learners in particular these women recognize the challenges academically and personally that this factor adds to the learning of their students. Jayne, Ava, and Milagro are very concerned about the ways

that assessments fail to take factors such as culture and language learning and proficiency into account and therefore are not adequate representations of what students know and can do.,

Teacher assessments which are too subjective or provide too little feedback. These teachers also struggled with aspects of their own grading as they recognized inherent subjectivities in many of the assessments they created and graded. While Milagro, Ava, and Jayne worked hard to grade assessments ethically and equitably, this did not prove to be a simple task. Milagro explained that

> …there are so many variables in the life of a student and in the life of the teacher assigning the grade that it is difficult to assert that any grade would ever be a true representation of the academic or intellectual potential of a student. (Milagro, portfolio, assessment standard)

Similarly, Ava struggled, often feeling that her "evaluation of… students' performance is less than objective," and while she acknowledged that "rubrics are helpful" she also indicated that "finding a truly good rubric can be difficult" (Ava, Moodle, 1.25.09).

Jayne also grappled with the complexity of assigning a numerical score when her students needed very different feedback and had a very different product. She explained,

> I also struggle with being impartial with the grading. For example, I have one student who is excellent at putting ideas together and thinking critically, but his handwriting is almost illegible, and his projects look terrible, and he'll forget key elements like his sources. Then I'll have another student who tries to research and put ideas together, but everything she writes will be totally wrong, although well-written, and beautifully presented. I think she honestly tries, but she doesn't seem to have enough background knowledge to really understand what she's talking about. (Jayne, Moodle, 1.27.09)

A numerical score would not attend to the particular needs of the students in order to improve their product. Jayne's student with content needed feedback and support on the presentation of his information while her student with the beautifully constructed presentation needed help on the content. Merely providing these students with a letter or numerical score would have done little to help them identify aspects of their work in which they were excelling as well as areas which needed more attention and effort. This information, however, was what was needed to impact their learning and to guide their future work.

Ava was similarly concerned about the use of assessments to help students know how to improve. In her engagement on the discussion board, she shared with her colleagues that in her opinion the frequency with which traditional assessments were given without being used to inform instruction was particularly problematic. She said,

> It seems like so often we teach, assess, some students do well, some don't and we move on. I would like to move more and more towards using assessment as feedback to move students continually forward - not as a means of telling them you are a success or a you are a failure - which is what I think it often becomes. (Ava, Moodle, 1.25.09)

These teachers found it particularly problematic that merely receiving a numerical score does little to help direct student learning and energy but instead forces students to feel that they themselves are a C or D. In the following section these educators critique traditional assessments (which do not authentically represent student knowledge and which do not offer students opportunities to identify areas in which to improve) as an anti-educative process which damages students and their view of self as a knower.

Assessment as a damaging force in student's view of self and worth as knower. One of the most painful parts of assessment for Jayne, Ava, and Milagro was the way in which assessments implicitly sent messages to students about their value and abilities. Milagro shared the following with her colleagues on the discussion board "Every time I give a bad grade, I hear the clank of the shackle of failure locked onto one of my students. It really gets me" (Milagro, Moodle, 1.21.09).

While reflecting during her MAT about the inequities caused by the current high stakes assessment structures in education, Milagro said,

> We are a society that revolves around the pleasures received by instant gratification. The kid takes a test, we run it through a machine, much like a credit card, and, presto! We have a result or a grade for that child. Interestingly enough, the result that comes out of the machine mimics the result we get from the bank or the store when we go to obtain a credit card, a mortgage, or purchase something. We care not that the result of the test is oftentimes completely inaccurate and assigns A's to children who could very well only possess the skill of detecting false answers and avoiding them. We care not that these tests repeatedly fail children due to the fact that they were not raised in a household with the parental: social status, background, paycheck, or education that is required to pass these monstrous inventions. We teach these children that we fail repeatedly that they have no place in academia, that they are not valuable members of society, and that they will have a very difficult time becoming valuable and productive members of society. What often escapes us as teachers is that we not only teach the children that fail these tests that they are failures, but we teach their classmates (you know, the ones in possession of all the correct background and circumstances necessary to have any hope of achieving success at school) that these unsuccessful children are unworthy of higher learning, higher education, higher pay, etc. We teach the successful children that the unsuccessful children are the backs upon which they can later build their future fortunes on. (Milagro, Livetext, week three, third week of January)

Milagro expressed her frustration that the county not only chose the assessments that she would give to her students, but also determined the percentage of their grade that

would be based on that singular test score. She argued, “I feel like it should be left up to me how much the test counts toward their GPA! I should be the evaluator- not the county! They should have more faith in me! It’s a travesty in my opinion!” (Milagro, opening interview, 12.16.08). Instead, she was forced to watch hardworking, high performing students who did not test well on standardized measures of assessments drop as much as two letter grades because a single assessment counted as twenty percent of their final grade.

In our opening interview, Milagro passionately stated that her students are

> NOT a PRODUCT! This is not an industrial laboratory! This is a classroom! These are people! And when you tell them over and over again that they are not good they WILL believe you eventually! Why on earth would we cripple our own youth? They are the future! (Milagro, opening interview, 12.16.08)

Milagro was not the only participant concerned about the ramifications of “giving a student a score” for his or her view of self. Ava shared times when her students became dejected after not scoring well on tests, explaining tearfully that they knew nothing about the topic they had studied, which was certainly not the case, because when they were provided a more authentic way of demonstrating their understanding, they excelled (Ava, Livetext, week 4, fourth week of January; Livetext, week seven, third week of February; Closing interview, 3.13.09). Jayne struggled with the fact that so many of her TAG students “automatically equated academic failure with personal failure” (Jayne, Livetext, week 7, third week of February). On the discussion board she shared this concern with the other participants, saying:

> We've taught them that being wrong is an academic sin, but how are they supposed to figure anything out if they don't get to try a few times first?

> We don't expect infants to ride bikes... I know it would take forever, but sometimes I wish we could just give feedback on what students are doing well and what they need to improve and skip the grade thing altogether. (Jayne, Moodle, 1.27.09)

They found that assessment structures cause undue pressure and demoralize students who do not consistently perform with exceptional levels of proficiency. These teachers were deeply troubled by processes of assessment that left their students feeling as if they were less than brilliant, competent, and capable and the high stakes nature of these tests that do in fact serve as a demarcation for future educational, professional, and personal opportunities. This cannot be overstated, as it has been a part of the discourses on oppressive schooling structures in which these women have been engaging others since their preservice training began.

Identifying Barriers Encountered While Striving To Create Equitable And Meaningful Assessments

While assessment was a theme for all the participants, Milagro's context and experience included barriers to more ethical assessment practices that were unique to her in this study. In Milagro's experiences, assessment was used as a means of regulating teachers. This regulatory process created a climate in which teachers were unable to reject the national, state, county, and school testing narrative. This caused Milagro a tremendous amount of strain as an educator committed to justice and to her students as she was not able, with sufficient safety, to advocate for change and student equity or to subvert the practices that she found unethical.

During her MAT, Milagro quoted the International Reading Association's (IRA) Position Statement on testing which argued that "Tests allow these outside parties to

take control away from local education authorities without assuming the responsibilities of educating the students." (IRA Position Statement, p. 5) This particularly resonated with Milagro when a teacher she worked with in her student teaching contacted the county office concerned that a mandatory (county created) test had "several questions with no correct answers." This teacher was reprimanded and told that she was a "faulty educator" and that the tests were fine and that she should "keep quiet" about the testing. In a faculty meeting following this event, teachers were instructed that "they were not allowed to express concern or to complain about testing. Doing so would result in an official reprimand." Milagro was horrified by the school and county choices to respond to teacher concern with intimidation and threats. She reflected on this injustice saying,

> Our jobs are at stake. The consequences of losing our families' livelihood and income which are needed to survive is what hangs in the balance. Do I sacrifice my children? Do I live with no income, lose my health benefits, and live with the social stigma that I was thrown out of the teaching profession? Fear. [This fear is] now forcing me to subject my students to intellectual tyranny. Systemic discrimination. (Milagro, culture portfolio)

Milagro explained that these fears silenced those who were acting in ways to transform inequitable systems. This very same fear created in Milagro a duality that was both difficult and painful as evidenced in the following excerpt from our conversation during our closing interview:

> Milagro: There is so much pressure – there's so much you know focused on the grade- the grade – you know- we NEED to get rid of the grade...
>
> Terry: What are you excited about and what milestones have you accomplished in the past semester and a half?

> Milagro: Okay – all of my kids passed their tests- and I just said that doesn't matter and you know at [my school] that really matters! (Milagro, closing, 3.11.09)

Even while Milagro did not value the test and found it very problematic, she quickly pointed out that it had been an accomplishment for all of her students to pass. Remaining employed, making the administration happy, and being seen as a strong teacher were critical concerns for Milagro as she worked to establish herself as a competent professional.

These needs are compounded for beginning teachers in new school contexts, particularly during a year when teaching positions are coveted and county systems are on a budgetary hiring freeze. In this time of testing, Milagro frequently jumped through hoops that were diametrically opposed to her beliefs, in order to develop and maintain the respect of her administration and in response to the vulnerability she experienced as a beginning teacher committed to equitable education. This tension caused by competing needs (the need to speak out for equitable educative processes for her student and the need to remain employed) was particularly painful to Milagro. On several occasions I found myself encouraging her to follow testing mandates because she "won't do any good for any student if [she] is not in the classroom" and reminding her that our profession cannot afford to lose educators with her level and depth of commitment. Watching Milagro grapple with this across her teacher preparation program and through her first year of teaching was challenging for me, as a person who cared for her and as an educator committed to change; however, I saw no alternative

but for her to comply with these procedures in her classroom while working to inform others and change policy on a larger scale.

An additional, yet significant, barrier that Milagro faced in the creation of authentic and equitable assessment structures was caused by the sheer volume of work she had to assess and the amount of time required to grade that work. Milagro's teaching context, in an academically competitive school and in a heavily tested content area, made assessment unbelievably challenging for her. Within the course of one year, Milagro had to prepare students to pass the High School Graduation Test, the Writing test, and the End of Course Test, in addition to the benchmark assessments given throughout the year. Milagro's school also had specific requirements for the number of grades per student per term, which amounted to an astounding amount of grading, as evidenced in this mathematical scenario she shared with her colleagues on the discussion board:

> I have to grade over one hundred and thirty pieces of work every time I give an assignment. The department expects between twenty five and thirty assignments [per student] per semester. This translates to 3,250 papers, at least, to grade. If I spend five minutes grading each paper, then that is 16,250 minutes or around 271 hours grading papers. This is almost a seven week project, at forty hours per week. This on top of planning well organized and content specific lessons. (Milagro, Livetext, week 3, third week of January)

This extraordinary time commitment, even at a mere five minutes per assignment, meant that Milagro was not able to create assessment structures that demonstrated extensive depth of thought and understanding, because she would never be able to keep up with the grading. Throughout conversations, postings, and reflections, Milagro

came back to the issue of class size and funding for a more reasonable ratio of students per teacher.

> Class size…to me is the critical issue. It seems to me that education is being handled today the way that industrialized products are being managed. Those making decisions want to mass produce the best quality of educated students they possibly can at a minimal cost to the government and to the taxpayer. This sounds beautiful and logical, but could not be farther from what our children need in today's society. If you neglect… things like properly educating our youth the consequences will be disastrous. People just do not want to allocate the money necessary for education, and then they want to turn around and blame teachers for a lack of success on the part of students. (Milagro, Moodle, 1.28.09)

Milagro was indignant that our youth are not a financial priority and argued for the re-evaluation of national financial priorities and structural change, lowering the student/teacher ratio so that students could be meaningfully and adequately served. She felt that it was unjust that teachers were held accountable on multiple measures while they were not adequately supported with reasonable class sizes. In spite of the fact that Milagro and her students suffered from these injustices, she could find little to ameliorate these issues other than a national shift in educative paradigms. This tension, of seeing inequities yet being unable to act against them, was a significant challenge for Milagro as an educator committed to equity and structural change.

Taking Beginning Steps Toward More Ethical Assessments

In spite of the challenges inherent in creating authentic and equitable assessments, all of these teachers engaged in the attempt. They did this primarily by the creation of project-based and task-based demonstrations and application of student learning. Milagro and Jayne created many project based assessments in which they felt

students were able to connect their experiences with the content, thinking deeply and meaningfully about their learning (Milagro, initial interview, 12.16.08), (Jayne, closing interview, 3.31.09). At the end of our data collection period, Ava named equitable and authentic assessment of student learning as the aspect of her practice that concerned her the most. During her Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT), Ava reflected upon key purposes and practices of assessment which she put into place during her first year of teaching stating that "teachers should use assessments to measure where students are to begin with [in order to design lessons] to meet the needs of each student and move each one forward," and that they should also use assessment for recognizing growth rather than only determining whether students had gained full proficiency at an externally imposed target standard (Ava, portfolio, Assessment standard).

Ava struggled to "make a really good and fair assessment" and explained in our closing interview that there are "a lot of things that I KNOW about assessment- it's much harder to actually put them into practice and integrate them with what I'm doing" (3.13.09). She said,

> I know that I should have the expectations for what they will accomplish at the beginning that the students should know that, and as we go we should be building to that so that by the time we get to the assessment there's nothing new or unexpected and …you assess [how far you have gotten] in achieving this goal. I think it's really important and I think it changes the whole way that education works when you can do that cause I think for the students, tests [would] become so much less of an anxiety … cause they [would] already know… where they are and it becomes much more about showing what I can do and what I've learned and how far I've come as opposed to trying to figure out what this teacher wants me to put on this thing. (Ava, closing interview, 3.13.09)

While she felt that she was making progress toward putting this into action, she still felt she had significant room for improvement. She worked hard in her classroom to conduct informal reading inventories (Ava, Livetext, week 7, third week of February) and other authentic assessments to inform her as she created curriculum to meet the specific learning needs of her students. This enabled her to recognize student growth and instruct in relevant ways rather than solely examining where students were in relation to grade level texts, without considering the additional complexity of English language development.

These teachers all experienced tensions as they worked to develop equitable assessments that are truly beneficial for students and their learning. The fact that they did not yet feel they had adequate answers and continued to trouble the construct was noteworthy.

Identifying And Countering The Ways Current Testing Narratives Negatively Impact Democracy

The teachers in this study rejected the notion that a student could demonstrate deep knowledge by picking the “best answer out of four” (Jayne, Moodle, 1.27.09). They found this particularly problematic “because it doesn't say best according to who and leaves the students to guess at the test-creator's personality” even while it leaves students “hard-pressed to construct their own answers” (Jayne, Moodle, 1.27.09). Ava worried that these types of assessments actually affected the content learning of students, as ‘scantron tests’ taught students to think in certain binaries and to assume that every problem in life had only one possible answer (Ava, Moodle, 1.27.09). Milagro,

who had the most rigid context regarding testing measures, argued that the “Don’t pick this one- Pick this one” stance of standardized testing measures “robs kids of content depth and creativity and all sorts of things!” (Milagro, closing interview, 3.11.09) and merely demonstrates that students can (or cannot) “select the correct [answer] hidden amongst a few carefully worded tricks” (Milagro, Livetext, week 3, third week of January). Instead, these teachers were interested in the responses to curriculum that “spring from [the] minds” (Milagro, Livetext, week 3, third week of January) and the emotional reactions that come from the spirits of their students.

Jayne explained that her students do

> …pretty poorly whenever I have given them tests that are not multiple choice… They can pick the "best" answer out of 4 (I hate the idea of the "best answer" because it doesn't say best according to who and leaves the students to guess at the test-creator's personality), but they are hard-pressed to construct their own answers… It's not that I think they can't do it, it's that I don't think they have much practice with critical thinking, or analyzing things on their own. (Jayne, Moodle, 1.27.09)

At the beginning of the year when she began a unit on the Middle East, Jayne started her students off “with a question that I told them we were going to come back to over and over again which was ‘what is the difference between a freedom fighter and a terrorist?’ ” She followed the question with the following scenario:

> You’re a young British guy who doesn’t have much prospects so you join the army and you get shipped off to protect some citizens from a bunch of unrest…So you’re out...patrolling by yourself and you start getting shot at – are you being shot at by freedom fighters or terrorists?” [and the students yell] ‘TERRORISTS!’ and I’m like “What if it is 1775? freedom fighters or terrorists- who are you getting shot at by?”…. (Pause) “THE MINUTE MEN!!!!” (Laughing) It’s a complicated question- there’s no answer. You know- but I was like - “I want you to always think when we’re learning about- when we learn about the Middle East… we’re gonna learn about a lot of war we’re gonna learn about a lot of

> bloodshed…a lot of conflict but there are also people who have made the decision to chose other paths that don't require people to have to figure that out if they are a terrorist or a freedom fighter." "Yeah" (whispering as if she was a student)"and when [are] we gonna talk about Gandhi?"

She explained that the students are often frustrated by that unanswerable question saying that

> …they get pretty worked up- it's really interesting- they WANT a concrete definition!...They'll say things like "Well, a freedom fighter cares more about good things and a terrorist just wants to hurt people." And I am like "Well, what if the freedom fighter shoots somebody- then what?" and they are like "Well, they only shoot the bad people." and I'm like "What about our friend the British soldier? Did he come over to be a bad guy? Who is the bad guy? I mean when it comes down to it who's shooting at who and who's the bad guy and who's the good guy?"and it is interesting because they WANT a concrete answer and I refuse to give it to them- cause I'm like "There is no concrete answer- that's the point!" Sometimes they get upset and they're like "Ms. Smith, you shouldn't ask us questions where there are no ANSWERS!"- and I'm like "WELCOME TO LIFE!" (Jayne, initial interview, 12.17.08)

Milagro, Ava, and Jayne felt that one of the most significant problems of assessment in its current political iteration is the damage that it does to students who need to be educated in ways that prepare them to be participants in a democracy. They have expressed concern that the dominant methods of assessment undermine each individual's engagement in divergent and independent thought, which are both necessary in a democracy.

As indicated in the previous data, these teachers believe that most traditional assessments were less than equitable and lacked authenticity, relevance, and the potential to allow a true demonstration of student learning. They found these types of assessments antithetical to democratic processes, as they condition students to believe that there is one right answer and that someone else has already determined what it is.

This oversimplification of constructs of “truth” and “rightness” was extremely troubling to these teachers. They felt that this trend of assessing student knowledge based on ability to identify the “best out of four” choices encouraged students to believe that life could be clearly placed into a simplistic binary structure of the right answer and the not right answer. Additionally, they rejected the implication that students were to guess the answer that was deemed correct by someone else rather than constructing a truth, a transaction, or a stance that was authentic to their personhood. They were concerned that students were being conditioned to believe that there is one right answer, but that that truth is outside of themselves and that only others had the power to determine right and wrong, the right to question, and the insight to interpret. Clearly, the construct of democracy itself is threatened by such assumptions.

In a myriad of ways, the teachers in this inquiry problematized general assumptions about the purposes and practices of assessment, calling into question constructs of power and privilege, of ethics and equity, and exploring their own issues of developing expertise. Through their work, these teachers deconstructed not only the possibility of one right answer but also the idea that there is one numerical value that can represent student learning. They viewed both learning and teaching as much more complex endeavors.

The next section will demonstrate how these teachers “ruptured the transcendent script” (Gutierrez et al., 1995, 1997) of assessment and the construct of a singular truth or correct answer by creating a third space where students demonstrated not only their deep understanding of content but also their own interpretations of truth

and their own emotional responses to the discoveries they were making about the world and the human community.

Democratizing Education, Liberating Teachers And Students

As emancipatory educators committed to justice both for their students and for themselves , Milagro, Ava, and Jayne engaged in liberatory educative practices through (a) democratizing educational practices through holistic assessment structures, and (b) privileging the emotive alongside the cognitive in justice oriented education.

Democratizing Educational Practices Through Holistic Assessment Structures

In order to democratize their processes, the participants in this study devised alternative opportunities for authentic assessment in which students were given the space for divergent thoughts and opinions and were able to demonstrate the depth of their knowledge and to engage with learning in much more personal and emotional ways.

During the first semester, Milagro's students created persuasive presentations in the form of public service announcements. Milagro encouraged her students to express themselves and their concerns in a very open way by offering them a great deal of flexibility in topic and format so that they would be able to demonstrate their knowledge of persuasion in a context that was meaningful to them. Students engaged their peers in conversations related to a variety of issues of justice such as protesting animal testing, the dangers of pornography, and the Save Darfur campaign. Her students were able to take a stand for something that they believed in and were encouraged to express themselves openly and passionately (Milagro, initial interview, 12.16.08).

Ava also created opportunities for her students to demonstrate their learning in creative and alternative venues. She created a weekly conversation group at a local coffee shop with members of the community to give her students opportunities to engage in authentic and purposeful uses of English. She did not provide guidelines or topical choices, rather she encouraged her students and her friends, who had agreed to be a part of the venture, to discuss openly whatever they chose. This openness provided students with opportunities to express themselves and also to build relationships with native speakers of English in their community. This form of authentic engagement also served as an informal assessment as Ava was able to listen to the conversations that were occurring and note aspects of language development she could work on with the girls in the coming weeks (Ava, Livetext, week 1, first week of January).

Jayne also incorporated a variety of tasks and projects that counted as quiz and project grades in order to find "different ways to assess that aren't test based" (Jayne, Moodle, 1.27.09) creating opportunities for her students to "explore their interests,… be innovative, [and to become] deeply invested in their own education. (Jayne, Moodle, 1.28.09). For example, students made a Codex (an Aztec book) using Aztec hieroglyphics and pictures and art from the period instead of taking a quiz on the Aztecs and Cortez.

At the beginning of the study of the African continent, Jayne gave them a political cartoon called 'the African quilt'; it showed Africa, and all the pieces were covered with words such as war, poverty, Aids, Hutu, Tutsi, apartheid, and famine. The students' immediately responded that the representation was "only bad stuff!' At that point she explained to her students that their "test grade" for the unit would be to

recreate the quilt as a complex picture demonstrating what they had learned. She explained,

> Yes there's bad stuff in Africa but why? What are people doing about it? What [about] the good stuff- you know this [political cartoon] doesn't mention anything about Nelson Mandela … [or]about independence movements and how imperialism was defeated- it doesn't even mention imperialism! (Jayne, closing interview, 3.31.09)

Her students' final projects included aspects of Africa's history (and present) such as foreign ownership, oil, black gold, blood diamonds, resource economy, AIDS, and historic wonders. Jayne explained,

> Looking through these… that's my reward…to be able to see that these kids understand that it's a very complex thing…You know most adults couldn't do that! My standard was explain how the presence of gold, diamonds, and oil has impacted the economies of Africa – which is basically to destroy those countries entirely. (Jayne, closing interview, 3.31.09)

Toward the end of the year, Jayne decided that her students needed a space where they could "share and ask questions about the world without the pressure of grades and having to have 'the best answer'" so she created a website "as a sort of social studies facebook for [her] students" making them all co-editors "so they will be the ones actually posting the content." She did this because she felt that it was "really important that students have a place to engage with history and politics without always being graded" and noted that "they seemed pretty excited about it!"(Jayne, Moodle, 2.23.09)

As discussed in the previous section, Jayne, Ava, and Milagro found the common 'scantron' tests to be antithetical to the constructs of critical thinking. Each of them worked to create a variety of project based assessments that enabled students to make

their own meaning out of the content they were learning and to determine for themselves what was interesting, meaningful, or true and how they could make evident their thoughts and feelings in creative and authentic ways. Thus these teachers democratized assessment practices by privileging student interpretations and providing spaces for multiple viewpoints and ideas. While the contextual constraints (or flexibilities) of each of the teachers were significant in the extent to which the teachers could put these beliefs into practice, Milagro, Ava, and Jayne all engaged in these democratized practices.

Unique in the work of these teachers is an emphasis on the emotive and affective reactions to curriculum. All of them used a variety of engagements that encouraged students to think deeply about society, literature, and themselves and to have both a cognitive and an emotional reaction. As will be discussed in the next section, these teachers want their students to feel, to have an emotional reaction, and to be troubled by issues of justice and inspired by individuals who have worked for equity. In short, these teachers refused to accept the construct of a single "right" answer/ interpretation/ stance/ truth and instead encouraged their students to think deeply, to engage, and to care. This is a significant aspect of their work as social justice educators.

Privileging the Emotive Alongside the Cognitive In Justice Oriented Education

Jayne, Ava, and Milagro all recognized that issues of justice and equity cannot be merely understood; rather, they must also be felt. These teachers viewed the emotive

as an essential part of the learning process and were intentional about including affective elements into their classroom and their curriculum.

When studying Patrick Henry and Thomas Payne, particularly the sentiment behind “Give me liberty or give me death!” Milagro asked her students to create visual representations of the relevance of that sentiment in their lives today. One student’s visual representation was “Give me liberty, or give me death,” but he crossed out several of the words so it just said “give me, give me” which represented what *his* society was telling him- just give me “give me, give me!” (Milagro, initial interview, 12.16.08). Students were given space to create texts of themselves as well, dressing up as their thirty-year-old selves in order to plan out aspects of their own lives as a response to learning about Benjamin Franklin’s almanacs and his need for an orderly and well planned life. In these assignments, students were given ways to think about literature, themselves, and their world in response to curriculum that made them think, feel, and imagine.

Ava often provided students with opportunities to engage artistically in response to curriculum through the creation of visual texts. While both of her students chose this modality to express themselves, it was most often chosen by the sister who struggled with the creation of written text and whose English development was less advanced. Yasmin used visual texts as an opportunity to “convey her thoughts and emotions” (Ava, Livetext, week 7, third week of February) demonstrate her depth of understanding and feelings about difficult constructs such as the holocaust, discrimination and hatred. When talking with Ava about the symbols and meaning included in her text she

“amazed” her teacher with “her creativity and… the depth of emotion she captured.” Ava described this visual text as “completely symbolic” with very significant color choices. Yasmin explained that her intention was to “convey the emotions of sadness/grief and anger” as well as “a sense of being overwhelmed” (Ava, Livetext, week 7, third week of February) as her emotional reaction and interpretation of the written text.

Yasmin’s sister, Nayely created a collage based on *Through My Eyes* (1999) by Ruby Bridges and also *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (1997)depicting discrimination. In her explanation of the use of symbols she said that she crafted trees out of newspaper because the newspaper “has all the good and the bad news in it” and she used trees to symbolize that “we have to share in each other’s suffering” (Ava, closing interview, 3.13.09) Ava found these “encouraging” because she felt that it “is important to know about these things and to care about them and not just [feel] like- oh this is terrible that this happened.” Ava found it gratifying that complexity of understanding and depth of feeling were evidenced by the girls’ ability to create a meaningful “outside of the bubble” interpretation of/response to a difficult work which would not have been evident if they had been limited to the ‘one out of four’ options as the only potential response to literature.Jayne also provided opportunities for students to respond emotionally to curriculum. In response to learning about the holocaust, Jayne and her students recreated

> …the west wall…Because [the content] was so intense I just… put paper and art supplies out and the kids at any point when they got overwhelmed with anything they would… just take art supplies and just do whatever. (Jayne, initial interview, 12.17.09)

This wall gradually filled up as students responded to learning about the atrocity in an open ended and often artistic representation of their feelings and thoughts.

Another example of using artistic expression occurred at the completion of Jayne's class' study of the Gulf Wars and the invasion of Afghanistan. Jayne encouraged each of her students to act as musicologists, creating the soundtrack for a documentary about the US involvement in the Middle East that was targeting an audience of young people. For their final grade for the unit, students chose songs to accompany the film segments such as 'Who is Osama Bin Laden?' and wrote two short paragraphs, one discussing who he is, and the other describing the chosen song and the rationale for recommending it as a background for the film segment (Jayne, initial interview, 12.17.08). Through this sound track students demonstrated that they knew the content, and they were also encouraged "to express whatever opinion they wanted to express by the choice of their song AND it allowed them to validate their music

> … which they LOVED!!!" … "It was fun for me too! I mean who wants to read 700 seventh grade essays on the Gulf War?...They were actually writing about something… they wanted me to know about, their music!"(Jayne, closing interview, 3.31.09)

Jayne felt that this type of open-ended project was effective for all of her students because it provided them with an opportunity to express divergent political views while demonstrating their deep understanding of the conflict. She explained that some of her students come from pretty conservative homes or have parents who are in the military. She was very sensitive to the fact that, "it's a pretty scary thing, especially [for] kids this young to…think thoughts that really contradict what their parents say

cause then their having to chose between their teacher and their parents and that's not fair" (Jayne, initial interview, 12.17.08). In order to prevent that internal conflict, she deliberately left the assignment open asking students to describe the events, describe the key people involved, and "choose whatever song they wanted. It could be a happy song. It could be a sad song. It could be "Yeah U.S.A.!" It could be "This is terrible!" (Jayne, initial interview, 12.17.08). Jayne explained that her ultimate goal is for "the kids to be engaged. I want them to be critical. I want them to have an emotional reaction. I really do and I wanna create the space where they feel that they can do that" (Jayne, closing interview, 3.31.09).

This space was evidenced during a discussion of the decimation of the Aztec nation by Cortez when one of Jayne's students

> …just picked up her book and she THREW it down and she said 'MS SMITH- I HATE THIS!!!' and I was like-'Okay- what- what's going on?' and she was like 'I HATE THAT THEY KILLED EVERYBODY!!! I CAN'T STAND IT!!! IT MAKES ME SO MAD!!! IT MAKES ME SO Mad!!!' and she's like really WORKED UP and I stopped and I said 'This is gonna sound weird but I'm glad! I'm glad it makes you mad! …This stuff is really upsetting and if it doesn't make you mad then I think that there is probably something wrong!...I don't teach you this stuff because I want you to be depressed…I'm not trying to make you sad. I'm trying to tell you about what has happened so that you understand when you go out into your life and people talk about SOME group of people that you can treat any way that you want because they're not as good as you or they're different – or you have some leader on your television telling you that those people over there- whoever they are – are not good- that you will remember my class and that you will remember the Aztec and the Inca and you will remember the conquistadores and what they were allowed to do and that you will KNOW- that this won't happen again and again and again…

Later when reflecting upon this day she said "I think what was really validating was that my kids finally understood that it was okay to be emotional about it, you know cause I

think that they don't really think they're supposed to or something"(Jayne, closing interview, 3.31.09).

Students in the classrooms of these social justice educators found that learning isn't just a cognitive engagement. Instead, if they were to engage with knowledge, with history, with concepts of justice and oppression deeply, they SHOULD have an emotional response. They discovered that that school is not a place where cognition is always privileged over emotion.

This space cannot be created in a classroom that uncritically accepts the 'single truth' of a multiple choice answer or accepts the interpretation of others, or of curriculum, teachers, or students themselves as a non-neutral entity. Even while these educators provided space for their students to engage emotionally with curriculum, they realized that they too were engaging in affective ways with the content that they taught.

Summary

In their work with students the participants in this study embodied a commitment to justice and equity as they challenged overly simplistic explanations which blame students for "just not caring." Instead these women looked more deeply at the student, at the curriculum, and at their own teaching, in order to find ways to reconnect to that student. These teachers critiqued current schooling processes in general and worked to counter the anti-democratic view that there is one right answer and one single truth. Instead, they strove to make students think in divergent ways, to engage with content not only cognitively, but also personally and emotionally.

As shown by the themes presented in this chapter, these teachers are working within their various contexts to subvert “industrialized” models of education and to provide students with opportunities both to think and to care. These teachers recognize and work against systemic oppression in society, and they fight against the ways that those injustices affect the lives and schooling of their students. They courageously engage with students in difficult conversations which challenge hegemonic processes and provide students with opportunities for critical thought and deconstruction of previously unexamined stances. In their first year of teaching, these teachers realized that they themselves were not neutral, nor were they offering a neutral curriculum to their students. They took responsibility for this, asking themselves consistently why they were engaging with students in this manner and making sure it was in order to increase student empathy and ability to think, speak, and act, to “be the change” they wanted to see. Milagro, Ava, and Jayne were sensitive to the fact that this process is painful and challenging. In short, these women encouraged their students not only to “know the facts” or “talk the talk,” but also to feel empathy and compassion for the suffering of others, to engage in authentic community, and to believe that a small group of committed individuals really can change the world.

These teachers’ individual experiences, engagements, tensions, perceptions, and concerns during their first year of teaching are remarkably insightful and inspirational. It must be noted, however, that these women all yearned to be participants in communities of educators with whom they could develop, maintain, and strengthen their own commitment. They were, as noted in Chapter Four, isolated in their schools,

and they functioned without other teachers who shared this commitment, or colleagues in their school who could inspire them and provide insight and authentic mutual accountability. Through our collaboration, we were working to build such a community, and while it was still in an early stage of development during the time of this study, through our community we were able to provide important support to each other. It is this story that we will share in the coming chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

A MULTIFACETED COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT FOR BEGINNING SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATORS

As social justice educators co-creating an online community of support during their initial year of teaching, Ava, Milagro, and Jayne found that this collaboration influenced their experiences in a variety of ways. This chapter will address the multifaceted opportunities for engagement in community which were offered as a part of the design of this study. Each participant engaged in these spaces in unique ways based on her own goals, needs, and interests. This chapter will address the following (a) an explication of the multiple venues and options for engagement offered to the participants; (b) an examination of the initial goals of each participant and the ways that each engaged in and felt about the various aspects of the collaboration; (c) an exploration of the barriers to the creation of an active online community according to the participants, and (d) an analysis of the participants' articulated goals, plans, and hopes for the continuation of the supportive community.

The space that was created for the participants was multifaceted. Daily and weekly reflections were posted on Livetext and sent only to me. This space for critical reflection related to issues of practice, attending specifically to the high and low points of each day and to the teacher's impressions of the entire week. When participants directed a question to me on Livetext or when I felt that I needed to contact them to

offer support or encouragement based on their weekly postings, we corresponded by email, because Livetext does not provide opportunities for extended discourse.

The discussion board (on Moodle, a technology similar to Blackboard or WebCT) was open to all participants at all times, and it was suggested that all participants post on it at least two times per week. All four of us engaged in the discussion board over the course of the data collection period. This space was created as an asynchronous opportunity for the participants and myself to co-create a supportive community of like-minded people to meet their expressed needs for collaboration, mutual encouragement, and inspiration.

Throughout the data collection period, there were occasions when individuals emailed, called, or met with me individually, providing additional information, insight, or clarification about things that they had not fully disclosed in Moodle or in Livetext, or asking for particular assistance related to their practice. I came to view these occasions much like theatrical asides, in which the action stops momentarily and a character speaks directly to the audience. While the metaphor is a bit lacking (since I was not a bystander), it is indicative of the fact that there were different purposes that individuals ascribed to each space and some aspects of the reflection or conversation that did not "fit" within the constructs of the original methodology.

Throughout the data collection period, participants used the community and collaborative space in unique and individual ways in order to meet their own implied and/or expressed needs. While there were differences between the participants in the use of the collaborative space, there were similarities in what they found to be

particularly salient and supportive about the experience. Ava, Milagro, and Jayne shared that they were helped by (a) the individual reflections they crafted daily and weekly (on Livetext), which they found to be beneficial to their practice and development, (b) their participation in and co-creation of an online community of individuals committed to equity and interested in collaboration, which they identified as inspiring to their work, and (c) the private asides and the ways in which I offered them support, validation, and encouragement. These aspects will be discussed in turn as they relate to each of the participants.

Ava's Involvement in the Community

Ava's Goal for the Collaboration: Building a Supportive Community of Like-Minded Teachers

From our initial conversation about the proposed project, Ava was excited about the possibility of beginning the community. Ava stated, "When you originally were talking about it, I was just excited about the idea of being connected with other teachers. I mean since I AM the only teacher at my school. It's nice to kind of have other teachers to talk to and I think that support system would be really helpful" (Ava, initial interview, 12.18.08). She particularly was excited that the other teachers would be in their first year of teaching as well and were coming from similar ideological places. She hoped that the collaboration with other teachers would "be a good place to get support and just learn" (Ava, initial interview, 12.18.08).

Ava explained that she was "hoping that this will be a place we can share ideas, collaborate, inspire one another, and tackle some problems together. A

sort of support system, and maybe a place where we can pool creativity to address things" (Ava, goal statement). In addition to Ava's goals for the collaboration, she also had several personal goals that were practical and organizational in nature, such as devising systems for planning, grading, and record keeping (Ava, Moodle, 1.20.09).

Ava's Use of Livetext: Reflecting, Setting Personal Goals, Monitoring Pedagogical and Student Growth

Ava never missed a day of reflecting and posting to Livetext. She came to find the discipline of daily reflection an integral part of her practice. Ava used the daily postings on Livetext to talk about the content that she was teaching and curricular conversations that spurred authentic and critical connections to the world and to issues of justice. Many of her daily reflections were focused on gauging student understanding, documenting student progress, and noting student successes and challenges. She did not include samples of student work but did describe their engagement and their success. In her highs and lows she often critiqued her own teaching, delivery, clarity, and preparedness.

Ava actually used her *week in review* posting to code her own daily reflections. She looked for patterns in her experiences over the week and set goals for the coming week based on those challenges and building on the successes. She found themes and wrote about overarching week issues rather than specific day to day struggles. She also focused a great deal on her own structures and pedagogy and larger concerns about her student Yasmin, which emerged from examining patterns in her struggles throughout

the week. Ava's *week in reviews* were used largely for analyzing her consistent struggles and successes and monitoring progress and processes, and setting goals for herself for the coming week.

Ava remarked that Livetext "was probably one of the most helpful things." She admitted that at first she had not been very "excited about sitting down every day and writing" but noted that she found it to be very helpful. She explained that she was "really glad that [she] was kind of forced to do if for long enough to see how helpful it is because I will probably keep [reflecting daily]." Ava found that the process of daily identifying her high and low moments gave her "kind of a starting point for the next day and something to refer back to at the end of the week to say 'That's something I need to work on next week.'" She found that Livetext served as a type of "guided reflection" for how she designed her teaching. (Ava, telephone communication, 3.1.09). She explained that giving approximately ten minutes to her reflection at the end of the day "didn't feel like it was too much time at all… [particularly] for the amount that it was helpful, it wasn't very much time to put into it" (Ava, closing interview, 3.13.09).

Ava felt that the discipline of weekly reviews led to her asking why she "chose those things and then…why did that go so well or why did this not go so well?" She found that "looking at [her reflections] week by week [helped her] to see [that she was] constantly having problems in this area," and then she was able to come up with a plan to "tackle" those issues. For example, she was able in the *week in review* to notice that Yasmin consistently struggled with particular things, and she was also able to see improvement in her students over time. She explained that those aspects of her practice

“wouldn’t be salient… unless [she was] sitting down and thinking about them.” She felt that if she hadn’t written things as they occurred, she wouldn’t have been able to remember them accurately in order to reflect on them week by week. Daily reflection enabled her to notice, remember, and take into account the little but significant things that happened.

Ava found that the reflective process enabled her to be more gracious with herself, realizing that becoming an expert teacher is “a process and that it takes a lot of time.” She recalled that in December she “was feeling pretty discouraged and just frustrated with where [she] was and the way that things were going.” She remembered feeling unsure that she could take another semester like the first one, “struggling every week but not feeling like [they] were building to anything.” Through her daily and weekly reflections in the second semester she came to see that she had to “tackle one part and see that start to work and as that’s come under control…tackle another part as opposed to looking at all of it and seeing- and feeling like okay ALL of this is falling apart and I can’t do all of this at one time” and not feeling able to change anything.

Giving herself permission to focus on improving one aspect of her practice at a time was encouraging to her as she was able to see progress and to see her development as a teacher “as a process.” She recognized that “there IS progress being made and it’s slow but we’re moving forward.” She found that reflecting daily has helped her recognize that while there is “definitely more that [she] would like to be doing,” she still has “quite a ways to go” and “things are not all together” as she would like them to be, she has, nevertheless, been able to accomplish her goal of doing

"something meaningful with [her] students" as they develop content knowledge, and English language and literacy, and grapple with real issues of justice and equity. She has been able to note that in spite of the fact that she still has some learning to do, that essential "part is going well." She explained that if she is "not evaluating what [she is] doing it's very easy to get way off track or to be doing things that are not helpful." She came to believe that "a lot of things that appear very good are not actually helpful to the students" and stated that only through "actually looking at what [she is] doing and thinking about" can she really support her students in a holistic way, academically and personally. Ava believed that reflection enabled her to "be aware and careful of those things."

Her engagement in this reflective practice has also positioned her to think about the coming year with great anticipation, saying "next year hopefully we'll make even more progress and we'll keep moving that direction." She was extremely pleased by the ways in which spending "an extra 5 minutes at the end of the day or an extra 15 minutes here and there" had shaped her practice and her instruction in such significant ways (Ava, telephone communication. 3.1.09).

Ava's Involvement in the Online Community Discussion Board: Sharing Ideas and Multiple Perspectives and Offering Encouragement

Many of Ava's postings were confirming others in addition to sharing portions of her own challenges. She connected to the posts of others and offered support, feedback, and encouragement to Milagro and Jayne. This excerpt from Ava's discussion

board posting on February 26, 2009 is an example of this type of encouraging collaboration. Ava wrote,

> You both sound like you are doing wonderful things! I really enjoyed reading your posts. I love the idea of teaching using various lenses, and was excited to see how you did that, Milagro. I teach Bible to my students, and have been exploring different ways to make that practical, interesting, and meaningful for them. I really like the idea of comparing a passage from the Bible (like Corinthians 13) with other literature. I think it adds a lot of depth. I was really impressed with what your students got from that as well. Way to go!
>
> I definitely agree with you too, Jayne. There is so much suffering and pain wrapped up in so much of what we teach - especially the really meaningful stuff. It's easy to get bogged down in that, but I loved your reminder for why we teach these things. Compassion is so important!
>
> I'm excited to hear about what you all are doing and the ways you're confronting the challenges you face. I'm looking forward to hearing more! (Ava, Moodle, 2.26.09)

Ava particularly enjoyed Milagro's and Jayne's postings about things they were doing with their students. She described their postings as very exciting to hear and so helpful because "everybody has a different perspective in how they tackle stuff and what's important and so some things that I would just never think of doing somebody else is doing and it gives me new ideas." Ava particularly valued a shared space where activities and lessons could be offered up and discussed and recognized that she missed that type of collaboration in her context.

Ava's Relationship with Researcher: A Space for Helpful Collaboration

Ava and I had several "asides" where we emailed or met in order to discuss aspects of her practice, her curriculum, her ability to negotiate with her principal for curriculum changes, and the progress of her language learners. My role with Ava was as

a mentor and collaborator, discussing potential curricular options and routines for simplifying her processes. I acted as a coach, asking her questions about her goals and how they could be broken into smaller more manageable parts. I offered her feedback and encouragement and shared with her several resources for her curriculum and frameworks to simplify her planning and record keeping. Later in the data collection period we met to examine the writing of her students and talked about how to encourage each of them in specific ways to meet their unique literacy needs.

Ava and I met early in the spring semester to re-conceptualize her curriculum. Her written recount of our day of collaboration ended in this way:

> I left the meeting with a much stronger idea of how to structure my lessons, and more confidence that what I was doing would be more effective and engaging for my students and their specific needs. One difficulty for the students in trying to learn English has been the fact that nearly everyone they interact with regularly also speaks some Spanish. This is a blessing, but it also means there are few times when they really MUST use the language. Each of them has improved in her ability to understand English, but because there are few authentic opportunities to speak the language, that aspect has lagged behind. We set up the writers/readers workshop to create more authentic opportunities to produce the language. The girls are spending a significant amount of time each day reading and writing – this gives them much needed exposure to new vocabulary and reinforcement of grammar structures. The writing gives them practice in applying what they are learning, and a safe place to take risks and try new things with the language. (Ava's, write up of January 17th meeting)

At the closing interview, Ava reflected upon that planning day in the following way,

> I was very pleased with the time we spent and with the amount we were able to accomplish in an afternoon. I feel like it has really helped me move forward in my teaching and be far more effective with my students. That one Saturday that we sat down and just planned stuff out kind of gave me the framework and then the kind of the push to like go ahead and set that stuff in place that I needed to do. You just gave me ideas [for] some structures and that was really helpful. I think that was

> probably a major turning point in the whole year for me. That was extremely helpful and I think it was hard for me to decide like "Yeah, you need to spend like 6 or 8 hours on a Saturday and just do this!" but it was good and it was fun because we were hanging out…So it was cool… I enjoyed it. It's just that initial time up front that you have to put in to really think about that stuff so I think that's been extremely helpful. (Ava, closing interview, 3.13.09)

She also stated that when she had other questions or concerns she had been able to call or email and that I have been "available" which was "really helpful."

Summary of Ava's Engagement in the Supportive Community

Ava's participation in this collaboration served several purposes. She was able to document, monitor, and reflect upon her practices and pedagogy and the learning of her students in ways that shaped and informed her instruction. Her voluntary continuation of this reflective process indicates the extent to which this process has been a productive and helpful practice for her during her first year of teaching. She engaged in the Online Community Discussion Board in ways that offered others encouragement and insight into aspects of their practice even as she benefited from the multiple perspectives and ideas shared by the other participants. Through the collaborative processes in which she and I engaged, Ava was able to be more intentional about the creation of a curriculum centered on issues of justice which incorporated language, literacy, and content learning for her students. According to Ava, involvement in this collaborative community has supported and encouraged her in a variety of ways.

Milagro's Involvement in the Community

Milagro's Goal for the Collaboration: Engaging in Supportive Dialogue and Contributing to the Lives of Others

Milagro entered the collaboration looking for support primarily from me but interested in engaging in the dialogue with other teachers as well. She also saw her participation in this work as a potential contribution to the field of education, and she was extremely dedicated to that possibility, saying "for me it's all about being a productive, positive, member of society, like using your life to make a difference in others and if you publish something then that's what you're doing" (Milagro, closing interview, 3.11.09) Milagro also hoped for tips on "how to better organize, plan, and grade materials" (Milagro, Moodle, 1.21.09).

Milagro's use of Livetext: Reflecting, Refocusing on Issues of Justice and Relevancy in the Curriculum, and Creating an Educational Scrapbook

Milagro, who described herself in her "I AM" poem as a rule breaker and a non-conformist, is not much of a follower of parameters. That worked in fantastic ways for our collaboration since the framework was quite flexible and since I had hoped that they would take the loosely constructed plan and make it individualized in ways that met the unique needs of each participant. Some days Milagro chose to use the original format, naming and reflecting upon her high and low moments of the day. Other days she mostly shared observations and included student work; on other days she shares her thoughts or aspects of her life inside or outside of school which were troubling her; still

other days she posted resources, poems, lyrics, and hyperlinks that she had used to support her curriculum.

Her *week in review* postings were also interesting. She would often sign them "☺ Milagro" and would frequently reference her other postings on Livetext or on Moodle. It was ever apparent that I was her audience by her use of "you" and "like we talked about." Milagro fluidly moved between the different aspects of our collaboration, our interviews, our shared history in class, and emails as she constructed her *week in reviews*.

Milagro found that engaging in reflection helped her consider her teaching differently. She exclaimed that "the livetext thing rocked. Once I got used to it, it easily became part of my routine." Milagro believed that "Someone should incorporate that into every first year teacher's life. It would help us keep track of materials, lesson plans, reflections, but most importantly what worked and what did not." She found that the *week in reviews* and daily reflections helped her re-conceptualize her practice. She also used the space to attach documents and handouts that she used during her teaching. She came to see Livetext as the creation of her own "educational scrapbook" and recognized the value of using this space as she began to conceptualize her teaching for the following year.

Milagro found that through writing every day she was able to see "recurring patterns" which she would have missed if she hadn't written them down and been able to go back and look at the week, because as a teacher "you're just in the moment and I think that's the best way to describe your first year teaching is that you are in the

moment- you are in the millisecond of the moment which is weird." She found the practice of reflecting daily and looking across a week to be an important process which kept her from being caught up "in the millisecond of the millisecond" and instead allowed her space to be reflective and ensure that her "teaching [had] purpose."

She explained that she would probably not have engaged in this type of focused reflection were it not for this project because "…you make all your lesson plans and you go, go, go, go, go and you grade, grade, grade, grade, grade and you know its six hours, five classes and you just you hit is as hard as you can." She didn't think she would have been disciplined enough to write everything down or to keep a journal if it had not been for the fact that I had explicitly asked her to engage in that type of reflection. She feels, however that having this type of longitudinal reflection allows her to go back and pull her lessons and to "see things [she] hadn't seen before." She feels that she is particularly well positioned for next year because she has "mapped everything out. It's almost like you map everything out with this project, day by day by day, what worked? What didn't work? What happened?" She feels that as a first-year teacher this has been particularly helpful and that next year she will still "need to evolve a little bit more, and the year after that you're gonna have to evolve a little bit more…" She feels that the reflective process has been a critical part of her evolution as an educator.

She recounted a particularly difficult novel she had reflected upon day after day in Livetext, and through her writing she was able to "stumble into a solution" (Milagro, Livetext, week 6, second week of February). She recounted this experience in this way, as she was wondering "why are we reading it? and like … help me Lord! But then I kept

writing and I kept writing and I kept writing and then I finally got it! And it was great!" Milagro feels that reflection as she engaged in it during this project "has been critical in terms of growing as a teacher." She stated that through this project she has become "a big believer in research and reflecting and [in] collaborative groups."

Milagro felt that the reflective process helped her think seriously about the curriculum she was offering students. She said, "this project has really helped me in terms of being majorly aware of curriculum…You know, there's a big difference between just trying to make it and really [thinking] about what it is that you're doing as a whole and how it fits into a bigger puzzle piece. You're just one little piece… in these kids' lives." She felt that through reflecting about herself, her curriculum, and her students she was able to find ways to make her class "meaningful for them" so that she could "make the biggest difference." Reflective practices which were a part of this project also enabled Milagro to think continuously about "incorporating social justice into the equation" (Milagro, closing interview, 3.11.09).

She also found that engaging in the act of writing itself was helpful to her as she missed the type of intellectual reaching and processing she was encouraged to do in graduate school and appreciated the opportunity to engage in scholarly activities related to her teaching. In summation, Milagro found that the reflective process had exceeded her expectations as it had "made [her] a stronger teacher." She talked about the day that her students called her the "cool Cuban voodoo teacher" and said that "that was like UNBELIEVABLE!!!" but that she didn't "know if that would have happened so much if [she] hadn't really been as reflective as [she] was."

Milagro's Involvement in the Online Community Discussion Board: Engaging with Others in Collaboration and Community

Milagro had several short periods of extensive engagement on Moodle. When she was trying a new type of assessment she sent out a quick update several times during the two day testing period to keep the other participants informed about her progress and her students' reactions. She also "[loved] to read what other people [were] talking about" and what they shared about their practice and the integration of justice issues into their work. In the closing interview, Milagro explained that participation in the collaborative discussions was "beyond wonderful for [her]" because in her work at school she tends "to clam up" and "lock herself into the classroom" but that the discussion board has provided her an opportunity to engage with others in collaboration and community.

Milagro's Relationship with Researcher: An Emotional Safe Space

Milagro and I had several asides over the telephone and email. There were times when she felt vulnerable due to the context of her teaching and therefore became a bit nervous about what she had shared in her reflections. There were other times when she wanted to clarify things to me that were not written down, and there were times when she just needed some confirmation that she was on the right track and was contributing to my research. There were also times when we spoke about life in general and aspects of both of our lives that were particularly stressful.

Milagro explained that her collaboration with me specifically provided her with support and a safe place to learn from her challenges and to be encouraged. She said,

> I could be more honest when I wrote just to you- I really could- like I felt like that was my kind of safe space- No one could look at it- You're not a judging person so I felt like I could really tell you. I didn't have any problem telling you "I completely fell on my face today. I really did- And I didn't mean to and I spent six hours researching that topic and I messed it up…" And so I didn't have any problem telling you that cause I knew you thought enough of me that you knew I was going to go back and that I was gonna really hit it hard the next day…That I failed today but I'm not gonna fail tomorrow! You know, and so I felt like I could tell you those things. I felt like I could tell you those [incredibly difficult and painful things about school and about home] and not be hurt by it. And then you would… come back and you could say…"Hey Milagro, I read that and you know don't worry about it!" And the times I did write you with concerns you were like (snapping) right back and "You know, don't even worry!...It's good! It's good"…I felt like I could get that support and I think…new teachers really desperately need that cause you need to be told, You need a place where you can say "God I really screwed up and now I need to unscrew myself now!" And then you need someone to say "Hey, you know what? You might have messed up but that's human and that's okay and you're gonna be alright and everybody does- you know- so don't worry about it!"

Milagro explained that she felt that she found that type of space and support on Livetext, and that the reflective processes in a safe environment there "was brilliant [and] really worked" to encourage her. She further explained that the space and the relationships that we had created made her feel like she was "not alone in that chosen isolation."

The fact that I had disclosed much of my own story and vulnerability to these women through this process made Milagro feel that I would not only support her, but also understand her. She explained, "You know, you went through some stuff and I went through some stuff so I know you know what it means to go through really, really big catastrophic changes in your life- and until you've walked that little road, you don't… you don't really know." Milagro knew that I was firmly positioned in her corner and that

I would be behind her personally and professionally. This mutual encouragement and the friendship that we developed became an important factor in our work together.

Summary of Milagro's Engagement with the Supportive Community

Participation in this community of support was, by Milagro's reports, beneficial to her in a variety of ways. Through her daily and weekly reflections she found that she was more able to create a relevant curriculum, to identify trends in her practices, to "stumble" into solutions when she was struggling with aspects of the curriculum, and to become a better teacher and more focused on issues of justice and equity in her classroom practices and curriculum. Her participation in the Online Community Discussion Board provided her with a place to engage with others in community and collaboration, an aspect of practice that was highly valued by Milagro, but which was lacking in her school context. Lastly, my relationship with Milagro offered her a safe place to confide her struggles, challenges, and triumphs and an opportunity to develop her professional identity in a safe space and in collaboration with someone who recognizes her dedication, her commitment, and her passion. This safe space was important particularly in light of the vulnerability she experienced during the year. This collaborative community supported Milagro in a variety of ways and was, in her words "More than she could have hoped for" (Milagro, closing interview, 3.11.09).

Jayne's Involvement in the Community

Jayne's Goal for the Collaboration: Building a Supportive and Inspired Community of Like-Minded Teachers

Jayne explained that she wanted an "actual conversation between teachers who know that teaching is both hard and incredible. Instead of an endless list of complaints, I'd love for teachers to keep it real about teaching AND ALSO talk about how mind-blowing our experiences are" (Jayne, Moodle, 1.18.09).

Jayne was looking forward to the fact that this project was conceptualized with the intention of being a useful, functional, and helpful engagement for participants in their current contexts by being open to their needs and lead by their direction. She hoped that connecting with other teachers could provide her with ideas when she became "stumped" by her own questions of practice. Jayne looked forward to engaging in the "practice" of reflection each day, knowing how helpful it is to her but that she rarely does it when she gets home because she often just "passes out" from exhaustion.

Jayne had realized early in her first year that if she tries to talk about teaching with most teachers what she gets is "a gripe session" where the teacher merely complains about the students who are "driving [her] crazy, " the amount of work that teachers have to do, and feeling overwhelmed. Jayne said, "I already know that! That I'm good on! I got that one down! What I WANT is some inspiration!" Jayne was particularly excited about this project as it was conceptualized in order to create "a place that is actually a positive energy where

[teachers] deal with real stuff and are keeping it real at the same time." She explained that this is something she has found to be very lacking in teacher communities, explaining that gatherings of educators are frequently "either very negative or…people who don't know anything apparently about education or are a little on the Pollyanna side." Jayne powerfully stated that she

> …would REALLY LOVE to find a group of people who know the trenches and at the same time don't want to just sit around and bitch because … honestly I can hang out in the teachers' lounge if I want but I don't really want to cause it just brings you down.

Jayne felt that it was essential to build a community of teachers "in a way that makes sense that actually works that is not requiring them to go to something that is not useful-which is a lot of what happens-." Jayne believed this to be the case because "the number one thing teachers face is just being tired and overwhelmed and fishing for ideas [wondering] what the heck [they are] supposed to do" (Jayne, initial interview).

Jayne was clear that she did not want this collaboration to be filled with "endless complaining, or to continue the myth about the Pollyanna teacher who comes in and, after about 15 minutes of conflict during an average film, solves all things for her troubled students" (Moodle, goal setting). She did not want her reflection during this project to be just something to stick in a drawer but instead wanted it to be a "useful…functional, working thing" where teachers can talk to each other. She was excited that this project was not asking her to implement any processes without taking into account her time constraints, limited resources, student needs, and the other realities of her teaching context, all factors which were indeed not taken into consideration in county-wide professional development or in subsequent curricular

mandates. She explained in the opening interview that "if anybody else had asked [her to participate in another endeavor such as this research project, [she] would have said no…I have a test to make up and grades to enter by tomorrow and I don't know what I'm doing." However, she realized that as a first-year teacher she could use support because it was "not easy" and she was looking forward to my encouragement and collaboration.

Jayne's Use of Livetext: Reflecting About Issues of Justice in Schooling and In Her Curriculum

Jayne generally used the Livetext to discuss issues of justice in her curriculum, to critique issues of equitable (and inequitable) educative processes in her school, to describe her own struggles with the school context and climate. Sometimes she wrote about her highs and lows; at other times she had other concerns, ideas, or thoughts that were the subject of her posts. On several occasions she used the space to transcribe lessons and curricular conversations which were particularly powerful. On occasion she included students' poems or reflections. Jayne did not write weekly summaries or do a weekly review.

Jayne explained that she found "the reflection process to be very helpful." The very basic "minimal requirements" of the framework of "just writing a little thing about what [she] was doing," and "what worked and what didn't work" was not an extensive time commitment but did support her in the practice of journaling and reflecting. She noted that often when events occur that could be reflected upon, she was "usually grading papers and answering someone over the intercom and talking at the door and leading a group discussion at the same time" generally leaving "not so much" time for

reflection. She explained that generally she is “pretty much just wingin’ it.” She believed that the process was “incredibly important,” but she had found, in years before, that the practice, the habit, was difficult to develop and maintain because of “the struggle [with time].” Through this process of reflection, Jayne found opportunities to “really think about what’s going on” in her teaching and in her students’ learning.

Jayne’s Involvement in the Online Community Discussion Board: Multiple Perspectives From Others With Similar Commitments

Jayne came into the collaboration really wanting “just to hear some other voices of other teachers who have a similar desire to incorporate social justice. “ She said she found that in the Moodle postings and she was excited when other people posted because she wanted “to see what they are up to.” She found the things that Ava and Milagro posted to be “really useful.” Jayne was happy to hear about all of the great things the happening in their classrooms, particularly since she found many of her school based colleagues to be “about as inspiring as toast.”

Jayne has come to believe that “it’s rare that teachers are passionate.” While she knew that before she joined this profession, she says she “didn’t really know” how few teachers were really passionate and actually “CARE about this stuff.” Jayne misses being around such passionate people and wants teachers to fully engage in their work, in their curriculum, and with their students. She said, “we have to do it anyway so you might as well have a good time- I mean you’re not going to inspire anyone to want to do this if you don’t even want to do it…” (Jayne, closing interview, 3.31.09)

Jayne hoped to “continue to talk with other teachers just very day to day about what [they] are doing.” She has said that when trying to get into the heart of the matter and to “have this engaging conversation with kids” she highly valued the opportunity to get feedback from me and from the other participants. She said, “otherwise it’s just me and the kids and it’s really hard to KNOW… if I’m going in the right direction...You get caught up in your own thing but you really kind of crave an outside perspective.” It is this outside perspective from inspired, passionate teachers committed to social justice that Jayne, and the other participants as well, needed and desired from this community.

Jayne felt that Milagro and Ava’s postings gave her insight into different ways of approaching and thinking about things. She particularly was affected by Milagro’s discussion of Buddhism as it related to one of the texts she read with her students. That same week, Jayne brought in a Buddhist monk’s poetic description empathy and compassion and discussed it with her class. Jayne found Milagro’s posting helpful because she recognizes that she approaches most issues from a critical theory stance asking “Who had the power in this situation? Why did these things happen?” She wants her students to become critical thinkers, so she brings a variety of resources such as poetry, music, and art, into her curriculum. She has come to realize, particularly from Milagro’s posting about Buddhist thought, that as a person who is not “particularly spiritual” she tends “to forget about… the spiritual aspect.” Milagro’s posting, integrating Buddhist thought and Corinthians 13 with a piece of literature, reminded Jayne that “even if [spirituality] is not a big part of [her] life that it’s a big part of a lot of

peoples' lives and that people connect on that." Jayne found the different perspectives and approaches each of the participants shared "very useful" and thought provoking.

Jayne's Relationship with Researcher: A Space for Affirmation

Jayne and I had limited asides. Mostly I wrote to her after reading her weekly postings to describe how much I had been moved and inspired by her courageous conversations with students. One such time she replied "Thank you for reading and thank you for encouraging me. Thank you for creating a space where I can share these sorts of experiences and feelings." (Email communication, 2.4.09) Jayne appreciated the validation that I have given her as a friend. She explained,

> I don't need…props but I do need feedback! I do need to know that what I'm doing is okay because honestly I'm in here and I'm staying up late at night trying to figure out how I'm gonna teach this stuff and I'm not sure I even understanding it myself so it's very helpful to me to know that other people think I'm on the right track.

She specifically appreciated feedback "from the point of view of someone coming out of higher education" who could take "theory and practice and really [bring] them together." She explained that it is apparent that I am "someone who has worked in public school classrooms" because I "have a very good understanding of the realities of what is going on." She felt that I have helped make theory "accessible and relevant to what is going on" in her practice. She said,

> …you've given me the validation and things to think about from the theoretical point of view that are very applied and practical to what I'm doing…You're like- this is what you're doing, this applies to this theory- that's very helpful to see the connections.

She continued, "I love that there's someone…at the university level" who is "really honestly talking" to "those of us in the classroom" because "I want that

connection and I want that validation!" Jayne explained that while many of the struggles that she is dealing with "come out of public education systems in general," what this community provided was "the support and the insight from other sides and that's incredibly helpful." Jayne believes that "teachers burn out cause they feel alone in all of this and so you're trying to break that isolation and that's the best thing that you could do for new teachers, definitely!"

Summary of Jayne's Engagement with the Supportive Community

Jayne's participation in this community of support served her in several ways. Firstly, it supported her in the practice of reflecting upon her teaching, which while she has valued it highly, she often cannot seem to fit into her day with all of the other demands on her time. Secondly, her engagement in the Online Community Discussion Board provided her with some opportunities to engage with other teachers with similar commitments to social justice and equity and to be informed by the multiple perspectives that they bring to their work. She found that our friendship served as a point of affirmation and encouragement which was particularly helpful as she had few colleagues with whom she could engage in critical conversations about curriculum. Jayne found participation in the various aspects of the collaboration to be helpful practices which she hoped to continue.

When Jayne read over this chapter before its completion she responded with the following comment.

> Thinking about this now, I think that the connection we had on Moodle was really, really important. I think that isolation is a major problem for new teachers, especially those of us who are coming from a social justice perspective, and even more so for those of us who feel marginalized

> because of sexuality, race, or other factors. I can literally lose my job and have no recourse if I come out. This means that I have become very guarded in my work environment, making it hard to make alliances with teachers who may agree with me politically. It was so vital to know that I had a community where I could not only speak my mind, but also feel personally accepted.

Summary of Participant Engagement in the Supportive Community

While participants used each of the spaces in different ways, they indicated several similar benefits. The participants all valued the opportunity to reflect on their pedagogy, consider their own learning, find patterns in their own teaching, notice patterns in their learners, and identify aspects of their practice that they considered their growing edge. They found in the reflective processes of Livetext an opportunity to ask questions about their own practice and to "stumble into a solution." They found the daily and weekly reflective processes to be a significant contributor to that growth.

Milagro, Ava, and Jayne wanted a strong community of committed, passionate, and inspired educators to engage with in mutual support and mutual encouragement. While they each identified aspects of the discussion board that were productive, they also recognized that the collaboration had not been as robust as they had hoped or as it could be in the future. They did note, however, that they found ideas, encouragement, and a variety of perspectives while reading the postings of other participants and were consistently excited to read about the happenings in these other classrooms. In their contexts, they were all lacking people with whom they could collaborate and who were on the same page, and so they were excited to find this community. Based on the comments of the participants, it seems that the discussion board, to some extent,

helped to mitigate their feelings of isolation and/or the actual isolation they experienced in their contexts.

Lastly, participants indicated that I was able to offer them helpful collaboration, affirmation, and a safe space as they worked to answer questions related to their practice and to negotiate the tensions they experienced as beginning teachers committed to educational equity, social justice, and structural change. Participants indicated that they found connections between theory and practice, a safe space to admit difficulties, opportunities to re-conceptualize aspects of practice, and the support, encouragement, and validation they needed to find answers to their own questions. The social and emotional support provided to these novice teachers through this complex and multifaceted collaborative community has been named as an important contributor to the success of these beginning teachers in their first year.

Barriers to the Creation of an Active Online Community

The participants named two primary barriers to their participation on the discussion board, (a) the limitations of time, and (b) the lack of familiarity and established relationships that could have engendered a more cohesive community.

Limitations of Time

The lives of beginning teachers are already harried with a variety of commitments, responsibilities, and a steep learning curve. Engagement in this inquiry was an added component to the already busy and stressful lives of the participants. There was not a great deal of activity over the Online Community Discussion Board at many points of the collaboration, a fact which each participant attributed primarily to a

lack of time. Even from the first posting on the discussion board, Jayne and Ava expressed concern about keeping up with the project and keeping track of the two different systems, on Livetext for daily/weekly posting to me, and on Moodle twice a week for posting to the community as a whole. In fact keeping up with this project was a part of Jayne's New Year's resolution.

It should be noted that the participants were extremely consistent about posting on Livetext and submitting to it weekly. Milagro missed one week when she had experienced two personally traumatic events and was silenced by them entirely. Jayne missed one week of posting on Livetext but rejoined the following week. She explained that Livetext "was really good when [she] could remember to do it... [but the] hardest thing was if [she] forgot to do it [daily] then it was hard…to go back and remember what [she] had done" (Jayne, closing interview, 3.31.09). Ava consistently posted, and at the end of the academic year, more than two months after the final interview, she continued to post regularly as she had found the practice particularly helpful to her teaching.

All of the participants expressed that they were not as active on the group discussion board as they had hoped to be. While at several points in the discussion there was a flurry of activity on the board, there were also long dry spells when no one posted for several days. Jayne stated that she "didn't get to [post] as much as [she] wanted" (Jayne, closing interview, 3.31.09). When asked how we could make it a less time consuming process she stated,

> Honestly, it didn't take me much time to do. It was that I have SO MANY things to do…I'm trying to remember all those things I'm supposed to do

> for this and the TAG certification and it's just a general observation that everything that I do has a different computer program…I think it's just one of those things of building the practice and I think that as I am a little more familiar [it will get better]. I'm still learning the logistical ropes of how this stuff works

Ava reflected at the end of the formal data collection period that people "just didn't post very much" on Moodle. She explained that she is "as responsible as anybody" because she "didn't post very much either." She did feel that it was not as productive of a place as it could have been as far as the sharing of experiences. She recognized that the primary reason for this was the fact that they were all so busy and "posting on all these different things." Ava found that she often would take several days to consider what she wanted to say in response to another person on the discussion board and then "by the time it would take shape it would be…such a long time" from the original posting that she would wonder if her ideas were "even still relevant to post" and often decided not to share. Ava and I discussed whether it would be helpful for me to post a conversation starter. I did that to some extent by asking open-ended questions, but then I determined that if I did so frequently, even "just to get people to post things and then respond to each other," it might be counterproductive. It may give me the role of directing the conversation, which was antithetical to our shared purpose.

Milagro expressed that she wished she "had used that Moodle thing more" but found that she "just couldn't get it in there." She did state that she "loved the conversations that we had" and that "they were so good." She wondered about whether the Livetext postings and Moodle postings should be alternated, providing participants space for personal reflection and for conversation on a rotating basis. She

personally found the recording of her highs and lows and *week in reviews* particularly helpful to her practice but stated that if we discontinued the personal reflection she thought that she would be on Moodle daily. She felt like in Livetext she "had this great space" and she found that Moodle took second place to the daily and weekly postings.

Challenges of an "Anonymous Community"

The second barrier to this project was linked more directly to the design of this inquiry. I had conceptualized an online community since one of the potential participants (who later declined the invitation to participate due to the time constraints of the first year of teaching) had taken a position in another part of the country. Recognizing the time constraints of everyone involved, I believed an asynchronous meeting would best meet the scheduling needs of beginning teachers. Also I thought that the relative anonymity of a discussion board might be a comfortable space for these beginning teachers to share their feelings, thoughts, tensions, concerns, and triumphs.

I shared this concern with Ava during our closing interview explaining that "it's hard to know where the line is between protecting anonymity and building community." She laughingly said, "I don't know that you can have BOTH….. An anonymous community." She further explained that though they had posted introductions on the Moodle blog, it was still "hard to respond to each other if you don't know exactly what their context is or what's relevant."

Milagro also admitted in her closing interview that she "felt a little bit intimidated cause I didn't know [Jayne or Ava]." She explained her tension in this way,

"you don't want to be too informal cause you don't know them- but you don't want to be so stiff…that you can't be completely honest either…It's a kind of hard thing." Milagro also said that since she didn't know very much about the other participants she was worried about hurting or offending someone by "inadvertently [saying] something that would go against their value set. They would be upset and you wouldn't have even known that you hurt them." She explained that it would have been helpful "just to know- I am a Christian. I am Jewish." Or as she identified herself, "I am- oh I don't know- I used to be Catholic and now (I'm) not even sure." Milagro felt that knowing the context of the other participants

> …so…you don't say something insensitive. Not that anyone would be insensitive, but you know how easy it is to hurt somebody so that's the only thing. That's why I was a little bit hesitant like on the Moodle but then I found out that [Ava] was teaching at a Christian school and then it was easier to frame. And it was easier to find things in common too to talk about. (Milagro, closing interview, 3.11.09)

Milagro noted that for her there was a different level of trust on Livetext, since she knew she was writing to me, her friend and former instructor, than there was on the discussion board with women she hadn't met and hadn't built a relationship with first. She explained "I just can't tell them what I tell you…..it's a different level of trust." There was a marked difference in the level of self disclosure on Livetext and on Moodle from each of the participants. Milagro explained it in this way,

> I would never say [on Moodle] half of the stuff, even an eighth of the stuff I say to you [on Livetext]. I just couldn't cause it's just too -it's really personal. I don't know [if they] are… going to understand- are they going to have any frame of reference?

Ava, in her closing interview, aptly summarized this barrier saying that we "can't get the supportive relationship with no relationship."

Continued Goals for the Partnership

Milagro, Ava, and Jayne all expressed a desire to meet in one place for social gatherings and for support. Milagro suggested that we throw "kind of a party" where "we could all go and just talk a little bit" or if we could gather regularly "like twice a semester… that would be great" Jayne said that she "would LOVE to have…something where we physically meet and talk… that would be helpful. Not necessarily all the time but from time to time… [because] I would like for [our collaboration] to continue." Ava too expressed a desire for us to meet because talking face to face could provide "at least… some kind of context for each person." They felt that those relationships built in time together might help the community sustain itself over the discussion board in a more active way.

Each of the participants hoped that this community of teachers who were passionately committed to teaching and to issues of justice would continue to develop because it made them feel less isolated. They viewed the discussion board as a place with great possibility, offering them connection in place of isolation. Ava expressed that she was "excited about sharing [the discussion board] with other teachers" and felt that it would be helpful "especially since [she is] the ONLY teacher at my school it's kind of nice to hear what other people are doing, to know that I'm not the only one in the world." She felt that this type of community would be particularly helpful

> …in the first couple of years of teaching…just as a space to like share ideas to kind of bounce ideas off of each other and to address sort of

> some of those issues like… assessment . I think there are some major issues in education that all of us kind of struggle with [and] it's just good to talk with people…that you know are going to understand what you're saying. You're not going to have to give a whole bunch of background information or like try to explain you know like why assessment is different for language learners or whatever.

She felt that it was important to have "a space to talk about some of those things and other issues that just come up as you're teaching" and hoped "to be able to connect more with the other girls involved" and to "get to know them and to share with them."

Ava expressed that one of her main goals for the future of the collaboration was that the members could provide a supportive place for true accountability where the group encourages her to meet her own pedagogical goals. She did not want to feel that people were acting as evaluators saying "I give you a B this week" but did want to know that she would be engaging in conversations with people who knew what her goals were and could "give [her] that extra push to keep [growing] cause it's always easier to take a break or to reach a level that's decent but maybe not great and to sit there. I hope to keep being pushed forward and to push each other." She explained that a group of encouraging educators who were similarly committed could help her be more motivated than if she were just by herself.

Milagro celebrated receiving encouragement from likeminded people who were able to provide her with assurance that there were other people who "think that way too." She explained that that feeling of solidarity was "really important cause there are not that many people who think that grades are not important and I really feel like they so mess kids up and… make them feel like they're not quite good enough." Finding

educators who agreed with her on points of principle was an important and affirming experience for Milagro.

Milagro also spoke of the need for a community where she could be supported as she navigated the tensions of being an educator committed to equity in the conservatively socializing public school setting. She explained that she really needed a community where she could talk to people in a non-evaluative and safe environment. She had encountered some very damaging colleagues during the year and recognized that safety and trust were essential aspects of a community of teachers taking an educative and social stand that was not entirely safe. She said,

> I just NEED to talk to people that aren't gonna go rat me out – it's like that trust thing that we had with Livetext I really felt like I could really tell you [what I was struggling with] and that is really important cause you can't really fix a mistake if you don't kind of bumble around a bit and talk about it with somebody that is gonna say "You need to really watch out here. Maybe pull back a little bit here. But really go for this- this is great!"… I really need that [space] where I don't feel like my file could be compromised but where I could tell the truth. Just access to other teachers where it is non-judgmental and where the ideas can flow freely and where it's safe- you know there's no fear.

Jayne also felt that a group of teachers who are excited about teaching and willing to share ideas was invigorating and an important change from her school context. She stated, "what I would love to have is something where we can post to each other…really great ideas, things we're struggling with, or just thoughts we've had." She explained that it is difficult to find truly inspiring and collaborative relationships with teachers inside a school building. Jayne explained that by having a community intentionally formed with educators committed to educational equity, we have created

a space where teachers can “feed off of that energy” to maintain and strengthen their commitment and to remain encouraged in spite of challenges.

Summary

Through the co-creation of a collaborative community created during this inquiry, the participants in this study found a variety of supportive mechanisms they identified as necessary for the development of their pedagogy, the improvement of their practice, the expansion of their abilities to teach for social justice, equity, and structural change. They also experienced a diminished sense of isolation, frustration, and vulnerability. They delineated specific processes and structures which could support them further through the beginning of their teaching career. The significant implications of supportive structures during the induction period of beginning teachers committed to social justice and structural change will be discussed at length in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This discussion chapter will address the commitments to transformation and equity that Ava, Jayne, and Milagro embodied in their lives and communities, in their engagement in this collaborative inquiry community, and in their classroom contexts. These beginning social justice educators created multiple third space(s) of contestation and transformation in these situated contexts as they worked together with others in these spaces to rupture the status quo and reimagine ways of being and acting in the world. They found in this inquiry a community of support for their cognitive, social, and emotional needs while they were developing as liberatory educators. Implications of this study for (a) teachers; (b) policy makers at the state, district, and school level; (c) teacher educators and teacher education; and (d) future research are discussed, as well as a brief exploration of my own growth and insights through my engagement in this inquiry with these inspiring beginning social justice educators.

Embodied Commitments to Transformation and Equity in Participants' Lives and Communities

Milagro, Ava, and Jayne had extraordinary experiences through which they had developed strong commitments to social justice, structural change and equity. These women were shaped by early childhood experiences such as growing up a child of missionaries in a Guatemalan village, being raised "off the grid" in the upper peninsula

of Michigan, and being the daughter of parents who escaped a tyrannical regime. In their early adulthood, these women made decisions to live and work in communities which made them more aware of inequities and positioned them to work toward mitigation of those injustices. During their first years of teaching, these women were also engaged outside of the classroom in informal community organizations as they worked and advocated for equity and justice, peace and possibility.

Much of the professional literature on teachers committed to social justice and structural change placed emphasis on the positive impact of teacher education programs focused on issues of equity and culturally relevant pedagogy (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001). Kuzmic (1994) whose ethnographic case study of a kindergarten teacher in her first semester of teaching and Chubbuck and Zembylas (2008), who conducted an ethnographic study on a high school English teacher, both explored the experiences of beginning teachers committed to structural change. In these articles, the researchers included only a very brief description of the participants as individuals who existed outside of the teacher preparation program and the classroom. By merely providing a cursory description of the race and socioeconomic background and giving general geographic information about their participants' upbringing (i.e., from the Midwest) researchers did not attend specifically to the personhood of their participants or the ways in which the classroom commitments of beginning teachers could have been manifestations of their lived commitments.

In contrast, my relationships with Jayne, Milagro, and Ava in this study provided a nuanced understanding of their life histories, values, and ontological purposes.

Throughout this inquiry, I attempted to honor and support the commitments and experiences that led these women to this vocation. Insight into the life stories and exploration of the classroom practices of these beginning teachers made it evident that there was no overnight transformation in their dispositions or ontologies during their time of professional preparation. Rather, since childhood they had been continuously broadening their perspectives, deepening their understandings, questioning their assumptions, and increasing in their capacity and tendency toward empathy and social interest.

Embodied Commitments to Transformation and Equity in this Collaborative Inquiry Community

The holistic supportive community that was synergistically created as a part of this dissertation research encouraged participants in their endeavors to enact transformative and liberatory curricular opportunities for their students. Through engagement in this community, Ava, Milagro, and Jayne found and offered a range of support which enabled transformation. I will discuss the three specific types of support, (a) cognitive, (b) social, and (c) emotional, in the sections to follow.

Cognitive Support Which was Offered by the Inquiry Community and Enabled Transformation

All development, all learning, indeed all transformation evolves from what individuals already think, know, and/or believe. Learning occurs when an already formed self must face disorienting dilemmas. Those disorienting dilemmas occur when the beliefs, paradigms, and ideas about the ways of the world (or what the ways of the

world SHOULD be) are contradicted by experience. McCann et al. (2005), Scherff (2006), and Cantor (1998) all found that the radical differences between the expectations of many beginning teachers and the realities and responsibilities of teaching are often causes for dismay and severe discouragement. Dilemmas developed for Ava, Milagro, and Jayne when they entered schools and encountered the challenges which are usually interpreted as student apathy. These teachers responded to these dilemmas by engaging with students in challenging conversations, by creating curriculum and assessment methods that were not constricted to a singular truth or right answer, by privileging the emotional and social as well as the cognitive, and by democratizing education.

Ava, Milagro, and Jayne created curriculum and engagements that reflected their own lives and ontological purposes, and in many ways they chose to work through the disorienting dilemmas by reaffirming their commitments and considering, through critical reflection (Freire, 1970) how they could best stay true to them. In the daily and weekly reflective processes of this study, teachers were able to consider aspects of their practice at their *point of need* (Swenson, 2003). These teachers continued to see themselves as learners as they engaged in self study and research, reflecting daily upon the challenges and successes of their practice and their students' learning. By constantly asking themselves questions such as: How did my teaching go? How did the students react? How should I change it next time? These teachers considered what their students were learning, what they were actually teaching and indicating was important, what aspects of their practice were most needing focused concentration, what was going

well, and how they were focusing on aspects of justice in their curriculum. Crucially, these teachers also asked themselves constantly, "What am I going to chose to do with this information?" Through this self reflective and reflexive process, Ava, Milagro and Jayne created for themselves and collaboratively participated in relevant professional learning opportunities based on their teaching context and on their own identified needs and interests. This type of authentic and relevant learning based on teachers' self identified areas of need was noted by Swenson (2003), Fry (2007), and McCann et al. (2005) to be a critical component in the development of pedagogy and practice.

While Jayne, Milagro, and Ava all highly valued the act of reflection, they recognized the difficulty of engaging in regular reflection as a practice in the context of a harried first year. The nudge from the collaborative research community for them to reflect daily upon their practices helped each to practice the discipline of reflection on herself, her practices, her curriculum, her students, her community, and her society. The participants all recognized the significant benefits of engaging in these self reflective practices; however they indicated that they would not have done it without some level of accountability.

Through these reflections, the participants were able to stay focused on issues of justice and equity in their teaching, pick specific goals for improving their practice based on evidence of what was the most challenging aspects of their work, deconstruct the challenges and less than successful aspects of their work and learn from them, recognize and acknowledge their own growth in those areas, and have an opportunity to reaffirm their identities as askers of questions and lifelong learners, rather than individuals who

have come to all of the answers of teaching and of life. The *curriculum* of this professional support network was entirely self driven and based on the individual teacher's own questions, reflections, and ponderings. Not surprisingly, while there were similarities across participants, there were also very different questions, needs, and challenges that arose due to their different contexts, students, content, and personhood.

As a participant researcher I created the guided reflection framework for the participants to reflect daily and weekly upon their practices. I frequently wrote to the participants, asking them open ended and reflective questions such as: What resources might you draw on to help with this challenge? What obstacles are you encountering in trying to reach this goal? What is your purpose in making such a change in your teaching approach? Sometimes I assisted by providing them with resources and reminders of our shared experiences in their preservice training, to enable them to find answers to their own questions of practice. I often asked questions which encouraged them to think of their practice in a new way; occasionally I offered a different perspective or hypothesis for potential action.

The space created for this guided reflection was used differently by the participants and served unique purposes for each. Ava used this reflective space to enhance her practice through setting specific personal goals for herself and her teaching and also used the space to monitor and measure her own growth and the growth of her students. Throughout this collaboration, she chose for me to relate to her primarily as a helpful collaborator. I met and talked with Ava occasionally to discuss her curriculum

and to consider together aspects of her practice that were particularly challenging. I provided her with resources for curriculum and instruction and offered her a space to consider aloud, and through written reflections, her goals, needs, and next steps. Milagro used her reflective space to consider what worked, what didn't, and to organize herself for future units (through the creation of what she came to consider an *educational scrapbook*). She also reflected in order to refocus herself on issues of justice and relevancy in the curriculum she offered her students. Similarly, Jayne used the reflective space to consider issues of justice in schooling and in her curriculum. As each participant considered her goals and next steps, my role as co-questioner and a reflective and responsive listener proved to be a helpful aspect of this collaboration.

Previous research (Bergeron, 2008; Cantor, 1998; Flores & Day, 2006; Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005) has indicated that beginning teachers need cognitive support through professional development centered on their own identified needs. Milagro, Jayne, and Ava found that their daily and weekly reflective journaling was not "something to just stick in a drawer" (Jayne, initial interview, 12.17.08), but rather consisted of ponderings, questions, concerns and celebrations they were sharing with me, an individual deeply invested in their success and their commitment to educational equity.

The community provided opportunity for reflective discourse (Mezirow, 1998, 2000) and critical conversations between educators with similar commitments, passions, and ideologies who were working in a variety of school contexts across the state. They worked together as collaborating thinkers, asking questions and providing

mutual support as each worked to find her own answers to questions of practice. Research has indicated that this type of collaborative questioning is a critical part of the development of beginning teachers as it enables them to see themselves as problem posers and individuals who can work to find answers to questions about pedagogy (Athanases & Achinstein, 2003; Feiman-Nemser, 2001b). This process of reflection and conversation enabled these teachers to remain engaged, empowered, self-reflective, and invested in their own learning and each others' growth and success. The reflective conversations offered multiple perspectives, alternative hypotheses, and a range of options for acting in schools and communities.

Through this process, each participant crafted a space for her own professional development and learning and each found an audience for her reflective practices where she could ask her own questions, set her own goals, deconstruct her own challenges, and monitor her own growth. This platform for reflective practices enabled them to stay focused on what was most important to them, to be responsive to the needs of their students, to work for social and educational equity, and to, in their own words, become better teachers.

Social Support Which was Offered by the Inquiry Community and Enabled Transformation

Cognitive learning and negotiation was not the only area of need for Milagro, Ava, and Jayne. The type of guided self reflection and collegial dialogue that assisted them in their cognitive learning would not have been possible without the social

support that they also sought and mutually developed as part of the collaborative community.

Research has indicated that the social context, school leadership, and school climate have a significant effect on the learning, morale, and career commitment of beginning teachers (e.g. Gold, 1996; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Weiss, 1999). Additionally, beginning teachers are occupied with issues related to their social setting as they try to navigate and understand the norms and ways of being in their new context (e.g. Flores, 2006; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Sivell & Yeager, 2001). The challenge many beginning teachers face as they meet the competitive and conservatively socializing factors of our schools is to appear to be an expert even while learning how to teach alone for the first time. It is important for beginning teachers, who are often the most vulnerable educators in a school, to make the administration happy, to be seen as a strong teacher, and frankly, in this year of severe cut backs in school personnel, to remain employed. These were critical concerns for Milagro and to some degree Jayne, as they worked to establish themselves as competent professionals in a public school context. Successful teachers in the literature (Bergeron, 2008; Cantor, 1998; Flores & Day, 2006; Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005) were in school contexts where they had the support and advice of colleagues and administrators and where there was philosophical congruence between their own ideologies and those of their institutions.

Ava, Milagro, and Jayne did not find this type of supportive collaboration with other teachers in their context. Jayne and Milagro had chosen isolation out of frustration and self protection and felt that they were very much on their own in their

school contexts. Ava, as the only teacher in the school, was actually isolated, since there were no other teachers with whom she could collaborate. This isolation was particularly problematic because these teachers had just graduated from very relational and supportive teacher preparation programs and each highly valued community and collaboration.

Previous research has indicated that collaborative relationships are needed both with other teachers in the school context, and with other beginning teachers who were colleagues from a teacher preparation or teacher development program (Colaric & Stapleton, 2004; Eick, 2002; Rolheiser & Hundey, 1995). The research of Sivell and Yeager (2001) and Rolheiser and Hundey found that teachers who participated in collaborations with others with similar theoretical training, common professional discourse, and shared vision were supported in meaningful ways. Some teacher networks did not attend to ideologies and commitments or a common goal in the creation of the collaborations (Fry, 2006; Long et al., 2006; Singer & Zeni, 2004). Others were facilitated by university faculty who either had evaluative roles over the participants (Scherff, 2006), set protocols which limited participants' opportunities for open participation (DeWert et al., 2003), or required that all postings first be vetted by university faculty (Dalgarno & Colgan, 2007). In contrast, the group discussion board in this inquiry did not utilize protocols for participation, nor were postings screened and vetted by a faculty member before being added to the list serve. Instead, this organic and co-created community served as a platform for these teachers to build relationships with other educators.

Milagro, Ava, and Jayne did not have the benefit of collaborative relationships with other teachers in their school. However, they found that discussing issues of practice and schooling with others outside of their first space of school offered them a variety of perspectives. Having an opportunity to engage in safe and critical conversation with others who were philosophically congruent and who had similar passions and ideologies offered Ava, Milagro, and Jayne needed social support during this critical stage of their professional development.

As the participant researcher, I was intentional about inviting individuals to participate in this inquiry who were similar in ontology and ideology and who, I believed, were likely to engage in nurturing relationships while providing an atmosphere of mutual challenge and support. Participants' initial goals for this collaboration all included the desire for some element of social support which they recognized as lacking in their own contexts. Ava hoped to build a supportive community of like-minded teachers to whom she could offer and from whom she could receive multiple perspectives and new ideas. Similarly, Jayne hoped to build a supportive and inspired community of like-minded teachers, and Milagro hoped to engage with others in collaboration and community. My goal was similar, and throughout the collaboration I worked to establish and strengthen social ties and trust levels which were needed for the community's success.

Whenever I had an opportunity to speak to one of the participants about the research and the amazing things that were happening in the classrooms of the other participants, I did so in order to encourage participants to recognize the phenomenal

resources they had in each other and the similarities in the work they were doing in their respective classrooms. My enthusiasm about the inquiry and the community, along with my prior relationships with all of the participants, was a significant aspect of the collaboration which likely spurred more participant engagement. I attempted to make connections between participants, for example, when Milagro shared an article on narrative assessments rather than numerical grades, I immediately posted a message to Amanda on the board and indicated that the article made me think of her undergraduate studies and I wondered what she thought of Milagro's post. In such ways I attempted to trying to create a social structure where they would have that opportunity to become more deeply invested in each other and to provide the type of social encouragement that beginning social justice educators need, particularly those experiencing actual or chosen isolation in their contexts.

Throughout the inquiry, we also discovered two aspects of our collaboration that I will alter in the future to ensure a more cohesive and relational collaboration, (a) we will be gathering in person to solidify and strengthen our relationships, and (b) we will add additional social justice educators in order to have a more robust community in which there are more individuals both asking for and offering support. These changes will likely be significant in the strengthening of our community.

Emotional Support Which was Offered by the Inquiry Community and Enabled Transformation

The emotional struggles of beginning teachers, including feelings of isolation, frustration, alienation, vulnerability, anxiety, and just being overwhelmed are

documented through the voices of participants themselves in almost every study inquiring into the experiences of beginning teachers (eg. Curry et al., 2008; Featherstone, 1992; Flores, 2006; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Kuzmic, 1994; Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005; Scherff, 2006, 2008; Timmons Flores, 2007). However, only a few researchers have engaged in an analysis of the emotional needs and experiences of beginning teachers, particularly in their findings and the implications of their work (Chubbuck et al., 2001; Chubbuck & Zemblyas, 2008; McNally et al., 2008; Singer & Zeni, 2004; Swenson, 2003). As Chubbuck et al. (2001) found, it is extraordinarily evident that the beginning teachers in this study needed emotional support in a non-threatening, non-coercive, extra-school environment with individuals who had similar values.

For a beginning teacher committed to social justice, equity, and structural change in a social milieu that is threatening and isolating, it is difficult to feel a sense of belonging and community, and often the teachers in this study chose to isolate themselves, both for self protection and because listening to teachers “bitching” in the teachers’ lounge can be debilitating and painful for educators committed to student success.

Adler (1998) posited that the primary way to stave off feelings of isolation, depression, frustration, and alienation was by increasing one’s social interest. Social interest is increased when individuals feel a strong sense of belonging and community and when they feel that they are and can be contributory to the lives of others. The potentially therapeutic nature of group membership has been well established by

scholars in the helping professions (Gladding, 1995; Jacobs et al., 1994; Yalom, 1985). Yalom identified a range of potential positive effects of participation in groups.

Several of those factors were manifested in this collaborative community. The *instillation of hope* occurred for participants as they observed the inspiring work of other social justice educators. In the social isolation of their school contexts, these educators often felt that they were unique, alone, or the *only one* in the world with these *crazy* ideas. Ava, Milagro, and Jayne all indicated that they wanted individuals who were similarly committed, inspired, and passionate with whom to collaborate, people they could understand and by whom they could be understood. The similarly committed individuals in this community provided the participants with a feeling of *universality*, a *mutual validation* as they perceived their similarities both in commitment and in challenges. Yalom (1985) posited that the recognition of universality is critical to individuals who often "express great relief at discovering that they are not alone and that others share the same dilemmas and life experiences" (p. 9). This type of universality was, in fact, found and appreciated in the context of this community.

Another therapeutic factor was the practice of *altruism*. These beginning social justice educators benefited from engagement in the intrinsic act of giving in a collaborative community. It was refreshing and exciting to read about the inspiring work that was taking place in the classrooms of co-participants. Through "offering support, reassurance, suggestions, and insight and [sharing] similar problems with one another… offering spontaneous and truthful reactions and feedback" (Yalom, 1985, p. 14) these beginning social justice educators offered each other emotional and social support. The

educational processes of this group were implicit as each participant received not only new ideas and potential ways of enacting her ontological purposes in the classroom but also the type of support and encouragement needed in order to engage in those emancipatory practices.

At the beginning of the inquiry, I had planned to model encouraging statements that I hoped others would take up and utilize in their comments and posts to each other. During the first posts on the discussion board, however, it became abundantly clear that these women were already living out a spirit of encouragement and reaching out to each other in ways that would increase social interest. Informed by Adler (1998) and Yalom (1985), I was conscious in my conversations to offer the types of emotional support and encouragement that enhance social interest and to foster conditions for a therapeutic community of support. This spirit of encouragement and belongingness was critical to the women in this study. Milagro found, in her conversations with and postings to me in particular, an emotionally safe space and a supportive dialogue. Jayne found affirmation and encouragement through our correspondences. This collaboration provided Milagro and Jayne both with a safe space to feel, think, share, and to know and be known, where they could "not only speak [their] mind, but also feel personally accepted" (Jayne, member checking comment) as they were encouraged by and offered encouragement to each other.

Through their participation in this community of support, these teachers had the opportunity to share with other educators, to benefit from the ideas of others, and to remain open to alternative explanations, actions, and practices. Through mutual

support, engagement, altruism, the instillation of hope, and an increased understanding that they were not alone, nor were they the only educators working for this type of social and personal transformation, these educators co-created a safe space for reflection, conversation, personal growth, and encouragement.

By engaging in the community, members became more inspired, more committed, and more hopeful. This sense of belonging and the opportunity to observe, through the postings of co-participants, the remarkable and transformative educative opportunities offered to students, reminded participants with every posting that they did have the potential to be the change they wanted to see in the world. In fact, this sense of belonging and being contributory, not only to each other but also to the lives of students, families, and communities, continued to increase social interest in an unfolding and expansive way.

In December, when we first began to engage in this inquiry, each indicated a need for supportive mediation through the challenges and vulnerabilities of the beginning of their career. Through our collaboration, each of these beginning teachers found in each other, and in me, the type of emotional support that was so needed, where they could struggle and still be believed in, where they could fall and be picked back up, where they could be frank without fear of offending, and where they could be authentic without worrying about being “ratted out,” “outed,” or fired. Through this community Ava, Milagro, and Jayne experienced diminished isolation, frustration, and vulnerability. These teachers particularly needed emotional encouragement as they had chosen, by their very nature and ontology, the challenge of working simultaneously to

gain a foothold in the teaching profession and to strive for transformation of the system of schooling itself.

It was easy for these participants to see how educators who entered the profession committed to structural change, but who remained isolated in their schools, might eventually believe that they could not make any difference, since the problem of equity is so significant and since educational structures are often so oppressive in nature. Without involvement in a collegial community in which they can find universality, instill in each other a sense of hope, engage in altruism, feel belongingness, and find encouragement, teachers committed to equity and change may experience difficulties that cause them to doubt the impact or importance of their efforts and to reconsider their choice of vocation.

As members of this small community of educators committed to social justice, Ava, Jayne, and Milagro were able to remain motivated and inspired by each other and the amazing work occurring in a variety of classroom settings. This served to increase their social interest, their sense of belonging, and their connection to community, and to encourage them. These teachers were able to recognize and celebrate their own growth through their reflection and their collaboration with others. This continuous turning toward others and appreciation of their own growth served to support these educators in ways that each highly valued.

These beginning social justice educators indicated that participation in this inquiry offered several layers of cognitive, social, and emotional support as they

navigated the tensions of their first year and worked to enact their beliefs and hopes as educators committed to equity and emancipation.

Embodied Commitments to Transformation and Equity in Classrooms

Ava, Milagro, and Jayne repeatedly enacted their commitments to equity and transformation as they worked with students in specific contexts. While these teachers came to their MAT with identities and commitments that were already formed and shaped, they did find ways of focusing that commitment through their coursework and field experiences. They encountered and imagined ways to embody those ideologies in a classroom context and to focus their commitment through their pedagogy and through the classroom community they co-created with their students.

These beginning social justice educators were committed to offering transformative and encouraging opportunities for their students to increase their social interest while developing cognitively and emotionally. Alongside their students, they created spaces that could be transformative in many ways for all involved in the classroom communities. Milagro, Ava, and Jayne recognized that their students were coming to their classes with ideas, language, experiences, opinions, thoughts, struggles, and concepts of self. They co-construct spaces with students which had the potential to be transformative in many ways, spaces where they could all be exposed to disorienting dilemmas and engage in reflection to come to understand what was puzzling, confusing, challenging, or enlightening about their cognitive dissonances. These woman worked to create an open and encouraging classroom culture where it was safe for students to share with each other their interpretations, ideas, and beliefs, to reconsider their own

previously held stances, and possibly decide to live and act differently in the world. Because the teachers in these classrooms were open to the ideas and interpretations of others and receptive to more than one potential answer, they felt that their students became more able to recognize the overly simplistic nature of a single truth or a definitive binary. Over the course of the year, the teachers observed that some students became more open and accepting and began to think and to feel, interacting with each other and with the universal experience in more empathetic and compassionate ways. Ava, Jayne, and Milagro did not require that their students develop a specific ideology; rather they asked them to think critically, to support their opinions, and to consider alternative hypotheses in order to develop, refine, or refute their previous stance. In short, these educators made use of the same learning theory in their classrooms that they utilized in their own lives and in their collaboration. This construction of a democratized educative experience was both conscious and deliberate.

By promoting a sense of belongingness and helping students feel that they could be a part of the change they want to see in the world, these teachers offered their students encouragement, in the true sense of the word. By creating a safe space and then asking questions that helped students to dig deeper and hold out and weigh their previously unexamined beliefs, they often offered students opportunities to be reflective agents in their own development. These teachers were not content with proof of cognitive mastery. Rather they had a more holistic view of students and of development, as a cognitive, social, and emotional experience, and they created a space and a community where each of those developmental processes could be supported.

Consequently they witnessed students' mutually encouraging each other to think differently about themselves and their world. These teachers offered students more than just a safe place to ponder their own ontological purposes. Milagro, Ava, and Jayne intentionally created opportunities for students to enact their beliefs and be a part of the change they wanted to see in the world. The teachers worked at reorienting these young people toward empathy and care for others as they increased social interest and feelings of being an agent of change and a contributory individual in the lives of others.

The Mutual Creation of Third Space(s)

A third space is a fluid, disruptive, ambiguous space where ways of being and living are negotiated in the context of disparate and varied social structures, behavioral expectations, and moral dilemmas. In third spaces, individuals live in the tensions, exploring and deconstructing obvious ways of acting and interacting, and creatively considering ways of becoming "beings for ourselves" (Freire, 1970). Third spaces are inherently places of resistance, "imbued with intent, that attempts to challenge, change, or retain particular circumstances relating to social relations, processes, and/ or institutions" (Routledge, 1996, p. 415). They are places where individuals can "imaginatively [create] a hybrid space allowing both participation and resistance" (Rowe & Leander, 2005, p. 30), a stance particularly necessary for beginning teachers as they work to learn to teach and develop a professional identity and simultaneously engage in practices to transform both their own classroom contexts and larger hegemonic and oppressive social structures.

In our collaboration, we recognized that each of us was unfolding, that our personal histories, educative opportunities, teaching, and collaboration were not separate experiences but were mutually informing and inherently connected. Because of this understanding, the processes through which these educators formed, maintained, developed and enacted their ontological purposes in the creation of liberatory and emancipatory communities (in and out of school, and in and out of this collaborative inquiry) became evident. The commitment to structural change and transformation of these beginning educators was embodied in their creation of and engagement in *multiple* third space(s) across their spheres of influence and points of connection with others. Specifically, Ava, Jayne, and Milagro engaged in the creation of transformative third spaces in three specific communities: in their neighborhoods and relationships, in their participation in this collaborative inquiry, and in their classroom contexts.

As Ava engaged in a shared living community in service to the neighborhood, as Jayne worked as an advocate for peace and conflict resolution, and as Milagro redefined her out of school role to engage in supportive and meaningful ways with her students outside of the traditional school day, these women ruptured scripts and worked for transformation and equity. Each worked within her sphere of influence to enact the change she wanted to see in the world.

During their first year of teaching, Jayne, Ava, and Milagro established a third space of mutual support through their participation in this inquiry community. This community was a transformative and subversive third space. Jayne, Milagro, and Ava

demonstrated through sharing their lives, hopes, frustrations, needs, and gifts with each other and with me, that beginning teachers, particularly those committed to equity, liberatory education, and structural change, need and can provide for each other the cognitive, social, and emotional support structures that will help them maintain, develop, and enact their commitments. With these three conditions in place, these remarkable women found it easier to develop a subversive and liminal identity enacting social justice and working for liberation and emancipation in the context of schooling. They re-evaluated their principles as they entered these conservatively socializing and seemingly incommensurable spaces (Bhabha, 1990, 1994) and found ways to work through these tensions in critical reflection and conversation with other teachers who were also committed to equity. Through this collaboration and in the context of this first year of teaching, Milagro, Jayne, and Ava reconceptualized curriculum, problematized simplistic explanations of student apathy, deconstructed the one right answer myth of traditional testing narratives, and worked to liberate themselves and their students through democratizing educative opportunities.

These beginning social justice educators also created third space(s) in their classrooms where it was safe for students to notice disorienting dilemmas, expose, explore, and exchange inherited and unexamined attitudes and prejudices. These radical and disruptive actions created third spaces in their classrooms and in the lives of their students, as transcendent scripts were ruptured (Gutierrez et al., 1995). In these third spaces, new possibilities could be entertained, new identities could be created, and new ways of living and acting in the world could be imagined and made real (Soja, 1989,

1996). These teachers were, by their very nature and work, subverting and transforming the status quo, one student at a time. In this, I believe, lies the potential for this world to become a place, as Freire (1970) hoped, “where it will be easier to love” (p. 40).

While a third space is generally conceptualized as a singular point of connection, contestation, and liminality, these women demonstrated that, at least in their lives, there are multiple third spaces where such contestation, liminality, and rupturing of the status quo occur. By understanding the complexity of the lives of individuals committed to social and structural change, we can notice the congruency and continuity of commitment that permeates the lives, work, and relationships of these women. Having this nuanced and developed understanding of these women as individuals, we are more able to note the significant impact they are making in multiple aspects of their ecological contexts and to recognize the depth of commitment and consistency exhibited by individuals dedicated to the transformation of society. Through this situated and nested understanding of Third Space(s) we are able to more clearly understanding the influence, the bravery, and the inspiration of these women who strive in their work and their world to be a part of the change they want to see.

Implications

Implications for Teachers

As Jayne, Milagro, and Ava realized, they necessarily taught with their lives in sight. In other words, their personal ideologies, beliefs, struggles, passions, concerns and biases necessarily impacted the curriculum they created and the opportunities they offered students. This recognition, that they would never be neutral and that education

itself is not, positioned them to be self-reflexive educators, considering the messages, implicit and explicit, that they shared with students. In our examined and unexamined moments, we are living out epistemologies, ontologies, biases, and beliefs. This is not true only of educators committed to social and structural change. It is true of all educators. By knowing what our beliefs and biases are and recognizing when they may be, and may not be, helpful in the classroom, we teachers are more capable of being both congruent and critical, thoughtful and reflective, compassionate and passionate. This level of self knowledge and self reflection would benefit all.

Ava, Jayne, and Milagro were not particularly excited about the idea of daily reflection at the beginning of our collaboration. However, throughout the data collection period and beyond, they came to highly value the critical reflection in which they methodically engaged. They noted that a structure for routine self reflection, with someone who could help hold them accountable to that practice in spite of their extremely harried schedules, was particularly powerful as they developed as social justice educators. The implication for other beginning teachers, therefore, is that they may benefit from establishing systems and structures to support them in consistently engaging in the practice of self-reflection.

Another lesson from these first year social justice educators is that there will very likely be disorienting dilemmas for similarly committed beginning teachers as they enter classrooms, because the realities of learning and teaching are not necessarily what many beginning teachers expect and are prepared to face. Cochran-Smith (2004) posited that reform-minded teachers need to know how to find or build networks within

or across schools in order to “find colleagues with whom to collaborate” (p. 63). McCann et al. (2005) noted that beginning teachers who have “intelligent, positive, and supportive colleagues, in and out of school” will have higher expectations for their own success and will generally be more hopeful. Throughout this inquiry, Milagro, Jayne, and Ava saw themselves as learners and knew that they would need support from other like-minded individuals during this critical point in their careers. Collaboratively, they developed, nurtured and maintained relationships with other beginning teachers committed to social justice and structural change, realizing that they themselves would develop more authentically and have more sincere accountability if they developed in collaboration rather than in isolation.

Other teachers will likely benefit from a mutual engagement with fellow educators who share similar commitments and ideologies. Teachers themselves have a responsibility to actively create and engage in supportive communities in order to develop and maintain their commitment to the field, to themselves, to their students. All teachers need to engage in mutually proffered cognitive, social, and emotional support as they carefully consider and reflect upon their own practices, their students’ progress, and ways to re-imagine the work that they do in the classroom. Within these groups teachers must work to foster the type of positive and safe community which provides social and emotional support in order for participants in the group to engage in critical self reflection and collaboration.

This inquiry community was deliberately attentive to the affect of beginning social justice educators. While several previous studies have noted the impact of

emotional challenges in the work of beginning teachers (Chubbuck et al., 2001; Chubbuck & Zemblyas, 2008; McNally et al., 2008; Singer & Zeni, 2004; Swenson, 2003), these emotional experiences of beginning teachers have primarily been acknowledged, documented, and recorded. Conversely, this collaboration was framed within Adler's (1998) constructs of social interest, encouragement and belongingness as well as Yalom's (1985) therapeutic potentiality of groups, with the express purpose of providing support that could mitigate feelings of isolation, alienation and frustration. The privileging of the emotional and social learning tasks of beginning teachers, along with cognitive development, is a substantively different lens through which to consider communities of support for beginning teachers. In this research collaborative, teachers did not gather merely to note the challenges and emotional duress that often accompanies work for equity and justice in the classroom. Rather, they found the benefit of the dialogic communion in its ability to support their emotional health, their hope, and the maintenance and development of their commitments to their chosen vocation. When teachers gather in a group in which they feel valued and known, in order to provide and receive needed encouragement, then authentic and meaningful community can be established. This research has significant implications into the type of emotional support beginning teachers need in order to maintain commitment and to celebrate growth as well as insight into the type of community that can offer such support. These communities hold great promise for the transformation of curriculum, learning, teaching, and schooling.

One of the most significant revelations of this work was the tendency for social justice educators to create multiple third spaces of transformation and resistance. Within case and cross case analysis of data revealed significant similarities in the dynamics of transformation as they were experienced and encouraged by these teachers in several spheres: personal, professional, community, collaborative and classroom. The implications for other social justice educations who wish to be instruments of transformation is that Adler's concepts of social interest and encouragement can be consciously applied in many settings to help groups of people become collaborative change agents.

Implications for Policy Makers at the State, District, and School Level

Several implications of this study can inform individuals and bodies who shape and influence policies on the local level and also those who make more broadly constructed and wide reaching decisions about teaching and learning. As indicated by much research (Gold, 1996; Nagy & Wang, 2007; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Weiss, 1999) policy makers and administrators have significant influence on the social milieus of schooling. The experiences of Jayne and Milagro particularly indicate the need for administrators and school leaders to foster school climates that support teachers so that no one has to feel isolated or choose isolation for his or her own self protection. When educational leadership recognizes, values, fosters, and creates conditions for teachers to engage in supportive learning communities, it may significantly impact teaching and learning.

School districts and school administrators alike must recognize the value of supportive teacher inquiry communities and should acknowledge the efforts of educators who engage in self-reflective research, examining and improving their practices in meaningful ways. These types of communities should be considered viable and productive professional learning engagements and valued by schools and accreditation agencies as a meaningful venue for continued education. These collaborative communities not only can provide social and emotional support but also can foster the cognitive development of teachers, since their learning can be more effective if social and emotional supports are also in place. Impetus for this change has come with a recent policy adopted by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) which calls for inquiry based classroom research.

If policy makers were to support cooperative engagement between universities and districts as they collaborated to provide alternative options, teachers might have access to more meaningful opportunities for professional development that responded to their self-identified needs (Fry, 2007; McCann et al., 2005; Swenson, 2003). If this were to occur, teachers would be offered opportunities to view themselves as learners and to focus on aspects of their practice that they wanted to improve. Research clearly indicates that professional development opportunities are most effective when they respond to the needs of the educators. Two challenges are helping those educators accurately assess their own developmental needs and helping them feel safe enough to reveal those needs to continuing education planners. The self-reflection habits and mutual coaching questions as well as the safe, accepting environment created in this

research collaborative offer hope that those challenges can be met and professional development strategies can be based on teachers' needs. An additional implication for policy makers is the need to provide resources (such as time and space and funding for materials) that would not only nurture the growth of existing groups but also encourage the proliferation of such collaborative communities.

This research reinforces the notion that care must be given to the separation of supervisory/evaluative responsibilities and these collegial peer support structures. As demonstrated by Jayne, Milagro, and Ava, it is particularly critical that these groups are constructed with transparency and so that participants could engage authentically with no fear of coercion or evaluation. If these groups are truly to lessen feelings of isolation and provide opportunities for social, emotional, and cognitive support among faculty, they must truly be constructed in ways that protect participants from feelings of competition and vulnerability. Safe spaces for this type of collaboration must be created, and school administrators and all members of the school community should work to ensure that the climate and structures in place in the school support and foster this type of meaningful and authentic collaboration. The research of McCann et al. (2005) suggests that the university representative can perform a role that is rarely provided in schools: sympathetic, nonjudgmental listening. Cooperation between school administrations and university schools of education could make facilitation of noncoersive support groups available to teachers, particularly during their induction period. The university can become one of the best resources for the school system in teacher induction and retention. In the University system of Georgia, the Board of

Regents has assigned colleges of education with the responsibility of providing induction support for all new teachers in their catchment area. Unfortunately, that responsibility is often fulfilled by providing workshop events or on-line teacher resources, and not by fostering collaborative communities of support.

Networks that are safe, noncoercive, and nonevaluative, where members are able to examine their own practices and hold themselves and others accountable for pedagogical development and ontological exploration, hold great promise. Policy makers and school leadership must be intentional and deliberate about their support of safe communities created for the express purpose of mutual encouragement and collaboration. This will enable teachers to engage in the types of holistic learning opportunities educational leaders hope those teachers will co-create with their students. Policies, both broadly constructed and locally situated, which offer support for these small and collaborative communities of practitioner researchers could transform the practices of teachers and schools in remarkable ways and hold great potential for the induction, development, and retention of committed educators.

Implications for Teacher Educators and Teacher Education

There are three specific implications for teacher educators and teacher education from this research. They include (a) attention to the types of engagements we offer in classes and practica which can promote self knowledge, self reflection, and collaborative communities of support and learning; (b) commitment to graduates of our programs beyond matriculation, into and beyond the induction years of beginning teachers; and (c) reexamination of the focus of our energies, funding, and commitments

to ensure that our practices and policies are indicative of such a long term commitment to beginning teachers who have matriculated from our institutions and also those who are beginning their careers within our geographical purveyance.

While this inquiry was not specifically focused on the preparation of Ava, Jayne, and Milagro, it is evident that they entered their own classrooms with a great deal of self knowledge and ability to engage in self reflection. While some individuals come to teacher preparation programs with a high level of self understanding and reflexivity, all beginning teachers would benefit from the development of those characteristics. In coursework and practicum experiences, teacher candidates should have opportunities to engage in mutual coaching and mentoring communities which move beyond commiserating about the challenges of teaching and toward a collective inquiry in which candidates investigate potential answers to specific questions of learning and teaching. Teacher educators can work to create these communities of inquiry and inspiration through coursework and field experiences, helping future teachers become more comfortable in collaborative communities of support. Teacher educators can demonstrate and participate in the development of these collaborative processes by offering and discussing the efficacy of open-ended questions and working to promote positive communities and collaborative conversation styles. Teacher educators can encourage preservice educators to put themselves in groups and work at identifying and developing skills that will foster positive and safe collaborations which will make those groups more effective.

Another important implication for teacher educators is the need to develop and encourage preservice teachers' tendency and capacity to engage in critical self reflection of their teaching. This practice of self reflexivity in the classroom can be fostered particularly in field based experiences. Freire's (1970) construct of praxis, of emerging "from the world, [objectifying] it, and [transforming] it with [our] labor" (p. 125) is one that is particularly critical if teachers are to develop in ways that authentically attend to specific students in specific contexts. Such praxis, with self-reflexivity, can be developed and supported during preservice teachers' early classroom experiences. If candidates are able to deconstruct their practices through this process of self-reflexivity, it is more likely that they will employ such self-examination when they are in their respective classrooms as beginning educators. Pedagogical skills are certainly developed in the context of teacher education, however they are not the only things teacher candidates gain. Habits and ways of being, values and priorities can also be formed, informed, and reformed in the context of teacher preparation. Teacher education and teacher educators have the opportunity to engage preservice teachers in practices of self reflection and critical collaboration that have the potential to significantly impact the work of teachers long after their matriculation.

Lastly, my collaboration with Jayne, Ava, and Milagro has significant implication for the relationship patterns of teacher education programs. My relationship of mutual care and support with the three women began when they were students and developed long after their graduation from our programs. Noddings' (1988) call for an ethic of care in the midst of relationship was exemplified through this collaborative inquiry

community. The need for teacher educators to build authentic and meaningful personal relationships with students cannot be overstated and was a very significant implication of this work. As teacher educators, we must build strong relationships with preservice teachers in our programs and know them well enough to understand their commitments and passions, if we are to help create communities of mutual support across the induction processes and to nurture continued professional development of graduates over time and across their career. This paradigmatic shift for most teacher training institutions would position teacher educators in ways that focus on the training and development of all educators; it would conceptually shift our purposes to be inclusive of all educators at all points in their career and would make evident our commitment to students, families, communities, schools, and democracy by supporting educators in meaningful ways. This longitudinal relationship can provide the teacher educators themselves with an opportunity to self-reflectively analyze their own practices and ascertain the aspects of their teaching and their teacher preparation program which merit further attention. While I recognize that this is a significant shift, it is possible, as evidenced by this collaboration, for a faculty member to remain closely involved with a small group of graduates after their matriculation.

As teacher educators, we must have a high level of accountability to those we train. Our culpability for their preparedness does not end upon their entry into their own classrooms; rather, we must find ways to build upon those relationships. Online support structures have potential as they enable us to support individuals across time and space. Fortunately, many teacher educators with this commitment have found and

utilized the technologies to support such communities and sustain such relationships (Dalgarno & Colgan, 2007; DeWert et al., 2003; Fry, 2006; Long et al., 2006; Scherrf, 2006; Singer & Zeni, 2004; Swenson, 2003). While listserves have been created for the past decade to meet the pedagogical and professional development goals of educators at varying stages of their teaching careers, few of these communities were created in order to support the holistic development of beginning teachers. The intentionality with which the collaborative inquiry community was formed for this research was unique. Specific attention was paid to creation of a community of support with highly compatible and ideologically similar individuals. Social justice educators particularly need to be engaged in these types of collaborative communities with others who are similarly committed. Teacher educators can only facilitate the creation of these highly compatible groups if we know our students well and have meaningful relationships with them.

The attrition rate for teachers is a clear indication that significant attention must be paid to the development and retention of educators. While research has indicated that there are multiple factors which influence teachers' decisions to leave the profession (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2008; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Hirsch, 2006; Ingersoll, 2003, 2004; Weiss, 1999), teacher education and teacher educators must carefully and honestly examine the ways in which we and our institutions are complicit and participatory in this exodus. This project would certainly indicate that teacher educators can help respond to the needs of beginning teachers in ways that help them develop and sustain their commitment to our vocation, by taking

responsibility for continued collaboration with our students through the transition from our classrooms to classrooms of their own. If we in institutions of higher learning would reframe our responsibility in ways that encouraged and fostered continued support and ongoing relationships beyond preservice teacher training, there is potential to, at least in part, alleviate some of the feelings of isolation, alienation, and frustration which often lead to high attrition rates. Collaborative relationships with teachers throughout their career span could enable teachers to consider the challenges of education in ways that promote social interest and encouragement, possibly impacting positively their likelihood of remaining in the field.

This paradigmatic shift for most universities might require that teacher educators and teacher education institutions ask serious questions about how faculty is engaged and by what terms faculty are tenured and promoted. An examination of current priorities and expenditures of energy and time may indicate that there could be other ways of conceptualizing teacher preparation and development that would help graduates stay in the profession they have chosen. Self-examination on the part of universities and colleges of education, departments and individual teacher educators might lead to the creation of ongoing structures that would truly make a difference as we work to prepare and support teachers who can and do chose to stay in the field.

Implications for Future Research

One problematic construct in the research on beginning teachers committed to social justice and structural change is that research too frequently either completely neglects or glosses over the lives of these educators before they entered their teacher

education program. These individuals came to our programs with histories, experiences, convictions, and beliefs that shape their work. Since all teachers enact some type of ideology in the classroom, whether or not they are fully aware of this fact, teacher education programs and research on teachers must embrace a more holistic view of educators as individuals who do exist outside of universities and schools and who are shaped by all of those factors.

Milagro, Ava, and Jayne had entire lives that prepared them for just and equitable teaching and therefore came to their teacher preparation programs with strong commitments to educational equity and structural change. I wonder to what extent the comparatively short experience most teacher candidates receive in their teacher education program can support them in the development of an ontology that is disruptive of the status quo, if they have not yet grappled with inequities on a personal level. There is research, certainly, about teacher education programs which were transformative through providing readings and field experiences which caused disorienting dilemmas (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2001). Future research could explore critical questions such as: What type of communities of support do beginning teachers who were first introduced to issues of inequity and injustice during their teacher preparation need in order to continue to develop and then maintain commitments to equity? How might beginning educators who are newly exploring constructs of equitable education create curriculum and classroom communities focused on emancipation and liberation? How can the individuals and systems implicated in the successes and failures of beginning educators (teacher

educators/district coordinators/school administrators/veteran educators) engage alongside them throughout their induction and through their career in ways that are meaningful, supportive, encouraging, and challenging?

The Impact of This Inquiry on Me, My Life, My Work, and My Commitments

As I entered into this research, I had two goals in mind, (a) to co-create a community that could offer some degree of meaningful support for beginning teachers about whom I cared deeply and in whose success I was deeply invested; and (b) to gain an understanding of the experiences of these remarkable women and the ways that they enacted their commitments to justice, equity and social transformation in their classrooms during their first year of teaching. My sincere hope was that this research could positively influence both the lives of the participants and my life as a beginning teacher educator and researcher and specifically as an individual who is similarly committed to equity and social transformation.

From the outset, I recognized that I was not, nor could I ethically be, a passive, objective or distant researcher. Rather, I hoped to work and journey alongside these remarkable women who had inspired me so and had indeed, through their own work and commitment to students, cemented my vocational commitment to teacher education. I knew that I hoped to engage with the participants in research that had the potential to "change the lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher's life" (Cresswell, 2003, p. 9-10). My involvement in the lives of these individuals was not distant or unemotional. Throughout this inquiry my first commitment was to Milagro, Jayne, and Ava, and I acted at various points as a

confidant, a coach, a collaborator, a questioner, a facilitator, and a friend. I worked to be as responsive to their needs, requests, and hopes as I could be. Of course, this responsiveness in many ways made this research different from what I had originally hoped. (For example, there was only one week throughout our data collection period when all of the participants posted at least twice on the discussion board.) However, this responsiveness to the real people who were my collaborators and co-conspirators in this inquiry far outweighed the profitability of narrowly constructing and prescribing the types of supports that would be available. I found that at times I needed to have face to face meetings for support or needed to assuage concerns about the frankness of postings written to me due to the vulnerability of participant employment. In short, I needed to care and demonstrate care for these women. This was, after all, my intention as I embarked upon this work, and I do feel that to a great extent that goal at least was met, in addition to several unanticipated and exciting outcomes. The sometimes messy work of responsive research is ultimately a humane and human process of learning together, collaboratively, with and from and alongside the other, in ways that enrich our world and our knowledge of the world. This stance necessarily changed my research, and I am eternally grateful for the gift that these women have given me over the years and through this process. It has changed me. Indeed it has helped me envision, imagine, name and create my own spaces of contestation, explore and expose my own liminality, and it has ultimately given me tremendous hope for our collective future.

As a collaborator, encourager, and confidant, I found that I grappled with the struggles of these women. I hurt for and alongside them when they were threatened,

damaged, or made vulnerable by an unjust system. In a word, participation in this research required that I felt, that I cared, that I hurt, and that I celebrated. This type of research, with its human connection, required that I share my humanness and my heart with these women. I feel that such a relational methodology has the potential not only to influence positively the lives of readers, but also to enrich the lives of the participants and the researcher.

This type of inquiry, rooted in Freire's (1970) notion of emancipation, Kemmis and Wilkinson's (1998) advocacy/participatory research , and Noddings' (1988) construct of care, is a research paradigm which is based on relationship, and in Freirian terms, dialogical communion. Through this inquiry, Jayne, Milagro, Ava and I collaboratively participated "in the revolutionary process with an increasingly critical awareness of [our] role as Subjects of the transformation" (Freire, 1970, p. 127). Similarly, Noddings (1988) challenged researchers to engage in research *for* teaching which "would concern itself with the needs, views, and actual experiences of teachers" (p. 227) rather than research on teaching. While Milagro, Jayne, Ava, and I have all learned a great deal through this inquiry, this collaborative process has enabled each of us to see ourselves, our students, and our practices more clearly. This research has been *for* us and has a number of implications *for* others. Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998) posited that advocacy/participatory research makes participants active partners in the inquiry through collaboration and recursive and dialectical processes which engage *with* others, rather than *on* or *to* others. The four of us hoped to further politicize and create a climate of debate which will ultimately disrupt oppressive structures and help to

create a more just world. I am eternally grateful to these women for sharing this portion of their journey with me, and I am thrilled that our collaboration is merely beginning.

My work over the past years with Ava, Milagro, and Jayne, and particularly through the course of this inquiry, has significantly impacted me and my stance as a beginning teacher educator. I have become even more convinced that relationships are crucial for educators throughout their training and career. Just as classroom teachers must build authentic relationships with students, so too must teacher educators work to build and maintain relationships of support with those whom we train. Our responsibility to these teachers cannot end when they leave our ivory towers and enter the complexities of public schooling. Rather, we must re-conceptualize our role as teacher educators committed to the development of teachers throughout their induction and their career.

The participants openly acknowledged that their willingness to participate in this process was based on my relationship with them. My knowledge of these beginning teachers enabled me to identify them as teachers committed to structural change and equity, people whose life histories had positioned them in unique and powerful ways to engage in liberatory education. Through my continued work with preservice teachers, I have been able to identify other beginning educators who will be working in their own classrooms as first year educators next year, and I have had the opportunity to invite some of them to join our collaboration. If I am to foster communities of mutual support,

I must know students well enough to coordinate these types of partnerships between individuals with similar ideologies and purposes.

Throughout this inquiry I have been inspired by the courage, the grace, the compassion, the brilliance and the empathy of Milagro, Jayne, and Ava. I have become more and more convinced that education can be a liberating and emancipatory endeavor. These women have also made it clear that communities of support are crucial if we are to keep the gifted, passionate, and dedicated educators who enter our profession. This experience has convinced me that my vocational decision to educate teachers, and my own commitment to equity, structural change, and a more just world, necessitate a longitudinal commitment. As Kahlil Gibran (1964) so eloquently stated,

> My soul counseled me and assured me that… I was formed even from the same dust of which all [people] are created, that my elements are their elements, and my inner self is their inner self. My struggle is their struggle and their pilgrimage is mine own. If they transgress, I am also the transgressor, and if they do well, then I have a share in their well doing. If they arise, I too arise with them; if they stay behind, I also, to company them.

If our work is indeed our love made visible, I must make visible in my words, my deeds, and my life, my commitment to these teachers, to the transformations they are supporting in their classrooms, and to the creation of a subversive, collaborative, and collective third space where we can together be the change we want to see in the world.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Data Sources and Analytical Procedures

Data source	**Purpose**	**My Analysis**	**Peer Debriefer**	**Member checking processes**
Initial Interview: Life History "I am" Poem Artifacts	Each was asked to share her life story. Each participant wrote an "I Am" Poem. Each participant had the opportunity to share and discuss artifacts of personal significance to them Data utilized in Chapter Four to provide socio-historico-politico-cultural background for each participant	Ability to use their own definitions of self and co-creation of their narrative. Data used by researcher to craft *Intertextual biographical narratives* for each participant.	Peer debriefer checked the analysis of these documents and the discussion from the beginning interview to be sure that I storied their experiences in ways that attended to referential adequacy.	*Intertextual biographical narratives* were incorporated into Chapter Four and shared with the participants when the draft was completed ensuring that each was represented in the research in a way that was authentic to them.
Artifacts from MAT	Participants shared writings and reflections from their MAT program which indicated their commitment to social justice and structural change.	These documents were analyzed through the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to create a description of the ideological stance of each participant during their preservice training.		Portions of these documents were incorporated into Chapter Four and shared with the participants when a draft was completed ensuring that each was represented in the research in a way that was authentic to them.

Artifacts from the beginning of the first year	Participants shared lesson plans, written reflections, and/or teaching resources from the beginning of the year	These documents were analyzed in the same manner as all of the other data in this inquiry- though the use of the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) over artifacts from the course of the entire pre-study period.	Peer debriefer reviewed the analysis of these documents and the discussion from the beginning interview to be sure that I storied their experiences in ways that attended to referential adequacy	Portions of these documents were incorporated into Chapters Four and Five and shared with the participants when drafts were completed ensuring that they are being represented in the research in a way that was authentic to them.
Daily Jottings/ Weekly Reflections	To have in the moment reflections both affective and cognitive- to record their experiences day by day and week by week	Within Case Analysis conducted for each participant, each week, through the use of open coding and analysis of themes and ideas, salient points and perspectives. These weekly summary charts were juxtaposed in order to determine recurring issues and themes which emerged over time. In this way the coding schemes and manual (Miles & Huberman, 1994) for each case was updated weekly based on emerging ideas and tentative findings. At the end of each month, these coding schemes were examined over time and larger themes and instances of their appearing were documented. creating an overall chart analyzing the themes and ideas which emerged across weeks	Reviewed data and analysis at the midpoint and endpoint of the collection period-	
		Between Case Analysis- Open coding across participant codes (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995;Yin, 1994) weekly to create Data charts, tables, and matrices enabling me to see patterns across weeks and across the experiences	Reviewed at the midpoint and endpoint and discussed alternative analysis-	Results of these findings were incorporated into Chapter Five and shared with the participants when a draft was completed

		of individual participants (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994). A coding matrix was kept which included the preliminary names of codes, locations of their occurrence in the transcripts, and a short excerpt or phrase to facilitate my recollection of the content		
Discussion board-	To see how the space is used and negotiated by the group	Open coding and analysis of the discussion board occurred at the end of January and then at the end of the data collection period. These were natural topical breaks in the discussion board conversational strands. The primary topics of discussion collapsed into the ongoing analysis from the week in reviews and daily jottings and were added to the data charts for within and between case analysis of experiences discussed above.	Reviewed data and analysis at the end of the conversational strands to check themes and researcher subjectivity	Results of these findings were incorporated into Chapters Five and Six and were shared with participants when a draft was completed
Emails, Telephone conversations, and/or meetings with participants	Dialogue between myself and the participants so I could respond to their expressed needs and offer encouragement or support.	Meetings and conversations were reflected upon in my memos and when appropriate used as data sources. I asked Ava to write up a summary of our meeting as it was the most significant example.		The data that was used from these asides were incorporated into Chapters five and six and noted accordingly. Participants received this information in the form of chapter drafts in order to member check.
Cross data source analysis of uses	To see how participants chose to engage in the various aspects of the collaboration (Livetext, Moodle, and Emails, phone conversations, and/ or individual meetings)	Analyze types of engagements in each aspect of shared space over time.	Discussed with peer debriefer- at the end of the data collection	Results were incorporated into Chapter Six and discussion about negotiated usage/identities in each space with each audience

Analysis of Participant Researcher on the discussion board	To see how the participant researcher engages in the space	I analyzed my own participation and engagement in the discussion board every two weeks- noting the ways that I encouraged, offered resources, asked questions- and evaluating whether I was attempting to "solve" issues through my engagement.	Monitored participant researcher's engagement in the discussion board- particularly in light of the researchers stated role and intentions for engagement in the space.- this will occur every two weeks	Results of these findings will be incorporated into Chapter Six and shared with participants when a draft is completed
Closing interviews	Retrospective discussion of a self-selected salient piece of writing from their MAT, Participants were asked about their experiences in the online collaboration and in the research in order to ascertain their perceptions of engagement in the inquiry project and hopes for future supportive engagements.	These discussions were recorded, transcribed and analyzed		Results of these findings will be incorporated into Chapters Four, Five, and Six were shared with the participants when a draft was completed
Researcher memos	Document my engagement and thought process- Serve as audit trail	I memoed in a variety of formats throughout the collection, transcription, and analytical processes, documenting my thoughts, reflections, queries and emerging understandings (Charmaz, 2005)	Was a primary data source for discussion with peer debriefer on researcher subjectivities. Provided an audit trail for coding and analytical decisions- which was discussed with peer debriefer every two weeks during the collection and analysis stages to be sure that thick description was utilized	Results were incorporated into final chapters

APPENDIX B

OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT BY WEEK

Participant Engagement by week	**Dec. 3rd Week**	**Jan. 1st Week**	**Jan. 2nd Week**	**Jan. 3rd Week**	**Jan. 4th Week**	**Feb. 1st Week**	**Feb. 2nd Week**	**Feb. 3rd Week**	**March**	**May**
Initial Interviews	X									
"I Am" Poem Share life stories Share Personal Artifacts	X									
Share artifacts from MAT	X									
Share artifacts from the beginning of the year	X									
Daily Jottings		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Weekly Reflections		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Discussion board posting opportunities		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Closing Interview									X	
Member check relevant chapters										X

APPENDIX C

OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANT RESEARCHER ENGAGEMENT BY WEEK

Researcher Engagement by week	Dec. 3rd Week	Jan. 1st Week	Jan. 2nd Week	Jan. 3rd Week	Jan. 4th Week	Feb. 1st Week	Feb. 2nd Week	Feb. 3rd Week	March	March-May
Beginning Interviews	I/A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
"I Am" Poem Personal Artifacts	C/A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
Artifacts from MAT	C/A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
Artifacts from the beginning of the year	C/A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
Intertextual biographical narrative										WU
Within case analysis of Jottings/ Reflections		A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
Between Case Analysis of Jottings/Reflections		A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
Discussion board posting		PAN	PAN	PAN	PAN	PAN	PAN	PAN	PAN	
Discussion board analysis					A				A	WU
Collection and analysis of data from emails, telephone conversations, and/or meetings with participants		AN	AN	AN	AN	AN	AN	AN	AN	
Cross data source analysis of uses		A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	WU
Analysis of part. researcher engagement on discussion board compile/analyze as posted		AN	AN	AN	AN	AN	AN	AN	AN	WU
Closing Interview									I	WU
Researcher memoes		M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	WU

Key- I= interview; C= Collect; A= Analyze; AN= As Needed; P= Participate; M= Memo; WU= Write up

APPENDIX D

QUESTIONS FROM INITIAL INTERVIEW

1. Please tell me about yourself. What formative events and people do you think have influenced who you have become?
2. What does it mean to be a teacher?
3. Why did you become a teacher?
4. Please define justice. What role, if any, does this concept have in your life?
5. How do you feel this disposition affects your life?
6. Why do you think I asked you to be a participant in this study?
7. What expectations do you have for our work together?
8. Is there anything else you would like me to know or keep in mind?
9. Is there anything you would like to know about me?

APPENDIX E

QUESTIONS FOR CLOSING INTERVIEW

1. What progress have you made with your goals for social justice teaching?
2. To what degree have you met your own expectations and hopes?
3. What has not gone as well as expected?
4. What has disappointed you in the implementation process?
5. What feedback have you received from others outside our collaboration group?
6. What long-term benefits have you begun to realize?
7. What has worked (not worked) in our collaborative relationship?
8. What would improve it?
9. What issues are truly important to you right now?
10. What is something that you are excited about?
11. What milestones have you accomplished?
12. How have you celebrated your progress?
13. What outside evidence validates the efforts you have put forth? (accomplishments, comments of others, etc.)
14. What is one insight you have gained from our shared experience in this project?
15. What obstacles or challenges are you facing now?
16. What do you believe needs to happen in order to continue making progress toward those goals?
17. What are your continuing goals for this collaborative relationship?
18. What needs to change in our collaboration methods in order to support you better?

APPENDIX F

WEEKLY ANALYSIS PROCESS FOR PARTICIPANT

Day	Text	Main Ideas
Mon	High - We started a very short (just one week) mini-unit on the Civil Rights Movement and Dr. King. This is basically just to build some background knowledge because the girls are fairly unfamiliar with who he was, and why the Civil Rights Movement was such a necessary and important part of U.S. history. Although it just happened to be necessary right here due to the upcoming holiday and a service project we wanted to involve our students in, it actually fits in very well with the current curriculum. We have just started reading Roll of Thunder Hear my Cry/Lloro por la tierra in Spanish. In our initial discussion today the girls made connections between events in that story (the main characters who are black go to a separate school, and do not have a bus like the white children). We previously read a book set during WWII, about a friendship between two boys - one Jewish and one German. The girls were able to connect the setting of this previous book with the setting of the current book - recognizing that the current book is set in 1933 which was just before WWII started. I felt like they were making some really good connections, and was excited about this. Low - I was a bit frustrated with the Boys and Girls Club today. We have a lot of communication difficulties. I communicate directly with the coaches who work with the students, and Lori (the principal) communicates with one of the administration staff. However, the administration staff and coaches don't always communicate. So, although I've told the coaches that we need to end the swimming curriculum after this week, and Lori has communicated that with the adminstration, the coaches still seem to be proceeding as though we will be swimming next week as well. They were trying to plan a trip to a different pool for the girls, which was supposed to be this week, but they seem to have moved it to next week, although we aren't supposed to be swimming next week at all. This is a little frustrating as I'm not sure where the communication breakdown is occurring.	Excited by student connections-setting of books @ holocaust and @ civil rights movement Break down in communication with community partners

Tues	High - In Science class today we continued our discussion of pressure. We thought of diffeerent places there is pressure. We started with physical pressure (air pressure, pressure under water, etc), and then moved into other types of pressure (peer pressure, pressure to follow rules, pressure of studying for a test, etc). We then used the formula for pressure (pressure = force/area) to make some analogies. So for the studying for the test example we discussed what would be like the force in that situation, and what would be like the area. We decided the amount of material you had to study would be like the force, and the amount of time would be like the area. Then we discussed how if you have more to study (more force) and less time (less area) you have more stress (pressure). The girls were able to come up with some pretty good examples, and I had them write a paragraph describing their own example and explaining how it related to the pressure formula. I felt like this really helped them to get the relationship between these three conceptsand connect the word pressure to a lot of different situations and really get it into their vocabulary. Low - There were a lot of things in my plans today that we just didn't get to do. This happens often. Most of the time it is okay, but today I felt like we got a bit behind and I failed to cover some things which were pretty important. This means that we'll have to spend a little more time covering some of this material than I had hoped.	Felt really helped students to make relationships between pressure and different types of pressure- making analogy to pressure for studying for a test Taking longer than she thought to complete things
Wed	High - We read an excerpt from Dr. King's *I Have Dream* speech, and then watched a video clip of it. The students then wrote their own list of "dreams"or ways they would like to see the world change. I felt like the activity went well and was pretty effective in giving them a better and deeper idea of who Dr. King was and the things he stood for. I also felt like it was well enough planned out and prepared for that it went smoothly and was at the right level for the students as far as their English. I think because they had a written copy of the speech which we read together first, and then they listened to it spoken by Dr. King and were able to follow along their comprehension was pretty good. They were both able to explain a few things Dr. King hoped for. Low - Even though the goals of this mini-unit are just to give the students a general knowledge of who Dr.King was and what the Civil Rights Movement was about, I still feel like we are moving slowly and I have to keep reminding myself that it's okay that we are not going very deep right now, we will return to these concepts later. Right now we're just laying the foundation. I find myself wanting to get way off track and go in depth with so many thing as I am see more and more that they are not very familiar at all with many of these concepts.	Successful lesson- Dream speech- well planned, went smoothly, students able to make connections, comprehend and explain their own dreams for change Struggle with pace- wide not deep- laying foundation to return to… wanting to go deeper as she sees more that they don't know about
Thurs	High - We went on a field trip to the King Center today. It was incredible just the wealth of information that is there. I have been multiple times, but every time I go I see something that I missed before, or some new aspect strikes me. The girls were pretty interested, and seemed to enjoy it. I felt like they were able to make some connections between	Pleased about students thinking deeply about king, Obama, grappling with topics, fairly recent change

	what we had learned in class and the things they were seeing there. They were also asking about one sign that said that Black people had been struggling for 340 years for equality. I explained about how slavery and segregation were around for 340 years prior to the Civil Rights Movement. We then calculated how long it has been since the Civil Rights Movement happened. They really seemed to get that the equal rights Dr. King had fought for were a fairly recent change. We connected this to the historic significance of Obama's presidency, and they seemed really impacted by that. I really enjoyed this conversation and like to see that they continue to think deeply about these issues and topics. Low - I felt like the girls did get a bit overwhelmed just by the amount of information there was there.They struggled quite a bit with everything being in English - especially with so much written in English. Our tour guide ont he Birth Home tour also spoke very very quickly, and I don't think they were able to follow most of what he said. I still feel like they were able to get the gist of a lot, and build some good background knowledge, but I also think if I had done a longer preparatory unit with more vocabulary work, more of the information there would have been comprehensible for them and they would have enjoyed it more.	Girls a bit overwhelmed by volume of info at king center and birth home… quick speech of tour guide too fast for them to get most of what was said- but they got gist, background kn. Regrets that she had not done more prep voc. Work for increased comprehensibility
Fri	High - My students were able to remembeer a lot from yesterday, and seem to have really deepened their understanding of the Civil Rights Movement, and Dr. King.They both expressed a lot of respect for him, his ideas and the things he accomplished. They also made several comments about his use of non-violent tactics, and seemed pretty fascinated with this. One of them made the connection between things we've discussed in Bible class before (loving your enemies, responding in love, etc) and non-violence. Overall I was really happy with what they seem to have learned and the amount of knowledge they built this week. Low - I felt like today we just had trouble getting focused and staying organized. A lot of this, I think, was me, but I think too the girls were pretty distracted, tired, and ready for the week to be done. Today marks the end of the quarter and there were several things that needed to be wrapped up. We had a couple of tests, and then were getting ready for a service project Monda, which I still feel like we are not quite prepared for. On top of that it was amazingly cold today, which I think contributed to the lack of focus - I know it was affecting me.	Really happy with learning and knowledge built during the week. Student retention and connection with info- respect for and fascination with non-violence- Connection between tactics and bible class- Tired at end of the week, quarter, grades, service project, lack of focus and ready for week to end.
Wir	Overall I was pretty happy with this week. I feel like it was my first attempt at mixing the two class blocks (history and language arts) and although there are still some things to be worked out, I liked it a lot better. I think having a theme as well really helped me to stay a bit more organized and focused and to feel like we were moving somewhere with this information, rather than just looking at disjointed bits and pieces. I definitely am eager to do more of this and to more fully meld together all of these classes. I am generally encouraged by my students and inspired by them and the way they pursue learning and make connections. I think that this way of teaching is going to really suit them as well, and probably significantly help them with their English learning. I	Happy with thematic integrated curriculum- increased organization and focus. Moving somewhere not disjointed. Need to present curricular changes to Adm.

	was really encouraged by our meeting yesterday and by the amount of planning we were able to get done. I am also really excited about the broader themes we came up with and feel like this is goin to give me a really good framework for my planning over the rest of the semester. I'm a bit nervous about how to present it to Lori. Generally, I think its something she's going to be supportive of, but I think a lot will depend on the way in which its presented. I want to be sure that I am well prepared, have thought through everythign I need to think through and can present this to her in a way that shows how it fits in with what she's already created - not in a way that makes her feel like I'm re-vamping everything she's worked on. So I'm working on that.	So it clearly fits with pre-established structures rather than revamping all of her work creating the school- want to be prepared to present it in such a way I responded to this in an email

W1	HIGHS	LOWS
Mon	Excited by student connections-setting of books @ holocaust and @ civil rights movement	Break down in communication with community partners
Tues	Felt really helped students to make relationships between pressure and different types of pressure- making analogy to pressure for studying for a test	Taking longer than she thought to complete things
Wed	Successful lesson- Dream speech- well planned, went smoothly, students able to make connections, comprehend and explain their own dreams for change	Struggle with pace- wide not deep- laying foundation to return to… wanting to go deeper as she sees more that they don't know about
Thurs	Pleased about students thinking deeply about king, Obama, grappling with topics, fairly recent change	Girls a bit overwhelmed by volume of info at king center and birth home… quick speech of tour guide too fast for them to get most of what was said- but they got gist, background kn. Regrets that she had not done more prep voc. Work for increased comprehensibility
Fri	Really happy with learning and knowledge built during the week. Student retention and connection with info-respect for and fascination with non-violence-Connection between tactics and bible class-	Tired at end of the week, quarter, grades, service project, lack of focus and ready for week to end.
wir	Happy with thematic integrated curriculum-increased organization and focus. Moving somewhere not disjointed.	Need to present curricular changes to Adm. So it clearly fits with pre-established structures rather than revamping all of her work creating the school- want to be prepared to present it in such a way
Weeks Big Ideas	Excited by student T;T connections Science going well- thinking about pressure in lives and in science; well planned lessons go smoothly and give kids opportunity to connect; kids grappling with issues of discrimintaiton/recent/current; deep thinking about non-violence, connect to biblical truth; deep learning and thinking Thematic and integrated curriculum helpful to work with more focus and organization	Struggle with pace, how deep to go, how to build 'enough' background knowledge, challenge of making content comprehensible and how long it takes to complete things. Invested in explaining curr. Changes in a positive way to adm. Tired from exhausting week, grades, service project, Frustrated by community partners

APPENDIX G

MONTHLY EXAMINATION OF REFLECTION THEMES: AVA IN JANUARY

W1 Big Ideas	Ss are learning and progressing- writing, listening, speaking, grammar. Ss are taking risks and feeling more confident. Ava is able to determine areas of need based on their production. Great relationships w students- Feels like she is doing pretty well on the surface: My teaching is generally effective, I have a good relationship with my students, they are both learning and progressing, etc.	Implementation issues- environmental challenges (only middle school, electric out and limited resources in other building) Needs better systems for organization/grading/planning Concerned about being coherent and comprehensive, thorough – need structures to focus on the things she values (supporting concepts , critical thinking and broader topics) A bit frustrated and overwhelmed

W1 Highs and lows	WIR
highs consistently what ss are doing well lows – things she feels SHE is not doing well	WIR more goal oriented, cognitive, reflective, what is going well- what she needs to work on and improve

W2 Big Ideas	Excited by student T;T connections Science going well- thinking about pressure in lives and in science; well planned lessons go smoothly and give kids opportunity to connect; kids grappling with issues of discrimination/recent/current; deep thinking about non-violence, connect to biblical truth; deep learning and thinking Thematic and integrated curriculum helpful to work with more focus and organization	Struggle with pace, how deep to go, how to build 'enough' background knowledge, challenge of making content comprehensible and how long it takes to complete things. Invested in explaining curr. Changes in a positive way to adm. Tired from exhausting week, grades, service project, Frustrated by community partners

W2 Highs and lows	WIR
Mostly about student learning, grappling with deep issues, connecting curriculum to world and thinking deeply about important content Challenged by time management, deciding how deep to go, much paperwork and organization this week, and concerned about explaining the curricular changes to adm.	Happy with increased organization and thematic and integrated curr. – feels more focused and organized- concerned about presentation of curricular changes to principal

W3 Big Ideas	Service and partnership went well- girls felt successful Curriculum world connections with inauguration Inquiry wall and big ideas for curriculum went well Excited and relieved about curriculum changes Hopeful about impact on student learning with units Learning in spite of experiments, gaining understanding of science Meaningful and thoughtful writing and helpful writing conference, encouraging week- processes for organization going well Curriculum has potential for great things – and approved Very happy and encouraged that things are coming together and kids making progress	Less organized for service project than would hope, thousands of people there, Time it takes to do grades Community partners not responsible Sick- and impatient but not wanting to take day off and get behind Struggle with time it takes to do everything, tension between rushing and giving ss time to do well Felt off, crazy week, grades, curriculum changes, busy/ scattered

W3 Highs and lows	WIR
Service and partnership went well- girls felt successful Curriculum world connections with innaguration Inquiry wall and big ideas for curriculum went well Excited and relieved about curriculum changes Hopeful about impact on student learning with units Learning in spite of experiments, gaining understanding of science Meaningful and thoughtful writing and helpful writing conference, encouraging week- processes for organization going well Less organized for service project than would hope, thousands of people there, Time it takes to do grades Community partners not responsible Sick- and impatient but not wanting to take day off and get behind Struggle with time it takes to do everything, tension between rushing and giving ss time to do well	Encouraging things- organization for participation etc. effective. Working out kinks in planning and curriculum- slow but like it- see potential for great things- Really happy it was approved for now Things coming together and generally encouraged by st. progress. K felt “off” New quarter- Routine broken by MLK inauguration New curriculum changes Grades due- Busy and scattered…

W4 Big Ideas	Thoughtful writing and discussion about connection/disconnection/ lines diving and bringing together Science experiments and discussions going well as connected to a more metacognitive/process oriented curriculum to world approach Students growth in art and in discussion of community/identity/ etc. Upward trend- Lori liked plan format, incorporating more movement Systems taking less time, increasing st. responsibility, working well	Some difficulty getting across constructs of racism when abstract and difficult to explain Gap between girls- pressure on students to engage all the time Some really less engaging, incorporating movement not going well at first, student struggling with pronunciation and memory

W4 Highs and lows	WIR
Thoughtful writing and discussion about connection/disconnection/ lines diving and bringing	Hopeful that this week is the start of an upward trend- Lori liked lesson plan format-

together Science experiments and discussions going well as connected to a more metacognitive/process oriented curriculum to world approach Students growth in art and in discussion of community/identity/ etc. Some difficulty getting across constructs of racism when abstract and difficult to explain Gap between girls- discussion based lessons harder for Yasmin Some lessons really less engaging, incorporating movement not going well at first, student struggling with pronunciation and memory Ava uses this space to talk about content and curricular things that spurred real and critical conversation and connections to the world, she focuses a great deal on student understanding and progress, successes and challenges. This is generally more about pedagogy and impact than about process.	Incorporating more movement- Some systems in place are working much better- taking less time and increasing student responsibility- Concerned about Yasmin falling behind- Pressure with only 2 students and no time for a break Ava uses this space to talk about and review her daily postings, think about goals and see patterns in her own work- in fact it is like she uses this space as her own data analysis – definitely reflective of overall issues rather than ones that are more specific day to day. She also focuses a lot on her own structures and pedagogy and larger concerns about patterns she is seeing in Yasmin. Very much goal setting, processes, and overall plans.

APPENDIX H

CODING MATRIX FOR BETWEEN PARTICIPANT ANALYSIS

	Jayne	Milagro	Ava
St tensions	4 STRUGGLE advocating for ELLs- beg to be in her class- not sure how to help kids who are seeking her out 5 Mexican boys- fighting to be thrown out of school. ESOL teachers have no idea what ti do or what is really going on. Need someone who understands them I want to help but I am painfully aware of my whiteness, my mediocre Spanish. And on top of it, these are not even my students. I already have 70 + students to keep track of. How can I realistically make a difference? 7 too much pressure, kids need advocates 7 kids need counseling – I wish I could do more	1 lying about folder 3 worrying about kids out of school life 5 stolen ipod (not at my school)	4 gap between girls- pressure to engage all the time- some lessons really not as engaging 4 Yasmin struggles with pronunciation and memory 5 Yasmin broke down- need to find success- low self confidence contributes to low levels of effort 6. Yasmin positively effected by comments about her writing 6. working harder 7 not working hard enough on homework 7 Yasmin's inconsistency

ELLs	4 kids sitting quietly 4 beg to be in her class 4 STRUGGLE advocating for ELLs- beg to be in her class- not sure how to help kids who are seeking her out 5 Mexican boys- fighting to be thrown out of school. ESOL teachers have no idea what ti do or what is really going on. Need someone who understands them I want to help but I am painfully aware of my whiteness, my mediocre Spanish. And on top of it, these are not even my students. I already have 70 + students to keep track of. How can I realistically make a difference? 5 poetry workshop 7teachers don't get them		See all of Ava's comments
Personal life- share self	1 spiky hair 2 gay as insult 3. she is German- challenging kid on his beliefs about Asians from WWII	1 motherhood, single 2. Cuban music and father 4 Faith shaken, silenced, afraid 5 single mother- stress with custodial laws- torment- parents rights 7 Ethan Frome as mirror- personally difficult to teach work 7 suffering- Buddhism- overcome not give him power	
Assessment	3 know about Pan-Africanism and neocolonialism but not what is on the crct 3. kids remember from last semester 4 trying to figure out how to assess in less cumbersome way 7 TAG kids too much pressure- how will they learn to learn from mistakes	2 quizzes used for management 3. Shift from scantron… discussion of larger structural changes needed in assessment	6 Not getting in enough grades 6 Worried about fairly assessing writing 7 struggling to keep up with assessment- need advice from Lori 7 plans to do an iri for more focused instruction 7 struggling with organization, grading, assessing fairly
St. Apathy	7 Frustration teaching elaborate, engaging, student centered life applicable lessons and	6 Boredom, talking, apathy, respect, entitlement, afraid of spring	4 some lessons just less engaging- never allowed to zone out

	kids don't want to think or care- some would prefer worksheets		
Parent/Student encouragement	2 parents tell her kid loves class 7mom tells her son can't stop talking about class and now wants to travel the world	2 Parent teacher conferences- kid loves class 7 heard kids say they want to be in her class cause they have all the fun	
Mentoring	1 chosen isolation 3 problematic self appointed mentor	1 gratitude for mentor (is this where she talks about being given plans?)	
Back up reteach	7 – as a high- broke it down, made it relevant- it worked	3 as a frustration	
Management/time	1 takes time to create great curriculum 2 behavior issues 3 loose ends – drowning 5 out of town- alarm not going off- just 'managing chaos' 5 Behind on grading, curriculum, not well thought out project, feels like she is just managing chaos- meet expectations? I know I'm a good teacher. I know I can teach. But I don't know if I truly have the energy to keep up with everything that is required of me. 7 frustration with one class behavior- not fun- out of ideas	2 concern about behavior 6 respect essays- self regulatory and responsibility for own actions 6. Many essays "restored my faith in my students and in the future of our country" 7? loud after test	1 needs better systems for organization/grading/planning 1 need to focus on things she values- supporting concepts, critical thinking, broader topics 1 frustrated and overwhelmed 2 thematic and integrated helps with focus and organization 3 excited and relieved by curriculum changes 3 hopeful about impact on student learning with units 3 writing conferences going well 3 organizational processes going well 3 very happy and encouraged- progress for kids and curriculum 3. less organized for service than hoped Time it takes to do grades 3 sick- impatient- not wanting to take day off and get behind 3 struggle with time 3 felt off, crazy week, grades, curricular changes, busy/scattered 4 systems taking less time- increasing st responsibility- 6 routines and structures help her get to things but still needs organizational/grading systems 6 feels like a plate spinner 7 thinks she can do better than she is doing with more organization, planning ahead, flexibility and knowledge of students
How much can they handle	3 talking about racism when they just want to be happy about new president 4 right mix in economics (puzzler from interview)	2 . how much can adolescents handle? Adult thought/adolescent maturity	7 Wants to have them delve into topics that fascinate them and tackling things that matter- doing things often enough to gain mastery and proficiency

	4 reparations 5 what they focus on is curious- dolls from Queen Elizabeth 5. Worry about going too deep- too much of a burden on kids so young- Still trying to negotiate that line between keeping it real and keeping things age-appropriate. 5. Need to let the seeds sit		
Structural change	4 race, distribution, access, privilege, etc… her class is all about this!	3 Need for early intervention and political change. Assessment and structural processes of ed- Structural solutions she believes are necessary 4 school funding on something more stable that property tax 6 recess 6? NCLB to family courts	
Difficult/relevant curricular conversations	2 MLK Malcolm X- passive/pacifist 3 offering space for dissent- talking through beliefs so they can be unpacked 4 reparations!	2 noting that racism not discussed or noticed- not pushing it further 3 talk about talk Language of Whiter Communication 5 Gender/ access- examine own world and past worlds 6 struggle to make ethan frome relevant- meaningful 6 Differing views on morality 7 character analysis- recognition of the power of perspective to shape the story-whose voice is missing discussion of own agency 7 pain and suffering 7 fascinating conversations – unbelievable responses	2 Deep thinking about discrimination- recent/current; deeply thinking about nonviolence. Connect to biblical truth 4 lines dividing-bringing together- connection vs separation 4. artistic discussion of community/identity 5 great connections across content 6 collage interesting and thoughtful response to discrimination 6 kids connecting between texts and larger truths- peacemaking- thinking widely and deeply about concepts
Exhausted	3 – Tired from inaugural celebration and less patient	2 straight through an parent teacher conferences	2 from grades, service project 6 tired- less than engaging instruction- struggling to explain
Job security	4- Not-good- people losing jobs, benefits decreasing, class sizes rising	4. Scared = silenced, angry about volatile funding 5. signed contract	
Love my school		1 support from ad when sick 5 contract signed- love my school and countyt	
Confidence to share resources		5. “Loved the fact that the teacher felt confident	

		enough to post her stuff.”	
Ss shape curr,	3 African student wanting to instruct	4 trashketball – enabling weakest student to be seen by others as knower	3 stuff going well- service partnership; world connections with inauguration; inquiry wall and big ideas
Love of teaching	4 reparations	5 Laughing with students- buffalo- “There is just no better job than this one on earth.”	
Push back school power	1 geo bee laughing 4 Admin not valuing SS		2 invested in explaining curricular changes to principal 4 Lori liked plan format 5 collaboration with Lori around larger curricular constructs is rewarding helpful fun 5 Difference from Lori in what work is worthy of display 7 not abl to keep up with grading as it stands
St. Progress		7 great discussion about characters- strong interpretations- understand that pt of view changes depiction of characters	1 progressing, taking risks, increasing confident 5 girls making lot of progress 5 emphasis on writing important and helpful 7 girls making great progress and connections- content to literature, inqury, hwere to locate information, reallythinking deeply- depth of understanding of character motivation, artistic response to text
Struggle with pace	3 Difficult knowing how much to have ss own curriculum, know all about pan-africanism and neo-colonialism but not on the CRCT		2 how deep to go, how to build enough background knowledge, challenged by time it takes to complete things 6 not enough time to get to everything – doing excellent stuff but some stuff she feels she is “not covering adequately” 7 struggle- tension- depth and breadth- how do you determine what not to cover when you have already chosen the essential things- only got through half plans this week-
Use of space	Email- feb. 4 Terry Thank you for reading and thank you for encouraging me. Thank you for creating a space where I can share these sorts of experiences and feelings. I feel so helpless and ineffectual most of the time. Teaching is all I know how to do.	6 Please excuse my rambling, I am not meaning to complain as much as I am trying to stumble onto a solution ... 6 “I think if teachers are more honest about what really happens in their classrooms, it could really help better support the people in our field.” 6 checking to see if it is what I need and can use	

	The inspiration is very mutual.		
What I offer	Space to share experiences and feelings	Support and encouragement	Mentoring, coaching, feedback, encouragement, support, resources

APPENDIX I

PARTICIPANT USES OF DIFFERENT SPACES

Participant uses of different spaces				
	highs/lows	Week in review	Postings	Asides
Jayne	Generally talks about justice issues- representation – kids not being served- her own struggles- all kids need for advocacy- and sometimes transcribes most powerful lessons- some st work included	Never	Will get on and serial post	Limited
Milagro	Sometimes does h/l Sometimes shares observations- thoughts- issues- often when not following h/l format signs- also sometimes writes low/high- Often posts resources used or created for teaching	Interesting self referencing- mostly to h/l sometimes postings- Signs some of them	Often posts during school day and is anxious for reply	Many- affirmations
Ava	Ava uses this space to talk about content and curricular things that spurred real and critical conversation and connections to the world, she focuses a great deal on student understanding and progress, successes and challenges. This is generally more about pedagogy and impact than about process.- Never samples of st work only descriptions	Ava uses this space to talk about and review her daily postings, think about goals and see patterns in her own work- in fact it is like she uses this space as her own data analysis – definitely reflective of overall issues rather than ones that are more specific day to day. She also focuses a lot on her own structures and pedagogy and larger concerns about patterns she is seeing in Yasmin. Very much goal setting, processes, and overall plans. Pointing out overall themes she is finding in her work and reflections across time- her consistent struggles and successes- she is coding her work! Setting goals; making plans	Largely connecting – offering support and feedback… asking how things went	Many- curricular and structural questions- issues – products

APPENDIX J

CHART FOR ANALYSIS OF MY ROLES IN DISCUSSION BOARD

Date/ time Context	Strand title	Message	Role/theme/purpose
1-11-09 1:57 PM	News forum- this is a test to see if it works	This is a test	Technical concerns
1-15-09 10:13 AM	News forum- Lets get together!	Hey everyone- I am really looking forward to getting us moving in this collective endeavor- Basically- when you get on- go to forum and then you can type into the text box and say whatever you want- it will go to each of your emails and then you reply (I think) by getting back on to the CRT site. We'll figure this out together. How about this- please log on and post something to the Blog section that is a bit autobiographical by way of an introduction. Then get on to the forum and type in a subject. Maybe start with a story from your classroom, or a puzzle you are wondering about, or an issue that you are thinking about a lot these days. Let's get this ball rolling---- Can't wait to hear from you all on here in the next couple of days- Take Care! Terry	FACILITATION Getting started Technical concerns Blog and intro- getting started Bringing up issues- n ot well crafted prompt (getting started) Encourage participation

1-16-09 2:38 PM	News Forum- Goals and Hopes	Hey everyone- I think it would be great if we all could get on to this thread and post the goals and hopes that we have for this community. What do you hope we are able to do together? What can we do (or not do) that will help you get the most out of our collaborative relationship? Looking forward to hearing from you all! more soon! Terry	Getting started- Goal setting- facilitator Collaboration discussion: facilitator and connect to others Encourage participation
1-16-09	Beginning of open forum section	Greetings all I think this may allow us to start new discussions and to reply- as you can see this technology is taking me a little bit to figure out- and it is helpful to figure out what i can see that you can't! Think this is a step in the right direction as a discussion where only I can speak is not so interesting and is pretty antithetical to my purpose here!!!!	Technical concerns Facilitator
1-16-09 5;37	Open forum for posting and discussion -> Goals and hopes (take 2 :))	Hey everyone- I think it would be great if we all could get on to this thread and post the goals and hopes that we have for this community. What do you hope we are able to do together? What can we do (or not do) that will help you get the most out of our collaborative relationship? Looking forward to hearing from you all! more soon! Terry	Getting started- Goal setting- facilitator Collaboration discussion: facilitator and connect to others Encourage participation
1-28-09 5:14 pm (in response to Milagro on gradeless universities)	Open forum for posting and discussion -> Goals... -> Re: Goals...	Hey all- very interesting article- thanks for sharing Milagro- Jayne- I was thinking about you the whole time I read it- what do you think about it?	Thank for resource sharing Facilitator, encourager Connect to

ROLES assumed in my postings on line in January						
Posting number Date	1 1-11 This is a test	2 1-15 1st moodle mail	3 1-16 Try at prompt- they couldn't respond	4 1-16 Description of new open forum	5 1-16 2nd try at prompt- same as 3	6 1-28 Comment on NCTE article and question to Jayne
Encourager						X
Provide emotional/ social support						
Facilitator		X	XX	X	XX	X
Connect to Past			X		X	
Connect to Others						X
Coach			XX		XX	
Resource						
Provide alternative hypothesis						
Unanticipated role- technical support	X	X		X		
Unanticipated role- getting started		XXX	X	X	X	
Unanticipated role- Encouraging participation		XX	X		X	

Coaching Questions Used- whole group					
	M.1	M2	M3	M4	M5
Relate			1-16 All for getting started		(see 3) 1-16 All for getting started
Relate			3,4		3,4
Reflect					
Refocus					
Resource					
Review					

Deviations from Roles	
1	Tech support,
2	Tech support, getting started prompts, encouraging participation
3	Getting started, encouraging participation
4	Technical support, Getting started
5 same message as 3	Getting started, encouraging participation