

Teacher Learning within Literacy Instruction:
Reflective & Refractive Considerations on Community, Interpersonal, and
Individual Planes

by

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved May 2011 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2011

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores the learning experiences of two first-grade teachers in a progressive public elementary school in the southwestern U.S. Participants inquired into their literacy instruction practices within their reading-workshops. Weekly inquiry group conversations between teachers and researcher informed a perspective of learning as participation. During the semester-long study, two key questions guided design and implementation: 1) What is the nature of teachers' learning experiences related to their literacy instruction practices, contextualized within an inquiry group? 2) How do those learning experiences reflect and/or refract the community, interpersonal, and individual planes of analysis?

An ethnographic perspective informed data collection and analysis; data were collected through weekly inquiry-group conversations, bi-weekly classroom observations, and in-depth interviews. A learning framework of community, interpersonal, and individual planes of analysis served as an analytic tool used in conjunction with a modified analytic induction.

Teachers' case studies offer unique accounts of their learning, contextualized within their specific classrooms. Findings are discussed through narrative-based vignettes, which illustrate teachers' learning trajectories. On the community plane, apprenticeship relationships were evident in teachers' interactions with students' parents and with one another. Interpersonal interactions between teachers demonstrated patterns of participation wherein each tried to teach the other as teachers negotiated their professional identities. Analysis of the individual plane

revealed that teachers' past experiences and personal identities contributed to ways of participation for both teachers that were highly personal and unique to each.

Affective considerations in learning were a significant finding within this study, adding dimensionality to this particular sociocultural theory of learning. The ways teachers felt about themselves, their students, their community, and their work constituted a significant influence on what they said and did, as demonstrated on all three planes of analysis. Implications for practice include the significance of professional development efforts that begin at the site of teachers' questions, and attention to teachers' individual learning trajectories as a means to supporting educators to teach in more confident and connected ways.

For Mom and Dad

I learned from you, first.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"You know, I've got to tell you, I bear the marks of writing this dissertation on my soul."

When a newly appointed assistant professor from a New York college said those words to me, I laughed at her wry tone, but immediately sobered as I looked more closely at her face. We were sitting on the brick patio of a Fort Worth, TX restaurant on a balmy December evening, swapping notes on the dissertating process. I was plying her for details, advice, suggestions.

In that moment, I realized afresh that there was no magic bullet. There was no substitute for the hard work, agonizing revisions, and countless meetings with fellow writing buddies and advisors that would enable me to push this project to completion. Thus began my own journey with writing a dissertation for which my soul would bear the marks.

I believe now that my soul is not the only one bearing the marks of this work. I owe a debt of gratitude to my chair, Teresa McCarty, who patiently listened, thoughtfully considered, and gave me just enough advice and encouragement to take the next step in this complex process without feeling overwhelmed. Karen Smith, Josephine Marsh, and Gustavo Fischman graciously gave of their time as committee members, believing all along that I could do it.

To my unofficial committee members, Jeanne Fain, Dawn Lambson, and Sarah Hudelson: thank you for being available to listen, read, and advise.

The Graduate Professional Student Association supported this research in its earliest stages with a JumpStart grant in 2009 and the Graduate College at Arizona State University enabled me to bring this work to completion with a fellowship

award in my final semester. I am grateful to these organizations for the financial support.

My friends and fellow graduate students, Amy, Jayne, Melissa, Angela, and Silvia pushed my ideas and my writing in powerful ways, offering critique, accountability, and a shoulder to lean on. Our writing community and friendships will be with me always. Mrs. Nome de plume, I'll love you forever.

To my family: Ashley, you listened to more than your fair share of navel-gazing—thanks, sister! Mom and Dad, you read endless (obtuse!) drafts and edited my work with thoughtfulness and loving critique. You made it financially possible for me to pursue this goal, and prayed me through to the end. Without you, this would not be.

My thanks also go to the deserving participant teachers. You make a work like this possible in your selfless willingness to make your teaching public, inviting another adult into the secret worlds that teachers share with children. You openly talked about your learning process, bluntly telling the truth when things did not go the way you hoped or planned. Thank you for sharing your classrooms and your learning lives with me.

Helen Keller wrote, "Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved." To all those who strengthened their souls alongside mine during this process, I thank you.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

This dissertation presents the learning journeys of two first-grade teachers who lived their learning and teaching lives alongside me, a researcher who joined them for a semester. Although it was their learning, their classrooms, their thinking, I am the author of this recounting of it—an issue that has weighed on me no small amount. I wrote every page with the participant-teachers in mind, with concern for their perspectives and well-being. Were it their choice, I suspect teachers might have chosen different episodes and different ways of presenting these data. I hope they someday take the opportunity to reflect and write on these events, themselves.

In part, I tell the story of these teachers' learning experiences through vignettes. These constructed stories are not “made up,” but based on actual conversations and events within the data informing this study. Ultimately, I encourage readers to construct their own understanding, staying open to the possibility that you may find your own stories reflected herein.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Vignette: “Oh! That’s all it is?”

“So I watched that video you loaned me over Fall Break,” Annemarie¹ said to me as we walked down the hallway to pick up her students from recess.

“Really? What did you think about it?” I asked. My teacher-researcher heart hoped she had found the fifteen-minute video helpful. I had suggested it as a possible support to her inquiry several weeks earlier when she brought up small group instruction and commented that she “wasn’t good” at doing guided reading groups.

“Well, it was interesting, because I kind of went, ‘Oh! That’s all it is?’” Annemarie glanced at me and hurried to explain, “I mean, I know they’re a lot of work and they take thought and planning, but it helped me to see Taberski running the groups and realize that it was just having a conversation with kids about their reading and supporting them while they read. It’s a lot like what I do during conferences.”

“That’s great, Annemarie! I’m glad to hear that.”

That was all the time there was for this particular exchange as we stepped into the bright sunshine and noise of a hundred and twenty children waiting to be picked up after a boisterous morning recess. Annemarie took the hands of her two first-in-line students to lead them back to their classroom, and I brought up the rear, complimenting students on their shoes and reminding them about hallway etiquette

¹ All names of people are pseudonyms.

in the manner of a researcher who well remembers her own teaching days. I mentally filed the conversation away, determining that I would follow-up with Annemarie during our next inquiry-group meeting. A few days later, Jean, Annemarie, and I sat cross-legged on the floor around a low table, munching on the leftovers of a first-grader's birthday treat.

I asked a direct question, so great was my curiosity, "So, Annemarie, I wondered about the comment you made to me in the hallway a few days ago how watching the Taberski video helped you re-imagine your small group instruction. Do you mind talking about that a little more and telling me what you're thinking about all that?"

"Sure, basically, what I was starting to tell you is that when I think of small groups, I'm immediately brought back to the intervention groups at my old school. We would sit around a U-table and I would give each child a copy of a Harcourt story, and we'd go around. Each kiddo read a page of that week's story—you know—it was painful and difficult for them because they were all struggling readers. And all along, when I heard of guided reading groups, I went back to that place in my mind and I just knew that wasn't what's best for kids. So, it's been hard for me to change that idea, to catch a new vision of what they could be. When I watched that video and I listened to some of the things that she's saying to the kids, and it just made me realize, 'OK, this is basically a conference with just a few students, as opposed to a one-on-one, and we're still having the conversation. We're talking about what they're trying and what they're noticing in books. It's just a group of kids with the same issue. So that just kind of opened my eyes. I went, 'OK, that helps

me change my thinking about it.’ I don’t have to do a round-robin format, where each kid struggles through a page and we all do a worksheet.”

“That’s really interesting,” I said. I glanced over at Jean to see if she had any thoughts, but she was listening intently and did not appear ready to speak. I continued, “I’ve been thinking about how it seems that the video helped you imagine the possibilities of what small group instruction could look like, in *your* context. But you have studied Taberski’s books before, and maybe even seen those videos in your undergraduate work, right? It wasn’t like the video taught you anything brand new, it’s just...?”

“It was more than what I had in my mind,” Annemarie completed my sentence.

“Yes, and I was also thinking along those lines in the context of the undergraduate students I’m teaching this semester. I could show them the same video that you saw, and it would be a totally different learning experience for them...” my voice trailed off as Annemarie and Jean both nodded.

“Right, well, it *is* so much about experience—those teachers haven’t been in the classroom,” Annemarie responded. “They haven’t worked under those mandates yet, to feel like, ‘this is the way it’s got to be and you’ve got to do it this way and your principal’s going to come and check on you to make sure you’re doing it the right way.’ I worked under those mandates, and that’s why I felt so locked into doing guided reading groups a certain way.”

“Interesting,” I said, a bit surprised that she had brought up the Title I curricular mandates she worked under at her previous school, especially since she

was not working under them at her present school. “And so then the interpretation of that video comes from...?”

“Experience,” Annemarie said firmly.

“OK, experience, and...?” I was hoping she would elaborate.

“I mean, I would have looked at that video four years ago and it would never have had the same impact on me without the experience from my previous school. Even when I first came here, and I didn’t have as much experience teaching holistically, I never would have been able to pull out the same kinds of things that I pulled out of it last week.”

“So can you identify what thing or things you saw that you don’t think you would have seen four years ago? What is it about who you are now, as a teacher, that played into that?” I asked.

Annemarie paused for a several beats. She responded tentatively at first but with growing confidence, “I think, if I had watched it four years ago, I would have probably been looking at it and going, ‘OK, but what does she *say*? How does she organize it?’ And now, when I listen, I notice those things, but it’s—I can think a little deeper and go, ‘OK, it’s still just the conversation. I can still get to know my kids as readers and as people, in this small group setting...just like I do in individual conferences.’ When I first started teaching this way, I would have focused more on the management part of things, and been wondering, ‘How does she manage this?’ and ‘What are the other kids doing?’ and ‘How does she get it to be that way?’ The video doesn’t even specifically show her management, but I would have been trying to figure that out.”

“It’s almost like your years of teaching give you the ability to fill in the gaps of what you don’t see with her management, like you know that if her students are sitting around reading quietly, she has set certain expectations in place to make sure that happens,” I offered.

“Absolutely,” Annemarie agreed. “And four years ago, I would have had more questions about *how* she did that, as opposed to now, when I know what works for me. It just helped me catch a new vision of what it could be, and makes me more willing to try it, for myself.” Annemarie wrapped up her thinking with a shrug of her slim shoulder, and the conversation moved on.

Rationale for Study

This vignette demonstrates the kind of learning-conversations in which teachers and I participated throughout the semester-long study supporting this dissertation research. I share it to put readers into the center of the action and show the way teachers’ learning experiences took shape, as they actively examined their assumptions about themselves, their students, and their literacy instruction practices.

This qualitative case study of two teachers’ learning answers the following questions:

1. What is the nature of teachers’ learning experiences related to their literacy instruction practices, contextualized within an inquiry process?
2. How do teachers’ learning experiences reflect/refract Rogoff’s (1995) community, interpersonal, and individual planes of analysis?

In this chapter, I provide a rationale for the study that moves from my personal motivation to study teacher learning to the broader contexts in which

discussions of teacher learning take place. I have structured this rationale to briefly offer a justification for the design decisions inherent in this study and provide readers with a sense of the study's purpose.

Teacher learning has long been a topic of interest to me, from my earliest years as an educator. Questions arose out of the interactions I lived each day with my students, but took hold on the stage of my internal, emotional landscape. Daily I yearned to know more about my subject, my pedagogy, my students, my teaching self, even as I felt that I did not have the time to articulate questions, much less consult with others in search of answers. I began to recognize the importance of maintaining sufficient emotional distance from these issues, which gave me a measure of peace with the not knowing, even as I pressed forward. However, I never found a way to balance the tension between wanting to know more and having so little guidance or time for learning. I know now that I was learning all the time, and sensed it even then, but did not discern my learning to be sufficient for all the needs I so acutely felt.

As I moved out of my role as a classroom teacher and into my role as a graduate student, the time for inquiry was fore-fronted. I read and participated in conversations about the social, cultural, political, philosophical, and physical boundaries that structure conversations about teacher learning. I was intrigued with the way phenomenological and ethnographic research held the possibility for telling the complex stories of teachers' learning, in contexts of their practice. It was through my learning as a graduate student that I envisioned a study that could honor and address my tensions as a teacher-learner.

I designed this study believing that research of this ilk makes it possible to understand “thoughtful action in context” (Florio-Ruane, 2001, p. 209) by particularizing theoretical ideas in contexts of teachers’ practice, even as it might also benefit teachers by making space for their learning. I relished the opportunity to “slow down” and closely examine the phenomenon of teacher learning. Although these research interests emerged from a place of personal interest, they hold significance to the questions the field is presently asking about how to sustain teachers’ learning and professionalism.

Sociocultural theories on learning are fundamental to my own beliefs about teaching and learning, and subsequently guided my contribution to the field’s questions. These perspectives conceptualize learning as a process of constructing meaning from experience (Dewey, 1938) in “relationships between students, community, and the world” (Pérez & Nordlander, 2004, p. 298). As such, learners’ interactions within social settings are critical to the learning process (Ball, 2000; Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978). Sociocultural theory values conversation, reflection, scaffolding, and experience as means to transformed perspectives and practice (Kelly, 2006). Research in this vein focuses on describing and understanding the activities that characterize particular learning settings, seeking ways to discern learners’ participation (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Current understandings about teacher learning perceive it to be embedded in teachers’ practice and strengthened through collaboration (Pedder, James, & MacBeath, 2005).

It is from this sociocultural perspective that I reviewed the literature and considered the ways my study might contribute to a discussion of teacher learning.

Researchers already recognize teacher learning as complex, while seeing these complexities as opportunities to better understand teacher learning and discern ways to support it (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Gallucci, 2008; Putnam & Borko, 2000). Further, many (Borko, 2004; Borko, Whitcomb, & Byrnes, 2008; Henze, van Driel & Verloop, 2009) assert that the field of teacher learning is relatively young, and in need of better means to understand and articulate the ways teachers learn. Researchers are seeking ways to emphasize active, long-term, embedded learning opportunities which lead to transformed teaching, much different from “one-shot” professional development efforts that often simply “add tools” to teachers’ belts (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Putnam & Borko, 2000).

Discussions about the need to better understand teacher learning are typically couched in terms emphasizing *what* teachers learn (content area knowledge or pedagogical practices), *influences* on teacher learning (organizational considerations, individual considerations, reform mandates), or the *contexts/means* of teacher learning (formal professional development programs, individualized learning efforts, informal learning). In reality, these topics are interrelated across studies of teacher learning, but I have chosen to distinguish among them to expand this study’s rationale. I do this to provide readers with a concise explanation of this literature while explaining some of the design decisions informing this study.

What Teachers Learn

Tensions emerge in discussions of what teachers should learn when researchers, curriculum specialists, accountability experts, and teachers themselves call for different areas of focus. Professional development content is often

connected to certain programs or strategy implementation, and data-driven professional development is becoming more common, as schools rely on data sets to guide curricular decisions (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Lieberman, 1997). Subject matter or pedagogical competencies are typical dichotomies that emerge in these discussions, while researchers and teachers openly acknowledge the need for both (Borko, 2004; Henze, et al., 2009; Wilson & Berne, 1999). Beyond pedagogical skills or content-area knowledge, teachers need to engender dispositions of problem solving and flexibility to cope with the complex issues of teaching (Bullough & Baughman, 1997; Schön, 1983; Van Manen, 1995).

For discussions of teacher learning related to literacy and literacy instruction, researchers agree on the importance of helping teachers foster a mentality of teaching children, rather than teaching subjects, materials, or programs (Freppon & Dahl, 1998; Spiegel, 1998). Teachers must also be able to provide a blend of instructional styles and strategies, using scaffolding and personal knowledge about students' cultures and backgrounds to meet students' needs (Pérez & Nordlander, 2004; Reutzell, 1999). Spiegel (1998) advocates for learning efforts that professionalize teachers by equipping them with knowledge about the broader contexts and debates surrounding research-based understandings of literacy. This can support teachers in becoming informed decision-makers, instructing from a comprehensive view of literacy combined with local knowledge of children's needs. My study provided an opportunity to find out what teachers learned when the choice was theirs, within inquiry efforts emerging out of their classroom contexts.

Influences on Teacher Learning

The larger societal and institutional pressures that shape conversations about teacher learning also deserve consideration. Pressures resulting from the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (*NCLB*) are stronger than ever, although at the time of this writing, *NCLB* is in the process of changing (Obama, 2011). Nevertheless, the emphasis on performance-based assessments of teachers' work is likely to continue in conversations about what matters in education and teacher learning. The social constructs of school, accountability, success, literacy, and learning are shaping influences on what is valued for teachers. In the U.S., individualistic norms for progress and the merit-based pay structures emerging from them often obstruct collaborative interactions and learning opportunities (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). As I argue later, teaching is a very personal, individual, organic, and emergent profession, typically subjected to quantitative measurements that often only support public debate, rather than teachers. Numbers gloss over the complexities of the issues teachers face and oversimplify discussions of what teachers need to know. By its very nature, the dichotomy between accountability-based measurements and the personal, caring work teachers do every day influences teachers to resist in both subtle and overt ways (Bullough & Baughman, 1997; Juraisaite-Harbison & Rex, 2010; Noddings, 2003; Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson & Fry, 2004). This resistance affects what teachers learn and how they learn it; those who study accountability pressures on teaching and learning find that it is not easy to empower teacher change in the face of prescriptive goals from outside sources (Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992).

On local levels, specific districts and schools sometimes support and other times stymie teachers' personal learning efforts. Even school districts that might say they support teachers' learning often direct it in ways that are misaligned with teachers' goals for their students (Bullough & Baughman, 1997; Long, et. al, 2006). Communities that do not make space for self-directed teacher learning or value the many ways it plays out in teachers' lives fail to recognize possibilities for transformative teaching (Gallucci, 2008; Juraisaite-Harbison & Rex, 2010). Physical and social environments within schools also shape what teachers say about their learning, the topics on which they focus, and the learning problems they take up (Geijser & Meijer, 2005). Research that more closely examines these community influences, as elements of my study do, makes it possible to further conceptualize the nature and significance of those factors.

Contexts/Means of Teacher Learning

Discussions of the most opportune contexts for teacher learning emerge from general agreement about *how* teachers learn, from a sociocultural perspective. These contexts include active engagement, opportunities for teachers to see strong models, the ability to ask questions connected to their classrooms, and opportunities to participate in collaborative conversations (Borko, 2004; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). Dialogue enables teachers to examine presuppositions, reflect on their teaching practices, and more adequately support student learning (Egawa, 2009). Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are one way districts and researchers are pursuing these ideals. PLC settings allow small groups of teachers to share their individual questions and knowledge as they work collegially to learn

about, try, and reflect on new practices in their classrooms (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999a; 2009; Morrissey, 2000). PLC's are not without issues (Cochran Smith & Lytle, 2009; Egawa, 2009) but are increasingly recognized as a beneficial avenue to supporting teacher learning.

Discussions of the most ideal structures to support teacher learning always emerge out of past efforts, typically perceived as “a patchwork of opportunities— formal and informal, mandatory and voluntary, serendipitous and planned” (Wilson & Berne, 1999, p. 174). Traditional forms of professional development, including one-day in-service workshops, what many call “drive-by professional development,” have been criticized as ineffective one-shot fixes provided by ‘experts’ outside the contexts of teachers’ lives and questions (Stein, Smith & Silver, 1999). Teachers generally report that such in-service programs are irrelevant or minimally affect their practice (Little, 2002); their fragmented nature fails to provide rigorous, sustained learning opportunities (Knapp, 2003). Research such as this reveals the importance of designing learning opportunities that pay attention to what teachers know and what they want to know about their own learning, while emphasizing the need for sustained and focused professional development efforts.

Bringing it All Together: A Brief Word on the Study's Design

I have purposely distinguished between the content, influences, and means of teacher learning to clarify the rationale for this study. In reality, each element is inseparable from the others in any consideration of teacher learning. Chief among research-based understandings of this topic is the importance of choice in learning; teachers must have some say in designing and implementing their own learning

efforts for sustainable and meaningful change (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Grossman, Wineburg & Woolworth, 2001).

While I initially conceived of this study as a way to inquire into the nature of teacher learning and tease it out through theoretical reflections of the data, the study also *became a learning experience for teachers*. Because I valued teachers' choices and local knowledge, I designed this study to begin with teachers' questions. Their wonderings emerged from their practice and were thus urgent in nature. Making teachers' questions the catalyst for design decisions left various possibilities open for their learning. It was challenging but worthwhile to plan a study that would make space for teachers' individual needs (Herr & Anderson, 2005).

This study took place alongside two first-grade educators who were teaching in a progressive, public elementary school in the southwestern U.S. Participant-teachers' literacy instruction practices focused on reading workshop pedagogy, which formed the context for teachers' learning efforts. Considerations of content, influence, and means are visible in this research project as follows.

Content. Because I looked at teachers' learning experiences related to their literacy instruction practices, teachers focused on learning efforts that would support their students' development as readers. Our scheduled weekly conversations influenced the content of their learning, and became a means to articulating the questions and reflections that made up their learning experiences. As a result, teachers' talk focused on workshop-based instructional engagements, including topics such as guided reading, conferencing, and grand conversations (Peterson & Eeds, 2007; Taberski, 2000).

Influence. I suspect that teachers were significantly influenced by the fact that I, as a researcher, was inquiring into their learning experiences. Thus, there was some “pressure” to learn. There was an informal component to these learning experiences, however, since I constantly reassured teachers that “their learning was their learning.” Our conversations were not influenced by external professional development considerations or expected outcomes. The social nature of sharing about practice on a regular basis also shaped learning within our inquiry triad, as indicated by the particular learning pathways we pursued, the conversational patterns that emerged, and the learning decisions we each made.

Means. Because the teachers and I approached our learning from a sociocultural perspective, we decided to negotiate these new understandings through conversations about what they were noticing. Dialogue thus became a vital means to supporting teachers’ learning. Although teachers fostered their own learning through journaling and private reflection, it was our time together that became the most obvious space for observing shifts in thought and participation (Adger, Hoyle & Dickinson, 2004). Additionally, since this study examined teacher learning in the contexts of teachers’ classrooms, it allowed teachers to build understandings that were immediately relevant to them and their students (Adger, et al., 2004; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

Given this brief review of the considerations and influences on teacher learning, I submit that this study further supports conceptualizations of content, format, and means. By pursuing a study of teacher learning within the crucible of teachers’ practice, I provide an account of teacher learning that substantiates its

nature and importance from the perspectives of teachers, themselves. I studied the specific situations and contexts of teachers' learning lives, which enabled me to observe, describe, analyze, and understand participants' actions and perspectives (Florio-Ruane, 2001).

Discussions of what counts in teacher learning evidence the power and pressure on this issue from all sides, but ultimately, I wanted to examine what teachers did at the local level, when given the time and space to converse about questions that mattered to them. I chose to study literacy instruction practices partly because of my own background and interest in literacy instruction, and because it is a curricular focus in the participant-teachers' school site, as I explain further in Chapter 4. I also perceive reading instruction to be a rich site for research, as the field seeks ways to support teachers in holistic literacy instruction in the context of reform mandates that often emphasize discrete elements of literacy development.

Myriad questions arise from considerations of teacher learning: how can teachers support their own learning within the contexts of accountability mandates? What is valued and recognized as valid within teachers' pursuits of new knowledge? What influences positively or negatively affect teachers' commitment to their own learning? How do teachers pursue learning efforts that matter to them within the constraints of institutional structures that hold sway over their positions? How can teachers' collaborative and interpersonal interactions support their learning efforts? In this study, I specifically address two questions emerging out of these issues:

1. What is the nature of teachers' learning experiences related to their literacy instruction practices, contextualized within an inquiry process?

2. How do teachers' learning experiences reflect/refract the community, interpersonal, and individual planes of analysis?

Overview of the Dissertation

In Chapter 2, I explain the theoretical ideals framing this study, sharing literature that supports the literacy-instruction contexts for these particular teachers' learning. I present the literature on teacher learning from a sociocultural perspective in general before discussing Rogoff's (1995) theoretical perspective on learning, which constituted an organizing framework for this study.

Chapter 3 outlines the literature supporting the use of qualitative case study and ethnographic methods in research before delineating my research as it progressed through data collection and analysis. I also briefly introduce readers to the participants and describe my own positionality in the work.

Chapters 4 and 5 provide the answers to my research questions. In Chapter 4, I first describe the contexts of the participant-teachers' school and curriculum before presenting each teacher's learning case across the semester. Chapter 5 explains the ways my data *reflected* Rogoff's (1995) three planes of analysis (community, interpersonal, and individual). I use assertions, vignettes, and discussion (Erickson, 1986) to present findings. I also explain the ways my data *refracted* Rogoff's ideas.

Finally, I suggest implications for research, theory, and practice in Chapter 6, pointing out the ways my research contributes to the field and proposing ways forward for those who support teacher learning.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I first present literature that supports a socially oriented perspective on literacy, which was foundational to the literacy instruction practices evident in my research site. Because teachers' literacy instruction practices comprised the context of their learning, it is important to share the literature undergirding the literacy practices and values evident in teachers' learning experiences. The second portion of this chapter outlines the literature supporting this study's conceptualization of teachers' learning. I conclude by summarizing Rogoff's (1995) theory to offer a justification for a study such as this.

To guide readers, Figure 1 presents a visual representation of my study's focus.

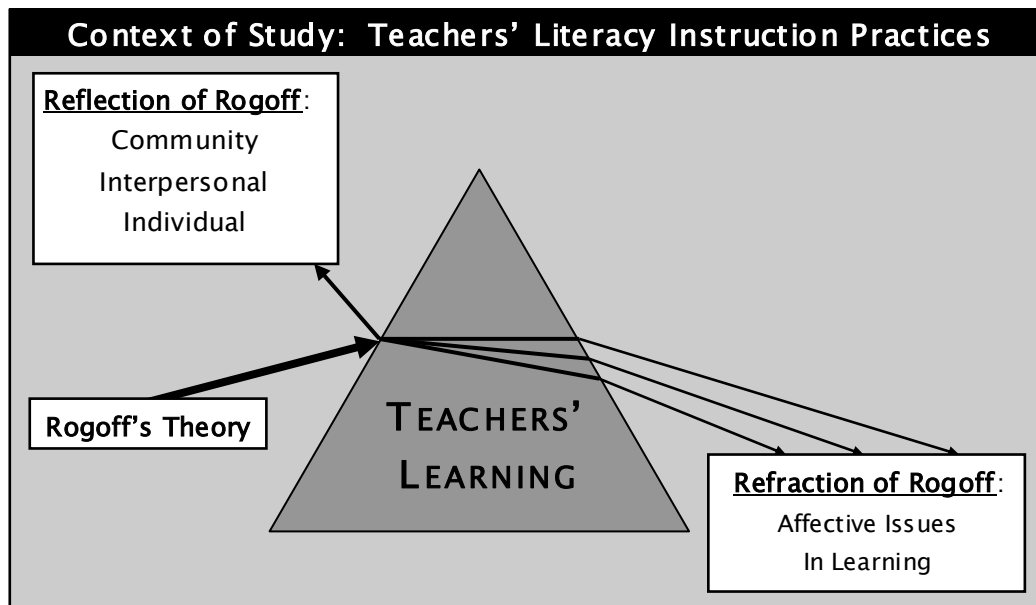


Figure 1. Visual representation of conceptual framework for my study. This graphic demonstrates how teachers' learning was in the context of their literacy instruction practices, and shows the dual purposes of Rogoff's sociocultural theory, as envisioned in this study.

As the figure illustrates, although learning and literacy were the two major themes within this research project, they were not equal in focus. Teachers' learning was the central consideration in this study; teachers' literacy instruction practices provided the instructional contexts in which I saw teachers' learning unfold.

Rogoff's (1995) theory of learning on the community, interpersonal, and individual planes of analysis was the primary lens I put on the data. I detail her sociocultural theory of learning at the conclusion of this chapter to elucidate my aim to reflect and refract her ideas through the prism of teachers' learning.

The Literacy Contexts of Teachers' Learning

Any discussion of teacher learning is bounded by contextual factors influencing its definition, scope, and purpose (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999b; Graven, 2004). For this study, teacher learning was integrally connected to literacy instruction practices aligned with a sociocultural and constructivist viewpoint. Literacy, from this perspective, is far more than the ability to read and write. It is both a process of constructing meaning from texts (including visual, arts-based, and multi-media), and a collection of communicative and cultural practices shared between members of specific groups (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Harste, 2003). As such, literacies are plural, holding unique meanings for particular groups, most fully explored within their specific social contexts and uses. While there are shared ways of making meaning across groups, the cultural and social meanings attached to those literacies vary (Harste, 2003; Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000).

Also important is the distinction between literacy practices and literacy events. According to Barton & Hamilton (2000), literacy practices conceptualizes

the links between “activities of reading and writing and the social structures in which they are embedded and which they help shape” (p. 7). Literacy events are observable activities where literacy plays a role. This distinction becomes important in explaining that I studied teachers’ literacy instruction practices in first-grade classrooms. As such, the particular domain of school shaped the literacy practices and events that took place (p. 12). Teachers’ literacy instruction practices were subsequently influenced by their roles as educators, the standards-based expectations for first-grade readers, and the social and developmental considerations of instructing emergent and early readers. Although the participant-teachers subscribe to the ideas that literacies are plural, contextualized, and meaning-based, their literacy instruction and my retelling of it are shaped by these school-based considerations of children’s learning. Thus, I use the term “literacy” throughout this dissertation to encompass teachers’ work and learning, despite my understanding literacies as multiple, complex, and context-specific.

Currently, educational reform efforts regarding early literacy instruction do not take up holistic, pluralistic, and cultural/socially embedded notions of literacy (Cambourne & Turbill, 2007). Instead, present-day policy focuses on outcomes-based literacy instruction emphasizing “the Big Five” (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension) and programmatic approaches based on prevalent one-dimensional assessments such as *DIBELS* (Dynamic Indicator of Basic Literacy Skills) or Accelerated Reader®. Accountability measures in the wake of *NCLB* are far-reaching; schools that do not perform are typically taken-over by business-oriented models of school reform, which often implement basal-based

literacy programs. While these trends are pertinent in the larger discussion of teacher learning, it is not within the scope of this dissertation to discuss them in detail.

Rather, I provide a literature background on the literacy instruction practices prevalent in this study's site, which includes reading workshop and balanced literacy, as a means of contextualizing my study of teacher learning.

Reading workshop. Readers' and writers' workshops are a shared set of literacy instruction practices which value constructivist theory. It is a pedagogical approach to literacy instruction emphasizing reading as a process of constructing meaning from texts. As such, this pedagogical framework supports holistic, literature-based instruction. Researchers and teachers committed to these ideals recognize children's literacy development as informed through social interactions with more experienced others (Ball, 2000; Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978), which gives rise to instructional practices emphasizing conversation and shared understandings (Peterson & Eeds, 2007).

The belief that literacy is always embedded with social and political meanings can lead teachers to value reading and writing for authentic purposes (Peterson & Eeds, 2007; Short, 1996). Within these ideals, teachers purposefully develop curricular plans around the needs of their students, rather than standards (Taberski, 2000). This does not imply disregard of standards, but rather that standards do not take priority over students, texts, and meaningful learning experiences. Through varied instructional interactions, teachers engage students in a range of literacy events supporting the individual and collective reading development needs of their students.

Termed by some as “balanced literacy,” reading workshop involves considerations of how to help students self-manage their learning, instruction in the context of ongoing, purposeful work, and rituals and routines that support productive learning environments (Serravallo & Goldberg, 2007; Sibberson & Szymusiak, 2008). Literacy instruction operating out of these ideals often values what learners know and bring to their learning settings. Thus, teachers and learners are freed from curriculum ideals that force all learners to be on the same page, or develop at the same pace. Reading workshop practices that offer learners space and time include multiple means and structures for supporting students’ reading development in authentic curricular engagements. These include independent reading, shared and guided reading engagements, conferencing, and mini-lessons. These types of curricular engagements enable teachers to teach from their professional perspective of children’s needs in context with a larger view of holistic learning ideals (Spiegel, 1998). Thus, teachers scaffold students’ learning through mini-lessons and self-regulatory learning habits, managing complex classroom engagements effectively by coordinating materials, time, student behavior, and resources (Hindley, 1996; Taberski, 2000; Wharton-McDonald, et al., 1997).

While my description of these literacy ideals emphasizes value for local contexts and teachers’ personal knowledge, workshop involves neither lackadaisical nor disconnected teaching. Teachers who value these principles still teach in accountability-driven times. Their students need to show progress in the same ways that children who prepare for tests all year do (Sibberson & Szymusiak, 2007). This kind of teaching demands a high degree of pedagogical and theoretical knowledge.

Teachers' learning ideals within balanced literacy. Teachers who work out of these literacy ideals benefit from knowing instructional approaches including but not limited to, read-aloud, language experience, shared reading, guided reading, interactive writing, and independent writing and reading (Reutzel, 1999). Each of these means for holistic literacy instruction involves pedagogical and theoretical considerations including expertise in literature and book choice, thoughtfulness in grouping children with similar/diverse needs, knowledge of language and literacy development, and effective management strategies.

Teachers classified as highly-effective literacy instructors (Pressley, Rankin & Yokoi, 1996) self-describe their learning efforts in terms of attaining flexibility in their instruction, designing instructional plans that meet students' needs, and providing skills-instruction embedded in literature experiences with whole texts (Wharton-McDonald, et al. 1997). These teachers have a high sense of purpose for their students' learning and set expectations accordingly, weaving a variety of methods to create rigorous and successful learning communities (Pressley, 2006; Wharton-McDonald, et al., 1997). They also provide a blend of instructional styles and strategies within a personal understanding of students' cultures and backgrounds (Pérez & Nordlander, 2004). These educators value instruction through use of hands-on experiences, modeling, flexible grouping, and authentic assessment practices (such as miscue analysis, running records, anecdotal record keeping, and portfolio-based assessment).

Finally, this kind of literacy instruction depends on educators' reflective understanding of reading from a whole-to-part conceptualization—the ability to

embed skills instruction in literary experiences (Weaver, 1998). This kind of teaching requires teachers to take up an attitude of learning themselves, actively availing themselves of opportunities for reflection and professional development. Teachers who do so make space for a range of sociocultural/political factors (Pérez & Nordlander, 2004), enabling them to situate theory and practice “in the relationships between teacher, student, time and place” (Heydon, Hibbert & Iannacci, 2004, p. 314).

I chose reading workshop as a rich context wherein I could see teachers’ sense making and learning in action. The literature presented here illustrates how much the participant-teachers in my research site could have chosen to focus on, within their own self-directed learning efforts. As I explain further in Chapter 4, teachers initially took up an inquiry into recording children’s talk as a means to supporting students’ literacy development. Beyond that, the literacy instruction practices (and thus the learning efforts) prevalent in teachers’ classrooms focused on reading workshops, including classroom interactions such as mini-lessons, independent reading, guided reading, shared reading, readers’ share, and conferencing practices.

Having reviewed the literature underlying the literacy conceptualizations particular to this study, I move to a brief discussion of learning, synthesizing theoretical perspectives on learning that frame this study’s work.

Definitions of Learning

While Rogoff’s (1995) theory of the sociocultural nature of learning was a major focus in this study, she is only one of many who see learning as a complex

interplay between individuals, experiences, and environments (Ball, 2000; Dewey, 1933; Eisner, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978). These learning theorists argue against perceiving learning as only a process of gaining knowledge/ability through study/action, because while attainment of knowledge or skill is an undeniable part of learning, it neglects the active process by which learners construct new understandings (Kelly, 2006; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). From a constructivist and sociocultural perspective on learning, sites of interaction and talk are conceived as places to “locate learning” (Adger, Hoyle & Dickinson, 2004) as individuals participate together in culturally valued activity (Rogoff, 1995, 2003; Wertsch, 1985). Communities of practice perspectives (Holmes & Meyerhoff, 1999; Lave & Wenger, 1991) pay attention to the ways members participate jointly, using shared practices, tools, and routines to negotiate meaning. From these perspectives, learning is not in learners’ heads but in the *processes of participation*. As learners collaborate, they evidence new and changed participation, moving from the periphery of community structures to full-fledged participation. Thus, identity and learning are aspects of the same phenomenon (Wenger, 1991, as cited in Adger, et al., 2004); learners simultaneously act out and shape their identities through their participation in a given community, which in turn shape the community, itself (Rogoff, 1995).

Literature on Teachers’ Learning

This study takes a sociocultural perspective on learning. As a result, the studies highlighted here examine what is presently known about teacher learning in ways that assume teachers’ learning is, at least in part: a) supported by interaction and collaboration in social settings, b) personal to individuals (in both process and

product), c) based on experience, d) the construction of new ideas through an active process, and e) a process of enculturation into a group's societal practices. These assumptions about learning are latent in both the literature that I explain here, and the design decisions of my own study.

Teachers' professional identity as the site of learning. One way to articulate and explore teacher learning is through professional identity development. From this perspective, "teachers use talk to perform ways of being and teaching" (Schmidt & Whitmore, 2010, p. 391). Thus, teachers tell others and themselves who they are, both through their words and actions (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 2001). These perceptions of self are shifting, socially constructed, and influenced through interactions with others. Teachers' words and actions constitute identifiable elements of their professional identities, especially when considered within the contextual influences that most significantly provide the words and roles that teachers take up. Identities are mediated (through language, social interactions, and ideas) and also mediate teachers' ways of being in the world.

Many studies substantiate the importance of teacher identity as a way to examine teacher learning, suggesting that teachers' consciousness of their professional identities helps them more critically analyze the social and political influences on the teaching profession (Britzman, 1994; Hoffman-Kipp, 2008; Lasky, 2005; Rex & Nelson, 2004; Sachs, 2001). This enables teachers to examine tensions between their personal and professional beliefs (Alsup, 2005; Britzman, 1994; Smagorinsky, et al. 2004) and creates space for teachers' emotion and purpose to inform their actions as teachers (Day, Kington, Stobart & Sammons, 2006;

Hoffman-Kipp, 2008; O’Conner, 2006). Finally, studies of teacher identity support a more purposeful view on how a teacher can *become* the teacher one wants to be (Hoffman-Kipp, 2008; Lasky, 2005), effectively mediating future action toward those goals.

As teachers take up different discourses and categorical ways of describing themselves (Schmidt & Whitmore, 2010), they develop dominant ways of being. These “Discourses” (Gee, 2001) are situated in various settings and interactions with others. From this perspective, it is instructive to consider teachers’ identities in light of influences such as: a) school communities, b) administrative attitudes towards teachers’ professionalism, c) positions of seniority or perceived expertise within one’s school, and d) larger political issues affecting education. These tensions between internal agency and external structures are evident in the intertwined and dependent relationships between teachers’ work and teachers’ lives (Day, et al., 2006). It is thus important to examine the interactions between teachers’ personal and professional selves. Within this study, I use professional identity to refer to the identity moves and learning evident in teachers’ practice and perceptions of their work.

Inquiry-based understandings of learning. One other major theme in the literature is inquiry as a means to support teacher learning, which arises primarily from Cochran-Smith & Lytle’s significant contribution to the field (1999a; 1999b; 2009). They argue that researchers must first identify and consider the conceptualizations of knowledge that underlie efforts to support teacher learning (1999a). This means asking questions about what counts as knowledge, and who decides? For what purpose, and from where does knowledge originate? Clear-

minded answers to these questions illuminate the differences between conceptions of teacher knowledge that emphasize vastly different ideals even though they may appropriate similar terms.

Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1999b) distinguish between three perspectives of knowledge, which correlate to the content considerations of teacher learning I discussed in Chapter 1. Briefly, these three conceptions are knowledge *for* practice, knowledge *in* practice, and knowledge *of* practice. The first, knowledge *for* practice, emphasizes formal knowledge, typically generated outside classrooms through research and university-based initiatives. This perspective suggests there is a body of knowledge teachers can and should obtain on the road to expertise, and thus distinguishes between teachers through labels such as “expert” and “novice.” This concept fuels discussions of teacher competence by asserting notions of best practice, which are typically developed by outsiders to the educational contexts they strive to inform.

The second conception, knowledge *in* practice, accentuates the artistry of teaching and suggests that teacher knowledge is generated directly out of practice. Thus, this perspective calls for close looks at the exemplary practices of competent teachers, because good teachers cannot be trained or taught, but must be coached in developing the ability to “think like a teacher” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999b; Hammerness, et al., 2005).

The final conception, knowledge *of* practice, is not a combination of the first two. Instead, it is a perspective on teacher knowledge that involves efforts to problematize one's own knowledge and practice by asking critical questions—a

practice that pushes learning out of strictly local contexts to enable teachers to critique larger ideas about knowledge and practice. It values teachers' ability to generate knowledge at any stage in their career, when they make their classrooms sites of inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999b). This collaborative and critical work supports teachers in developing visions of what is possible, beyond what is presently evident. This notion has the potential to support teachers in taking up learning mindsets that position them as members of a professional community and lifelong learners (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999b; Hammerness, et al., 2005, p. 383).

Studies examining the nature of teacher learning find alignments in this third conception of teacher learning, where all members (whether novice or expert, researcher or teacher) participate jointly in sharing their unique knowledge and experience. These groups have collective and shared purposes to function as fellow learners in ways that blur the novice/expert dichotomies present in many formal professional development efforts. As a result, these contexts do not emphasize “findings” per se, but rather efforts to understand, articulate, and ultimately alter practices, in order to,

bring about fundamental change in classrooms, schools, districts, programs, and professional organizations. At the base of this commitment is a deep and passionately enacted responsibility to students' learning and life chances and to transforming the policies and structures that limit students' access to these opportunities (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999b, p. 279).

These goals, albeit lofty, are ones with which I perceive my own study aligns. I did not conceptualize teacher learning as emerging from teachers' needs to gain formal knowledge, nor did I examine teachers' practice in an effort to generate practice-based conceptions of good teaching. Rather, I assert that through a

conceptualization of *knowledge of practice*, it was possible for participant-teachers and me to inquire into our assumptions about learning and teaching, seek ways to better meet students' needs, and to describe the nature of the learning experiences emerging from active inquiry.

Conceptual Framework of Learning Informing this Study

Having outlined the theoretical constructs informing definitions of literacy and learning for this study, I articulate the theoretical lens that most specifically informed this study: Rogoff's (1995) articulation of learning through three planes of analysis. These planes are 1) community, 2) interpersonal, and 3) individual. In her discussion of these planes, Rogoff uses metaphors of apprenticeship, guided participation, and participatory appropriation to explain the relational supports to learning evident on each plane. I have included a visual for Rogoff's conceptualization of this theory in Figure 2 to show that although the planes of analysis are interrelated and inseparable, each one allows for different grains of focus to inform a more complete examination of learning within sociocultural activity.

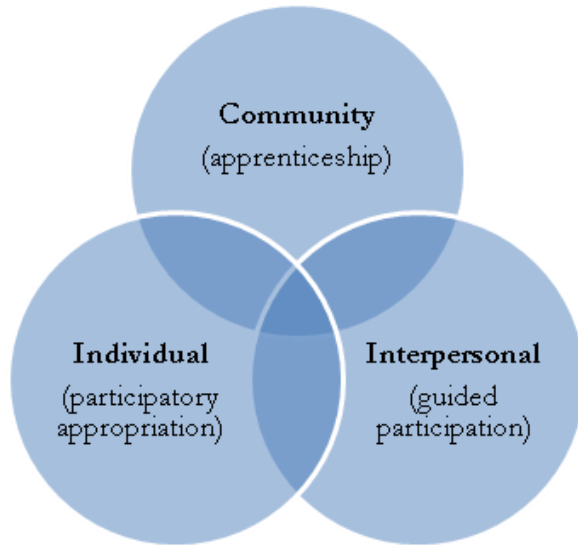


Figure 2. Graphic representation of Rogoff's planes of analysis. This graphic illustrates the ways each plane overlaps and informs the other two while providing a way to foreground a single plane of analysis.

Rogoff's background in psychology is evident in her developmental perspectives on learning, but her 1995 piece discusses the sociocultural nature of learning in ways that move beyond strictly developmental considerations. Rooting her ideas in the significance of culture, Rogoff asserts that observing people's participation in sociocultural activities enables researchers to describe the nature of their learning and development. While I recognize there are psychological underpinnings and stage theory implications embedded in the word "development," I use it here because Rogoff uses the term; however, her focus on culture and sociocultural contexts of learning broadens notions of development beyond a strict, psychological interpretation.

Rogoff bases her ideas on Vygotsky (1978) and Dewey (1938), but her articulated theory of learning has been primarily informed by her examination of

children in community-based learning situations. As I argue further in this chapter, my use of her theory as a lens on teacher learning in formal education settings enables me to contribute theoretically, by examining these planes as a lens on adult learning in school-based contexts. My appreciation of Rogoff's theory led me to incorporate it into the study at the question level, consequently informing data collection and analysis. Accordingly, I describe her theory here to illuminate these design decisions.

Community Plane

While each plane supports an analysis of people's participation in culturally organized activity, the community plane emphasizes the institutional structures that support or restrain learners' participation. Rogoff asserts learners' activities are goal-oriented, often structured in ways that allow more experienced others to support newcomers' participation. Thus, apprenticeship is the metaphor that best describes learning interactions on this plane, a perspective that enables researchers to see the ways newcomers and experts take active roles to obtain or give support. While communities can overlap in location, members, and times, I focused on the school community as a particular level of community pertinent to teachers' learning. I examined the ways teachers' roles played out in relation to the institutional factors of their particular school context.

The community plane demands an examination of the institutional structures and activities that both *emerge from* certain communities and *support* those communities. Institutional structures, values, resources, and constraints inherent in activities are more visible from this plane of analysis, enabling researchers to see the

organizing purposes behind certain activities, the roles people play, and the tools people use to get things done.

Interpersonal Plane

The interpersonal plane corresponds to the ways people work together and learn from one another. Guided participation is the metaphor Rogoff uses to describe this plane, but not as a way to differentiate between interactions that are guided from those that are not. Rather, she uses the term in a broader sense to encompass interactions of all sorts: everyday happenings, organized instruction, and face-to-face or tangential exchanges. From this perspective, learners' participation always entails some sort of engagement, which may or may not be externally visible. Thus, a person may observe and mentally follow the activities of another without saying or doing anything to contribute directly. Rogoff would say this constitutes participation, because the person's attention shaped his/her thinking. Similarly, a teacher who is simply envisioning a lesson for her students participates in cultural activity shaped by her observation and conversation with fellow teachers, her knowledge of the students she will teach, and the cultural/societal values for understanding a given concept (typified in standards). Thus, this teacher's thinking and planning is said to be *guided participation*.

This demonstrates the way that participation can be defined in terms of the wider context of cultural resources, constraints, and interactions that guide any work or activity in a given setting. Rogoff explains, "Guided participation is...an interpersonal process in which people manage their own and others' roles, and structure situations (whether by facilitating or limiting access) in which they

participate in cultural activities” (p. 148). Studies on the nature of learning can thus be expanded beyond identifying developmental changes to tracing the origins and evolution of learners’ ideas.

Individual Plane

The individual plane enables an examination of how learners transform their understandings of activities *through* participation (Rogoff, 1995). This participation subsequently shapes the responsibilities and identities learners take up. Rogoff uses the metaphor of participatory appropriation for the individual plane because it is through participation that individuals both take from and contribute to the meanings, actions, or ideas of others.

The term “appropriation” is a deliberate choice; Rogoff contrasts it with internalization, a concept that implies distance between the learner and the social context, or a kind of boundary from external to internal understandings. Internalization suggests a static, “container-oriented” notion of knowledge, as opposed to appropriation, which is an active process. Analysis through the individual plane thus necessitates a focus on the shifting, dynamic qualities of an individual’s participation in an activity. There is no boundary between knowing and not knowing. Instead, an individual’s participation (evidenced in thinking, remembering, planning, acting, etc.) constitute the knowing and learning. Examining the changes in participants’ roles and their accommodations to others’ understandings within participation and shared goals are several ways to conceptualize learning on this plane.

Tying it All Together: Justification for this Study

I presented the graphic in Figure 3 at the beginning of this chapter to visually represent the ideas informing my study. I present it again here to contextualize the literature review in relation to my study before concluding this chapter with a brief discussion of each component.

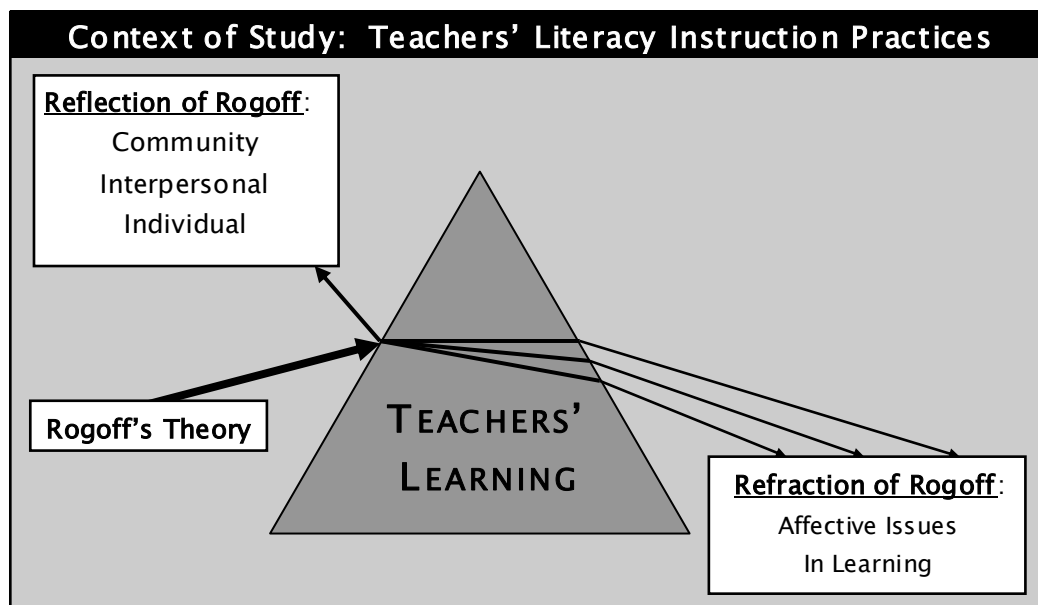


Figure 3. Visual representation of conceptual framework for this study. This graphic demonstrates how teachers' learning was in the context of their literacy instruction practices, and shows the dual purposes of Rogoff's sociocultural theory.

Teachers' Literacy Instruction Practices became the context in which I saw teachers' learning experiences unfold. School values for balanced literacy and workshop-based pedagogy meant that teachers focused their learning efforts along these trajectories.

Teachers' Learning was the focus of this study, the phenomenon of interest. Because I took a sociocultural perspective on learning, I presented literature supporting these ideas.

Rogoff's Theory was the theoretical lens I shone on my data, informing both the structure and analysis of the study. As I discuss further in Chapter 5, I used metaphors of reflection and refraction to explicate my findings.

Interpretive studies such as this can shape theoretical development (Borko, Whitcomb & Byrnes, 2008), and Rogoff's theory has not yet seen direct research applications within teacher learning and school-based situations (B. Rogoff, personal communication, January 11, 2011). Thus, I argue that this study makes a multilayered contribution to the field. First, it is theoretical in nature, enabling an extension of sociocultural theory within contexts of teacher practice. My study is also practical, contributing directly to the work teachers do every day, because it supported teachers' collaborative, inquiry-based learning efforts (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999a; 2009).

Studies such as mine contribute to the field in several ways, by a) documenting and supporting the inquiry process of two teachers exploring questions of their literacy instruction practices, b) describing teachers' learning in ways that constitute both mirrors and windows for other teachers, and c) detailing the ways theory (specifically a sociocultural theory of learning) is actualized in teachers' practice. Finally, my study has the potential to contribute theoretically by describing and interpreting learning outside the metaphors and theories of analysis presently evident in Rogoff's work.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND DESIGN

In this chapter, I explain the methodological considerations supporting my study to answer the following questions:

1. What is the nature of teachers' learning experiences related to their literacy instruction practices, contextualized within an inquiry process?
2. How do teachers' learning experiences reflect and refract the community, interpersonal and individual planes of analysis?

Conceptual Discussion of Methods

Qualitative inquiry was the best way to learn about the issues at the heart of my study because I wanted to study teacher learning at local levels, discerning the meaning teachers attribute to and derive from their learning lives (Barton, Ivanic, Appleby, Hode & Tusting, 2007). I utilized a qualitative case study design (Stake, 1995; 2005) informed by ethnographic methods (Wolcott, 2008), which enabled me to examine teachers' learning at local and personal levels. This supported an in-depth and nuanced understanding of the multiple interactions informing teachers' learning.

I value the ways qualitative methodologies enable interpretations of the educational world in ways that make it possible to “say what cannot be said through numbers—or at least not said well” (Eisner, 1991, p. 202). Quantification does not allow for the complexity of social interactions, and glosses over the socially constructed understandings of individuals, which I perceive as critical to educational change at local levels.

Characteristics of Qualitative Case Study

In further describing the qualities of my study, I rely on Merriam (2002), who synthesizes the key characteristics of interpretive qualitative studies. She explains that qualitative research a) directs attention to local knowledge and meaning, b) relies on the researcher as the primary tool for data collection and analysis, c) consists of an inductive process designed to generate themes, categories, and concepts about the world, which can subsequently inform educational theories, and d) is richly descriptive. Ethnographic case studies enable an emic, or insider's, perspective on matters of interest, which holds potential to inform significant educational questions, generate informative theories, and further the field's understandings about teaching and learning.

Case study gives researchers the ability to study the complexity of unique occurrences, the explanation of which often resonates for individuals outside the case (Stake, 1995, p. 7). The strength of case study research lies in the particular, and in the ability of the researcher to interpret and preserve the “multiple realities” (p. 12) of what is happening. Study of a single case does not support generalizations to further cases, and does not even necessarily seek to present the (T)ruth of a single case. However, the potential within the multiple perspectives and interpretation of a case makes it possible for readers to reflect further. This function of research then is “not necessarily to map and conquer to world, but to sophisticate the beholding of it” (p. 43).

Although qualitative research does not provide for direct generalizations to broader populations, its strengths justify its use (Eisner, 1991; Erickson, 1986;

Lincoln & Guba, 1994; Stake, 2005). People generalize and learn via many avenues, and use images and ideas to synthesize information (Eisner, 1991). Qualitative research that effectively describes, interprets, and critiques can inform our own lives and learning. Erickson (1986) argues that the general lies in the particular: what is learned from a particular case can be transferred to similar situations. This particular meaning effectively informs personal understandings, as Stake (2005) explains thus,

...case researchers, like others, pass along to readers some of their personal meanings of events and relationship—and fail to pass along others. They know that the reader, too, will add and subtract, invent and shape—reconstructing the knowledge in ways that leave it...more likely to be personally useful (p. 442).

Each of these authors supports qualitative research as a valid way of knowing. Qualitative research thus operates as both mirrors and windows onto understandings of educational contexts, allowing for reflections on the past even as readers envision ways forward. These perspectives are important considerations for my study, since by studying two teachers' learning in their particular classrooms, I anticipate the possibility that these perspectives might both encourage and sustain teacher learning in broader contexts.

Ethnographic Ways of Seeing and Knowing

Although this study is particularly informed by qualitative case study methods, it is also influenced by an ethnographic perspective. Ethnography is a distinct type of qualitative research derived from anthropology, often emerging from questions necessitating scientific descriptions of individual cultures (Wolcott, 1982; 2008). It is a disciplined, systematic process of inquiry about human social activity, which enables the researcher to construct experientially and contextually rich, first-

hand descriptions of cultural groups. These descriptions can also inform comparative understandings of similar phenomena across settings and contexts.

Ethnography emphasizes holistic ways of seeing and knowing, and traces interrelated elements to construct more complete understandings. It is systematic and inductive, meaning that it does not start with hypotheses but expects them to emerge from the analysis of large data sets, compiled over a significant length of time. Many researchers (Merriam, 2002; Spindler, 1982; Wolcott, 2008) emphasize that ethnographic studies incorporate sociocultural ideas into data analysis, such that the data can be informed by the larger social structures influencing observed behavior. This kind of work takes time; ethnography involves a sustained commitment by the researcher to understand local meanings (Wolcott, 2008).

Precedents in the Literature

Many researchers have used a qualitative approach in examining the relationships between teacher learning and practice/praxis in literacy instruction (Harste & Burke, 1977; Heydon, Hibbert, & Iannacci, 2004; Wold, 2003). Here, I briefly synthesize some of these studies to substantiate qualitative case study and ethnographic methods as a means of informing my own study.

Researchers of teacher learning advocate mindfulness about teachers' ultimate goal: student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Hoffman-Kipp, Artiles, & López-Torres, 2003; Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992). Ethnographic case studies of one teacher and nine of her students supported an examination of teachers' knowledge and beliefs about students' thinking and problem-solving (Carpenter & Fennema, 1992), enabling a more critical examination of achievement for both students and

teachers. Similarly, ethnography and case study methods served Wells and Chang-Wells (1992) in articulating the social influences of teachers' perceptions of achievement and the ways teachers resisted mandates that did not serve the interests of their students.

Lampert's (2003) year-long, ethnographic self-study inquired into the complexities of teaching mathematical problem-solving to her fourth-grade students. She found video-ethnography and artifact collection created such a large data corpus over the course of a year that her analysis process became one of zooming in for close, detailed looks at certain situations and zooming out for a larger analysis of the big pictures of teaching. Through this work, Lampert derived and elaborated a triad model of teaching practice between teacher, student, and content.

Finally, an ethnographic study conducted by a professor and a new teacher demonstrates how inquiry can serve complex questions of teacher learning and development (Bullough & Baughman, 1997). Bullough, a university professor and Baughman, a beginning teacher, conducted a collaborative, longitudinal case study examining the nature and process of becoming an experienced teacher. Together, they constructed narratives to describe Baughman's teaching experiences, utilizing personal narrative and classroom observations to inform their understandings of teacher development. In describing their research methodology, they explained that data analysis and interpretation was an ongoing process of "creating and testing meaning conversationally" (p. 11). Their prolonged engagement over ten years and rich description of both their research relationship and personal experiences/contexts provides readers with the chance to "see themselves" in a case

study of this design, wherein they can transfer the image and inspiration of such a careful look at teaching.

Each of these studies provides a context and framework whereby I have imagined and envisioned my own study. I value the emic meaning-perspectives and sociocultural influences of ethnography, and the close ways of seeing and knowing that ethnography purports. To that end, ethnographic considerations evident in my study's methodology include: 1) observation of participants in the settings contextualizing their meaning-making, 2) close, detailed field notes describing these actions, 3) interviews to support my understanding of participants' meanings, 4) document/artifact collection, and 5) immersion in the field over time.

Having provided a background of educational studies with methodological considerations similar to those in my own study, I move now to an explanation of the context for this study to support an integrated explanation of the study's design.

Site Selection

Site selection for this study was both convenient and purposive (Merriam, 1998, p. 62). I recruited participants from Desert Vistas Elementary School (DVE)², a public elementary school of 870 students located in the southwestern United States. It is comprised of self-contained kindergarten through grade six classrooms. Philosophically, the school aligns itself with Deweyan perspectives (DVE website, 2010) emphasizing authenticity in education (Putnam & Borko, 2000). As a result, the school emphasizes literacy instruction practices of the kind discussed in Chapter

² All names of places are pseudonyms

2. This includes literature engagements and a workshop approach to learning, with institutional commitments to developing students' identities as readers and writers.

Although public, the school's philosophical differences compared to other schools in the district make it an appealing option for more than a hundred families who have their children there on open-enrollment agreements.³ This fact, combined with the principal's ongoing negotiation of district policies, makes it a school where teachers experience both the freedom and expectation to teach holistically. I taught second and fourth grades at DVE for three years, from 2005-2008, which gave me the benefit of insider's knowledge and a personal history with its staff. I knew the educational philosophies informing the teaching and learning there, and perceived it to be a school site where I could see teachers' learning unfold relatively free of typical programmatic interventions. As such, this school comprised both a convenient and purposive site selection for my study.

Participant Selection

My interest in teacher learning necessitated purposive participant selection; I chose teachers who I knew to be thoughtful about their literacy instruction and learning. It was important that participants felt willing to take up questions of interest to them, in self-directed efforts to further their own learning. I also anticipated that the social influence of my own presence, as I interviewed and interrupted their classroom lives, might serve as an impetus for these teachers to more closely examine their questions, beliefs, and ideas about literacy instruction and

³ Arizona offers open-enrollment options for families as a means to increase school quality.

students. Thus, teachers needed to be willing to “host” this (at times, uncomfortable) inquiry into their learning and teaching lives.

Because I wanted to study the learning process of established teachers pursuing holistic, literature-based reading instruction practices, it was important that participants have similar curricular aims and an existing relationship with one another. This supported trust and affability in the face of potentially revealing conversations. It was also essential that teachers be willing to share and learn from one another, inquiring into their practice with the same measure of curiosity I brought to the project. The two participant-teachers who joined this study were more than appropriate selections in light of these criteria. One final factor influencing selection was my desire to study the phenomenon of learning and inquiry alongside teachers I admire. Edelsky (1993) speaks to the importance of this in designing collaborative research partnerships that are truly collaborative. Her work emphasizes how critical it is to find mutually intersecting interests between researchers and teachers, emphasizing the necessity of relationships between teachers and researchers that exist outside of and beyond the research project (Edelsky & Boyd, 1993, p. 7; Hudelson & Lindfors, 1993).

Jean Joseph taught first grade at Desert Vistas, and has done so since the school opened its doors in 2002. Prior to that, her teaching career spanned several schools across several northwestern and southwestern states. During her 24 years of teaching, she has taught every elementary grade. Having taught in the same school as Jean (although not on the same grade-level team), I knew her to be a master-teacher. Her passion for teaching, her joy in being with children, and her obvious

personal commitment to her own learning made her a teaching mentor I wanted to study alongside. When I approached Jean about participating, I asked her to help me consider the choice of one other teacher with whom we both could work. We chose Annemarie.

Annemarie Thau teaches next door to Jean. At the time of this study, she was in her sixth year of teaching. She began her teaching career as a flexible hire, which meant she was recruited at the district level under the contractual agreement to go wherever the district needed her. She was subsequently assigned to a second-grade position in a Title 1 school implementing a Reading First intervention program. After two years at that school, she transferred to DVE out of a sense that “something was missing” from her teaching life (Annemarie, personal communication, September 9, 2010). At the time of this study, Annemarie was in her fourth year of teaching first-grade at DVE. I describe the participants in further detail in Chapter 4, to illustrate their learning and teaching lives within the contexts of their classrooms.

Teachers signed IRB (Institutional Review Board) approval (Appendix A) allowing me to use their real names, but I chose to use pseudonyms for ethical reasons. Primarily, it was important that I protect teachers’ students, who were designated as participants due to the videotaping during data collection. I secured parental permission for all first-grade students (Appendix B) and ensured confidentiality by using pseudonyms for all potential means of identifying the students. IRB approval is included in Appendix C.

Design Considerations

Little (2002) writes, “in whatever ways relevant knowledge and spaces for teacher learning are evident in practice, one should be able to see and hear them in some way” (p. 920). Believing that I would be able to see teacher learning evident in their practice, I designed this study so that I could describe and interpret the processes of teachers’ learning through a) in-depth analysis of activities and b) an examination of those activities across time. I collected data for these teachers beginning in July 2010, proceeding throughout the fall semester to December 2010. This timeframe enabled me to trace the evolution of teachers’ learning as evidenced and influenced by classroom events, students’ talk, and participants’ conversational reflections.

Data Collection

The questions underlying my study relate to both the nature of teachers’ learning, and the way teachers’ learning reflects and refracts Rogoff’s (1995) three planes of analysis. These questions led me to generate data through three primary methods of data collection: 1) classroom observation, 2) participant observation in inquiry group conversations, and 3) teacher interviews. Data collection from these sources allowed for triangulation and confirmation of data themes, while constituting multiple opportunities to see teachers’ learning.

Classroom observation. Classroom observations were a significant tool enabling me to ground teachers’ learning in what they did and said as literacy instructors. I conducted bi-weekly classroom observations of teachers’ reading workshops, typically on Monday and Wednesday mornings. These observations

lasted 1-2 hours per teacher and enabled me to trace discernable patterns between each teacher's classroom practice and the things they shared during inquiry group meetings (the structure of which I explain next). I video-recorded most of the classroom observations (it took several weeks to collect all IRB permission forms from children) and took field notes of all classroom observations on my laptop.

Using my laptop and video-recording equipment meant that I usually stayed in a single location during teachers' workshops. IRB procedures directed me to videotape from the back of teachers' classrooms to minimize the possibility of children being identified, which shaped my observer role. I clipped a wireless microphone to teachers to pick up their talk as they moved around the room, and kept the camera on them. This enabled me to examine teachers' words and interactions with both large and small groups of students, while minimizing student exposure on camera.

I committed myself to careful and descriptive field notes during my time in teachers' classrooms, keeping in mind the ethnographic commitment to "thick description" of settings and events (Geertz, 1972). From the time I stepped into classrooms until I left, I focused my researcher's eye on not only the sights and sounds of these classrooms, but the affect and nuance of teachers' words and actions towards students. I diligently recorded these observations as best I could in real-time. A sample of my field notes is in Appendix D.

At the outset of the study, I focused on the big picture of what was happening in teachers' classrooms. To that end, I sought to capture the talk and interactions occurring during teachers' reading workshops. I scripted all field notes

in a two-column format, capturing the words and actions of an observation on one side of the paper, and my own thoughts, feelings, or interpretations on the other side. Within hours of observations, I combed these field notes to fill in the gaps, add additional observations, and record questions for teachers that informed my interviews and inquiry group interactions with them. Thus, my field notes supported a recursive and reflective process, enabling me to proceed in both deeper and more focused directions as I continued the data collection process. Teachers conducted a kind of member check by reading approximately half of the field notes from classroom observations to support their reflections and further confirm the accuracy of my field notes. As I received their feedback, I refined the field note format to more specifically portray and enhance an understanding of teachers' individual learning trajectories, which I describe in Chapter 4.

Inquiry group conversations. Jean, Annemarie, and I met together weekly to converse about their learning. These inquiry group meetings were an hour in length and gave us opportunities to converse about their literacy instruction and learning themes in an informal manner. The structure of these meetings evolved over the semester, but included conversation, quick-writes, analysis of student talk, and a “workshop” atmosphere where we examined classroom transcripts and discussed our ideas. I audio-recorded and transcribed these conversations within a week of their occurrence. This enabled me to trace participation and apprenticeship roles evident in the community and interpersonal planes of analysis.

Teachers' reflections and conversations during these meetings guided and subsequently supported more focused data collection; as the study progressed, I

shifted the focus of my classroom observations based on what teachers said they wanted to better understand about themselves or their students. For example, Annemarie said she was focusing her learning efforts on guided reading groups (personal communication, October 15, 2010). Once she mentioned this, I paid careful attention to her teaching in those groups, instead of field noting about the classroom as a whole.

Teacher interviews. I adopted an interview structure modeled after Seidman's (2006) three-interview format. The first interview elicited a life-history tour of participants' educational experiences and journeys to teaching (Seidman, 2006; Spradley, 1979). This provided context for participants' experiences leading up to their current environments and ideas. The second interview provided details of the experience under study by asking participants to reconstruct their learning experiences. This interview consisted of "day in the life" kinds of questions, as I solicited the details of the events upon which participants based their opinions or ideas. The final interview elicited participants' reflection on the meaning of their experiences, "addressing the intellectual and emotional connections between the participants' work and life" (Seidman, 2006, p. 18). This series of in-depth interviews built on one another to create increasingly insightful data sets. Seidman's interview structure is most appropriate for studies utilizing interview as the main data collection technique. However, my examination of such an "internal" phenomenon as learning made it important for me to elicit participants' experiences in direct ways, which supported the observable evidence of learning within their teaching.

Appendix E includes the interview questions I developed, based on Seidman's interview protocol.

According to Spindler (1982), conducting good interviews is like conducting a good conversation; it involves listening and asking questions that lead to meaningful answers. I "conversed" with participants once a month, for a total of six interviews (3 per teacher) during the semester-long study. Table 1 shows the interview schedule and dates. I recorded and transcribed all interviews, which ultimately served as the primary source for investigating the nature of teachers' learning experiences and goals.

Table 1

Interview Schedule

Participant	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3
Jean	9/3/10	10/15/10	12/6/10
Annemarie	9/10/10	10/15/10	12/9/10

Interviews enabled me to understand teachers' own perspectives on their learning processes and discern these perspectives away from the social contexts of inquiry group conversations. While there were many other opportunities for informal interactions with teachers, these formal interviews helped me ascertain the nature of teachers' learning from their own perspective. Additionally, they gave me an opportunity to more clearly discern their learning on the individual plane (Rogoff, 1995.)

Other means of data collection. Besides my primary means of data collection through classroom observations, inquiry conversations, and interviews, I invited teachers' reflections and wrote researcher memos to construct an understanding of teachers' learning experiences. Teachers also used reflection journals and digital voice recorders to make note of emerging ideas or record students' talk for later analysis. These reflections provided valuable insight into their ongoing meaning-making processes. I requested that teachers reflect as often as they could, but did not set a specific structure or expectation for these reflections. Teachers used the recorders as they had time, but most often shared their reflections orally during inquiry meetings. On occasion, teachers wrote reflections directly on a transcript of a specific classroom observation and returned them to me, later. Teachers each completed three or four of these written responses to my field noted observations of their classrooms.

Researcher memos enabled me to connect research themes across various data forms and constituted a process of both data collection and analysis. My memos included topics such as the structure and evolution of inquiry group conversations, the circuitous learning paths between talk and action, and the various tensions I was negotiating as a new researcher. These written records helpfully "froze" these moments of tension in time, allowing for reflection and fresh perspectives as I reviewed them later.

Shifts in data collection. There were discernable shifts in the data collection process that were a natural outcome of the interaction between research

plans and research realities. Table 2 presents a summary of these departures from the plan and I offer a brief explanation to justify these deviations.

Table 2

Shifts in Data Collection

Shift	Time frame	Explanation
Time	Early September	Moved from 45 minutes/day in each teachers' class to 1.5 hours per day
Reflective methods	Throughout study	Multiple ways of conducting inquiry group meetings (including quick-writes, conversation, lesson-rehearsal, and oral reflection)
Location	Throughout study	Tried meeting in teachers' classrooms vs. a coffee-shop
Sharing field notes	Late September	I offered copies of field notes/classroom transcripts as reflection points for teachers' learning efforts. I did this for two-thirds of the total classroom observations throughout the semester.

Time. Settling into the research site and achieving an observation schedule that worked for teachers were significant factors influencing the data collection schedule and procedures. At the beginning of the year, both teachers held their reading workshop times during the first time slot of the morning, which meant that I had to divide my time between their classrooms. I spent 45 minutes in Jean's classroom and 45 minutes in Annemarie's classroom before their commonly scheduled morning recess. This only allowed me to see about half of each teacher's reading workshop time. After several weeks, Annemarie offered to swap her reading

workshop and writing workshop times so that I could observe a full reading workshop in each classroom two times per week. After that, I observed in Jean's room for 90 minutes before morning recess, and in Annemarie's room for 75 minutes after recess. We revisited this arrangement halfway through the semester and found it was working well.

Reflective methods. I experimented with different ways of eliciting teachers' perspectives on their learning throughout the semester as I took note of the patterns of talk that emerged from our weekly conversations. I did this because, while I valued the collaborative nature of making sense of things together, I also wanted to discern the ways teachers identified and described their individual thinking. Thus, I sometimes asked teachers to quick-write their thoughts before sharing orally. I also encouraged them to use digital voice recorders I purchased for them to document their ongoing thinking during the week, when I was not present. While teachers never directly played their audio-recorded reflections for me, they did say that the act of recording things helped them remember things they wanted to share during the inquiry conversations.

Location. Time and place were important considerations in our inquiry group meetings, as I tried to figure out if our conversations were significantly different based on our location. Occasionally we met in a coffee shop instead of a classroom, which seemed to provide a welcome break to the stresses of teaching and loosened the conversational tension of a "research meeting." Other times, it was easiest for teachers that we meet directly after school. On these occasions, we sat

around a student-height round table in one or the other of teachers' classrooms. These meetings were focused, but also prone to interruption from others.

Sharing field notes. Possibly the most significant shift in data collection was a change in the ways I asked teachers to reflect on their learning. At the beginning of the study, their descriptions were often general in nature and disconnected from specific examples. My committee chair suggested I give teachers copies of my field notes from their classroom observations, and ask them to reflect directly on actual happenings. While teachers were too busy to give me written reflections on every transcript, this shift brought a welcome focus to their oral reflections about what was happening in their classrooms and in their learning. It took some effort to make my field notes ready for teachers to see, but this clean-up provided me with an additional opportunity to think through the data.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was iterative, beginning with my emergent thinking at the start of the project and continuing through the writing process. In describing my analysis, I first begin with the overall, ongoing analysis work before describing the steps of my analysis process.

Phase one: Ongoing analysis. This phase of analysis was ever-present during the study, and was a thinking process informed primarily through writing in the form of a) field notes, b) researcher memos, c) vignettes, and d) transcription.

Writing was a critical support to my sense-making process, and it took on different forms. My field notes format, which I detailed earlier, enabled me to identify emergent themes, while memos supported an exploration of those themes.

The analysis column on my field notes supported my reflections about my positionality in the research and helped me think analytically about the data (Erickson, 1986; Maxwell, 2004; Peshkin, 1988). Memos proved invaluable in helping me process the tensions I experienced in the research process as I juggled multiple roles of researcher, teacher, friend, colleague, and student. Writing about these experiences gave me some perspective on these issues, and helped me identify interesting data trails.

As I raised issues and reflected on them, I chose themes that struck me as significant and composed vignettes as a way to explore those themes. Vignette composition at this stage was a process of combing the data into a story form that gave me creative space to see beyond the questions I had. Vignette composition supported other analysis purposes, too, as I describe in the next section.

This iterative analysis informed my data collection efforts. Each of the shifts in data collection that I documented earlier has discernable threads in my memos, because I spent time writing about issues that came up. In addition to writing, I “tested meaning conversationally” (Bullough & Baughman, 1997), in exchanges with conversations with my advisor and critical friends. These gave me multiple opportunities to articulate evolving data trends and were an essential part of my ongoing analysis work.

I spent hundreds of hours transcribing interviews and weekly inquiry group conversations within a week of their occurrence, an effort that proved invaluable in giving me a second “real-time” understanding of the nature of the interactions.

Transcription enabled me to “read between the lines” of what teachers said because my ongoing thinking informed the re-hearing of those conversations.

I appreciated the flexibility that qualitative methods allowed for this study, in providing space for the emergent nature and un-anticipated shifts in teachers’ inquiry. This phase of the analysis work was helpful in analyzing parts of the data in ways that moved me into better understandings of the whole.

Phase two: Modified analytic induction. The next phase of analysis recursively moved me between larger understandings about the data corpus to the parts of which it was comprised. I conducted a modified analytic induction (Erickson, 1986), which allowed for both inductive and deductive thinking, beginning with a focus on patterns and themes throughout the entire data corpus. I continued reading and re-reading the data corpus in its entirety, getting to know it deeply.

Learning timelines. One of my first forays into synthesizing learning themes was to chart teachers’ major events and the ideas that seemed to emerge for each of them throughout the semester. I composed these learning timelines by thinking broadly about teachers’ learning events while examining the data in detail for what teachers said about these events. I put these raw data into rough timelines that gave a chronological overview of the semester (Appendix F).

To confirm these themes with teachers, I used our final inquiry group meeting to have teachers write about self-identified learning themes that figured prominently into their perceptions of the study. They wrote reflections on their learning and shared them orally. At the end of that meeting, I gave teachers my

timelines and asked them to reflect on them individually before I interviewed them for the final time. Several days later, teachers orally reviewed these timelines and member checked my major themes as part of the final interview. My timelines corresponded well with their self-reported learning themes and teachers confirmed the accuracy of these ideas. These timelines were a helpful starting point in constructing the case narratives for each teacher's learning experiences, which constitute a major part of Chapter 4.

Assertions, vignettes, and discussion. After constructing the learning timelines, I read the data corpus again, writing assertions, or ideas I felt I “knew for sure.” I submitted this long list of assertions to ongoing readings and comparisons in the data, to confirm or disconfirm their truthfulness.

Vignette construction was an ongoing process in this analysis phase, one that helped me stay close to the data. I mined teachers' words and conversational turns for examples that supported assertions. At times, vignette construction served an analytic purpose for me; the process of writing about my data enabled me to think about it with greater care and depth. Ultimately, vignettes proved to be a helpful way of discussing my findings, for it allowed me to not only synthesize teachers' words into a readable format, but also display small moments in the larger data set that supported prominent themes. I did not take great literary license with these vignettes, staying close to the data to explain teachers' learning interactions. Each vignette presented in this study is based on actual conversations/events.

Phase three: The dance between inductive and deductive methods.

Modified analytic induction works from the data corpus to generate themes (Erickson, 1986), so up to that point in my analysis work, I had made efforts not to “impose” theory on my data. However, the volume and length of my vignettes forced me to find a way to focus my explanation of the data, so I reexamined Rogoff’s planes of analysis as an organizational framework for presenting my findings. I continued composing assertions and vignettes, but moved back to a closer examination of Rogoff’s explanation of the planes to inform this work, choosing data sets that reflected Rogoff’s ideas. I gave careful thought about which parts of my data seemed to fit with her ideas, and which parts did not.

Atlas.ti. Up to this point, I have described my analytic process in a fairly straightforward manner, glossing the stops and starts that took place along the way. In fact, the process felt difficult and overwhelming, and it was during one of these many points of tension that I turned to a data analysis software program, Atlas.ti, to discern its usefulness in helping me manage the data. Although I had assertions and vignettes, I felt I was “losing the forest for the trees” in my process. Atlas.ti did not fix this issue, although it did make it easier to code and search across the data. I felt confident about shifting to coding in Atlas.ti because I had a sense of the data as a whole through my inductive work of reading and re-reading the data corpus. This made me willing to move to a more deductive way of looking at the data, in an effort to gain focus. I explored the coding capabilities of Atlas.ti, using open codes to identify themes I was already seeing in the data, along with deductive codes from Rogoff’s theory. I coded interviews first because I found them the richest source of

data for what teachers *explicitly said* about their learning. I also coded several inquiry group conversations to confirm themes across a different data source.

Ultimately, coding data in Atlas.ti was peripheral to my process, although helpful in shaping my thinking by confirming and disconfirming patterns I thought were there. Because I had been combing the data for themes and assertions prior to this deductive process, I had a strong sense of how my data was *not* fitting into Rogoff's explanations of learning. This supported my efforts to further explore and tease out these ideas through Atlas.ti and vignette construction. In hindsight, this analysis procedure fit with Erickson's informal advice about data analysis software, that it is most helpful after hunches about patterns have been established (F. Erickson, personal communication, January 14, 2011).

Deciding on the story's direction. Coding and running quote lists in Atlas.ti required that I make different decisions in accessing the data, as I considered Rogoff's theory. Because I began with interviews, I found the individual plane clearly evident in those data, but as I composed vignettes and discussions for that plane, I decided I was telling the "end" of teachers' learning stories. The individual plane was so personal, so core to what teachers were doing as learners, that it seemed an inappropriate place to start in presenting the data. Thus, I re-started my coding efforts with the community plane, to tell the story "from the beginning." Although chronology metaphors only partially represent the process, these were important shifts in the analysis process.

As I stepped away from my work with Atlas.ti to move back into the writing process, I composed descriptive evidence that could tie together assertions and

vignettes in my explanation of reflection/refraction on Rogoff. Vignettes enabled me to bring life to my data, but they could not stand alone. Vignettes always require discussion to further support and tease out the complexity of assertions and vignettes (Erickson, 1986).

Conclusions on analysis. This multi-step analysis enabled me to both see what Rogoff's theory revealed about teachers' learning process, and contribute to Rogoff's theory by examining phenomena that lay outside her articulation of the planes of analysis. This iterative analysis allowed me to move beyond simple confirmation of Rogoff's theory and "speak back" to her ideas as I ascertained their relationship to teachers' learning experiences in practice.

Considerations of Validity and Reliability

All researchers constitute a lens on their data, but qualitative researchers are especially cognizant of the ways we influence the settings and participation within the sites of our research and work. I recognize that my own experiences and values constitute the lens through which others understand and interpret events (Merriam, 2002). The personal dimension always influences qualitative work and it is impossible to eliminate researcher influence (Eisner, 1991; Maxwell, 2004). While it is a common understanding that every researcher has a set of experiences that determines how s/he views the data, Maxwell states, "the goal in a qualitative study is not to eliminate this influence, but to understand it and use it productively" (p. 109). These ideas necessitate that I articulate my own positionality in the research, staying transparent about the ways I influence it. I view my responsibility toward my readers as one of disclosing these issues, recognizing the importance of my integrity to

communicate my conclusions with a clear-minded view on who I am and how I influence the interactions and situations of my research.

Researcher positionality and roles. During this study, I was a full-time doctoral student at Arizona State University pursuing a degree in Curriculum & Instruction, with an emphasis in Language & Literacy. In this position, I was both a student pursuing my research interests and a teacher to a class of undergraduate students in their reading/language arts methods block. It was the first time I had taught undergraduates as a doctoral student, having previously taught master's courses largely comprised of practicing teachers. I found my undergraduate students' questions, emerging out of their own practicum experiences with young readers, shaped my own curiosity about the way Annemarie and Jean taught their emergent and early readers. I brought this perspective with me to my data collection efforts, seeking better ways to articulate to my undergraduate students the competence and tact (Van Manen, 1995) evident in my participant-teachers' literacy instruction practices.

My own years as a teacher at Desert Vistas gave me an appreciation for that school and the space it afforded me to meet students' needs. I have already explained the ways these factors influenced site and participant selection. As an insider to this community, I wanted to examine more closely the learning work in a place that respected teachers' professionalism and holistic literacy instruction practices. My previous relationships with participants enabled me to begin the project with some level of mutual trust as the participant-teachers and I negotiated our roles together.

My teaching years have given me an understanding of how complex teaching is, the ways it pushes on the margins of one's life. I wanted to somehow compensate teachers for their investment of time to meet weekly and think so carefully about their learning. This desire comes from the recognition that research alongside teachers must do more than simply take what their classrooms have to offer; it must also give (Hudelson & Lindfors, 1993). I chose to pursue this goal by volunteering in teachers' classrooms during the data-collection semester, helping in any way teachers needed. This help took on various forms, including working with small groups of children or one-on-one, conducting reading conferences, putting up/taking down bulletin boards, running copies, and collating homework folders. I tried to separate my research time from my volunteer time by coming during another day of the week to help, or spending afternoons assisting after morning observations.

At the outset of the study, I naively believed I could “switch hats” between researcher, helper, teacher, friend—that I could somehow play single roles on different days (“researcher” on Mondays and Wednesdays, “helper” on Fridays, “friend” and “fellow teacher” all the time.) I understood intellectually that we never play a single role (Ainley, 1999), but felt compelled to put discernable boundaries on a project I felt could otherwise consume me. My video camera and laptop proved helpful in this; while I was perched on a low chair in the corner of these classrooms, I was fully researcher. While my presence largely went unnoticed by the children during these hours, my engagement with them during “helper” times endeared them to me in special ways. I was the least active in my participatory roles during

classroom observations and was a participant-observer in every other aspect of my time during this research.

Validity and trustworthiness. Maxwell's (2005) list of validity tests encourages researchers to examine methods and procedures carefully to see the ways they can support validity. I actively tested the validity of my conclusions by staying open to disconfirming evidence, and submitting conclusions to others outside of my study (critical friends), who provided me with alternative ways to examine these ideas. Member checks gave me a way to share the ongoing construction of the study's findings with participant-teachers. As I already described, I informally member checked with participants throughout the data collection process, through conversation, interviews, field-note reviews, and learning timelines. I discussed my findings with each teacher to garner their perspectives during data analysis. These efforts enabled me to confirm the trustworthiness of my work.

Having presented the methodological considerations informing this study, I now share the study contexts and learning narratives for teachers in Chapter 4 before discussing the reflection/refraction of Rogoff's theory in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4

CONTEXT AND TEACHERS' LEARNING NARRATIVES

In this chapter, I answer the question, “*What is the nature of teachers’ learning experiences related to their literacy instruction practices, contextualized within an inquiry process?*”

I begin from the premise that, sociocultural perspectives demand a sense of the environmental, social, and cultural forces at work in teachers’ learning lives (Barton, et al., 2007). To that end, this chapter provides the background and context for the district and school in which teachers worked before presenting narrative portraits of teachers’ learning experiences throughout the semester-long study. I consider this information and the teachers’ narratives to be significant enough to be termed “findings” because they constitute the milieu out of which teachers’ learning emerged.

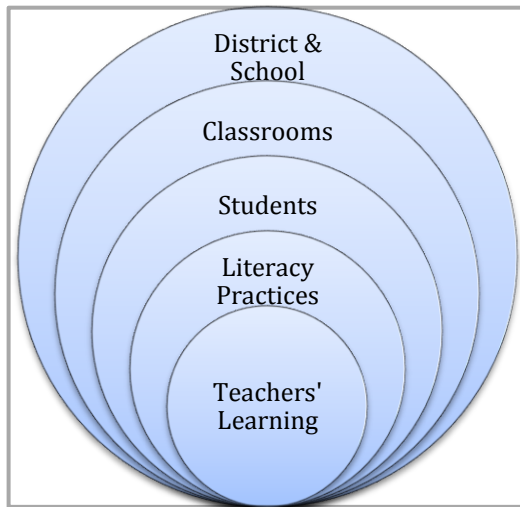


Figure 4: Graphic Representation of Description. This figure illustrates the various contexts deserving explanation in teachers’ learning.

In this ethnographically thick description, I move to the heart of teachers' learning by drawing increasingly smaller circles around the contextual boundaries that shaped their learning experiences: their district and school, their classrooms, students, and finally, their literacy instruction practices (see Figure 4). I also briefly address larger federal and state policies influencing these various contexts.

The School District

Located in the southwestern United States, Saguaro Hills Public School District (SHPSD) is characterized by a somewhat diverse student population. Across the district, cultural ethnicity numbers in 2007 indicated 55% of the student population was Caucasian, 30% Hispanic, and the remaining 15% equally distributed among African American, Asian, and American Indian populations. English was reported as the primary language for 75% of SHPSD students, with Spanish being the second most common language at 23%. Economically advantaged and disadvantaged populations were nearly equal in 2007. Based on federal achievement goals for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)⁴, one-quarter of SHPSD's 87 schools were in Federal School Improvement in 2007, leading to district administrative pressure on school principals for increased AYP. The district's stated mission includes a collective commitment to teach basic skills in all subject areas, develop higher-level thinking through experiential learning in science, social studies, and literature, and clearly define expectations and consequences for performance and behavior (district

⁴ Adequate Yearly Progress refers to a school's ability to meet standards set for testing a certain percentage of students, meeting testing objectives, and meeting attendance rates.

website, accessed December 12, 2010). This language appropriately identifies SHPSD as a district largely focused on basic skills.

In a district principally committed to back-to-basics instruction and efforts to “get students graduated,” the school in which the participant teachers worked was a different kind of school, compared to others in the district.

The School

Desert Vistas Elementary School (DVE) is comprised of kindergarten through grade six classrooms and had the largest student population (880 students) of any other district school during the 2010-2011 school year. Faculty and staff included 33 self-contained classroom teachers from grades K-6, 22 discipline-specific education specialists, and numerous other classroom, cafeteria, and support staff. DVE is the newest school in SHPSD, only in its ninth year of existence at the time of my study. Its construction on the outskirts of the district’s boundaries was due to rapid population growth in the district a decade ago. The resulting housing boom of well-to-do neighborhoods contributed to the school’s relatively uniform racial composition (85% Caucasian, 10% Hispanic, 5% Asian/African American). The school is only slightly more diverse socioeconomically; 20% of the student population are on free/reduced lunch programs while the rest are ineligible. Test scores receive heavy emphasis in SHPSD, and DVE’s scores have not reflected the level of expected AYP in the last few years. Currently, they hold a “Highly Performing” label, despite several years’ effort to reach the highest designation of

“Excelling.”⁵ This fact led to conversations between school administration and faculty as to why this is and how scores might be improved. At the heart of this dialogue is the tension between the values supporting accountability mandates emphasized by SHPSD and those emphasizing authenticity in education, which underlie the school’s overall mission.

DVE is a school that values authentic learning, as defined by Putnam and Borko’s (2000) explanation: authentic activities serve the goal of preparing students to be lifelong and intentional learners. From this perspective, workshop pedagogy (emphasis on trade books over textbooks, conversation-based teaching, and activities emerging out of children’s interests) fuels much of the teaching and learning at DVE. These instructional choices support the school’s philosophical foundations of constructivist learning theory and holistic learning principles. This way of teaching also gives school community members a common language for discussing teaching and learning, which emphasizes children’s identity development as readers, writers, and mathematicians.

Although not officially designated as such, the school considers itself a kind of magnet school, since it accommodates several hundred open-enrollment students from outside school boundaries. This fact, combined with the principal’s consistent negotiation with district policies, makes it a school where teachers have experienced greater amounts of freedom to teach holistically, compared to other SHPSD

⁵ These denotations refer to the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act, which uses AIMS (Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards) data to assign schools with achievement profiles. Schools are subsequently labeled as “Excelling,” “Highly Performing,” “Performing Plus,” “Performing,” “Underperforming,” or after two years, “Failing to Meet Academic Standards.”

teachers. Common school practices include a shared language about reading workshop, writing workshop, and inquiry-based math, and the Desert Vistas “family” hosts many well-attended parent and community events each year. The principal regularly increases teachers’ classroom libraries by providing a yearly book budget and purchases professional development (PD) texts if teachers express an interest in either formal or informal PD opportunities. Professional development is a consistently upheld expectation, and takes place in whole-school, team, and individually motivated efforts.

The two teachers who agreed to participate in my study are both members of the first-grade team, made up of five teachers. While each member of the team claims friendship with others on their team, they are not a group that often works closely to plan or share ideas. Team members all ascribe to similar educational philosophies but teach in ways that vary significantly from one another. Annemarie and Jean teach next door to one another at DVE, and enjoy a friendship borne of a neighborly working relationship. Within the following narrative descriptions of these teachers, I depict their classrooms and students, moving to a closer focus on the observed literacy instruction practices prevalent in their classrooms.

The Teachers: Annemarie

Annemarie Thau is a slim twenty-seven year old Caucasian American teacher with dark brown eyes and a ready smile. She went into the teaching profession “because [she] loves kids” (Interview 1, September 10, 2010)⁶ and this love has

⁶ In citing the sources of quoted material from my participants, I go beyond APA requirements (name, personal communication, date) to maintain the details of various data sources.

stayed with her into this, her sixth year of teaching. She has a patient voice and reasoning tone, but she can get loud and firm in what she laughingly terms her “East Coast personality.” Her strong chin and delicate features deny the need for makeup and her clothes are always stylish. When she reads aloud to students, she varies her voice and uses exaggerated gestures to engage students’ interest, but this is a normal pattern of her conversations with everyone.

Annemarie’s talk towards students is matter-of-fact, but she listens earnestly to the words students say. She modulates her voice to express displeasure and communicate expectations, but does these things more explicitly through a running commentary on what she notices and how helpful it is (or is not!) to their classroom community. Annemarie tries to be firm with her students but confesses she does not always succeed in taking them where she wants to go. Nevertheless, she gives herself and her students grace about this, saying that she knows “they are just six-year-olds and there’s a limit to how long they can sit” (personal communication, September 2, 2010). She frequently uses talk to moralize, for example, on the day she read aloud *The Story of Ferdinand*, she encouraged students to remember, “the important thing about Ferdinand is to be true to yourself....the things that make you different, you should feel proud of that. Ferdinand didn’t care that he wasn’t the strongest or the bravest bull of all.” (Field notes, September 15, 2010). She contextualized any story or experience into language that her students could understand and appreciate.

Annemarie’s Classroom

Annemarie’s classroom is bright and airy, scattered with six round tables sitting just 18 inches off the ground. Only a few child-sized chairs sit around the

perimeter of the room; students kneel on the floor around the low tables to do their work. On each table rests a plastic basket with various picture books, one bowl of crayons, and a cup of yellow, Dixon Ticonderoga pencils: everyone shares. No nameplates are pasted to the tables since the seating changes often. Three strips of printed alphabet tape are secured with clear packing tape for the students who need them.

Just through the door, students' backpacks hang on hooks and an orange bucket with rope handles holds students' lunches. A low rectangular table has baskets of books-on-tape and headphones sitting underneath it. The table doubles as a listening center and a place where students who are having trouble focusing on their work might be sent. The latter case is typically the reason students sit at the table. Along the wall are cubbies, each holding a book bag and math workbook per student, along with library books and the miscellaneous detritus of first-graders' school lives. Above all this is a long, rectangular bulletin board titled "A Perfect Name" where Annemarie has hung up students' painted self-portraits that her students designed. The pictures have been cut around their outline; oddly shaped heads hover on the wall, situated next to the students' name-art. Families who took the time sent in written explanations of how their children were named, and these short narratives have been mounted on yellow paper and stapled up next to the portraits. Further along the wall hangs a four-by-eight foot mural of a storybook scene, painted by one of her classroom parents. Rain gutters filled with books and hand-labeled for various genres stretch around the room.

Opposite the classroom door, the back wall is lined with built-in shelving units—a mix of bookshelves and cupboards. On the door of the largest cabinet hangs a poster where Annemarie has displayed every student’s classroom job in colored library pockets. Shelves are filled with books, either lined up or sitting in buckets labeled Emergent, Early, Transitional, and Fluent—descriptors of reading fluency stages (Taberski, 2000). Annemarie’s desk is pushed up against the wall, an afterthought of a workspace more conducive to piled papers than hosting a seated teacher.

Along the far wall is the meeting area, a cozy grouping of one short, lumpy couch opposite two low armchairs and a wooden rocking chair. All the furniture bears the abuse marks of dirty shoes and curious fingers—there are a few holes and places where the piping is tearing away. A pastel blue rug sits on the floor, grounding the furniture arrangement. Between the armchairs, a large, sturdy easel sits and a smaller easel accommodates the list of names of students who are waiting for reading conferences. Big books sit in a holder beside the couch. Near the meeting area is another mural of a cozy scene of a fireplace and chest. Around this mural, Annemarie has “built” a mantle with brown paper. Although a single whiteboard is mounted on the wall, there is no clear front to this room—I have never seen Annemarie stand at this board to teach. Normally, she leans forward in one of the armchairs or the rocking chair, to look and teach at the level of her students, who sit cross-legged on the floor.

Annemarie's Students

Twenty-four students—13 girls and 11 boys—make up Annemarie's community of learners. Two students are of Hispanic origin, one is of Middle Eastern Arabic origin, one is Asian American and the rest are Caucasian American. They are a busy, happy bunch. Annemarie terms three boys her "trouble kiddos" but does not often speak of them in these terms, limiting their boisterous fun by giving them their own space and making sure they have what they need to stay busy. Boys' hair features equal numbers of gelled spikes and boyish bed-head; girls are more kempt, with ponytails, barrettes, and flowered bows.

When they are together on the rug, students wiggle loose teeth, leaning into one another's faces to check out one another's latest loss and compare Tooth Fairy notes. They play with their fingers and pick at shoelaces and scabs. Talk is a natural extension of learning in this room. Students protest or express surprise with little inhibition, knowing their teacher will credit the words they insert into any lesson or read-aloud. Their words tumble over one another's and the teacher's words because that is how things go. Annemarie might frown at them, but she does not really mean it. They know she will just calmly remind them to follow class expectations and continue. Her students are self-assured about their interactions in this space, knowing that they can read and write because Annemarie says they can.

Students monitor each other with an edge of impatience, not tattling very often, but speaking directly to their peers in line with Annemarie's expectation that they "solve their problems." But they still need her. During any work time, several

children are always surrounding Annemarie, turning her into a veritable Pied Piper, trailing a tail of children.

Annemarie's Literacy Instruction Practices

During my research study in Annemarie's classroom, her observed literacy instruction practices during reading workshop centered on read-aloud, independent reading, conferencing, and guided reading instruction. More than half of the observations in Annemarie's classroom included reading aloud to students and participating in "grand conversations," a concept discussed in a book of the same title (Peterson & Eeds, 2007). Annemarie shared literature such as *A Picnic in October* (Bunting, 1999), *Liberty's Journey* (DiPucchio, 1994), and *The Story of Ferdinand* (Leaf, 1977), using the stories to engage students in conversations about freedom and having confidence in themselves. Teacher and student talk during this time was fluid and overlapping, without clear turn-taking or particular focus. Annemarie often reminded students about a strategy that would help them with their reading, but seldom directly taught strategies to the whole class, preferring to let the whole-class conversations go where the students took them. Annemarie said that she frequently determined "in the moment" whether to extend the conversation or move students into their independent reading time.

During independent reading time, Annemarie directed students to get their book bag books and "find their spot." Each student had a canvas shopping bag s/he brought from home, filled with 6-12 books at their specific reading level. These book bags stayed in their cubbies. When it was time for independent reading, there was a great deal of conversation and negotiating. Students who wanted chairs rushed

to get them—small kid-sized chairs that were perfect for reading. Other students swung their book bags aimlessly, glancing around the room for a long time as they made a decision about where to settle. Some crawled under the easel, others sat in corners, some found tables, and others curled up on the couch. Every student consistently chose a different spot each day. During independent reading time, Annemarie conducted individual reading conferences with students or did guided reading instruction.

Students could request a conference with their teacher by signing up on a whiteboard easel that rested by her rocking chair. If it was going to be a several-days-long wait, Annemarie often directed students to change out the books in their book bags on their own, but to write their name up for a conference so she could check up on them. During conferences, Annemarie's instruction procedures typically involved having a child read orally to her from a book and giving her a short retell of that passage. Annemarie took a brief running record, talked with the child about how s/he was doing, and wrote out a "ticket" or a strategy that the child should practice. These conferences often took anywhere from ten to fifteen minutes, during which time Annemarie focused solely on the child in front of her. The other students who were reading independently often took advantage of Annemarie's lack of focus on them. Classroom observations demonstrated students' almost-daily difficulty with focusing on their own reading without her monitoring and reminding.

The final element of observed literacy instruction in Annemarie's classroom was guided reading groups, an instructional method she alternated with

conferencing. Based on students' reading needs, Annemarie formed small groups of students for focused strategy instruction. Each child had a copy of a text and read it together, with Annemarie's guidance and support. Sometimes these groups took the form of a "round robin" reading session. Other times, students worked independently on a project and shared their work within small groups. Annemarie came to feel that she could meet more students' needs through guided reading groups, since she checked on students' progress with more regularity. Guided reading groups became a major learning theme for Annemarie during the course of the semester, as I further discuss in her learning narrative and later in Chapter 5.

The Teachers: Jean

Jean Joseph teaches next door to Annemarie. Jean considers herself as a "natural born" teacher, destined for the profession since her parents were both teachers. "You know how kids are, they always want to do what their mom and dad do, like 'I want to be a teacher!' but when I said it, it just became who I was--it's just something I always seemed to know" (Interview 1, September 3, 2010). Jean is completing her 24th year of teaching, which she rushes to explain is not 24 consecutive years because she was raising babies for some of those years. But you wouldn't know it from looking at her. Her frame is slim and lithe; she moves with grace. She is Caucasian American; her long, red hair is often loosely pulled on top of her head with a clip, and stray curls tumble down around her kind eyes. Her reading glasses are never far from her hand but she does not hang them on a string around her neck—that would interfere with her necklaces, many of which are homemade child-gifts, but still coordinated to her outfit.

Jean is a first-grade teacher with seemingly endless reserves of patience, but she's no pushover. She laughs with kids in one moment and gives them the teacher eye in the next. "Oh, oh, oh!" or "shu, sh, sh," are brief but pointed reminders that are neither condescending nor fake. She means it. But she loves her students and they know that, too. It is evident in the enthusiastic comments, "Wow, buddy, you rock!" and the quiet commendations after a focused work period; joy is an undertone in each interaction.

Talk does not often waterfall-tumble over others, as it does in Annemarie's room. Children take turns and are quiet when Jean is talking. She returns the favor with all seriousness. When children speak, she leans in to listen carefully, sometimes coaching them to make their talk connect to the larger conversation. First graders have trouble with this but she rolls with whatever they offer, sometimes probing, sometimes rephrasing, always complimenting, even as she makes their idea connect to the topic at hand. She thanks each student and spreads the talk around by asking others who have not spoken yet to share something. If they are not sure, she gives them time to think and compliments them on taking the time to be thoughtful. Every conversation is an effortless discussion of vocabulary, a natural chain of teachable moments within the context of conversation.

Jean confesses to having a "kid's curiosity" about life, almost as if she never grew up. "[It lets me] get on their level, though. I know how they feel" (Interview 1, September 3, 2010). When a student picks his way through his peers seated on the floor, instead of walking around as she has directed, she just smiles, knowing that it is not worth pointing it out now. He is too excited to hear her directions, because he

is stepping forward to share something with the class. He loves his teacher so much that he unconventionally perches himself on her slim knee. Although surprised, she shifts gears and welcomes him: “I’m good with it,” she tells me with a smile.

Jean’s Classroom

Jean’s classroom is a reflection of who she is as a teacher. She pointed out that since she spends more of her waking hours in this room than in her own home, she wanted to make it into a comfortable and inviting space. It is a room full of furniture and things to look at. She has painted one wall a maroon-brown that contrasts with the green cupboards and bookshelves along the far wall. An overstuffed taupe couch grounds the room, situated on a gold-yellow rug in the middle of all the action. This is where everyone gathers for mini-lessons and whole-class interactions.

A Friends and Family board laden with pictures hangs on the side of a metal frame bunk bed that doubles as a reading loft. Beyond it, in the far corner is the word and math corner, where Jean pulls the students together for word study, word wall discussions, and small group meetings. They might meet on the round rug in that corner, or they might perch at the kid-sized picnic table she has there. The far wall is hung with dark blue paper, framed by green curtains. An old-timey gas lantern hangs from the ceiling on a chain, giving the sense that this window to nowhere is really a window out on a starry night, viewed from a place of warm comfort. An old-fashioned claw-foot bathtub is every visitor’s awe. Jean had her daughter paint a desert scene on it many years ago, and when it is not storage for the floor cushions, children climb in it to curl up with a good book.

During workshop, children perch at the low tables on their knees or “sit on their pockets” to do their work. Their flexible bodies twist effortlessly to accommodate their work and the arms and legs of others at the table. Jean has woven sunflowers into the silk trees and tucked them into baskets; they even gently twist over everyone’s heads from yarn tethers in the ceiling tiles. Helen Keller’s words, “Keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see the shadows,” are an observable motto in this place.

The corner hosting Jean’s desk has three desks situated into an impossibly small triangle that barely accommodates two chairs. A silk tree at the corner of her upright piano makes it nearly impossible to see Jean when she is working in this corner, which is just the way she likes it. Very often, one of the three doors into her classroom flies open for a quick question and an unobservant person might miss the fact that Jean is thinking in her corner. This is where her teaching life overflows in barely controlled chaos, in bags and baskets and folders and papers. Love notes from students and decorated pages torn from coloring books hang on the tall cupboard in this quiet corner.

On the fourth wall, a painted mural of a Middle-eastern village done on dark blue paper lends an aura of mystery. This is next to a rippled flag alongside a poster of Martin Luther King giving his famous “I have a dream” speech. The word BELIEVE stretches vertically down the wall. Beyond that, Jean has pinned a snakeskin brought in by a child, which hangs next to a framed textile art piece. A brown paper bag from the district’s Science Center is stapled to the wall above the nature table. The bag has a prominent circle around the white label that says

“Caution! Live Bugs!” All around the bag, Jean has affixed bright orange sticky notes with students’ inferences about why the bugs in their most recent science kit were delivered D.O.A.

Jean’s Students

The 26 children who call Mrs. Joseph their teacher are a spirited but respectful bunch. Most of them come from European American backgrounds; only one student is Hispanic American. They are dressed in well-kept clothes with lots of high-water pants evidencing their quicksilver physical changes. A few girls wear poufy dresses with colorful tights.

When they kneel at the tables that are just their height, they work in close proximity but give one another space. There are seemingly endless reserves of flexibility and coping in this room. When small tiffs crop up, they get solved between students without a lot of fuss because Jean believes they can figure it out, and there are such high expectations and support for “how we *are* in this place” (Field notes, September 15, 2010) that there is no reason to disrupt the flow.

Whether it is Jean or a fellow student perched on the couch, children are a respectful audience. On the many occasions that one of their classmates reads aloud to everyone, students take their cue from their teacher. There is a bit of wiggling and head bobbing, but they know this time is important. A friend pops up to assist with words when the reader is stuck. They do not normally give each other words, but this literacy event, guest reading, is different—this is about fluency and performance. When the student finishes, her peers clap enthusiastically. She smiles, stepping carefully over everyone’s feet and fingers to put away her book before moving to sit

cross-legged with everyone else, faces turned toward their teacher like flowers to the sun.

Jean's Literacy Instruction Practices

The observed literacy practices in Jean's classroom were dominated by whole-group conversations prior to independent reading time and teacher/student conferences. Jean considered these conversations a critical part of her literacy instruction, the foundation to the community-mindset she strove to build. The first thing they did every day was to gather on the yellow rug. Jean perched on the sofa and engaged her students in natural conversation that flowed effortlessly from such mundane issues as attendance and lunch money to larger issues of the world. As I will describe later, *hope* became a central theme to Jean's learning and teaching and was a concept that students took up with enthusiasm. Every morning, students had "hope" to share, in the form of printed advertisements, candy wrappers, newspaper articles, or oral stories about something to do with hope.

During these times, Jean often moved students into a circle, so everyone "could look in one another's eyes." In these and every conversation, she supported turn taking in a form of show-and-tell talk that first-graders love to do. But this was broader and deeper than typical show-and-tell. Students knew to bring in things that would contribute meaningfully to the themes and talk Jean was fostering, so they often brought in items from nature (that their teacher loves nature is a well-documented fact), donations for a local shelter, or an item that reminded them of hope. Jean took whatever students had to share about their contribution and wove the seemingly loose and discrete ends of this talk into a holistic conversation.

Very often, these morning conversations took up a full hour, and students did not need to stand and stretch to maintain focus. When they did finish, Jean directed half the students to get pillows and the other half to get book bags. Students knew to “switch” and get the other item as soon as the crowd cleared; I never saw a skirmish over physical space during these transitions. Students quickly and quietly retrieved their items before settling at assigned tables into what Jean termed “rigorous reading.” Students knew there was no talking during this time, and their job was to refer to their strategy notebooks for support, not to come up and ask their teacher for help. These notebooks were full of Jean’s conference notes, running records, and individual “tickets”—succinct tips or strategies geared to the particular reader. During independent reading time, Jean conferred with her students in much the same way Annemarie did, asking them to read orally and taking a running record to determine their skills and needs. My classroom observations confirmed students’ efforts at being rigorous—while a few occasionally lost focus, most students read with concentration and determination until their teacher broke the silence with a quiet ding—their signal that it was time to ready themselves for recess.

Teachers’ Learning Cases

While these teachers shared a common wall and a common vision for teaching, they were individuals with very different personalities and personal lives. Jean’s five children, ranging in age from 26 to 14, heavily influenced what she did and shared during inquiry group conversations. Her life as a single mother was not easy; indeed, she had pursued her master’s degree at great personal cost, constantly

juggling work-home demands. At the time of this study, she was in her first semester of the Ph.D. program at A.S.U., commuting to campus once a week for coursework obligations.

Annemarie's husband worked as a police officer, a job that afforded her little time to be with him. They were just beginning their family; Annemarie was due to deliver her first child just a few months after the conclusion of this study.

Annemarie had completed her master's degree several years before. These teachers shared bonds of friendship and professionalism, yet led very different personal, and subsequently, learning lives.

For these reasons, it became important to describe teachers' learning experiences across the semester as individual cases. I wanted to paint their learning in broad strokes before unpacking the complexity of their learning. The remainder of this chapter describes teachers' learning moves across the semester. I discuss their learning in terms of the various ways they participated—through conversations, teaching, thinking, and reflecting. All of these participatory avenues evidence the ways these teachers qualified their time with children.

I begin by contextualizing the formation of our inquiry group and the initial ideas and themes that emerged as potential for study. I then describe the learning cases for Annemarie and Jean individually, to elucidate the personal and particular nature of teachers' learning experiences.

Talk as a Path to Learning

When I first sat down with the participant-teachers in the summer of 2010, their own conversational patterns revealed the way they personally valued talk as a

means to making sense of things. Jean tended to use long stretches of talk to start with a beginning idea and eventually wind her way to what she really wanted to say. Annemarie did a great deal of listening and tended to pick up the threads of previously stated ideas as a way to move into her own ideas about a topic.

It came up in the first meeting that both of them shared a strong value for supporting students' talk and thought that finding ways to systematically record student talk might be a path to better supporting student learning. The following snippet from our first meeting shows the way we all worked off one another to crystallize the inquiry topic that initially guided our work:

Jean: I've seen Annemarie watch stuff in my room and really want that for herself, but I think if she builds a strong community at the beginning of the year, that's where the foundation starts. I don't really have an actual area [of inquiry in mind].

Susanna: Maybe a community piece, a reading community, a writing community?

Jean: To me, that is what holds us together, the glue, the unity. For me, a lot of it circles around talk, dialogue. I can spend three-quarters of the morning talking with my kids. So...I would honestly, like to know more about that sort of, maybe. Just...how and where and why is that such a big part of the day? Even though I know talk matters, we all know that, but yeah, I don't know...

Annemarie: What kinds of things encourage talk, what kind of—

Jean: I find that I'm a terrible note-taker. As much as I want to do the double-sided note page, I try to do that, but I'm on to the next thing, I can't stop to take notes.

Annemarie: I can't do it 'til the end of the day.

Jean: One thing I've been trying to incorporate into my classroom for four years now, is to have a clipboard to take notes. My mind doesn't let me multi-task like that, or my mind is going five different ways.

Annemarie: Right, I try to write down what they say, but I'm already on to the next thing...

Jean: I can't keep track of the clipboard, half the time. (laughs)

Susanna: What if it was an inquiry into recordkeeping [students' talk]...?

Jean: Well, we've both talked about that...

Annemarie: And, I think, for me, this year, that was something I struggled with, because here I have their reading conferencing notebook with me, and here I'm doing this running record, and I'm trying to write down some of the things they were saying, but also I want to have my own notes, my own set of note cards, with rings and flip charts, and I would write things, try to record really quickly, but it became laborious....

Jean: And did you ever look back at it?

Annemarie: I'm trying to write for them and for me, and...

Jean: Did you ever look back at it, for conferences or anything, for yourself?

Annemarie: I wanted to use it in conferences, but I started it in January, instead of at the beginning of the year. I never got a chance to share it with parents. And I never really went back to it because it became so tough for me to figure out, okay, I'm writing in two notebooks at once...

Jean: What I want to know is how will it help me facilitate students in their literacy development? You know what I mean?

Annemarie: It did help me understand them. It helped me understand how they were thinking as a reader. I would notice below, "they're doing this." They are using this strategy or things that we've put in their conferencing notebook, but also I wanted to have a record of it so that I didn't have to go in their cubbies. It takes a lot of time trying to figure out where this stuff is. I wanted to have a record, because I've not been able to remember it well (Inquiry conversation 1, May 31, 2010).

This first conversation became the impetus for teachers' inquiry into student talk, and the following questions emerged from the discussion: 1) What does recording students' talk through note-taking efforts tell me about them as readers? 2) What means of recordkeeping for students' talk can support and enhance my literacy instruction practices? 3) How does recording students' talk help me support

their literacy growth? 4) Given my belief that “talk matters,” how can I better utilize students’ talk to report on and support their learning? I derived these questions from the conversational themes and confirmed them with the teachers at our next meeting.

These aspects of teaching might be regarded as “technical” (Zeichner, 1994) and thus deemed by some as less valuable than other reflective aspects of teaching. However, it was still an important starting point for the semester and it evidences the value teachers placed on talk as a path to learning, for their students and themselves.

As might be expected, this initial focus shifted a great deal over the semester, as teachers’ school years got underway. I elaborate this further in their individual learning cases. What held constant was the attention teachers paid to their students’ words and the ways they used that attention and thought to inform their teaching.

Having provided the context for the initial inquiry’s focus, I now move to presenting teachers’ individual learning cases. I use their words as framing quotes to present the data both thematically and chronologically across the semester. This organization shows the evolution of their thinking over time. Quotes serve as organizational tools to present the large learning themes self-identified by each teacher and confirmed through my observation. Teachers’ learning timelines (Appendix F) also provide an abbreviated explanation of the way their learning moved chronologically across the semester.

Annemarie’s Learning Experiences

Annemarie’s learning proceeded in identifiable areas of focus, in relation to perceived needs for herself or her students. She valued reflection on student talk

and our weekly conversations as ways to help herself become a better teacher. Annemarie alternated statements of confidence that she was doing a good job in her teaching with comments that she could always learn more. I share her learning journey through phrases of talk that she self-identified as significant “turning points” during the course of the semester. While her initial self-reflections evidenced a focus on the purpose and point of talk in her room, Annemarie shifted her learning efforts to guided reading groups midway through the semester. Overall, Annemarie’s learning journey demonstrated her thoughtfulness about her teaching and her efforts to support students’ needs.

“I think if I focus on students’ talk, it will help me stay in the moment.” Looking back on the whole semester, Annemarie felt that her learning ran along different avenues. At the outset of the project, she stated her enthusiasm for the expectation and support involved in an inquiry like this, saying, “*My Teacher as Researcher* class was really the last time I made it a priority to sit down and reflect and take notes and do kid-watching. Because I do try to keep it all in my brain...” (Inquiry conversation 1, May 31, 2010). She was excited to look at her practice and students’ learning in a focused way and appreciated the potential for the inquiry on recording students’ talk, believing it would provide her with a way to “slow down” and “be in the present moment” with her students. She described her desire for this in terms that hinted at how difficult teaching was. It was not that she did not enjoy teaching! She just readily acknowledged the frenetic nature of working with young children and the difficulty of meeting their needs:

I know when I’m starting to lose the control...their behavior—they just start bouncing, and [my voice] tends to get higher. Like, I know, ‘OK, we need to

move onto something else because you're done.' But I've noticed that I'm still struggling a little bit in transitions. ... You know, you still have [the kids who] dilly dally and play with friends before coming to the rug and then my voice just gets louder. So just figuring out those transitions....last year, I did music, used the Beatles song *Come Together*, just doing it to music, a slower beat and it just slowed us down a little bit. So I think I'm going to try that next week..." (Inquiry conversation 3, August 27, 2010)

Although Annemarie acknowledged feeling distracted in her many roles as an educator, she wanted to move past that. She saw recording students' talk as a way to stay in the present moment with her students, appreciating the teaching potential that was right in front of her.

Annemarie began her learning efforts with gusto. In one of our first inquiry group meetings after the school year began, she shared all the ways she had been recording students' talk, using the digital voice recorder I gave her, note-cards, and a research notebook where she was reflecting and writing memos. She said she was not sure which method might work best for her, but she was trying them all to help her figure it out. Annemarie also mentioned she was learning how to talk with students in a way that was calm and clear. She felt like she was "noticing a difference" for herself and her students, in terms of establishing their classroom culture and expectations (Inquiry conversation 3, August 27, 2010). At this early point in the year, Annemarie's literacy instruction practices focused primarily on read-aloud and conferring with individual students while the rest of the class read independently. In her conferences, she listened to children read and helped them find "just right" books to help them practice their reading.

As a teacher who valued talk and wanted to make it as productive and manageable as possible, Annemarie continually sought ways to help her students take

turns, listen to one another, and connect their ideas in meaningful whole-group conversation. She wanted students' talk to unfold in thematic directions on the level of meaning that Jean was fostering in her room and sharing about in our inquiry group meetings. But in early September, Annemarie still was not happy with the results, and suddenly recalled a lesson in Debbie Miller's (2002) *Reading with Meaning* that she felt might support her efforts. During that inquiry group meeting, she got up and retrieved the book from her shelf, deciding to conduct some mini-lessons on making meaningful connections. The next week, she followed Miller's sample lesson, reading aloud a story and charting every connection or comment students made through the read-aloud experience. Later that morning, she reread the story and conversed with students about each connection. Together, she helped students decide if it was a meaningful connection that supported everyone's understanding of the story ("Hold up one finger") or not something that helped them understand the story ("Hold up two fingers"). Her handling of first-grade talk in this lesson was thoughtful—she honored every student's comment for its inherent worth but also emphasized the importance of being mindful about one's contributions.

“Whoa, I talk too much!” A few weeks into the semester, I offered to share my observational field notes of teachers' classroom conversations as a way to focus teachers' self-observations and reflections on their learning. Annemarie had told me she was a visual learner, so she expressed enthusiasm for being able to read the transcripts and have a better reconstruction of a day's events. She began noticing new details of how conversations proceeded in her room. In response to one transcript, Annemarie wrote,

After reading through this conversation and listening to some [recorded conversations with children], I'm realizing that I'm not always processing what students say. I'm listening by looking at them and not interrupting, but I'm also quick to move on, whether it be to another student or another topic. I'm letting their words, 'go in one ear and out the other' (response to field notes, August 8, 2010)

Annemarie's habit of "moving on" was also evident in my classroom observations of her literacy instruction, and I privately hypothesized that she did this as a management technique—moving on seemed to be the easiest way to curb students' talk and get their comments back on-topic. Annemarie never directly confirmed this, but hinted at her tension with managing 24 voices, teaching content, and fostering meaningful conversations:

I've been thinking a lot about how I need to slow down. I've always tried to do too much or say too many things and then I wonder why they don't get it. Their brains can't process all that information. I just don't always know when to cut the conversation. I want it to be a natural break but it may not always happen that way. I have so many questions and ideas going through my brain that it is difficult to listen and analyze what kids say. And then I wonder, how do you tune out the piddly things that are happening, like somebody playing with things on...the carpet or kids having side conversations? (personal communication, September 10, 2010).

The field note transcripts I offered served as a reflection point for her to talk through her choice in literature and conversational themes with children. With chagrin, she stated how she was noticing that she "talked too much" and often heaped additional strategy instruction on top of a completed lesson in an effort to give students everything they needed:

It's just an eye-opener. In my mind, I had a sense that I was [saying too much], but seeing it written in print was like, 'Wow, OK, really—I need to stop!' Because I will, I'll have that going through my mind; I'll think about it as I talk to them, like, 'I'm giving them a lot of information right now.' But to see it in print, it was like, 'Whoa! Overload!' I'm overloaded just reading it. I can't imagine what they're feeling. They must just tune it out. So that was a real eye-opener. I still find that I do it sometimes, but I'm more

conscious of it, if I think about it, I'll move on [finish the conversation].
Yeah, that was definitely an ah-ha moment. (Interview 3, December 9, 2010)

This self-observation prompted Annemarie to increasingly monitor her talk, and focus on “just one thing” in her mini-lessons and conferences with students. This was both observable in her classroom instruction and became a theme she reiterated in inquiry group conversations throughout the semester.

“I think I can focus on guided reading groups. That would be good for me.” Shortly after her “I talk too much” insight, Annemarie and I had an opportunity to meet for an inquiry group conversation that Jean was unable to attend. Here, Annemarie shared her concern that her “research theme” was not “emerging” for her, as it was in Jean’s classroom— that all Jean’s work and talk about hope was not the same as what was happening in her own classroom. Although teachers’ identified a common inquiry theme at the beginning of the project, to record students’ talk, Jean’s own learning priorities had shifted significantly since then. Annemarie felt unsure about how to keep up. After six weeks of observation and study in Annemarie’s room, I wanted to support her in the technical aspects of literacy instruction, and to somehow remove the pressure Annemarie was feeling by not having a learning journey that looked the same as Jean’s. To that end, I encouraged her to consider shifting her inquiry to guided reading groups, a literacy instruction method she had previously said she “wasn’t good at doing” (Inquiry conversation 1, May 31, 2010), and that I thought might help her better manage her reading workshop.

Up to that point in the school year, Annemarie began her reading workshops with a read-aloud (often a picture book) and had a typically tumultuous conversation

with students about the story or a strategy they could use in their own reading. She then dismissed them to get their book bag books and spent the remaining amount of time conferring with one or two students while managing the rest of her independent readers.

Annemarie readily accepted my suggestion about guided reading groups as a proposed direction of study, and left that meeting saying that she felt better about the project, knowing that she had a direction that was do-able. She clarified that even though she knew she did not have to “be Jean,” she reflected later that up to this point in the semester, she felt like she was floundering by trying to “force something that wasn’t really her” (Interview 3, December 9, 2010).

Annemarie began re-reading portions of Taberski’s (2000) *On Solid Ground* and watched the related DVD on guided reading groups that I loaned her. Although she had read this book in her undergraduate program, re-reading proved a helpful refresher on the purpose and structure of guided reading groups. One day soon after, as we were walking down the hall to retrieve her students from recess, she turned to me and mentioned how much the video had helped her. As I shared in the opening chapter, Annemarie recounted that she had thought, “*Oh! That’s all it is? I can do that.*” (Field notes, October 28, 2010). She had only been able to conceive of guided reading groups in her previous teaching job, where she spent her first two years as a teacher in a highly scripted school environment. She described her thinking in an inquiry group conversation in early November,

Yeah, when I think of small groups, I am immediately brought back to intervention groups at Landmark Elementary, and sitting around the table and giving them a copy of the Harcourt stories. And we go around and each child reads a page, and...I just go back to that place and I don’t believe that

was what's best for kids. So it's been hard for me to change that idea. So I'm watching the video and I'm listening to some of the things that [Taberski] is talking to the kids about and it just made me realize, OK, this is just basically a conference with a few students, as opposed to one-on-one. We're still having the conversation, we're still talking. So that just kind of opened my eyes—it helped me start to change my thinking about it. I felt like, 'OK, I can do this.' (Inquiry conversation 11, November 1, 2010)

Annemarie was comfortable with conferring, and felt a strong sense that conversing naturally with students was the best way to know them as readers and share authentically about books. It was on this platform that she eventually built an understanding of guided reading groups, even though she did not initially conceive of guided reading groups as having this potential. It was interesting to see that although Annemarie's time at DVE convinced her that she no longer believed in a scripted method of content delivery, she had been unable to conceptualize guided reading groups apart from basal-based instruction. Inspired and emboldened by her new insights, Annemarie set off in earnest, collecting students' conference notebooks and using her fall break to sort students into reading groups.

When I asked Annemarie to talk more about how the video supported her learning, she commented on how she felt that her previous six years of teaching had “made her ready” for the video's content. She framed this in terms of her belief that had she seen that video in her first year of teaching, she would have been wondering *how* the teacher had all the kids reading in the background, and what exactly did she say to teach this specific concept. Annemarie felt that she had grown significantly, saying that her understanding about these concepts was “running in the background” for her as she watched the video. Yes, she still paid attention to the technical aspects of Taberski's teaching, but she could also focus on the larger purpose and point of

guided reading groups, using that to inform her instructional decisions in more purposeful ways than simply trying to “say things the same way Taberski did.” She also commented briefly on the significance of her years at a traditional, structured school, which gave her an appreciation for how different this kind of teaching is, and why she valued it.

Annemarie began guided reading groups the week after fall break, effectively exchanging her conferencing efforts with students for guided reading group instruction based on reading strategies she thought they needed. Her participation evidenced a “learning by doing” mindset, wherein she was constantly evaluating what was happening and how it was helping her know her students as readers. She felt that guided reading groups helped her “check in” on more students and find out about their needs as readers, but continued to comment on her tendency to teach more than one thing in those interactions with students. Annemarie had confirmed what she thought she was seeing in her teaching through reading Taberski, who reiterated the “teach one thing” rule. However, she felt conflicted about this premise in her teaching moments with children, knowing that readers use many strategies to make sense of text. In her intuitive instructional efforts, she wanted to teach more than one thing when students were struggling, and felt tension in balancing these considerations in the moment-to-moment interactions with students. Annemarie negotiated these issues through talk and reflection in inquiry group meetings.

“It’s such a struggle—trying to go back and forth.” November saw Annemarie’s continuing attempt to sharpen her teaching efforts within guided reading groups. This involved management considerations, things like where she

should conduct guided reading groups to ensure that she could monitor her other students' independent reading. She also continued to review students' strategy notebooks to inform her groups and instructional decisions. In one of our last inquiry group conversations, she acknowledged the struggle of "balancing" it all, knowing that she was "letting other things go" by focusing on her guided reading groups. At two different inquiry group meetings towards the end of the semester, she discussed her thinking on management and conferences:

Annemarie: I felt it was better, like the management, I could see...

Susanna: I saw your wheels turning; you sat down on one side of the table [to lead your guided reading group] and switched to the other side.

Annemarie: Yeah, I'm not going to have my back to them [the rest of the students reading independently]. Yeah, I was looking around the room, and sometimes I feel it is distracting to me, because they were not as off-task today as they are when there are times that they sit in an area where I can't see them at all.

(Inquiry conversation 12, November 8, 2010)

When sharing her positive feelings about guided reading groups, she tempered it with a balancing metaphor:

I realized that guided reading groups really can be a conversation, and I actually feel like, wow, I'm meeting with more children, and it's making me feel like I'm being a little more effective than those two kids that I conference with in an average day. And it's a way for me to just kind of check in, see what I notice about them as a reader, and no, it's not as in-depth as when I'm conferencing, but it gives me a little piece, like what are their strengths, what do they still need? But it's such a struggle, trying to go back and forth, and I've totally gotten away from conferences. And now I

feel like my kids have been in book bags that they're not interested in, because they've had the same books for so long, so that's been a challenge right now. I need to meet with them because report cards are coming up. I've told them, 'I'm conferencing now, for the next two weeks!' But I only got through two kids today, so I'm thinking, 'OK, I only have nine days [before the semester ends].'" (Inquiry conversation 13, December 6, 2010)

Annemarie felt the tension of time in her teaching and learning efforts; the semester's end and its report card requirements constrained what she felt she could do while motivating her decision to shift back to conferences to prepare for report cards. Additionally, her attention to students' behavior within reading workshop helped her know that guided reading groups were "not working" to keep her students in books that held their interest. She continued to think about these things, using the metaphor of balance to state her ideal workshop practices.

This semester-long snippet of Annemarie's learning journey demonstrated her thoughtfulness about her teaching and her students, and her continued efforts to support students' needs. Her learning appeared to proceed in discernable stages and phases, as opposed to Jean's, which was more organic and emergent. Despite the fact that these two teachers met together in formal, weekly inquiry-group conversations, the learning they demonstrated and discussed looked very different from one another.

Jean's Learning Experiences

Just as Annemarie's learning experiences unfolded in ways that were unique to her, Jean's learning across the semester proceeded in ways distinctively connected to her self-identified "slower" pace. Jean took a big-picture perspective on life, thinking through themes and problems all the time, connecting her life experience to the issues she faced with measured thoughtfulness. Jean also valued reflection and

used talk as a way to support her own learning, but did not approach the inquiry group conversations with the same needs that Annemarie or I brought to the conversations. Instead of coming with the expectation that she would learn something from or alongside us, I believe Jean came expecting that she would learn something from or about *herself*. Her learning patterns were deeply personal and reflective. As I explain in the following pages, Jean's value for thematic learning ideals led her to pursue themes of hope in her learning alongside children, which influenced what she did for herself, her students, and the families of her students.

“A golden age, an age of hope.” Jean says that her learning journeys related to a new school year always begin in the summer, when she spends time considering the larger themes and ideas that might tie her school year together. She did this work independently of our inquiry group conversations, in a kind of internal thought work that she called “slow cooking” her ideas. In our initial research meetings, she was enthusiastic about exploring the importance of recording students' talk as a means for supporting their literacy development. Jean's preliminary questions about recording students' talk ran along these lines,

I want to write down the things they say and see if I will actually use them. ...if I take notes about a child, does that actually show me something? Is it something I can share at conferences? Is it really as useful as people say it is? (Inquiry conversation 1, May 31, 2010).

Jean's questions evidenced her priorities as a learner—proving out the worth of an idea for herself and her classroom community, rather than just going by what the experts said. She was not a rebel, just highly tuned to her own professionalism and teacher-knowledge. A self-professed “abandoner of projects halfway through” Jean had tried various means of recording talk over the years, but felt that she was

always distracted from doing anything purposeful with it. She determined that this semester would be different.

Jean had other, larger priorities for her year beyond our inquiry for recording students' talk, some of which included sharing beautiful poetry with her students, stretching her students' capacity to sit and participate conversationally for long periods of time, and connecting home and school in meaningful ways. She recounted the emergence of the most important theme for her year in the discovery of a quote about hope for the world. "A golden age, an age of hope," were words that resonated for her; she built her first hallway bulletin board around it. She purchased a small hope chest for each student at a local craft store and sent each child home with a chest to decorate during the first week of school. Their homework was to talk with their family about what hope meant to them, write it down on a small slip of paper to put in the chest, and bring it back the following week. In hindsight, she commented that she was nervous about whether a "hope theme might actually fly," knowing that it had religious connotations and could be viewed by some parents as an inappropriate topic for school. She decided to take the risk, expecting that it would tie her year together in a meaningful way.

Despite her self-confidence in teaching and her trust in the process, Jean reflected one day about how she still did some automatic "teacher-things." In an early inquiry group conversation, she conversed with us about practices that were not necessary or compatible with the way she lived her life with students. She had photocopied worksheets and handwriting books that ultimately proved unnecessary:

I'm learning that for me, it works to just plunge right into the meat of the stuff. —what I think I'm learning is that I can achieve [conveying

expectations about writing] through the expectations I set for the kids. I can get them to be aware of how to write without having them do [handwriting] books, you know? Sometimes I—you know, you pull it out because you think you need—[you think] parents want to see some stuff. No matter how long you teach, you still go through a little bit of that. (Inquiry conversation 3, August 27, 2010)

In these words, Jean demonstrated her commitment to the means over the ends, in what proved to be a constant reevaluation of the “stuff” teachers do. It was an ongoing process of winnowing what “didn’t matter” from her day in pursuit of time for talk and good literature, a combination that tied everything together for her and her students.

Early in the year, Jean used poetry to deepen the conversations in her room, changing the way she normally read and shared poetry. Instead of “saving” it for a single unit or month, she decided to read aloud a piece or several pieces every day. She wanted to see if the power of poetry was observable in daily efforts to share and discuss it, and so began each morning meeting with a poem. She often read it aloud several times before facilitating conversations with students around the themes and meanings within. She shared poets such as Langston Hughes and Karla Kuskin. During the first few weeks of school, Jean noticed and felt amazed by students’ conversational contributions about poetry, while acknowledging that she also noticed that some children mimicked her words in their efforts to elevate their contributions. This reminded her of the importance of building community and setting expectations—she commented on how everything she did was a model to students who were closely watching what she said and did.

In response to a classroom transcript in early September, Jean wrote, “It appears from this reading that I am able to ‘weave’ the day together even when

things are seemingly unrelated (i.e., student council/voting.) I attribute that to the power of ‘talk’ in the classroom” (Classroom observation 7, August 8, 2010). This in fact was exactly what Jean was observed to do, and she took advantage of every bit of beginning-of-the-school-year focus children brought to the classroom, keeping her tone light but firm, teaching constantly and consistently.

In September, I asked Jean if she knew the Emily Dickenson poem that begins, “Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul, and sings the tune without the words, and never stops at all...”(Dickenson, 1959). Jean loved the poem and created a poster to use it as a touchstone text (Nia, 1999). She talked through the poem with students bit by bit, clarifying the confusing parts and reading/reciting stanzas together. Her talk was infused with not only the meaning of the words, but the feelings and themes embedded in the words. Students began memorizing it and Jean began hearing from parents that their children were reciting portions of that poem at home. A previously stated priority for Jean’s teaching life began to reemerge in her conversations during inquiry group times: a desire to connect school and family.

Jean extended this effort to strengthen school and family connections by inviting parents to volunteer in her classroom in an open-ended way: she sent home letters with lists of suggested ways for parents to get involved with a blank calendar for them to write back dates/times they were willing to come. She said it was the first time she had tried to invite parents in this way and that she hoped it would help them see how much she wanted what she did with children at school to not “stop at the classroom door.” For Jean, her efforts to articulate these ideas revealed her

perception of teaching as a higher calling, as so much more than simply teaching children to read and write and pass state-mandated tests.

“Hope notes are coming in!” Jean received her first letter from home in early September, a correspondence method that her students came to call “hope notes.” In it, her student, Christopher had written about his sorrow that his two beloved greyhounds had died and included a picture of his dogs. His mom had helped him back the note with maroon paper, an artistic touch that Jean loved. She invited Christopher to share the content of this note with his fellow first-graders and helped him talk about the hope that he had for where his dogs were and how they might get new dogs someday soon. That this first hope note and opportunity to share came from Christopher was especially poignant due to his learning and social difficulties related to autism.

Annemarie and I encouraged Jean to consider ways she could share these notes with families and convey her desire for this kind of communication between school and home. We scanned and posted several notes on her classroom blog and Jean supported these big ideas through her weekly homework notes where she encouraged families to look up “hopeful sites.” She researched these opportunities for families, finding such sites as *Hyundai Hope on Wheels* and *City of Hope*, both social justice-oriented efforts to help people with medical issues. Families diligently did their homework, and many wonderful projects and conversations came in the door. However, as the school year moved into October, Jean stated her concern that families weren’t writing many hope notes of their own accord, and she was wondering how strong the connection was between home and school, in terms of

the themes she was trying to inspire in her students. Nevertheless, children were bringing in newspaper articles, advertisements, or “found objects” that either had hope in them or reminded them of hope. Jean thought aloud about this, saying,

I find that the longer I go, this [talk] is so becoming them. It's like I don't have to prompt—they just come up with the stuff, right and left. And I really don't think that they're just saying it because they want my approval. ...I know there are a few who do that, but I think it's becoming *them*. [Children imitate] at first because they're just trying it on, but I don't find that anymore. There's more and more coming in, from home, and different things on their homework, where I'm seeing evidence that it's becoming the culture and part of their thoughts. And they're also making connections with other things. They're seeing the connections. It's not just in the morning talk with me. They're making connections with different books...so in that way, I'm thrilled about this. And I'm happy when I read this [transcript] and notice that there's a flow that I didn't expect to see. There's a flow throughout the room, that even though I have to discipline someone or redirect them, or if we have to change and do something else, I don't feel that there's a complete stop to the day or to the community feeling. I feel that it's normal. I don't feel like it's something I'm trying to produce only at that moment, and then when we get away from the circle, that whole feeling is gone—I don't feel that when I read through this. I feel that it's kind of permeating through the day. So that was something I was surprised to learn. Happy to learn. They don't just turn off the way they talk and speak. It's subtle, but I feel it when I read through this...there's a family feeling. It's neat to see that. (Inquiry conversation 9, October 15, 2010)

Within this reflective excerpt, Jean reminded herself that children often imitate on the road to competency, but tempered the observation with the sense that their contributions were connected. Her comment on the flow and connectedness of their classroom life together points to the connectedness Jean sought in her teaching.

Later in this same conversation, Jean reflected on her concern that not every student's voice was being heard. She noticed a whole-class conversational moment where one of her students had said, “it's a process” in a profound contribution to a

conversation about how people can have hope even when they are sick. But she went on by, either not hearing it or thinking quickly enough to respond. Jean shared,

What I'm learning about right here is that if a kid doesn't command that everyone listen, and that kid who said that was one of those who just says it really, really small [so that you can't always hear him]. So if I don't have time to repeat it or dwell on it, that kid didn't get the group's attention. He only got my attention [later]. ...It worries me when these kids have something brilliant to say and I have to stop everybody, get everyone's attention to repeat the brilliant thing they said. But the longer they talk, the longer they think, the more brilliant their answers are, which we already know is what happens to children or anyone who thinks longer on stuff. (Inquiry conversation 9, October 15, 2010)

In response to these observations, Jean encouraged students to "say it big!" so everyone could hear. She also supported children in thinking about what they wanted to say, complimenting those students who were perpetual hand-raisers who suddenly cannot remember what they wanted to contribute that "it is good to be thoughtful" (Classroom observation, October 22, 2010). Jean placed great value on giving children time, and in fact called herself a "slow cooker" in her ideas and thinking. She had faith in the process, believing that helping children participate in whole-class talk was the most important way she could spend her time.

I'm just so happy when somebody raises their hand and they aren't somebody who is always raising their hand. I think 'they want to say something, they feel safe to say something' and that just means the world to me. I want everyone to feel that way, to be that *present*. I'm just so excited when someone tries to express their thinking, and if it didn't quite come out right, I know that their wheels were turning around something. (Interview 1, September 3, 2010)

"We're going to adopt the pace of nature," she would say to children, with a nod to Ralph Waldo Emerson and a reaffirmation that no learning should be rushed.

"I'm going to do something totally different—it's a whole new agenda." While Jean said she felt encouraged by increasing evidence that families

were talking about hope at home, she was not sure it had “taken hold” in terms of parents’ attitudes about their children’s understanding of these big issues. She had full confidence that her students were learning and growing, but as parent-teacher conferences approached, she wondered if parents fully appreciated what her learning priorities for her students were. She decided for the first time in her teaching career that she would not rely on the report card as her chief way to report on children’s progress. Instead, she would minimize these external measures of student progress in favor of a more authentic conversation about her students and parents’ perceptions of their growth. This was a significant step for Jean; she admitted to some anxiety about whether or not parents would be okay with this. She acknowledged that this step represented a difficult task: to “try and change people’s minds” about what matters in learning.

[I have] a whole new agenda for conferences. I feel like the paper in front of me [report card] is going to be secondary. . . . I want to talk about big things. And I don’t even feel nervous about challenging [parents] a little bit. Does that make sense? Saying, ‘Is this what you want for your child? Why is it important to you?’ I see myself questioning parents. Not in a mean way, but—the tables will be turned. Where I always felt that I was the one being questioned, I don’t feel that way right now. And that’s pretty big. (Interview 2, October 15, 2010)

As Jean continued to process these ideas, she hit on what she really wanted for parents: to help them change from valuing a measurable, percentage grade to something that is immeasurable. As Noddings (2003) puts it, “I would not wish to choose, but if I had to choose whether my child would be a reader or a loving human being, I would choose the latter with alacrity” (p. 20.) Jean wanted to make sure that parents understood her classroom as the place where these priorities were being nurtured, commenting that if not, “I want to help them shift their priorities”

(Interview 2, October 15, 2010). Jean's commitment to life-long learning also spurred her to make sure parents gave their child the time and space to learn at their own pace. Jean recognized the authenticity and meaning present in her own conversations with children about big "life issues," and wanted to help parents understand this, also. Despite her concern that parents might be more interested in the report card, she said she felt confident about doing her conferences differently and she would see what happened.

What happened was wonderful. At our next inquiry group meeting, Jean enthused about the conversations she had with parents, sharing about how she had found them to be receptive to her efforts and ideas, and trusting of her opinion as an educator. In describing her conference experience, Jean shared,

I basically approached conferences from a very different perspective. I told them [the report card] is not your child, and said a little bit about my beliefs and philosophies, that the simple, measureable things are not the whole picture of their child. And I said, 'The things I'm so excited about are things that can't be measured and written down here.' I started my talk like that, and it just changed the whole feeling...the whole tone of what we were talking about. It was amazing to me. I've had such a struggle trying to get the report card to show what we want it to say and I finally decided it doesn't matter. It's a checklist. And I said to them, 'You know as well as I do that the talking and the reading and the writing and the projects we do and the community building and the growth you're seeing in your child is what gives rise to the talk here.' And it was just such a more at-ease conversation. (Inquiry conversation 10, October 25, 2010)

Having a positive experience with parent/teacher conferences was an affirmation to Jean about her learning priorities and further fueled the conversations at home. Hope notes and found objects began to pour into Jean's classroom. Every morning as children followed her down the hall and took off their coats and sat on the rug for morning announcements, they peppered her with news, "Mrs. Joseph, I

have hope!” “Look what I found!” “It’s a yogurt lid, Mrs. Joseph, and it has hope on it!”

“I don’t think of myself as the great inspirer. They inspire me!” As October gave way to November, Jean found families taking up the hope theme with more enthusiasm than ever. “Hope was everywhere,” as Jean put it, from their expert-project studies of endangered animals, to conversations about their friends with special needs, to their concern and almost daily donations for local foster children. The learning was everywhere, too—Jean’s expectations for work and learning were as high as ever. Children’s writing morphed from pre-literate scribbling to more conventional forms. Many of her students moved into beginning chapter books that semester and her more emergent readers gained fluency and confidence. Whole-class conversations about books from the beginning of the semester to the end demonstrated increased connectivity and depth.

Towards the end of the semester, Jean commented on DVE’s lack of ethnic and socioeconomic diversity as a drawback to the kind of real-life teaching she wanted to do, but said she felt confident in thematic teaching and rich literature’s potential to help her address difficult issues with children. She felt compelled to share deep things with her first grade students, saying:

I’ve always known my belief in humanity is there; I believe in the good of all people. And I wanted my children to have an awareness of these things because I feel like the neighborhood that’s surrounding us here is very much the same. There isn’t a lot of diversity, so I felt that [inquiry] is the best place I can teach these things about social issues. (Interview 3, December 6, 2010)

The inquiry journey Jean embarked on with her students became a very personal one: “I needed to be able to tap into hope to reach an even more personal

level with my kids. And it feels different. It feels a *lot* closer—it's so much more real. It's like peeling away a few more layers" (Interview 3, December 6, 2010)

Through all of this, Jean reflected at various points on how the initial inquiry had begun with a focus on recording students' talk, which she recognized as critically important. However, her conception of *what* was important about it shifted significantly throughout the semester. In late November, Jean laughingly said she had learned that she was "seriously poor" at recording students' talk on paper, but was finding that she definitely recorded it "in her heart" (Interview 3, December 6, 2010). Her teaching and learning were both organic and in-the-moment: "I am driven by [students'] responses. I am inspired to keep moving forward and so I get fueled by [what they say]. It's just amazing. I don't think of myself as the great inspirer. They inspire me!" Jean's intense observation of children and memory for what they said was evident within classroom observations.

By the conclusion of the semester, Jean was emotional about the depth and breadth of her learning journey. She knew that the ways she listened to students' words and helped them connect it to the larger conversation had deepened and matured, saying that this commitment to her own learning had reaped unforeseen benefits in her teaching:

You know, it's just so interesting, because...you think, 'Oh, I know how to teach.' But there's such a deeper level of taking your kids on a journey like this. It's a deeper level with not just being the deliverer, but also being the receiver, and doing it together. It's just so amazing. There were times that I was writing in my notebook or looking at the notes you transcribed, and I didn't always expect to see something, like 'I know what this says.' But unless you really take the time to notice, there's just such a wealth of knowledge there, and you'd be missing it without taking the time to reflect and think about it. [Without that] I would have heard my kids say neat things, but I wouldn't have had the depth of understanding that I now have

about how impactful this is in my life and how truly amazing their thought processes have become. I feel like I know each of my kids inside out. When I look at them, I feel like I see something different in each of their eyes...I see their soul. (Interview 3, December 6, 2010)

With these words, Jean appeared to enter a new phase of her own “age of hope,” affirming her deep commitment to her students, herself, and her learning life.

Conclusion

In this first of two findings chapters, I focused on answering the question, *What is the nature of teachers’ learning experiences?* To that end, I first described the various contexts surrounding teachers’ learning before presenting each teacher’s case in a chronological narrative highlighting their respective “turning points” across the semester. As is obvious from this account, these two teachers learned in very different ways. I hope the narrative emphasizes that the *kinds* of learners they were is not as important as the learning, itself. However, it is still important to acknowledge that as learners, they had different priorities, experiences, and understandings, all of which shaped their learning and participation.

The nature of Annemarie’s learning experiences reflected her topic-based conception of learning. She focused on various means and purposes for recording students’ talk before shifting to guided reading groups as a specific learning area. This decision shaped her participation within inquiry group conversations, and demonstrated her need to have focus in her learning efforts. Annemarie’s learning trajectories were “easy” to identify and trace, because they were related to practice-based considerations of teaching. As further explained in Chapter 5, I perceive her learning efforts to be shaped by her desire to grow as a teacher and gain feelings of competence and confidence.

For Jean, learning was part of who she was *as a person*. By this, I mean that she was not just always thinking about her learning, she was living it. The nature of Jean's learning was "messy" and took time, but her self-awareness and deep knowledge of children's developmental needs gave her confidence and a strong professional identity. These qualities led her to pursue learning interactions that allowed her to reflect on what she already knew in deeper and more intuitive ways. She willingly pushed against her comfort zones out of her desire to connect with her students and their families, always striving for deeper insights into who her students were. This does not mean that Annemarie did not have similar priorities for herself, but Jean was able to actualize them differently because of her experience. Jean discussed her learning in flashes of insight that emerged from her non-linear, self-proclaimed "slow-cooker" process. These comments had a great weight of thinking behind them, but also required time and talk to articulate.

Teachers' learning was completely tied to who they were as teachers. The differences between these teachers enable me to explain their learning, but also risk unfair comparisons between them. In Chapter 5, I take up Rogoff's (1995) theory to complicate the comparisons, and further unpack teachers' learning experiences. Rogoff's theoretical conception of learning on the community, interpersonal, and individual planes of analysis also enables me to illuminate the very personal nature of learning.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS IN LIGHT OF THE THREE PLANES OF ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I discuss teachers' learning experiences by describing and interpreting them through Rogoff's (1995) theoretical perspective on learning. Having explained Rogoff's ideas in Chapter 2, I have laid out this chapter to briefly synthesize each plane of analysis before discussing data in light of that plane. My presentation of data is a kind of conversation with Rogoff's theory, as I weave her (1995) theoretical model of learning into my own account of teachers' participation. Structurally, the chapter moves from an explanation of data in the community plane to the interpersonal plane, and finally to the individual plane. Within each plane, I present data through a single assertion, vignette, and discussion. The first half of this chapter constitutes an answer to my question on how teachers' learning experiences *reflect* Rogoff's planes of analysis. The second half of the chapter will describe the ways my data *refracts* Rogoff's notions.

Reflecting Rogoff

Prisms both reflect and refract the light that filters through them. The scientific principles behind reflection refer to the way light bounces off surfaces. The nature of the surface influences the amount of light that is reflected; smooth surfaces reflect more light than rough surfaces, which scatter and diffuse the light. I use this analogy to explain my study (see Figure 5). In the first part of this chapter, I discuss findings regarding the nature of teachers' learning experiences to show how they reflect, sometimes clearly, sometimes diffusely, Rogoff's theoretical ideas.

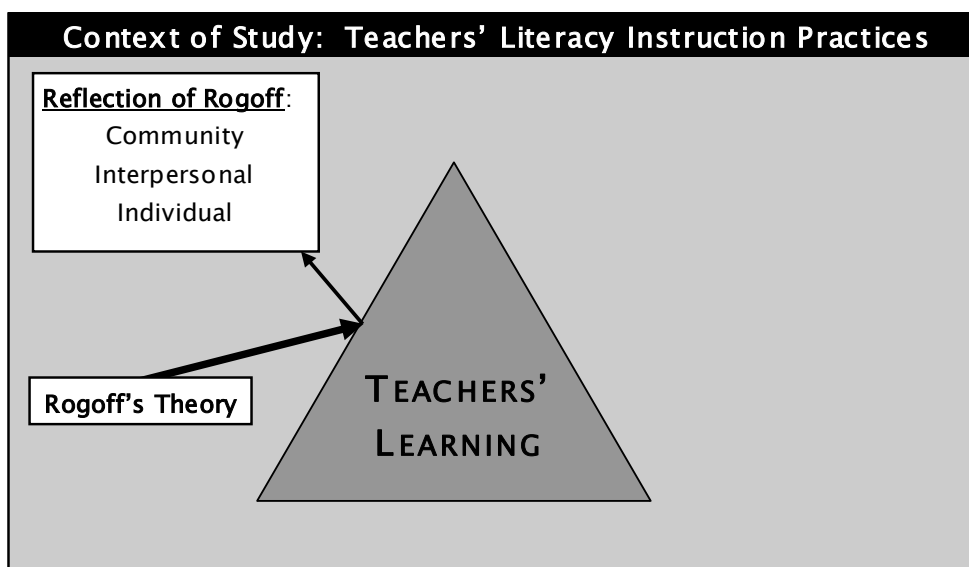


Figure 5. Visual emphasizing reflection of Rogoff. This figure illustrates the reflection metaphor, which sought parallels between Rogoff's sociocultural theory of learning and data for this study.

I found Rogoff's ideas adequate to describe the complexity of learning. This theory aligned with my sociocultural perspectives on learning and teaching, and helped me unpack the complexity of teachers' learning lives.

Community Plane

From Rogoff's perspective, analysis of the community plane necessitates a discussion of the institutional structures and activities within a community. This includes consideration of the values, resources, and constraints inherent in activities. Also important are the different roles people play and the ways they participate in activities that support the institution. From this perspective, community and people are mutually influential on one another; as people change, the community changes, yet the community also influences the changes people undergo.

Rogoff further explains the nature of the community plane by using the metaphor of apprenticeship. This metaphor supports an explanation of the nature of members' participation, as experienced members apprentice newer members into expanded participation. An examination of activities enables us to see the ways newcomers and experts take active roles to either obtain or give support (Rogoff, 1995).

As my reflective contribution to the community plane, I explain Rogoff's themes by tracing how the school community shaped teachers' participation and learning. I found Desert Vistas' school community to be the most germane to this explanation of teacher learning, even though teachers participated in many different and overlapping communities. Because the school community was the site of their teaching and learning, and the place in which my observations took place, it was the most obvious place to examine the institutional values, resources, and constraints on teachers' learning.

I submit that the community exerted significant influence on teachers' learning in ways that were not explicitly stated by teachers, but still evident. This concurs with Rogoff's (1995) theoretical model; people do not often identify the aspects of the institutions of which they are a part, nor actively consider the ways these aspects affect their learning. The patterns of participation become taken-for-granted and transparent. I found this to be true for teachers. In coding across the data, I found they said very little that explicitly revealed the ways the school community supported or constrained their participation. Thus, I bring my insider's perspective and knowledge of the school from my three years teaching there to bear

on this analysis. I perceive my personal history most significantly contributes to an interpretation of the community plane. However, because this study centralizes the teachers, I also maintain that their words and actions constitute the central premise from which to analyze the community influences on their learning.

It is important to provide some context for the community events in the forthcoming vignette of teachers' learning. Curriculum Night and parent/teacher conferences are typical school-community events mandated by the district and part of a wider school culture. At DVE, Curriculum Night is an annual event held after the first three weeks of school. It provides an opportunity for parents to meet the teacher, see children's classrooms, hear a community message from the principal, and generally explore the school. Parent/teacher conferences occur after the first nine weeks of school, and again at the halfway mark in the school year. This is an opportunity for parents to sit down with teachers for a 15-minute conversation about their child. Teachers conduct these conversations in their own way, but reviewing the report card is traditionally a priority in these meetings. These two events were the primary school-based activities that enabled me to examine teachers' participation on the community plane.

Assertion: Parental involvement constituted a significant part of the community plane evident in teachers' learning experiences. Teacher/parent interactions reflected an apprenticeship pattern as teachers interacted with parents and one another.

Vignette 1: Curriculum Night, Conferences, and Comfort Levels

“So, how did Curriculum Night go?” I asked as we settled in, propping pillows under our hips as we adjusted our legs under the low tables. I thought about

my own nervousness over Curriculum Night during my teaching years at Desert Vistas—you just never quite knew what to expect. The typically well-attended school event had taken place the previous night, and I figured it was likely the first thing on teachers' minds.

“Good, really good. I only had five parents that didn't come and one had already told me previously that they wouldn't be able to make it,” Annemarie started out.

“That's a really good turn-out, Annemarie!” I responded.

“I know, I feel like it went well. I had one family who was from another district and so the mom had lots of questions. She cornered me and said, ‘OK, I need you to lay it out for me. *What* is this school all about?’” So I had to spend a few minutes with her.”

“How did you start that conversation?” Jean grinned.

“Well, she kind of came at me with guns loaded, saying, ‘You need to explain the tables. Why aren't there desks in rows? And where are all the chairs?’ So I explained that to her, but I really couldn't figure out if she was looking for more of the authentic practice or whether she was looking for the worksheets. I don't know. She was really difficult to read.”

Jean nodded, “You're not sure which side of the road she's on.”

“Right! And when she left, I asked if she had any further questions and she told me she had a feel for it, but it was very hard to read whether she felt positive or negative about it. And that just makes me nervous—that's why I think my interactions with parents don't always reflect what I value in learning. I struggle with

it a bit because the things we value can't be measured on that report card, so it's just one of those tensions, but I think that's part of why I'm the complete opposite of you, Jean.

“You invite parents in to sit on the couch and have a conversation with you. You just said that you didn't even talk about the report card in some of your conferences! And I'm just very business-like in mine. I sit parents across from me at a table and I go through the report card. And I think part of it is I just don't know what their expectations are. So I just say, “This is where we are, this is what we've done, this is where your child is, boom, boom, boom.””

“It keeps you in the driver's seat,” observed Jean.

Annemarie giggled as she agreed, “Yeah, because I don't know them well enough to know what they value, and I don't know if I'm meeting their expectations...but I have to feel comfortable with it, so I do certain things to make sure I can.”

Discussion of Vignette 1

The vignette above reflects three themes on the community plane of analysis event in teachers' self-reported navigation of parent/teacher conferences and Curriculum Night: 1) participant-teachers' use of tools to navigate community values and constraints in ways that are personally meaningful to them, 2) teachers' efforts to apprentice newcomer parents, and 3) the multiple roles evident in teachers' interactions.

Use of tools. The contrast between the two teachers is evident in their use of tools and physical space within parent/teacher conferences: Annemarie seats

parents across from her at a table and takes them through the report card, structuring her interactions with them in a way that keeps her “in the driver’s seat.” Jean seats parents in a comfortable seat on the couch and briefly acknowledges the report card as a single, one-dimensional view of their child before engaging them in conversation about their child and their mutual values and hopes for him/her.

That Annemarie feels tension with this dichotomy between her interactions with children and parents is telling; she wanted to do things differently, but continued to choose the report card as a structure for her interactions with parents because she needed that structure to feel comfortable. This suggests evidence of Annemarie’s past experiences with parents, the details of which are not pertinent to this discussion, but which she herself summarized as,

Last year, I was constantly putting out fires—that was the entire year. [I was] putting out fires between the children, putting out fires between the parents. And...I was so overwhelmed with putting out fires that I couldn’t concentrate on anything else. (Inquiry conversation 4, September 3, 2010)

Annemarie negotiated her role with parents at the community level carefully. Her learning efforts indicated her commitment to community values of holistic workshop practices and authenticity in education. However, she needed additional time and experience to be comfortable in apprenticing parents in ways that reflected those values. Whether or not Annemarie makes her interactions with parents a priority for her own learning will be determined by her ongoing interactions on the community plane.

Jean’s participatory shifts are also evident in the way she negotiated one of the perceived constraints in the school community: the report card. Tracking and reporting children’s progress is an institutional structure of school. The district

report card asks teachers to grade student proficiency across a number of skills on a four-point scale, a format that is largely incompatible with DVE's holistic philosophy towards learning and teaching. Nevertheless, the report card exerts significant pressure on the ways teachers instruct, assess, and analyze children's progress. Teachers deal with this pressure in different ways; some structure their teaching around it, and others reject it. After 24 years of teaching, Jean freed herself from the pressure of the report card by rejecting its validity in the learning life she lived alongside students. Because she "followed the child," she found the linear expectations for development outlined on the report card to be incompatible with her knowledge of her students as individuals. Consequently, she minimized its importance in her conversation with parents. By this, I do not mean that she filled it out carelessly or abandoned the institutional value of monitoring progress. Rather, she considered the ways the report card was incompatible with a constructivist and holistic perspective of learners, and decided to play down its significance with parents by refusing to structure her conferences around it. That it took Jean 24 years to become comfortable enough with this decision to restructure her entire format for conferences is not insignificant; learning takes time and thoughtful reflection, especially in relation to community values that are such a strong influence on participants' roles.

While there have been ongoing conversations in the DVE community about the possibility that narrative reports would be more appropriate to the learning philosophies supporting the school than the district report card, there has never been a concerted effort to change this structure in any meaningful way. This is likely due

to district requirements, the challenge of uniting faculty opinion toward this goal, and/or the difficulty of apprenticing families into such a different way of reporting on children's progress. Ultimately, the report card also serves as a supportive structure for aligning the school to external structures that affect the school's funding at district and state levels.

At the community level, it is noteworthy to consider that although tools such as the report card and parent/teacher interactions are a critical element of school, they are an oft-neglected aspect of teacher preparation or professional development. The profession takes for granted that teachers understand how to approach these interactions in ways that feel comfortable to both teachers and parents. This proved not to be the case for either teacher; Jean has spent her entire teaching career working towards a level of comfort in her parent/teacher conferences that enabled her to follow her heart. Annemarie tentatively explored the tensions inherent in such interactions while never explicitly acknowledging the complexity of her learning in those moments.

Teachers' efforts to apprentice newcomers. The vignette also demonstrates the different ways that school community values are evident in both implicit and explicit ways. One way is the furniture arrangement in the first-grade classrooms. Instead of desks in rows, these classrooms feel more like living rooms punctuated by round, low tables. Children sit on pillows in flexible seating arrangements that emphasize the importance of talk and the sociocultural values of living and working in a comfortable space. Another evidence of community values is in the learning tasks. Rather than worksheets or drills, teachers emphasize reading

real books, thinking through conversation, and participating in literacy events that are both interesting and authentic.

That these values were different from the mother's previous school experiences was clear in the way Annemarie described the urgency of her questions. This newcomer mom took an active role in pursuing answers to why the furniture was set up in certain ways and why there were not worksheets coming home in her child's backpack every evening.

Community values have a shaping influence on learners' participation in activities. Apprenticeship is evident in the ways people help one another become more expert participants. By Annemarie's own account, she apprenticed this mother into the school's expectations by first listening to the mother's concerns and trying to assess her feelings and expectations about the school, based on her child's first few weeks. Annemarie's comment that she did not know if the mother was looking for "authentic practice or worksheets" hints at Annemarie's style in describing her interactions with parents; she tended to use "sound byte" answers in her explanations. That a school environment would be either totally authentic or totally structured around worksheets is an oversimplification that Annemarie would no doubt acknowledge. Nevertheless, this was a pattern in her learning talk, as she worked through the details of what she thought and how she communicated this thinking to others.

Multiple roles. Apprenticeship operates in several directions in this vignette. Annemarie apprenticed a newcomer parent into the literacy practices prevalent in her classroom and the larger school community of Desert Vistas. Also

apparent is Jean's apprenticeship of Annemarie, which constituted a kind of indirect coaching on how to interact with parents. Jean's comment, "You didn't know which side of the road she was on," confirmed that Annemarie was wise in probing to discover this mother's ideas about education before engaging in an explanation. It was also evident in Jean's explanation during other inquiry group conversations of how she interacted with parents in conferences. As Annemarie went on to talk about how different she is from Jean in her style of interacting with parents, she acknowledged the example Jean set, suggesting that she is open to this apprenticeship.

In this discussion of teachers' learning experiences, I showed how the community plane of analysis was reflected in teachers' efforts to apprentice newcomers. That Annemarie both apprenticed parents and was herself apprenticed by Jean is telling; the ways learners participate and the roles they take up constantly shift. Nevertheless, this vignette shows how learners use tools such as the report card to navigate the values of a community in ways that are personally meaningful to them. It illustrates how a parent actively sought and received the chance to participate more fully in the DVE community. Finally, it demonstrates the ways Annemarie was both supported and challenged to change her participation.

Interpersonal Plane

On the interpersonal plane, Rogoff (1995) directs our attention to the person-to-person interactions that occur as people participate in culturally valued activity. This accounts for not only face-to-face and side-by-side interactions, but also the ways people learn from one another distally, by overhearing or observing,

for instance. It emphasizes the interpersonal arrangements and interactions between people as they participate in activities. Rogoff makes the point that these interactions can both promote and restrict certain types of involvement (p. 7).

Rogoff uses the metaphor of guided participation for this plane to shape a view of interactions from a sociocultural perspective. Guided participation is not meant to distinguish between interactions that are guided from those that are not. Rather, the metaphor enables us to see the ways people communicate and coordinate their efforts as they work together to accomplish tasks. In this way, their participation is purposive, albeit emergent: “As people direct their activity toward implicit, explicit, or emerging goals, they may not be able to articulate their goals. Their goals may not be particularly task-oriented [...] However, people’s involvements are motivated by some purpose...and their actions are deliberate” (Rogoff, 1995, p. 8).

The idea that learners’ participation is always purposeful enabled me to analyze teachers’ participation in both routine and unexpected situations, and focus on the ways they observed and participated in the moment-to-moment interactions that made up their learning lives.

Context for interpersonal analysis. Before presenting the assertion, vignette, and discussion for this plane, it is important to provide context for the interpersonal interactions as they evolved across the semester. The vignette I will present is a conversation that took place at the halfway point in the semester. Four months prior, at the outset of the study, Jean was open with Annemarie and me about her discomfort with being a “leader” in the study:

Jean: I've seen Annemarie watch stuff in my room and really want that [classroom community] for herself...and that's a part I'm confused about, for this study. How much do you want Annemarie and me to work together? Do you want to observe us separately? See what emerges in each of the classrooms? Because I feel like if it was that, that I might be a leader, and I wouldn't want to be saying to her, 'Do this, do that' because that's what I'm afraid might happen.

Annemarie: Well, I'm doing my own thing too.

Jean: No, I know you are. But if it was separate, you [Susanna] would get a little more authentic data. I've thought about this—if we were collaborating and doing the exact same thing, it won't be as interesting or authentic as each of us growing individually.

Susanna: Well, it doesn't matter to me if you each are trying to do this your own way, or tackling it together. It's all learning. I don't have an agenda like that in mind...I just want us to touch base each week to talk about things.

Jean: It just seems...I think it would be a lot of pressure—I wouldn't want to have to be responsible. I want the learning to come naturally... (Inquiry conversation 1, May 31, 2010)

While we never reached a conclusive answer about this issue, the naming of it was significant for Jean; she recognized that Annemarie was always watching,

always learning from her. She wanted to support Annemarie, but she also wanted space for her own learning to emerge. As I describe in the analysis of the individual plane, Jean had a strong, internal learning landscape that she nurtured very carefully. Annemarie kept such close step with Jean that she often trod on her heels.

As Rogoff points out, the interpersonal happenings within culturally valued activity often leads to the borrowing and “tweaking” of strategies or ideas among community members. Guided participation is evident in the ways members use others’ ideas to make sense of their own learning, sometimes in ways that are not directly offered or formally articulated by either party. Annemarie was much this kind of learner. She created her own opportunities for guided participation by maintaining access to Jean, honoring her as a mentor, and listening carefully to everything she said. Jean’s sense that Annemarie “watched stuff in her room” was accurate; Annemarie openly acknowledged and appreciated Jean as a mentor in her teaching life:

Well, I would definitely say that Jean has been an influence [on my learning]. Having worked with her for the years that I’ve been at Desert Vistas now, I definitely can say that she has pushed me in my thinking in terms of this talk, because I see, I’ve seen in her room some of the things that come up, the kinds of things that she does with kids. And looking at some of her kids’ writing, it just makes you go where you just go ‘Wow!’ Her kids just get it and they’re just so deep! So I’ve tried to use her as a resource and we’ve had these conversations where, especially in years that I struggle, the first thing she always says to me is, ‘The community is the biggest thing, and if you don’t have that, you don’t have anything. You can’t make these meaningful and deep connections to the kids and to their learning if you don’t have the community....’ (Interview 2, October 15, 2010)

Transcripts of inquiry group conversations revealed two conversational patterns evident within inquiry group conversations. First, teachers’ participation was somewhat individualistic and informative-based. Teachers did not ask many

questions of one another, although they listened carefully to what the other said. The second pattern was evident in the way Annemarie listened far more than she spoke in these meetings. When she did speak, it was often to pick up a thread of something Jean said, appropriating it for her own use. While this pattern carried through our conversations throughout the semester, it was especially noticeable in the beginning weeks of the study. I share one snippet of conversational talk to illustrate these patterns, a conversation early in the semester when I asked teachers to do a quick-write on their perception of the power of talk in their respective classrooms. After giving them time to write, they shared their ideas:

Jean: I'm trying to put [the importance of talk] into words and it's like I'm doing my own self-research here. I think...if I don't see my kids feeling something, if I just see them doing...then it's like they come in here little robots and I send them out the same way every day...I need to have that talk—that human connection with them....I feel that if I really am not looking at them and listening to them, then I'm just becoming a task-force manager. Unless I have that human touch with my students and feel and talk with them on a deeper level, I feel like I'm just no different than any other teacher. I'm just getting the job done, and then I feel myself wilting.

Annemarie: Well, thank you, because I couldn't think of the word, and you said 'connecting' and I'm like *yes*, that's what it is! I feel

like whether it's through this project or just the group [of students] that I have...whatever it is, I feel like I am really trying. This [feels like] the first time I'm really *with* them and really focusing all my energy and just trying to block out all the other stuff, the 'have-to's' and just be present with them, to make that connection. (Inquiry conversation 4, September 3, 2010)

As this excerpt illustrates, teachers adopted a rather monologist way of sharing within these meetings. It also demonstrates the reason that I sometimes asked teachers to write their thoughts first, to find out what they were thinking, even though I appreciated the value of constructing understandings socially. Within the interpersonal interactions of our inquiry group conversations, these participatory patterns enabled me to identify teachers' professional identity moves. While they never explicitly stated this, I saw these conversational exchanges as efforts to make themselves known to one another.

Assertion: Teachers' interpersonal interactions demonstrated patterns of participation wherein each tried to teach the other.

Vignette 2: Teaching One Another

The noisy coffee shop was a different background to our regular, weekly conversation. Annemarie and Jean had graciously agreed to meet during their fall break so we decided on a local coffee hangout. We began with small talk about our lives and teachers' fall projects during the break. Fairly soon, the conversation moved to their classrooms, and I asked Annemarie to clarify some parts of a lesson I

had observed the previous week. It was a morning she conducted two lessons with her first graders on making meaningful connections.

I laughed as I told her, “Annemarie, there were times in my field notes that I wrote down, ‘I’m not sure what I would say to that kiddo, whether that was a meaningful connection or not! I was glad you were in charge of that conversation and not me!’ We laughed together as Annemarie filled Jean in:

“My kids have been making really random and meaningless connections in the stories I read aloud. It’s things like, ‘My friend’s mom is named Maureen, too!’ or ‘I have five cousins!’ and stuff like that.”

“Yeah, they do that,” Jean agreed.

“Yeah, and I was telling Susanna that, too, that I have to keep in mind that we’re still only at the end of the first quarter. But I did a lesson on making meaningful connections—you know, I wrote them all down, and then we went back and had a discussion, rating them a 1 for meaningful or 2 for not meaningful. And I wanted to see if by charting it and discussing it as a group, if they’d maybe start monitoring themselves a little bit.

“That’s interesting, the way you’re helping them manage their talk. You know, I approach that issue of kids making random connections in a totally different way,” said Jean.

“Mmm hmm?” Annemarie asked.

“I think I approach it in a fear way!” Jean laughed. She went on to clarify, “The first week, if they say something totally random, I look at them and let them

know right up front, ‘That has no place here.’ And they stop. I think it’s a mother thing, coming from twenty-plus years of experience.”

“I can see that. For me, though, it’s like, ‘Oh, my gosh! Am I crushing them right now? Am I crushing what they’re trying to say?’” Annemarie responded.

“Yeah, no—I don’t worry about that, because I know how not to crush them. I can tell how far is too far. It’s really interesting, though—how differently we approach this issue.”

I joined in, “It’s great that you two are okay with doing it differently. You’re right next door to each other, you’re both aiming at the same goal, but you’re approaching it in very different ways.”

“It’s a different bag of tricks and different reference points,” Jean said.

“Absolutely,” agreed Annemarie.

The conversation shifted, but it came back around awhile later. Annemarie was explaining a point in her lesson where a child had made a connection to Tomie dePaola’s (1999) autobiographical picture book, *The Baby Sister*, and said that when he was born, his whole family dressed up like clowns to celebrate the day he came home from the hospital.

“Do you think he was mistaken? You know how kids can tell a story when they want to contribute,” Jean said.

“Well, I just went along with it,” Annemarie responded. “I said to the kids, ‘This connection could be kind of tricky to decide. What do you think?’ And one of the kids said, ‘Yeah, that’s meaningful, we should give it a one because his family had a celebration like Tomie’s family.’ Another kid said, ‘No, I think it’s a two [not

meaningful] because it doesn't help me understand the story. Nobody dressed up like clowns in the story.' So I said, 'OK, I see your point, but...'

and then another child chimed in and said, 'Well, you have the birth of the baby in the story, and the birth of a baby here and both of them are having a celebration!' So we decided it would be a one, and we marked it as a meaningful connection," Annemarie finished.

"That's neat that your kids are figuring this out, because they're seeing how you respond to their answers, to help them learn about important contributions," said Jean.

Discussion of Vignette 2

This vignette represents a typical interpersonal exchange between Jean and Annemarie in the ways each one acknowledged the other as a learner, a teacher, and a professional. Although they approached their teaching interactions with children in different ways, they shared these exchanges as learners, always approaching the inquiry group conversations with things to share and a commitment to making sense of their thinking and literacy instruction through talk. As teachers, they had a mutual respect for one another's decisions and ways of teaching.

Beyond that, this vignette hints at the ongoing and underlying identity negotiations that took place when I, as a researcher, put teachers into a room on a regular basis and asked them to be transparent about their learning and thinking process. Within this conversational exchange, there are noteworthy reflections of the interpersonal plane of analysis, which I perceive as a) teachers' efforts to enact professional identities, and b) the negotiations inherent in guiding or "being guided."

Professional identity moves. The vignette itself demonstrates a shift in the two patterns I explained at the beginning of this section—important in its divergence from the pattern. In this interpersonal exchange, Annemarie shared her learning efforts related to teaching her students how to make more connected comments. She had shifted her own participation as a teacher by trying something new in her literacy instruction and seemed excited to share it. Although I had initiated her sharing on this topic through a direct request for clarification, I felt glad when she expanded her explanation to include Jean. The three of us participated in this interpersonal exchange in a face-to-face conversation predicated on our respective experiences. I can speak specifically only to what I experienced in this exchange, but I go on to interpret teachers' interactions based on the larger context of the study and my time with them.

As a researcher within this exchange, I appreciated the opportunity to hear Annemarie talk about her learning and teaching. This lesson on making meaningful connections was a literacy engagement that was more structured and purposeful than others I had seen in her room, and I knew it was a significant moment for her as a teacher. I also knew from being in Jean's classroom that she was right; her students did not offer the same kinds of connections that Annemarie's students did. Jean's explanation for this ("The first week, if they say something totally random, I look at them and let them know right up front, 'That has no place here.' And they stop...") is an accurate one, from my perspective. However, it was also unhelpful to Annemarie, constituting an inaccessible model of how to help students make meaningful connections. Since she could not discern the complexity of what Jean

did, Annemarie used what she could: another professional's step-by-step description of this engagement in her own classroom.

Annemarie referred to Millers' (2002) *Reading with Meaning* to guide her work. Annemarie shaped her own professional identity and participation through use of this tool (Rogoff, 1995; Vygotsky, 1985), but appropriated it for herself within this conversation. She did not mention that she got this engagement from a text. While I do not believe she was trying to hide this fact from Jean, I find it significant that Annemarie spoke of the lesson as her way of trying to help students make meaningful connections. This shows how learners may learn from a distance, using tools to mediate their learning (Vygotsky, 1986) but appropriate that learning as their own, folding it into their own professional identity.

Annemarie's statements were self-identifying in her desire not to "crush" students' voices. She lived up to this ideal in honoring the student's seemingly random comment about his family dressing up in clown costumes, and asserted her identity as a teacher with Jean by sharing her thinking accordingly. Further, I perceived this as an effort not only to teach Jean, but also to reaffirm herself, valuing her own efforts in the retelling of the lesson. Herein we see the ways teachers told others and themselves who they are, both through words and actions (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998). Teachers' professional identities, as a part of their overall perception of who they make themselves to be, are shifting, socially constructed, and influenced through interactions with others (Hoffman-Kipp, 2008; Rogoff, 1995). Annemarie's professional identity bumped up against Jean's in an unexpected way. While they both had the same goal of supporting students'

connected talk, they met that goal in different ways and essentially “taught” one another about their thinking through this exchange.

Negotiations in guiding or “being guided.” Jean chalked up her way of dealing with students who make superfluous and disconnected comments to her years of teaching experience and role as a mother. Indeed, Jean appeared to accomplish the complex and simultaneous tasks of holding high standards for students’ connections, managing talk, scaffolding students’ comments, and connecting it all into a larger conversation with the ease of breathing. However, in the conversational moment and in hindsight, I perceive her comments in this vignette to be a demonstration of her own efforts to teach Annemarie about how, from her perspective, it should not take months of time and ongoing lessons to support students in making meaningful, connected comments.

That Annemarie did not see this the same way (and would likely continue to work on helping her students connect their talk in her own way) became a point of negotiation. Jean tried to explain this issue as a management one—“Just give them a teacher look.” Annemarie’s effort to speak back to Jean’s unstated assessment of her method was deliberate, if transient. It led to an opportunity for her to rehearse her learning in a new way on the interpersonal plane. She interacted within our group from a position of ownership, taking a tentative step away from her more familiar role as someone seeking guidance. I suggest that this episode, if closely analyzed through her own reflective processes, may empower her to try it again in the future.

Also evident in this vignette are the ways teachers acted out their professional identities in ways that simultaneously revealed and hid certain parts of

themselves. I saw it as efforts to be both vulnerable and hidden in the same moments. Annemarie worked to learn from Jean without directly demonstrating her need. She did this by rarely asking direct questions and listening carefully to Jean's shared reflections. Jean was passionate about the learning unfolding in her own room and shared out of that excitement, but simultaneously felt reluctant to share too much. She worried that her very personal teaching process was put at risk when others tried to figure it out, tease it apart, as Annemarie so often did. To Jean, having others see or know about what was emerging in her room was like digging up a baby plant to see if it is really growing—a well-intentioned but misguided effort which only stunts the plant's chance of survival.

As a researcher, I experienced my own tensions about these issues on the interpersonal plane. Jean's experience and reflective bent (and Annemarie's desire to hear about Jean's thinking) meant that there were often unbalanced amounts of sharing between the teachers. I sometimes deliberately connected my own observations between teachers' classrooms. These efforts were usually spontaneous but also intentional: I wanted to hear Annemarie's perspective, and found it difficult to discern this when she was so quiet. As a fellow teacher, I also wanted to open space for her to participate with more agency in a learning situation that I came to view as imbued with power differentials. I valued a kind of equality in the amount and kind of collaborative talk that I was trying to foster and did not see that playing out the way I had envisioned. This realization was slow in coming, and I only later realized it as part of my positionality and bias as a teacher researcher. I discuss further in Chapter 6 the ways my research efforts influenced the interpersonal

interactions teachers and I shared during these conversations. I could not discern these patterns more fully until I was formally analyzing data.

I perceive this vignette and analysis to clearly reflect Rogoff's perspectives about the interpersonal plane. The three of us engaged in a person-to-person interaction as we participated in the culturally valued activity of supporting our teaching and learning lives through talk. The data show the ways that we negotiated our learning selves in retrospective looks at experience, demonstrating that sometimes learning by observation is not completely feasible. Annemarie was always watching Jean, and in this instance (as in others), observation alone was insufficient to help her make sense of this for herself and her students. Each learner's interpersonal interactions and participation were both purposeful and emergent: purposeful because we sought to identify our learning through changes in thinking and behavior. It was emergent because it evolved in the moment-to-moment exchanges that transpired as we taught one another and enacted various identities.

Individual Plane

The individual plane makes it possible to glimpse the ways teachers' learning experiences reflect their individual thinking and patterns of participation, observing how learners change their participation *through* participation. This makes it possible to see the ways that individuals alter or transform their thinking, their words, and their actions, through an examination of their involvement in culturally valued activity. Thus, the individual plane must also be considered in light of the interpersonal and community planes (Rogoff, 1995).

The individual plane demonstrates how learning, or change in participation, is always geared to future participation—today’s experiences prepare learners for tomorrow’s events. While these shifts in participation are observable, learners change in ways that are seldom linear or uncomplicated. Rogoff uses the metaphor of participatory appropriation to describe the multiple ways that individuals come to know and do things differently as they participate. Thus, this term reinforces that learning is neither discrete nor concrete, and does not constitute something that was once external and is now inside one’s head. This is why Rogoff rejects the idea of internalization, or the idea that knowledge crosses identifiable boundaries from the world into learners’ minds.

Instead, the metaphor of participatory appropriation makes it possible to envision learners’ participation *as the learning, itself*, such that learners appropriate new ways of being with increasing confidence and competence, all in service of different participation in future interactions. Learners might handle similar situations differently than they did before. Rogoff attributes this to the power of past participation to shape present and future interactions. Learning, then, is not only a transformation of understanding but of action. As learners participate, they appropriate knowledge, shaping their contributions and actions in observable ways, and expanding old understandings to accommodate new ones.

This is the most personal process of all the planes, although it takes place in the more public interpersonal and community-related interactions of any activity. It presupposes active and interdependent roles between learners, wherein observed activity demonstrates learning-in-action. Rogoff borrows from Bakhtin's (1981)

notion of the way people appropriate others' words to describe themselves, in a constant reification of existing ideas to create new ones. As a result, communication always

involves adjustments between participants (with varying degrees of asymmetry) to stretch their common understanding to fit with new perspectives in the shared endeavor. Such stretching to fit several views and to accomplish something together is development and occurs in the process of participation. (Rogoff, 1995, p. 12)

This stretching work is evident in the shifting participatory moments in which learners negotiate understandings and get things done. There is no straight line between the learning-talk that stretches understandings and the actions demonstrating those understandings. Thus, it is also useful to examine the talk in which participants engage as evidence of particular changes, rather than making efforts to document accumulated units of change or actions.

In my discussion of the data as they reflect the individual plane, I specifically examine 1) the ways teachers changed their participation, whether through words or actions, 2) the ways their ideas evidenced “stretching,” 3) teachers’ perspectives on the nature of learning, and 4) their personal passions about learning. All of these ideas constituted clear reflections of Rogoff’s individual plane—the personal perspectives each one brings to the interpersonal and community interactions present in any activity.

From these perspectives, it would be possible to reexamine the previous vignettes from an individual plane of analysis. However, I have chosen to share a vignette for each teacher because an analysis of learning on the individual plane emphasizes the personal nature of the learners, themselves. To speak across cases, I

structured these vignettes after excerpts from my final interview with each teacher. I found these particular conversations to be especially revealing about the individual plane, partly because they were the “capstone” of our entire semester together, and partly because the structure of Seidman’s (2006) interview protocol engenders deep reflections on meaning.

Assertion: Teachers’ experiences and personal identities contributed to ways of participation in teaching that were highly personal and unique to each teacher.

Vignette 3: Annemarie’s Individual Learning—“I Needed a Direction.”

It’s the end of a busy school day, and Annemarie tosses me a pillow and grabs one for herself as we sit at a kid table in her classroom for our final interview. Our conversation goes in many different directions, but I’m especially interested to hear about the day when she and I spoke in private and I encouraged her to try directing her inquiry efforts towards guided reading groups. I am especially interested when she introduces the subject:

“You know, it was so helpful for me, to have you say, ‘This is an area you might want to try.’ It helped me go, ‘Let’s do that. That’s a direction I can focus on, I can adjust what I’m doing and it gives me a purpose,’” Annemarie said.

“A direction?” I ask.

“Yes, a direction to go that felt right for me. And it fit me. Because I’m still learning.”

“Well, we all are!” I said.

“I know, but you know what I mean? It’s just been a few years since I’ve been here at Desert Vistas—yes, I’ve learned a lot and made huge steps, but there are still many steps to take. And watching the Taberski video definitely helped me readjust my thinking in terms of the small group instruction.”

“Readjust how?” I queried.

“Well, just the fact that I started with thinking the groups had to be a certain way, that we had to do it in a round-robin fashion, use choral reading, that I had to have a skill we were working on, or a sound. The skills part of it was my whole concept of doing small groups in reading. And seeing that video just made me think about them differently. I went ‘Oh! I can have a group and we can have a conversation and still be talking about books and noticing things that are coming up in the print and talk about a strategy. It doesn’t have to be a focus on a single skill or sound or pattern. It can be the bigger picture.’ So that just really helped me envision what reading groups could look like.”

“And it fit too with your philosophical understandings of what Desert Vistas is all about?” I offer.

“Right, absolutely. Knowing that talk is so important, and that I can honor that value when I conference with kids, it was still difficult for me to envision, ‘What does it look like with a small group? How does that talk come up when you’re not one-on-one?’ So that realization was a good moment for me.

“And then, as I started doing the groups, I became more comfortable. I was feeling better about how effective I was being in terms of meeting students’ needs and for whatever reason, whether it was the holidays or whatever, things kind of fell

off around Thanksgiving. So now my students are at a place right now where they really need me. I'm having to conference more because they're bored with their books and their behavior is getting bad again. They're exhibiting so many more off-task behaviors because I haven't been adjusting to what they need. So I have to find that balance where I'm conferring but still meeting in groups to make sure I can meet with more kids."

The conversation shifted a bit, but not long after these words, I asked, "So, if you could talk with other teachers right now, what would you want to tell them about your learning, based on your experiences this semester?"

"Oh, I guess I would say that it's not always easy to...be critical of yourself. It's really—you have to be comfortable enough with yourself to say, 'Hey, I'm not doing what I need to be doing,' or 'This isn't working and what am I doing that's maybe contributing to the problem?' It's hard to look at yourself in this way, but it's also so rewarding because you can grow so much by just looking at the pieces that aren't working and need adjustment.

"I also think too, that if you try to force it, it's not going to feel right. It's not going to look right. It's not going to sound right. Because it's not natural for you."

"Can you explain 'force' a little bit more for me? What do you mean by that?" I asked.

"I guess it's a bit of trying to be someone I'm not, or letting what other people are doing influence what you are doing in your own classroom, with your own kids. I wasn't doing the same thing as Jean—I didn't take on *hope* and try to do the same thing. But I was trying to get a big idea embedded in everything I was

doing, and it just didn't—it didn't flow the way it was supposed to flow. And good things did come out of it, yes, but did it feel right, and natural for me, and my students? No, not really. And it's really tough to kind of 'tune out' what everyone else is doing, to trust yourself and know that you did what's best for your kids and for you—you have to trust that process. That's a hard balance, because you're just stressed, as a teacher. You go back to those 'have to's.' I have to do this and we have to get to it before the end of the year, and before testing. I'm finding that if you let all that permeate, let it all come in, you're just going to be *so* ineffective. You're not going to be in the moment, you'll miss so much with the kids. And that has definitely come out for me with this group of kids.”

Discussion of Vignette 3

In Annemarie's final, formal discussion of her learning with me, she made public what is normally a private process—an individual's sense making and ways of interacting with the world. As a researcher, I could see and document some outward changes evident in Annemarie's literacy instruction practices. However, the individual plane necessitated teachers' vulnerability to share their personal thoughts about that learning.

Several themes directly reflect Rogoff's conception of the individual plane in Annemarie's words and actions. First, Rogoff asserts that learners change their participation *through* participation. The clearest example of this for Annemarie was in her decision to try guided reading groups, and to learn by *doing* them. It is noteworthy that this learning space was partly possible because I directly encouraged her to try this new area of workshop. I did this specifically because I saw Annemarie

floundering in her efforts to teach and learn in the same ways Jean did. I hoped that the opportunity to pursue something specific and bounded might reduce her learning tensions. She confirmed that this was helpful in her words,

Annemarie: It helped me go, ‘let’s do that. That’s a direction I can focus on, I can adjust what I’m doing and it gives me a purpose....’

Susanna: A direction...?

Annemarie: Yes, a direction to go that felt right for me. And it fit me. Because I’m still learning. (Interview 3, December 9, 2010)

Her individual participation with the video demonstrated how Annemarie brought her very personal ideas and experiences from her years at a traditional school to engage with a different conception of guided reading groups than she had personally experienced. The video stretched her previous understanding of guided reading groups, enabling her to “catch a new vision” (Annemarie, personal communication, November 1, 2011) for what was possible. The fact that she studied Taberski’s (2000) book in her undergraduate and graduate coursework, yet did not sustain these ideals in her first years of teaching, is potentially troubling to teacher educators. However, it is also insightful, illustrating that learning takes time, and that learners use what they already know to make sense of new information. Annemarie attested that her teaching experience made it possible to glean more from that tool than was possible for her in her undergraduate years.

As the semester went on, Annemarie’s teaching in small group formats demonstrated increased confidence and flexibility—observable shifts in her participation. Her choice to move ahead with trying this new literacy instruction was

evident and observable in her participation. These shifts were small but noticeable changes. I observed her making careful decisions about where to hold the meetings so she could better manage her independent readers, gaining confidence in grouping students with similar needs, and achieving greater flexibility in changing her plan mid-stream for guided reading groups that did not proceed as planned.

In the second half of the vignette, Annemarie specifically addresses the larger issue of trying to “be someone else” in her learning. I consider this issue was likely present for Annemarie before this study, but the research situation put increased pressure on it. At the heart of her teaching life, she wanted to be a different kind of teacher—more competent, more sure of herself, more aware of her students, and more connected to her professional knowledge. After a time of trying to do that, she appropriated a different understanding of what was good for her and her students. Moving from efforts to pursue a thematic, organic experience to a take-charge approach on guided reading groups was a “stretching” experience for Annemarie that was likely energized in our weekly, formal interactions together, where she had even more opportunities to compare what was happening in her own room to reports from Jean’s room. Issues like this demonstrate the truth of the idea that participation *is* learning, and learning is also participation.

The second way this vignette reflects Rogoff’s theoretical model is that Annemarie’s process was clearly one of expanding old ideas to accommodate new ones. She moved from initial ideas that guided reading groups must be skills-based, direct-instruction formats focused on a single sound or concept, to an idea that small group instruction could be conversational in nature, holistic in focus, and organic in

structure. This was a process of interacting with both tools and people, encompassed in the activity of teacher learning. And as Annemarie says, it is not an easy process, because expansion of old ideas always involves feelings of discomfort.

The final reflective point I wish to make is that Annemarie's individual thinking and learning was evident in the interpersonal and community planes of activity. Annemarie's changes in participation were both evidenced through and supported by the weekly inquiry group conversations. Additionally, she acted them out in the community-based context of her classroom. This confirms the idea that although one plane can be fore-grounded, it can never be isolated from the other two planes. I submit that the opportunities for Annemarie to talk about her learning *were* participation, and thus learning. Rogoff's model would reinforce this in pointing out that whether or not a person's actions noticeably shift is not the point. Learning is never this linear or uncomplicated. Annemarie did in fact make shifts, but these were small changes—increasing approximations toward being more comfortable with herself, her knowledge, and her journey. I maintain that this process was one of staying within her comfort zone while remaining uncomfortable enough to push those boundaries, just as she voiced in her reflections about parent/teacher conferences.

Annemarie's vignette and discussion of learning revealed that to some extent, she considered learning as occurring in identifiable events. She recognized a problem, consulted resources, and implemented a solution. Her vignette reflects this in the way she identified certain issues in her classroom that she set out to solve. In contrast, as I will show in the forthcoming vignette, Jean described her learning as

organic—fundamental to her very existence. It was also less structured than Annemarie’s pattern of “plan/implement/reflect.” The differences between these two teachers engendered different ways of discussing and sharing the details of their learning lives.

Vignette 4: Jean’s Individual Learning—“Learning is Everything.”

Jean and I are seated on her butter-yellow couch, with papers, books, and sundry items stacked and tucked on the armrests and into the corners. We sit among the overflowing detritus of a teaching life—I think briefly that the mess speaks to the nature of teaching better than any theory.

Jean begins talking with only a little prompting from me. Her words flow out of her in a way that suggests she does not often get the opportunity to reflect with another adult. “OK, I’ve been thinking about this—the significance of learning to my life and work—it’s just a huge, huge part of my life. It’s my identity. It’s who I am. I see this semester’s learning as particularly significant to my personal life too—the themes and things I was drawn to, they’re almost a reflection of my changing role as a mother, you know, as my kids grow up and that part of my life changes. These themes are all connected, and I think it almost met a need in my own personal life.”

“A need for...?” I prompt, nodding to show that I’m following.

“A need for some kind of positive-ness, some kind of peacefulness, some kind of hopefulness. I needed to believe and experience that there are good things and I can be a part of them. This learning was an affirmation to who I am. It was very significant to me.” Her voice chokes up and she reaches for a tissue. I look

away, hoping that my downcast eyes convey that she can have as much time as she needs.

“I just didn’t realize *how* connected my life and work were until this semester,” she went on after a moment.

“Really?” I’m surprised at this statement, having watched her teaching life in some fashion for over six years. To my way of thinking, Jean’s personal life connected to her teaching life in very obvious ways.

“Yes! I’ve always known about my belief in humanity, the good of all people. And when I think back on past inquiries, I can see that I have always wanted my students to have an awareness of these things. I did that in my homelessness inquiry several years ago. And that unit taught me that inquiry is a way that I can teach young children about difficult issues. But for some reason, this semester, this particular theme of hope, it hit a different level than ever before. I’ve learned that I have to tap into the personal with my kids. This thing has felt a *lot* closer, like peeling away a few more layers. And it connected my teaching life to my personal life in a new way.

“It’s taught me that the classroom is a place where I’m alive. I see myself teaching in the future, and also wanting to teach new teachers too, to open this door to them. I think I can help people change when I take them on a journey, in a class format. But I just feel so sure that when you stop thinking about things and wondering how everything relates—I think you just kind of cease. To me, learning is everything. And it’s also kind of lonely....” Her voice trailed off again and she stopped for a moment to think.

“I just think that once you start learning, you can’t stop. I hope that I instill that love of learning in my students, by being an inspiration about what I learn each day. And it matters so much because—you know that quote, ‘Those who refuse to study history are doomed to repeat it?’ That’s what I mean. If I’m not learning, I risk doing the same things wrong as I did before—I think I would go crazy if I felt that I had to be in this one place, with this one way of thinking about something. It’s just not very hopeful. Learning, to me, is just continually opening another door, taking another step.

“So it matters a lot to me, and I wish I could say that it mattered as much to some of the people I come in contact with, but you know, it’s amazing how the more you learn, the more you can see people who aren’t learning. That bothers me. And that’s where the lonely thing comes in. I just feel, with all the things that have happened in my personal life, away from school and classrooms—I feel that when I learn, it makes me value that understanding. Even if it’s just me who understands it. It’s a pat on the back. It’s another step in life. And I love seeing that not only in my own life, but in my students’ eyes.”

Discussion of Vignette 4

In this very personal interview, Jean revealed significant themes in her individual learning life. This interview demonstrates the ways Jean’s perspectives on the nature of learning and her passion for change, in her life, her classroom, her world.

Individuals’ participation is embedded in the social world in that their very participation exerts changes on their social world and on themselves at the same time

(Rogoff, 1995). In this sense, Jean was transforming her own participation by living out her personal identity as a learner and simultaneously transforming the social environment of her classroom and students. This was evident in the moment-to-moment interactions Jean shared with her students, which she often said were completely unplanned yet nevertheless connected by her careful thought about their needs and her community. Jean brought her own life into her teaching in ways that conveyed her passion for learning, revealed personal aspects of her life, and demonstrated a kind of “coaching” talk, which infused everything she said to children.

To further tease out what this looked like for Jean’s teaching, I share my field notes for a classroom observation I conducted in early November. On this morning, Jean shared a non-fiction text she had picked up at the school’s bi-annual book sale. In a ten-minute conversation with her students, she gave a brief, spontaneous mini-lesson on features of non-fiction text (discussing pronunciation guides, maps, and the function of diagrams as opposed to pictures), exclaimed over personal discoveries in the text (“Oh, wow, they can put a tag on a butterfly! I didn’t even know that—I’m going to have to read this book all the way through to find out what else I don’t know!”), and teased the students that the classroom scarecrow wanted to be the first to read it before diplomatically working out who the first child-reader could be (Classroom observation, November 8, 2010).

These kinds of exchanges were typical for Jean’s classroom. As a researcher, I was fascinated by the ways she took teachable moments like this one and wove her knowledge about children, state standards, personal sharing, and humor into a

teaching conversation. In a short morning session, she accomplished a great deal while keeping children engaged. When I asked her later if she had planned the “features of non-fiction text” mini-lesson, she laughed and said, “Is that what I did? No, I didn’t plan it.” When I told her that while I was watching the morning unfold, I was guessing that it might be a great example of the time she informed me, “Sometimes I don’t know what I’m going to say before I say it” (personal communication, October 4, 2010). Jean laughed and agreed,

You’re right. I did not pick that book up for that purpose, but I guess it comes from knowing in the background—knowing consciously what the expectations are. But it isn’t only that. It’s not front and center, it’s just in the back [of my mind]. But I’m also not limited to that. The things I share with kids are above and beyond that. I don’t know where it comes from. It’s an embedded—I’ve always taught like this. It’s different from direct teaching, like “I’m going to show you this, now.” I laid the book on the couch because I wanted to share it with the kids. I wanted to show them that I got a book at the fair and tell them that it would be in the classroom. And one thing led to another and I read little excerpts from it, but we’ve also been talking about the animals and those that are endangered and so that came into it, too, and everything was so connected.

But what I find is, *everything connects!* I’m thinking that when I talk with kids, it should be real and important things, and I don’t talk down to them. I just expect that they’re loving literature the way I am, and they can love learning the way I do. I’m not saying, “Oh, I need to be sure and show them this! And part of it is my whole childlike way of being interested in things.

I am a learner, and I can’t hide that from them. It comes from an honest [sense] that I’m on the same level with them. You know kids, when you see them in the morning, they’re like, ‘Let me tell you!’ And I’m like that...a lot of it comes from trusting the process. Because I’ve seen through the talking and sharing, that it’s authentic. So they’re going to internalize it a lot more than if I say, ‘OK, we’re going to do this little activity,’ and it’s very disconnected and disjointed from anything else that happened that day. So, no, I didn’t really know where that was going. (Inquiry conversation 10, October 25, 2010)

Although Jean’s words may indicate that she does not purposefully plan her literacy engagements, her teaching was obviously not without purpose. That this way

of teaching mirrored Jean's own internal and individual patterns of learning is obvious and significant. She thought of her life in themes reflective of her own learning. Her love for her children, for nature, for animals, and her desire to bring her students along to the very best realization of their individual selves infused everything she said. She valued looking closely and listening carefully in her own life, and subsequently made space for students to do the same. At six and seven years of age, this is not something that first-graders are typically asked to do in school-settings, but they rose to the occasion beautifully, taking on Jean's passion for hopefulness. She values connection and meaning in her life, and constructs a curriculum that mirrors those values.

Jean's teaching constitutes her appropriative perspective on the nature of teaching and learning (Rogoff, 1995, p. 12). Jean's participation was her own creative effort to understand and shape the social activity in her classroom. Rogoff asserts that these acts, "by their very nature involve bridging between several ways of understanding a situation. Communication and shared efforts always involve adjustments between participants...to stretch their common understanding to fit with new perspectives in the shared endeavor" (p. 12). Jean built these bridges between her own personal commitment to learning and her teaching engagements with students every day. She did this in small but significant ways, as I have just illustrated through her use of talk. She also made choices to shift her participation in larger issues like parent-teacher conferences. Her conscious decision to set the report card aside changed both the structure and trajectory of her conferences,

evidencing a clear change in her participation, even after 24 years of teaching. These examples demonstrate Jean's commitment to learning at every professional point.

Reflective Conclusions

In this reflective discussion of Rogoff's individual plane of analysis, I have demonstrated the ways that teachers' personal identities and experiences contributed to ways of participation that were highly personal and unique to each of them. Teachers changed their participation across the semester: Annemarie to pursue a different curricular engagement, Jean to pursue connectedness in her life with students and families. Teachers' unique perspectives on the nature of learning and their personal passions clearly reflect the individual plane, which was visible through interpersonal and community considerations. Analysis of data from this perspective helped me see the ways that teachers' learning and participation was always geared to different participation in future situations, and made plain the ways teachers constantly considered who they were, who their students were, and how they made decisions in the ever-shifting moments of teaching.

Up to now, I have answered the first portion of my original question: *How do teachers' learning experiences reflect the community, interpersonal, and individual planes of sociocultural analysis?* I turn now to a discussion of how the data from my study *refract* Rogoff's notions of learning, believing this analysis makes it possible for my study to enrich Rogoff's theories about learning.

Refracting Rogoff

Refraction is a scientific term related to the study of light and sound, but I use the metaphor to describe what happens to light when it passes through a different medium. Light refracted through a prism makes it possible to see all the colors present in white light. As such, it displays the composite pieces, revealing dimensionality in something that previously appeared singular and unified. (See Figure 6.)

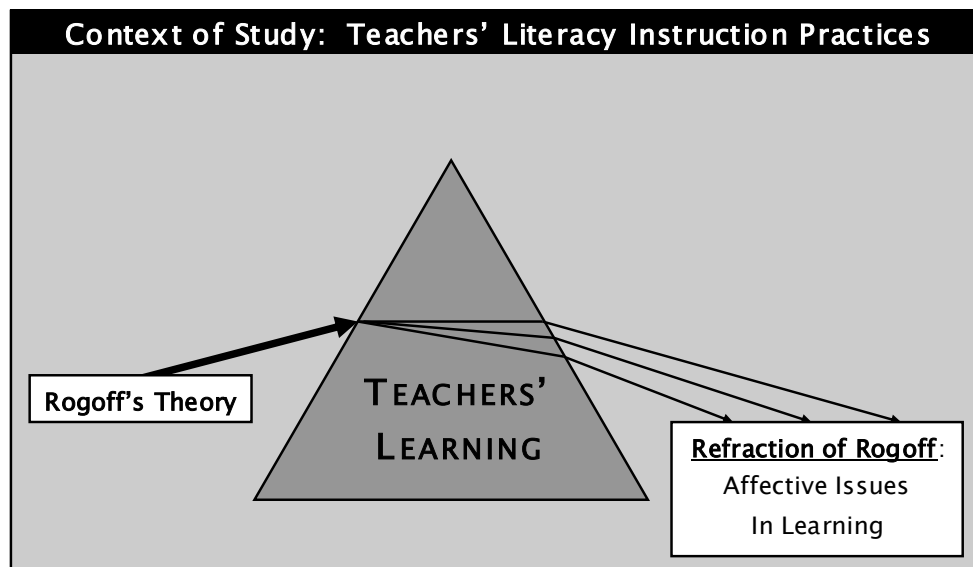


Figure 6. Visual emphasizing refraction of Rogoff. This figure illustrates the refraction metaphor, emphasizing the ways the data extends Rogoff's sociocultural theory of learning.

In the reflection metaphor, I considered the ways my data reflected the “light” of Rogoff's theory. As I move to the refraction metaphor, I now articulate the ways my data refracts Rogoff's theoretical notions of learning. This metaphor shows my effort to contribute to Rogoff's ideas about learning and participation, because as I explain in this second portion of this chapter, Rogoff's planes of analysis gain further dimensionality when refracted through the setting, participants,

and learning work of the participant teachers in this study. I go on to argue that her theory is under-developed in an important dimension in the study of learning: affective considerations.

Affect on the Community, Interpersonal, and Individual Planes

In discussing the importance of teaching writing in authentic ways, Shaughnessy (1977) advises teachers to retrace their journeys as writers to find times when writing was personal and meaningful. Teachers, she says, who otherwise avoid this vulnerability and personal engagement with writing can only compose in a way that becomes "...but a line that moves haltingly across the page, exposing as it goes all the writer doesn't know. Writing puts us on the line and we don't want to be there" (p. 7). This quote resonated for me as I considered the vulnerability involved in teaching and learning (Brown, 2010), and all the ways these endeavors "put us on the line." Feelings of insecurity, joy, hope, and self-doubt shaped teachers' participation in obvious ways. To support this idea, I share my refractive explanation of Rogoff by presenting a single assertion, vignette, and discussion. I argue that these findings contribute to Rogoff's ideas by further complicating the conversation of learning and participation as seen in her discussion of learning within sociocultural activity.

Assertion: The affective and emotional nature of learning and teaching was visibly present in teachers' experiences. The way teachers *felt* about themselves, their students, their community, and their work constituted a significant influence on what they said and did, evident in all three planes of analysis.

Vignette 5: Reflecting on our Learning

It's late November, a busy time of the school year, with holidays and report cards coming up. We are near the conclusion of the data collection process and I'm visiting with teachers in what is meant to be a quick conversation during their lunch break. I'm grateful they've agreed to take time to talk about these things with me and aware of how little time they have before picking up their students from recess. However, as the informal conversation continues, I grab my digital voice recorder to catch the reflective comments teachers make as they unexpectedly talk about how far they've come over the course of the semester.

Jean says, "I was thinking about how, when we started this inquiry, I talked about it in terms of how I wanted to become a better recorder of things. I believed I needed to write down what my students said because I thought it was a good thing for me to do. I've been mulling this the whole semester and I think this inquiry turned into something really different. And I decided it was never really about recording talk, for me. I wasn't sure what it was *really* about until it *finally* occurred to me that when I'm having those kinds of moments with the kids, it's not out of a desire to be their teacher, and record everything they say. Those moments are about the relationship. It matters on a different kind of level. I'm not assessing students. I'm not digging into what they're saying. I'm *with* them. I'm on the same plane with them."

"Wow, OK, that's significant!" I say, before thinking aloud, "but it also seems to me that you both have become more attuned to your students and in different ways than you were at the beginning. And you've let that attention direct

your teaching, too. For you, Jean, it was about how you did parent/teacher conferences, and for you, Annemarie, I think it was about how you did small group instruction.” As I make this comment, I mentally flinch at my reductionist synthesis of their learning, but both teachers nod, even as Jean picks up the thread of her first revelation.

“Yes, but I laughed to myself the other day when I realized this—I think I *knew* that I didn’t really want to be that diligent about writing down what they said. What it *really* was about was improving the relationship I have with my students. It became about *what I was learning about myself*. That’s the revealing thing. I have always admired the teachers who get stuff written down, and thought, ‘Oh, that’s neat that they have recorded what students said, but...’” Jean’s voice trailed off as she thought for a moment.

“You decided to value something you thought you should value? And then it turned out you didn’t really need to value that thing, after all?” I clarify.

“Yes, that’s exactly it!” Jean exclaimed.

Annemarie chimed in, “I don’t feel this semester’s learning has been a waste, at all. No, I didn’t become a master recorder, but I still learned.”

We chuckle together before Jean commented, “Isn’t it neat how we’ve grown, Annemarie? Remember where we were, and think about how we grew! I mean, I seriously thought I needed that piece in my teaching repertoire. And I’m not saying I’m never going to record what students say, but I’m thinking about it in a much different way. I got caught up thinking I needed to use it for a specific purpose, and I needed to try to catch everything students said, and thinking about

what I would do with it, and it wasn't about any of that. It was about the experience, it was the relationship. It was about touching them at a different level." She pauses for a moment before saying, "It was about me taking up a different role than *teacher*."

"About participating *with* our students," Annemarie said.

"Yes, and you know, I went even a step further than that with my thoughts," Jean said. "I thought, 'Was this all for me?' This quest I was on, this learning, was it for me—because I'm desperate for this feeling of connection? That was another route my mind took, so I pondered that a little bit, too. I was telling my classroom aide about this idea this morning—the kids came in from recess and put their heads down to cool off and I said to them, 'Let's think about this...,' and she said to me, 'I just love how you talk to them.' And I said to her, 'Well, I need them more than they need me.' That struck me. I wasn't really thinking along those lines before, but I got to wondering about that. I think it comes from my desire to connect with families or even to be at peace within myself. It could come from so many different places. But that's ultimately why I came to the place that this learning journey wasn't about recording everything kids say. All I do know for sure is that it's deep, and highly personal."

It's quiet for a moment before I offer, "I think all three of us share that in common. Our teaching is so personal to us." And then I ask, "What would the becoming thing be for each of you? There's an implied assumption in learning that we're always becoming, but do you have a sense of what that might be for each of you?"

Annemarie went first, “Well, I think for me, it was an effort at becoming a better teacher, specifically in reading. Before this study, I was feeling very confident, thinking that I felt pretty good with readers’ workshop. And I even said that to you. But even taking the very small piece of trying to get better at guided reading groups, I just feel like I’m meeting more of my students’ needs. I’m seeing more things than I did in the past, when I just had conferences with children. I feel like I’m becoming more reflective and really thinking about what I’m trying to do. And that’s all making me a better teacher.”

I respond, “You know, I was observing you this morning, Annemarie, and thinking about all the split-second decisions you were making today during your lesson. I can only guess about what was going on in your head, but I had a sense that you were learning moment-by-moment as you decided what to do with the conversational turns, were you going to let it continue or redirect it? At what point do you get up from your guided reading group to redirect the students in the back of the room? How much space do you give your extra-emergent reader to shuffle his books because he doesn’t want to read? And those split-second decisions, those real-time efforts we make to meet needs, that, to me, is the essence of our teaching work.”

“You’re right, and it’s also a process of coming to terms with the fact that I’m one person, I can’t get to all of them. And if Michael wants to sit there and shuffle his books like cards, I *do* have to turn a blind eye to it and just say to myself, ‘there are five kids in front of me that I need to focus on, and I worked with him earlier in the morning,’” Annemarie agreed.

“It’s like spinning plates, isn’t it?” I laughed. “There are 25 of them all going at different speeds, and if they fall, they break. It is high-stakes work that has nothing to do with tests or performance. It’s about the moments!”

Jean adds, “For me, it’s also about making sure that everyone feels right, that they feel safe. Like, I think of my little Sam, and I’m so concerned about him right now, about his self-esteem and how he views himself. I know he can read and comprehend, but it’s more than that with him. He’s always on the verge of tears, and I know he started out in my classroom that way—he didn’t just develop that in here. But I want his experience in here to be good. I feel that pressure to make it such a beautiful world for him.”

Having watched her closely for an entire semester, I encourage, “And you are, Jean. He needs time, too. It’s your work with him plus time.”

She agrees, “Yes, but it’s painful for a child to be on the outside, looking in. Intellectually, he’s ahead of many kids, but finding the right friend has been hard for him. I spend a lot of time thinking about their little spirits, more than anything.”

With a look at the clock, we realize that we are past time and disband. The teachers trot down the hall to collect their students while I make my way to the parking lot.

Discussion of Vignette 5

This vignette is nearly verbatim to a conversation teachers had with me near the end of the data collection process, and it reveals an extra dimension to Rogoff’s analysis on the community, interpersonal, and individual planes. Namely, the fact that teachers’ feelings and considerations of their students’ feelings were central to

their learning and teaching lives. While Rogoff's theory considers emotions and affect as an element of the individual plane, I highlight it because the data did not reveal this as a *part* of the individual plane. Rather, affect infused everything, and was contextually bound to participants' experiences as teachers, learners, and friends. The ways teachers felt about themselves, their students, their families, their co-workers, and their work significantly influenced the learning experiences they took up. I assert that for these teachers, the ways they felt were fundamental to their participation, as analyzed in each plane. Thus, I advocate for further consideration of the affective dimension of learning. This unquantifiable yet clearly observable quality influenced everything the teachers did.

Teaching and learning intertwined for these teachers, such that their discussion of affective issues related to teaching nearly always connected to what they were learning. While the previous explication of data may already make this plain, I discuss the ways each teacher talked about feelings in relation to their learning to offer dimensionality to Rogoff's theory on learning. I do this by postulating that her theory is insufficient to fully describe the sociocultural nature of learning because it leaves affective considerations under-developed. Ultimately, I argue that the affective dimension of teaching and learning deserves consideration in relation to each plane. To that end, I discuss each teacher's case individually, teasing out the multiple ways emotion infused their learning experiences.

In discussing these findings, I argue that each teacher had a core emotional need she strove to fulfill, which was both *evident* in her patterns of participation and a *shaping influence* on that participation. My explanation of teachers' emotional needs is

informed by not only teachers' words and actions but also my observations and perceptions, as an ethnographer, participant, and witness to their learning lives. I discuss these affective considerations for each teacher along three themes: a) feelings about teaching and learning, b) feelings of comparison/disconnection, and c) considerations of their relationships with students.

Annemarie: Living out her desire for competence. For Annemarie, “life on the line” (Shaughnessy, 1977) was something I perceive she simultaneously welcomed and feared. Her perceptions of teaching and learning were connected to the desire to “get things down.” By this, she demonstrated her sensitivity to others' perceptions of her and her teaching, and her concern that she was doing “enough” to meet students' needs.

Feelings about teaching and learning. Annemarie's feelings influenced the places she chose to teach. In retelling the story of her first year of teaching, she explained that she has a difficult time remembering that year because it was so stressful:

I can remember the kids. [But] I can't remember anything about the curriculum, other than that I was doing DIBELS all the time. And I felt like I couldn't even read a book that would go along with where we were in our learning. I couldn't even read it during reading time [because everything was structured around Reading First]. (Interview 1, September 10, 2010)

Feelings of stress and the conflict between her ideas about teaching and the realities of teaching led Annemarie to pursue further education. After failing to connect with a different grade-level team or with a district-assigned mentor, Annemarie decided to start her master's program during her first year of teaching. She retold her decision as, “...maybe my masters will give me the support I'm

looking for...because I felt like I didn't have any support. I was being told, 'You have to do it this way' and I was going, 'But I don't agree with this!'" (Interview 1, September 10, 2010). It is not insignificant that the strength of Annemarie's feelings induced her to begin a master's program halfway through her first year of teaching—a well-known time of intense stress in teachers' lives. The community plane was essentially in conflict with her individual ideals about learning; her desired ways of participating in literacy instruction were not possible for her in her first teaching position.

Those feelings of discomfort with the structure of her first school also led her to transfer to DVE. Although she had eventually achieved some equilibrium with a different grade-level team in her second year at Landmark, she decided she could feel comfortable in other places, too:

I did a voluntary transfer, and the only place I interviewed was Desert Vistas. I was blown away when I came here for the interview. I sat on the couch and thought, 'Wow, this place feels comfortable—I'm having a conversation with these people.' It didn't feel like being in an interview, [so I decided] OK, this is where I need to be. (Interview 1, September 10, 2010)

Annemarie's desire to "feel comfortable" in her workplace and profession led her to change schools. A vision of her own work in a place where her beliefs about teaching helped her fit in, instead of creating tension, motivated her to change school communities.

Not only did Annemarie's affective considerations influence where she taught, but it affected the ways she learned. Because she was attuned to the affective dimensions of place and method, Annemarie often couched her learning process in terms such as, "I'm trying things and seeing what feels good" (Interview 2, October

15, 2010) or “I definitely feel like I’ve got to a point [of competence]...but do not in any way, shape, or form feel like I’ve gotten reading workshop down” (Interview 1, September 10, 2010). In these words, Annemarie takes up the DVE community value of “always being a learner” while also revealing how important it is to her that she feel competent in her teaching work.

Within the bounds of this project, I believe it was this desire for competence that led Annemarie to pursue learning efforts that were both manageable and attainable. At the beginning of the study, she expressed initial enthusiasm for recording students’ talk, and tried many different ways of record keeping. Within these tangible tasks, she took up a theme about freedom and pulled read-aloud texts along this idea, trying to get her learning and students’ talk to “emerge” the same way it was in Jean’s classroom as she pursued the theme of hope. However, Annemarie’s efforts to foster connected talk along these themes did not satisfy her, and ultimately proved frustrating. I perceive that this was one reason that pursuing guided reading groups appealed to Annemarie. Having a focus or a topic within the community-based understanding of reading workshop provided a tangible direction for her learning. Ultimately, this enabled Annemarie to feel competent as a learner and a teacher (Interview 3, December 9, 2010).

Annemarie’s emotional perceptions of herself and her learning led her into an identity dance between “feeling good” about where she was and what she was doing, while constantly having to reconcile these feelings with all the ways she still was unsure about her learning and teaching. “...I know in my heart that I’ve gotta work on this, just a little bit, and tweak some things with [workshop]. But overall, I

feel like I do a good job...” (Interview 1, September 10, 2010). Annemarie’s feelings emerged not only from her own self-perceptions, but also from her perceptions of what others thought about her teaching. This was evident in the interpersonal connections between Annemarie and me, and the small things she revealed about what she imagined other people thought of her.

As with any teacher/researcher relationship, it took time for Annemarie to feel comfortable with having me in her classroom. In my researcher role that blended somewhat with my role as a fellow educator, I made a concerted effort to encourage her in her teaching. She said once that she could only imagine what I was thinking, sitting in the back of her room, wryly implying that it was probably a combination of confusion and disbelief. This moment of vulnerability gave me an opportunity to reassure her this was not at all the case, while confirming that feelings of competence were a strong driving force in Annemarie’s learning. I further appreciated the ways Annemarie took the risk to open small but informative windows into her “difficult” years, further revealing the way feelings infused her learning experiences. As she explained one day,

I don’t necessarily want to keep comparing past years that I’ve had, but...I feel like I’m not being pulled in fifteen million directions this year. People are not on my back as much as last year, where I felt like I was just putting out fires everywhere... (Interview 2, October 15, 2010)

Statements such as this point to the feelings teachers take on when their learning and participation is shaped by difficult circumstances on the community/interpersonal planes.

Annemarie rarely and only reluctantly attributed these conflicts to her teaching methods—a protective move that I surmise all teachers make in some way

to help themselves “keep on keeping on.” Just as Clandinin (2011) explains that teachers tell themselves stories that enable them to leave the classroom while saving face in a profession actively seeking lower attrition rates, I assert that teachers are equally likely to tell themselves stories of their success that enable them to stay in a difficult profession. By this, I do not mean to suggest that Annemarie is incorrect in perceiving herself to be a good teacher. Rather, I demonstrate that her feelings related to her competence led her to look outward, identifying external factors such as parental perception, class make-up, and reduced behavior issues as evidence of her competence and affirmation of her professional self. She used these outward looks in concert with her own self-perceptions to shape and act out her professional identity.

Parents’ perceptions of her, those of her teaching team, and the larger school community were all important to Annemarie. Beyond making general comments on her feelings related to what other teachers or parents might think about her, Annemarie specifically identified the principal in her explanation of her affective sense of teaching:

It’s been interesting because he [the principal] has been coming around more. Whether it’s because he sees that I have a better—I don’t want to say better class, but you know, he would never come through my room last year. And I understood. But now he’s coming in more and he’s hearing some of the things that are going on in my room and he’s saying, ‘That was brilliant!’ Last week he and a district official and another teacher came into my room and they were listening to a conversation and the kids were talking about strategies they were using. It was one of those beautiful moments when I thought, ‘Yes! Someone else is here to see this! The kids are talking, it’s not me. They are using the words!’ So it’s just interesting, because now he’s getting to see what I’m doing, so I just feel [better]. I know there’s some competitiveness between teachers, but...I’m okay with closing my door and just being with my kids. And when I need to open up that door, I go to Jean. (Interview 9, December 9, 2010)

It was extremely important to Annemarie that others feel positively about her teaching. She used the metaphor of closing/opening her door to express the ways she managed her teaching and learning life. Whether her participation came out of a desire to be recognized as an expert in the community or simply be affirmed individually was never clear to me. However, it speaks clearly to the basic need humans have for acceptance and love (Brown, 2010), a fact that is not often overtly articulated in discussions about teacher learning within schools or teacher preparation programs. Annemarie's words demonstrate not only how she felt about the principal's opinion of her teaching, but also in how she focused her affective learning-gaze on Jean's classroom.

Feelings of comparison. Annemarie couched her feelings about her learning in terms that suggested how closely she watched Jean, often comparing her learning and teaching style to Jean's. She tried hard not to blame herself for the problems she saw in her classroom community, and felt a measure of discomfort in acknowledging that Jean saw some of these issues and tried to help her with them:

[Jean] has pushed me in my thinking in terms of this talk, because I see some of the things that come up in her room, the kinds of things she does with kids. And just looking at some of her kids' writing, where you just go, 'Wow!' Her kids just get it and they're just so deep. So I've tried to use her as a resource and we've had these conversations, especially in the years that I struggle, the first thing she always says to me is, 'community is the biggest thing, and if you don't have that, you don't have anything. You can't make meaningful and deep connections to the kids and to their learning if you don't have the community.' So in last year's class, we didn't have it, and no matter how much I tried, it just didn't gel. I don't know why—there have been two years here at Desert Vistas that things have clicked and the chemistry is there and everything's great, and two years that it hasn't. I don't know. I don't want to sit there and blame myself, but it's one of those things that I just don't understand why that's happening. So she has pushed me to build the community in my classroom... (Interview 1, September 10, 2010)

In this deeply personal and revealing moment, Annemarie demonstrates the depth of her desire to feel positively about her work with students. Although she discussed her difficult years vs. her good years in general terms, she was clear that the difference in those years was related to how she felt about her students, their parents, and the mutual respect developed through a strong classroom community. I submit that her self-imposed measuring stick for what was possible, though, was always being lived out in the room next door.

Annemarie and Jean's interpersonal interactions contributed to Annemarie's identity formation in significant ways. Her efforts to compare herself to Jean, however private those comparisons were, shaped Annemarie's identity as a teacher and her own perceptions of competence. I perceive this process was both a way of making sense of what it meant to be a good teacher, and a way to determine whether she was doing all that was necessary or "right" in that position. It was also a process of constantly reconciling tensions between what was possible for Jean and what was possible for her own self. Annemarie negotiated these tensions individually through participation on both the interpersonal and community plane. As Annemarie made sense of the community's expectations, she played certain roles interpersonally to construct herself as someone who is still learning, but "felt pretty good" about all she was doing for children.

Annemarie strove to have confidence in herself and her abilities. Her past efforts at shifting her practice in relation to Jean's advice about community had not played out the way she hoped, even as she engaged in ongoing efforts to change things through increased attention to students' talk. When Annemarie made self-

confident statements like, “I know I’m my own person” or “I know I’m not Jean,” it appeared to me that these statements were laced with wistfulness, an ongoing effort to be at peace with her own becoming process.

Feelings about relationships with students. Finally, as is evident throughout the data, Annemarie cared a great deal about how students felt in her room, and made specific efforts to honor their words and generate good feelings within her community. She viewed these goals as important indicators of her competence.

Annemarie valued the relational aspect of feeling good with her students and having them feel good about her, commenting in her second interview that she felt that paying attention to students’ talk had helped her become, “more conscious of our community this year. I just feel like it’s different because I feel like I’m getting to know them” (Interview 2, October 15, 2010). Beyond that, she reflected on wanting to help students make meaningful connections in these terms, “I don’t want to take away from what they’re saying. I want to validate them [help them know] their words are important, and I don’t want to change them in any way. But I still want to push their thinking.” This was an ongoing research puzzle for Annemarie—honoring students’ voices while holding and maintaining high standards for respect and order. It is a difficult balance to strike, and the structures of school, in general, tend to emphasize respect and order over affective, relational considerations (Jackson, 1968).

Ultimately, Annemarie expressed her commitment to everyone feeling good in her room by sharing the story of one of her students from a ‘difficult year’ who

told her, “Mrs. Thau, you never laugh with us, anymore...” (Interview 1, September 10, 2010). Her obvious heartbreak over her student’s observation is what possibly pushes Annemarie to so vigorously pursue the affective side of teaching and community in her learning life, even as she is driven by fears about her own competence.

I move now to a discussion of the way feelings evidenced themselves in Jean’s learning life. I found sufficient affective parallels between Annemarie and Jean to justify discussing these themes under similar headings, even though the teachers embraced notions of feeling related to their learning in different ways. For Jean, a teacher with many years in the classroom, the core of her learning efforts were not driven by feelings of competence, but rather by a desire for connection. This pursuit for feelings of connection played out in her participation as analyzed across all three planes.

Jean: Living out her desire for connection. Jean is committed to “life on the line” (Shaughnessy, 1977); the emotional and affective nature of her teaching is vibrant. It constitutes a part of her learning and teaching self that she openly embraces, because learning is personal to her. In this discussion of findings for Jean, I show how her enthusiasm for learning was often tempered by her interactions with others who did not always know or understand her the way she hoped they would.

Feelings about teaching and learning. Jean finds great joy in learning and likens her own perspective on learning to the feelings of awe that she often sees in the eyes of her students. “I have a connection to nature and a detective’s mind. I want to figure out how things work... [and] I feel totally committed to always

learning and growing...” (Interview 3, December 6, 2010). She spoke about how her love for learning was an early theme in her life, “I remember one Christmas as a kid, I was doing this project and I loved it...it gave me a purpose. I made slippers for everybody in my family and I just loved the finished product, having something to show” (Interview 1, September 3, 2010). Jean went on to say that she was unsure whether it was having a finished product to show or if it was what she termed “the journey” of learning that she loved so well.

Jean’s use of the journey metaphor was a common occurrence in her discussion of her own learning. In fact, metaphors infused her teaching with students. In expressing the way talk naturally unfolds in her classroom and connects seemingly unrelated topics, she concluded her statement with an emphatic assertion, “You know what I find, though? *Everything* connects!” (Inquiry conversation 10, October 25, 2010). Her creativity and artistic bent is evident in the kinds of metaphors she used to describe this difficult-to-describe process, likening learning to growing or blossoming, unfolding, connecting or weaving threads, achieving new levels, and even trying on a shoe.

Jean explained the connectedness of her life as a learner to her teaching efforts. For her, the classroom was a place where she felt “like I learned a lot more about what is important...and threw out some stuff, and whittled it down to the really important things” (Interview 1, September 3, 2010). Jean only made space in her classroom for things that “made sense” for her and her students, and she made these decisions intuitively (Field notes, September 10, 2010). Thus, how she “felt” about things was of significant import to what she did.

Jean described her desire for connection in contexts of working alongside other adults, saying that she sometimes felt that she couldn't explain herself as well as she would like. I believe this feeling contributed to Jean's open-mindedness towards others, in an effort to understand "where others are coming from. As a learner, I'm really progressive. I like to consider new things, but I don't want to get rid of the things that are core to humanity" (Interview 1, September 3, 2010). For Jean, this core of humanity was strongly tied to her faith and her feelings. She describes how personal her learning journey is to her in saying,

My learning this semester was a very significant part of my life and work because my work is a huge, huge part of my life. It's my identity. It's who I am. At this point in my life, I'm kind of in a searching mode. I am a mother, and yet my children don't need me the same way. The work I do here every day spills into how I handle things in my personal life. My personal life and teaching life are not really disconnected.... I think the themes and things I am drawn to in my teaching is in part an effort to [fulfill] needs in my own personal life. (Interview 3, December 6, 2010)

It was this passion for connection between her life and work that fueled Jean's commitment to drawing connections between home and school, and what led her to weave it all together with the theme of hope. Jean's changing relationships with her own children and other circumstances of her personal life made hope a critical and motivating condition for her curricular life with students.

Feelings of disconnection. Jean's experience and grounded-ness in her teaching philosophy and learning efforts shaped the affective nature of her learning differently than Annemarie's. Although Jean did not frequently compare herself to others in ways that diminished her feelings of competence as a learner or teacher, she experienced her own feelings of insecurity that influenced her participation. Jean did not often experience the connectedness she craved in her school setting. This was

partly because she felt frustrated with the ways she felt she adequately (or not) communicated her learning to others: “I get so mad at myself, sometimes...when I talk, I get emotional, and that irritates me” (Interview 3, December 6, 2010). Jean spoke about this tendency as a trend in her life. She made a concerted effort to move past these affective issues in her parent/teacher conferences. I find it significant that her conferences moved away from focus on report cards to the connectedness of conversation and strengthening ties between home and school.

In another example related to her longing for connection, Jean successfully changed her participation on the night she spoke to her graduate level class. Her classmates came out to DVE for a visit, so Jean was able to show them her classroom in the context of sharing her teaching. She commented on having a level of confidence that night that she had not previously had in her public speaking efforts, and surmised that it was a different experience for her to talk about her learning and teaching within her classroom: “it becomes a safe haven for me in my room. I feel so comfortable, and [when I presented] I wanted to be here because that’s where I gather my confidence. It’s my own turf” (Interview 3, December 6, 2010). On that night, Jean connected with her audience in meaningful ways because she felt comfortable in her environment.

That Jean felt like she was a different kind of learner from other grown-ups also contributed to feelings of disconnection:

I feel like I’m going through life like a kid. I see the world with little kid eyes. Like everything is ‘Oh! Look at that!’ It’s almost embarrassing, because I think it shows on my face sometimes. I think people can see right through that. Like [they’re thinking] don’t even try to be sophisticated, because you are not. I feel so little. Little, little, little. (Interview 1, September 3, 2010)

Jean gave minimal credit to the possibility that seeing life “like a child” could be a great asset to her teaching life, despite the fact that it was. Instead, she was dismayed about the difficulty she perceived in making herself heard in the adult world. She spoke generally about various interactions with colleagues that reinforced these feelings:

My school just makes me determined. I’m going to do things in spite of how I feel personally about being shushed or silenced...I think it might be a good thing, because in my old life, I probably would have rolled over and been quiet. That’s my nature—I walk away from stuff. But I’m happy that I’ve grown through that enough to know that what I want to do is important. The growth and learning I’ve done—I wanted to learn. And I kept learning. (Interview 2, October 15, 2010)

This tug of war between determination and insecurity was significant for Jean, shaping her teaching identity in ways she thought about often.

One final way I perceive Jean’s feelings of comparison playing out in her learning was in her increasing determination to invite parents’ voices into the classroom and make her parent/teacher conferences a different experience than past years. Jean sidelined her feelings in a significant way to make these learning moves, to participate in a different way (Rogoff, 1995). Midway through the semester, in describing her plans for parent/teacher conferences, she said,

I’m more sure of myself; I know I’m going to change how I interact with parents. I am more confident throughout this inquiry than [last year]. Even though I knew what I wanted to do, I always felt a little trepidation going into conferences, like “what do I say IF?” But I have a different confidence now, because I’ve reflected through my learning [this semester]. (Interview 2, October 15, 2010)

Jean’s conscious choice to work against her feelings of insecurity in the “adult world” was a significant shift in her participation. It hinted at her

determination to stand up for herself, to have agency in a teaching culture that presumed it knew her, even when she didn't feel "known."

Feelings about relationships with students. Like Annemarie, Jean pushed her feelings about her teaching beyond a simple need to "feel good" about herself and her learning to consider her students' feelings as a measure of successful teaching. This was evident in the vignette as she pondered Sam's needs and wondered aloud about how best to help him. Not only did she consider individual students' affective needs, she discussed it in classroom community terms:

I'm always thinking about who is raising their hands and I think, 'They want to say something; they feel safe to say something.' That just means the world to me. I want everyone to feel that way, to be that present. I understand that I won't reach everyone to the same degree, but I'm just so excited when someone tries to express what they're thinking. And if it doesn't come out quite right, I know that their wheels are turning around something. That's exciting for me. I really love that. (Interview 1, September 3, 2010)

Jean desired connectedness with her students and wanted to foster their connectedness with one another. She taught out of these feelings, making her classroom a space where students could voice their thoughts and share things that mattered to them.

When I asked her if she thought that perhaps it was her own personal hope for her students that was driving her larger inquiry into hope, she commented,

It might be...I guess I'm so hopeful that I'm able to reach them on that level, where it sticks. I want to believe it's there, so if I have a moment go by in my day that I feel there isn't something going on that's meaningful or deep, that truly bothers me. When we get to the talking, as opposed to the 'school business,' I feel better. I'm not sure—is this my quest? My hope? We cling to our hopes, we don't want to just let them die. I guess that's why...when those parents came in and said 'Our daughter told us the hope poem...!' I felt so excited. I love to see and hear that children's learning went somewhere, and it hit the families too...that goes back to my need to reach the homes. It's a whole community thing. (Interview 1, September 3, 2010)

Jean's passion for community drove her teaching in significant ways and shaped her curricular plans for children. One very personal example of this was a night that Jean met me at a coffee shop and handed me a comb-bound book of letters her students had written to me, so that I would have hope in finishing my dissertation. She and I had met the previous week for a member check, and she thoughtfully took that experience back to her students, explaining to them about our learning journey. She thought they needed to know the reason Miss Steeg was not coming into the classroom right now was because was writing her dissertation.

Jean recounted how the students decided they needed to write me hope notes. I share a sample of these notes because it is germane in explaining the ways that Jean, her students, and I all experienced the importance of the affective nature of learning during our semester together. I have reproduced several notes here:

Dear Miss Steeg,
I wish vaery good luck and I Hope you do rilly good. I am giving you
courage and I mean it.
Love,
Kyle

Dear Miss Steeg,
I hoPe That You get though That random job becaus over fify six! Papers
You need help, for that mutch wow! P.S. ask somebuddy for help.
with HoPe
Sam.

Dear Miss Steeg,
You yes you You are like a flower. Geroing and gloing eech day. And dont
forget we all love you.
love,
Abby

These notes illustrate the way Jean's students knew they could make a difference in their world through writing, demonstrating how Jean's passion for

connectedness spilled over into their own lives. They believed that encouragement and hope are necessary for any big job, and reached across divides of academia and differentiated roles to give me hope.

Jean reflected on how often she thinks about her students in commenting,

You know, I'm not naturally about me. When I realized the connectedness of my needs in this learning experience, it was kind of surprising to me, because I don't naturally put myself first...my learning is definitely about my students. It's my nature to want to help others, and to want to have other people understand. It's never been about me, learning about me, or me feeling better about me—at least not on a conscious level. I think sub-consciously, I've been searching for something, and was moved to do these types of inquiries with my students to help myself ensure [their learning was good]. (Interview 3, December 6, 2010)

For both Jean and Annemarie, it was not only the quality of their learning that they considered in their teaching efforts, but the ways their students felt about learning and within those learning engagements. This in turn, drove Jean and Annemarie's learning experiences on each plane.

Refractive Conclusions

In this second half of Chapter 5, I shared the ways that my data refracted Rogoff's notions of learning by highlighting the significance of emotion in teacher learning. I perceive these findings significant in their explanation of affect and its influence on teachers' participation. Affect is an uncommon term in the literature on teacher learning, often considered superfluous to logic or knowledge-based emphases on learning (Day, et al., 2006, Noddings, 2003). However, I found that I could not talk about teachers' learning apart from it, and submit that it constitutes a worthwhile consideration in any theory or discussion of learning. As Mahn & John-Steiner (2002) put it, "careful listening, intense dialogue, and emotional support

sustain the cooperative construction of understanding, of scientific discovery, and of artistic forms” (p. 51). Highlighting Vygotsky’s connection between affect and meaning, they further state,

emotional scaffolding includes the gift of confidence, the sharing of risks in the presentation of new ideas, constructive criticism, and the creation of a safety zone...partners who have been successful in constructing such a joint system are sensitive to the sense as well as the meaning of each other’s language (p. 52).

In hindsight, this was exactly what I as a researcher and our inquiry group attempted to do for one another. We were careful of one another’s feelings in all comments, knowing that we were communicating meaning through more than words. In short, attention to the affective language of learning matters, despite outcomes-based educational goals for teachers and students (Mahn & John-Steiner, 2002.)

In the next chapter, I expand the discussion of findings by weaving in literature supporting these ideas and discussing implications and further research possibilities in these areas.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the nature of teachers' learning related to their literacy instruction practices. I sought to richly describe and interpret the learning lives of teachers so often glossed over by the business and busy-ness of teaching. Beyond these practice-based considerations, I wanted to write about teachers' learning and practice in ways that inform research. To that end, I used Rogoff's (1995) conception of the community, interpersonal, and individual planes of analysis in learning, along with her articulated metaphors, to explore the ways these theoretical idea were evident for adults in a formal, school-based setting. Her theory, articulated in study of children in informal learning settings, is thus informed by an examination of (adult) teacher learning.

Specifically, my research questions were:

1. What is the nature of teachers' learning experiences related to their literacy instruction practices, contextualized within an inquiry group?
2. How do teachers' learning experiences reflect/refract the community, interpersonal, and individual planes of analysis?

I used several big ideas to explain teachers' learning in answer to these questions. Concepts of reflection and refraction served as major organizational aims within this study, as I wove Rogoff's theoretical explanation of the community, interpersonal, and individual planes of analysis into my explanation of the data. I used comparison across teachers' cases to illustrate the differences in individuals'

learning, not as a means of valuing one over the other, but to forefront the unique processes of each.

While I did not initially conceive of a study that would use metaphors as this account has done, I found metaphors endemic to my data and vital to my explanations. I go beyond the reflect/refract metaphors in my research questions to accomplish three purposes in this chapter. First, I summarize conclusions from my study, suggesting the implications for practice (what teachers do) and praxis (teachers' actions as informed by reflection) (Wink, 2000) in teacher learning. Next, I consider my own role as a researcher and the methodological implications arising from a study such as this. Finally, I explore insights and implications for future research regarding teaching learning and the affective considerations therein.

Catching a New Vision

In the opening vignette of this dissertation, I used Annemarie's own words to describe an infinitely complex and complicated phenomenon: learning. She termed her experience with a professional development video as helping her to "catch a new vision" (personal communication, November 1, 2010) for what was possible in her teaching. I use her words again here to explain that while qualitative studies like this might only give us glimpses (Hoffman-Kipp, 2008) of the learning efforts evidencing such strong ties to emotional and identity work, they are nevertheless immensely informative. Studies like mine enable us to catch a new vision of the multifaceted nature of learning.

Using Rogoff's theoretical model as a lens on teacher learning enables me to assert without qualification that learning is circuitous, complex, and socially shaped.

I found alignment and parallels with her theory and teachers' learning efforts; community, interpersonal and individual considerations were evident in teachers' participation. Teachers' participation both informed and was informed by group conversations, social interactions within their classrooms, and their personal feelings. This theory made it possible to access the complexity of learning, from a sociocultural perspective.

Nature of Learning for Annemarie

For Annemarie, a teacher working towards feelings of competence in her practice, her learning talk focused on what was working (or not working) as an indicator for her learning efforts. This practical aspect of learning (Zeichner, 1994) is not only a beginning point for teachers new to the profession, but similarly helpful for experienced teachers who are trying new things. Annemarie's becoming process was very much focused on becoming a better teacher of reading—a better teacher, overall. This led her to try new things in her efforts to meet students' needs. This continual “trying” constituted her learning. Her observable patterns of talk within the inquiry group thus reflected her interpersonal efforts to take on the ideas of others and appropriate them for her own use. She chose to listen and think for a long time before offering up her own thinking on a topic, in service to her own becoming process.

Nature of Learning for Jean

For Jean, learning was inherent to who she is as a person, endemic to the identities she lived out each day: mother, teacher, friend, employee, and co-worker. Her passion for learning was borne out of her desire for connection; learning gave

her a way to cope with her busy life and mind. She wanted to make the most of every moment with her students, so she taught in ways that far surpassed the basic considerations of how to help students reach first-grade proficiency in reading/writing/math. Indeed, Jean considered this a secondary concern compared with helping children develop their full potential as human beings. She valued dialogue as a means of providing students this developmental support, fully committing herself to curricular plans unique to the moments of her day and the needs of her students. Thus, Jean's learning was very personal. Her learning, as viewed through the community, interpersonal, and individual planes of analysis, demonstrates a dimensionality and emotional component that lies outside, although tangentially connected to, the three planes.

From a practice perspective, these teachers' learning experiences suggest the importance of giving teachers the space to identify and articulate their individual learning temperaments, as a means to increased self-awareness of the teaching and learning process. I suggest this kind of work could take different forms, but informal learning conversations like those in my study, learning maps, and self-reflective writing might all support teacher learning on the individual plane. I submit that these efforts could make it possible for teachers to teach in more confident and connected ways.

Affective Considerations and Teachers' Professional Identity

Beyond simply looking at the ways my data reflected Rogoff's ideas, I also sought ways to see how teachers' classroom experiences and inquiry group conversations could further inform sociocultural theories of learning. I did this by

describing the affective considerations that infused everything teachers said and did. My study demonstrates that teachers' feelings directly affected their learning efforts. Annemarie's desire to feel competent and Jean's desire to feel connected were significant forces in their learning. Both teachers emphasized the importance of feeling comfortable in their learning, to know that it was "safe" to take missteps and try new things. They measured the quality of this safety in relational terms, stating the importance of "feeling good" about how things were going in their classrooms, in their interactions with parents, and their interactions with fellow colleagues.

I see distinct parallels between the affective considerations of learning and teachers' professional identity formation. I am not the first to assert that teachers' emotions shape professional identity (Day, et al., 2006; O'Conner, 2006). The emotions, reflection, and actions emerging from a teachers' desire to motivate, help, or inspire (O'Connor, 2006, p. 117) are powerful drivers to teachers' learning efforts. As teachers reflectively seek ways to care for students and enact caring behavior toward them (Noddings, 2003), they shape their professional identities and infuse humanitarian philosophies with their teaching roles. These studies also confirm that becoming (as opposed to merely being) a teacher reflects the realities of the learning process for educators of all experience levels (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999b).

Bullough and Gitlin (2001) note the identity-shaping power embedded in "the metaphor that a teacher is 'one who knows'" (p. 228). Within their study, teachers' institutionally supported identities were evident in the ways they sought to be masters or experts at their craft. Teachers who act out of this professional identity can perpetuate the novice/expert distinction identified in Cochran-Smith

and Lytle's (1999b) knowledge *of* practice. That this metaphor supports notions of the student as "other," to be in line with teachers as "disciples, imitators, or mimics" (p. 229) can be troublesome. However, this is a metaphor that I perceive underpinned Annemarie's learning efforts. She struggled to reconcile the not-knowing with her desire to know—to become the teacher she wanted to be. I believe this was in relation to her belief that as much as teachers might value learning and admit to being in process, we still work in a profession largely committed to objective knowing. I submit that she needed additional space for the not-knowing. I cannot say if it was a space I could have better created for her, as a researcher examining her learning. Likely, it was something she needed to offer herself.

Jean rejected the notion of teacher as "one who knows," as seen in her assertions that her students' needs informed the moment-by-moment curriculum unfolding in her room. Students were the instructional inspiration for her learning. At the conclusion of the semester, she felt that her efforts to pay attention to children's talk was not about recording it, but rather about her specific efforts to *not be* "teacher." She participated more fully with students in pursuit of this different role in her classroom. This goal and her process gave us a glimpse of her identity in process (Hoffman-Kipp, 2008). Because Jean was not striving for feelings of competence in her teaching and learning, she was better able to adopt a critical dimension in reflecting on her learning as she surfaced and identified her assumptions (Zeichner, 1994). Even though she was an experienced teacher, she took up the reflective work, engaged with the process, and took risks that changed her teaching (Britzman, 1994; Lasky, 2005; Zeichner, 1999).

In summary, I perceive that my study offers several important implications to considerations of practice and praxis. First, it is critical to recognize that teachers' lived experiences constitute the core of their sense-making efforts. I see this as a kind of "internal learning landscape" that influences what teachers choose to pursue in their learning, and the ways they go about it. Affective aspects can make or break learning efforts, shaping feelings of empowerment, capability, and trust, which in turn affect learning (Mahn & John-Steiner, 2002; Krashen, 1982). It is disconcerting that today's teachers are feeling increasingly pressured, disenchanting, and unsupported. How might those who work with teachers support them in the face of educational policies and practices that leave little time for praxis based on local knowledge?

I argue that one way might be to acknowledge the possibilities existing within professional development efforts that support teachers at the site of their questions. Teachers are so often subjected to professional development mandates that add demands to their time while leaving unacknowledged the issues in their classrooms (Borko, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 1996). My study shows that professional development efforts with potential for helping teachers be reflective, self-critical, and transformative begin with teachers' questions. This kind of PD provides space for those questions to change in the face of individual, interpersonal, and community-based considerations. It also requires time, reflection, dialogue, interaction between individuals with different experience and resources.

While advocating for teachers to collaborate on their questions, my study also points out the importance of a person like me, a

researcher/facilitator/participant who approaches projects such as this with an agenda. My multiple roles added complexity to this project, but also pushed teachers' learning by establishing regular times to meet, focusing their learning, and encouraging forward-based reflection (Lambson, 2010; Urzúa & Vásquez, 2008). Discussions of teacher-based learning efforts often background the importance of facilitators or leaders, but this is a critical consideration deserving further study.

My time with these teachers has demonstrated to me that educators who make time to reflect on their learning lives with others are increasingly self-aware and secure in their professional identities. It is by this means that teachers have the potential to do amazing things within their classrooms, ultimately moving it beyond their classroom walls.

Methodological Considerations

I designed this study with several goals in mind, while several other unanticipated ones emerged. I began with a desire to inquire into the complexity of learning, to slow down the quicksilver moments of teachers' practice, reflection, feelings, interactions, and look closely at what was going on. Thus, I built in opportunities to see teachers in their classrooms, converse about their learning, and interview them one-on-one. I also wanted to support teachers, themselves, so I asked teachers about their learning directions, giving them choice and space in this examination of their learning. I hoped that each of these methodological decisions might alleviate perceived pressures and support each of us in our learning efforts.

I found that within inquiry group structures such as this one, teachers made decisions about what to reveal based on what I understand as a kaleidoscopic range

of identity work. The complexity of this cannot be underestimated, as what teachers were feeling and thinking in those moments and what was going on in their respective classrooms also played into teachers' thinking. Teachers had goals beyond the stated ones, ones possibly hidden even to them. They chose to take up certain ways of talking about themselves and their work with students, and likely would not have actively done so to this extent, apart from me. My influence as a researcher was an undeniable influence in this sense.

This case study of two teachers' learning is what it was because of the very sociocultural theory upon which I based it. Those who question whether this study would have been different if I had identified different participants are right to do so. The study certainly would have been different. Because I perceive relational and affective considerations to have played such a large role in what happened for teachers, I submit that the identities teachers built and portrayed were influenced by the relationships we each had one with another before my study even began. This supported a level of trust and camaraderie that we might not have otherwise achieved, but it also highlighted the affective dimension of learning and identity formation that might not otherwise have been as visible.

Additionally, my own role as a researcher and the multiple identities I enacted within this study opened up and closed down various spaces of possibility for teachers. My own efforts to balance conversational give-and-take, to equalize power relationships, to celebrate teachers' accomplishments—all these things shaped what teachers chose to share or not. This is part of the sociocultural process itself and bears mentioning here as an expected dimension to sociocultural research, but

also a possible constraint to the study, since who I am and my relationship with teachers made this study so unique it cannot be replicated. Would affect have been as apparent in learning if I had not chosen these particular teachers? I cannot say definitively. Therefore, I add my voice to those who advocate for researchers considering sociocultural research to consider their own positionality, recognizing existing relationships with participants as rich sources for unforeseen possibilities (Edelsky & Boyd, 1993; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Peshkin, 1988).

Limitations

Every study has limitations, and I highlight three particular limitations within this work. The first is the problem of only examining teachers' learning in contexts of their literacy instruction practices. The second is the issue of describing teacher learning in a school context that is so different from that of many of today's schools. The final issue is related to the tensions I experienced as a researcher and the ways it influenced my writing.

Although teachers talked about the things they knew or were learning in the broader contexts of their multiple obligations, I could only be present in their classrooms for several hours on any given day. This meant that my only context for clarifying their learning directions was in relation to what I saw during their reading (and occasionally, writing) workshops. This subject-based demarcation of their work and learning was an artificial boundary on teachers' learning, in terms of the broader contexts of their work. As a former teacher at DVE, I had some understanding of and access to this context. But it became clear to me that further studies on teacher learning deserve extended time in the larger contexts of teachers' work, across full

days and multiple interactions. My explanation of teacher learning could have been more complete with an examination of teachers' institutional interactions, including meetings, conferences, specials, professional development, and instruction across all subjects. This would make it possible to better analyze the institutional setting of teachers' learning, which can itself become a tool for supporting teachers' learning in studies purposefully designed to do so (Cobb, Zhao & Dean, 2009).

The second limitation of my study is its inability to speak to teacher learning in school contexts more prevalent than Desert Vistas. DVE was (and is) a unique school setting; teachers had an increased amount of freedom to teach and learn in ways that “seemed best” to them, personally. This professionalized environment is sadly becoming more rare in the accountability-based drive for educational improvement. Teacher learning in those contexts is no less valuable, although certainly more constrained. While I consider teachers' learning experiences in this work to be unique to the site, I trust the parallels reach across other educational contexts. Teachers committed to their own learning will “add and subtract, invent and shape—reconstructing the knowledge in ways that leave it...more likely to be personally useful” (Stake, 2005, p. 442). This is a strength of the story in qualitative research: that it supports not only close looks at particular contexts, but also creates space for others to imagine the possibilities within their own lives (Eisner, 1991; Erickson, 1986 & Stake, 2005).

Finally, a critical friend on this project pointed out the importance of making plain the tensions I experienced between my own “feelings of knowing” and “feelings of not-knowing” within this research as a limitation. I took comfort from

Glesne and Peshkin's (1992) admonition that my subjectivity could be a strength, "equipping me with the perspectives and insights that shape all I do as a researcher" (p. 104). But I also wrestled with my subjectivity and roles. As a teacher, I have boundless empathy for the difficulty of the job and the risk and vulnerability involved in inviting outsiders into one's classroom. I was unwilling to have teachers shoulder additional responsibilities to write written reflections or spend a great deal of time outside our weekly conversations. Thus, the research was a constant process of bringing what I saw or perceived up to my participants, while constantly negotiating whether I could *really say* what I thought I was seeing or perceiving. Similarly, I suspect teachers glossed certain things on their part. When things do not "go well," those are difficult stories to recount.

Choosing to write about teachers' feelings, the affective nature of learning, was especially difficult. I worked hard to keep my retelling from being about teachers' competencies, and rather about their learning—to live the notion that "their learning was their learning." I also did not want my study to become a comparison between an "expert" and a "novice" teacher, and I especially did not wish for my study to negatively influence either teacher's work or otherwise affect their professional identity-formation. As a result, I struggled with my voice throughout the entire writing of this piece—to present evidence that would ring true while not necessarily telling the whole story. These were ethical decisions; I trust I have chosen rightly.

Theoretical Implications and Future Directions

I offer three future directions in connecting larger ideas to my work. These are a) proleptic ideas in learning, b) affect in learning, and c) one final learning metaphor.

Prolepsis

The "learning talk" that emerged in this study evidenced teachers' efforts at sense making around their literacy teaching practices. Teachers conversed and listened to one another in efforts to articulate conclusions that were only partially formed. Within this learning talk, teachers made "new sense" of old ideas. Teachers often couched these revelations in terms of things they had previously known, but were now experiencing in a new way. The context of their learning was thus influential—the students in their rooms, the conversational topics that arose, and the interactions in which tensions were probed—each of these made a way for teachers to make the "old become new." This was especially true for Jean, as she spoke out of her many years' experience with children. Learning, from this perspective, implies a proleptic ideal (Barton et al., 2007; Hoffman-Kipp, Artiles, & López-Torres, 2003). Teachers' past experiences and their future expectations and hopes for students combined to inform their present, moment-by-moment teaching decisions. This work shaped their identities and was subsequently shaped by who teachers were. While I did not pursue this line of inquiry in the data, I perceive that future studies on the nature of learning ought to emphasize this past/future dimension embodied in the present moment.

Affect in Learning

In building the case for this particular study, in light of this particular theory, with these particular teachers, I had to demonstrate that my work would fill a gap in the research on teacher learning. It was a step of faith to believe that Rogoff's theory, developed as it was from a cultural-psychological perspective, in research settings studying children's learning in informal settings, could prove useful in describing what happens for teachers in schools. I knew I could not simply "apply" this theory to teacher learning, even though it appealed to me as a reasonable explanation for the way sociocultural researchers might theoretically unpack the complexities of learning. Thus, I had to work recursively between theory and data, at times stepping completely away from the theory—to identify exactly what was happening for teachers before overlaying it again with theory. This back-and-forth work enables me to say now that my study fits in the place where affective considerations related to teacher learning go unaddressed. While Rogoff asserts that emotions, intuition, and artistry are all integrated elements of learning (personal communication, January 11, 2011), I believe my study brings something much different to the table. It shows how personal teaching is, how much it demands of those who truly care about their students and work (Noddings, 2003). It does this by teasing out the affective nature of learning for two very different teachers. I submit that my study also encourages researchers and practitioners to consider the affective implications inherent in the policy and practice decisions enacted every day, by describing the district and school contexts at play within these personal accounts.

One Final Metaphor

In his 2010 presidential address to the Literacy Research Association, David Reinking discussed metaphors of research that might better serve the field of literacy research than those presently dominant: the laboratory (quantitative) and the lens (qualitative). He called for design research as an alternative to the quantitative/qualitative divide, but of particular import to me was his suggestion of the potential in the metaphors of “teacher as cook” vs. “teacher as chef.” Reinking unpacked the metaphor by describing how teachers who operate as cooks do not view their jobs as imbued with creative possibility: they follow recipes. They teach in ways decided upon by others, trusting that with the right ingredients and steps, their “product” will turn out well. Teachers who approach their profession thus (or are in educative settings where these ideals dominate), might be interested only in learning directions that directly inform their teaching, relying on outcomes to confirm the worth of their efforts. On the other hand, teachers who are chefs know that teaching is not nearly this straightforward. They approach teaching and learning with flexibility and creativity, using resources and professional expertise in service to innovation and inspiration. These teachers make up their own “recipes” and actively participate in work that pushes their profession forward.

I was fortunate to work alongside two “chef-masters” in the teaching profession—two very different teachers who both pursued ways of improving their practice as they shared their learning lives with me. Annemarie consistently refused to be satisfied with “what was,” trying out new recipes, new ways of being a teacher. Her passion to meet students’ needs made her willing to be uncomfortable as she

learned from those around her and negotiated a sense of her teaching self. Jean taught out of her years of experience, but refused to stagnate. Her passion for learning and desire to connect with her students led her to pursue hope and joy in her profession, inspiring children to think big thoughts. I borrow Reinking's metaphor to inquire, what if all teachers were encouraged and empowered to learn like chefs?

What if?

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APPENDIX A

IRB LETTER FOR PARTICIPANT TEACHERS

Informed Consent Form
Examining Teachers' Learning on Three Planes

INTRODUCTION

The purposes of this form are to provide you (as a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research and to record the consent of those who agree to be involved in the study.

RESEARCHERS

- Dr. Teresa McCarty, Principal Investigator
 - Professor, School of Social Transformation, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
- Susanna Steeg, Co-investigator
 - PhD Candidate, Curriculum & Instruction, Language & Literacy, Teachers' College

Susanna Steeg, under the direction Dr. Teresa McCarty, invites your participation in a research study.

STUDY PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is to describe and interpret the nature of teachers' learning in classroom contexts, specifically related to teachers' literacy instruction practices. Additionally, this study is designed to support teachers' inquiry into questions of practice. As a result, the researcher will participate with teachers in an inquiry study group, conduct classroom observations, and interview teachers to gather data describing the complex phenomenon of learning.

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY

If you decide to participate, then you will join an unfunded study designed to examine the nature of teachers' learning. The protocol for this research includes the following commitments and your consent to be recorded in these activities through video or audio recording:

1. Participation in a teacher inquiry group: weekly 1.5 hour meetings between researcher and teachers. Content and topics of the meeting will be determined based on teachers' classrooms and desired direction of study. These inquiry group conversations will be recorded and transcribed.
2. Interviews: Three formal interviews (of 1.5 hours in length/once per month) wherein the researcher will solicit discussions of teachers' learning processes, history of learning process, and detailed thinking about the nature of their learning. These learning discussions will be contextualized in teachers' classroom occurrences and inquiry-group discussions. Participants are free to skip any interview questions they do not wish to answer.
3. Classroom observations: One or two times per week, the researcher will observe your reading workshop as a way to contextualize the connections between your literacy instruction and your learning. These classroom

observations will be video-taped and you will be asked to wear a microphone to record your talk with students.

The volume and nature of the data collection necessitates video/audio recording. Your participation connotes agreement to this. If you say YES, then your participation will last for one semester (August 2010-December 2010) at Zaharis Elementary. You will be asked to teach and work as you normally would, allowing the researcher to be present and as much of a participant observer as you feel comfortable with, in your classroom. Only two teacher participants are being included in this small, qualitative study, although each teacher's students are also counted as participants, as they will be incidentally recorded during classroom interactions.

RISKS

There are no known risks from taking part in this study, but in any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified. It is important to know that the small nature of this study makes it difficult to guarantee complete confidentiality. It may be possible that others will know what you have reported. Because of this, participants will be free to strike data or information from the record, should they feel concerned about any adverse impact to them.

BENEFITS

The possible/main benefit of your participation in the research is the opportunity to support your own learning and classroom instruction through a close inspection of your work.

Beyond the benefits to you personally, this research has the potential to benefit the educational field through a deeper understanding of learning, especially as it pertains to sociocultural theories of learning.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Due to the nature of this small, qualitative study, the researchers cannot guarantee complete confidentiality of your data. It may be possible that others will know what you have reported. The results of this research study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the researchers will not identify you by name, unless you so choose. Based on participants' wishes, Susanna will assign each participant pseudonyms and use these subject codes in working with and discussing the data. Pseudonyms will be assigned for all children. Only the chief investigator and co-investigator will have access to the confidential information.

Audio and video-recordings of the inquiry study groups and classroom observations will be erased after five years.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. It is ok for you to say no. Even if you say yes now, you are free to say no later, and withdraw from the study at any time. Your decision will not affect your relationship with Arizona State University or otherwise cause a loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. If you choose to

withdraw from the study, the researcher will discuss your preferences for the video and audio-tape data from your classroom, and honor those wishes.

Your students will also be assured that participation is voluntary and that nonparticipation or withdrawal from the study will not affect their grades or classroom experience.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS

There is no payment for your participation in the study.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

Any questions you have concerning the research study or your participation in the study (before or after your consent), will be answered by Teresa McCarty (480-965-6292) or Susanna Steeg (480-760-5590).

If you have questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk; you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at 480-965-6788.

This form explains the nature, demands, benefits and any risk of the project. By signing this form, you agree knowingly to assume any risks involved. Remember, your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefit. In signing this consent form, you are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this consent form will be given (offered) to you.

Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in the above study. By signing below, you are granting to the researchers the right to use your likeness, image, appearance, and teaching—whether recorded on or transferred to videotape, film, slides or photographs—for presenting or publishing this research.

Subject's Signature

Printed Name

Date

APPENDIX B

IRB LETTER FOR CHILDREN AND GUARDIANS

Examining Teacher Learning on Three Planes of Analysis
PARENTAL LETTER OF PERMISSION

Dear Families:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Teresa McCarty in the School of Social Transformation, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to describe and interpret the nature of teachers' learning, especially as it pertains to their literacy instruction practices.

I am inviting your child's participation, which will involve incidental videotaping as I conduct classroom observations of your child's teacher during reading workshop instruction. As a result, your child's speech and conversations with the teacher and other students during this time may be recorded. Classroom observations will occur up to three times per week, for an hour each time, during the fall semester (August 2010-December 2010). The exact times of the observations are based on the teacher's reading workshop time, but will most likely take place in the mornings. These observations will not interfere with normal classroom instruction or interactions.

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to have your child participate or to withdraw your child from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. It will not affect your child's grade, treatment, or classroom experience. Likewise, if your child chooses not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. If you grant permission, your child will also be asked to sign a child assent form (which is copied on the back of this letter.) In the event that either you or your child does not give consent, I will ensure that she/he will be moved to the periphery of any group instruction on the days that classroom observations take place, out of range of the video camera. Your child will not receive any differentiated instruction or classroom experience as result of this arrangement.

The results of the research study may be published, but your child's name will not be used. Video clips of your child's teacher in conversation with students may be used in reports, presentations or publications, but your child's name will not be used. All data for the study will be stored in a locked file in a secure office in Payne 301 (Teacher's College, Tempe campus) and in a separate and secure, password-protected computer database to which only the project investigators will have access. All data will be regularly monitored by the co-investigator.

Although there may be no direct benefit to your child, the possible benefit of your child's participation is that the study will provide opportunities for your child's teacher to reflect on and further support her learning. As a result, your teacher may be better able to support students' learning. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your child's participation. I will maintain your child's confidentiality through use of pseudonyms. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications, but your child's name will not be used.

If you have any questions concerning the research study or your child's participation in this study, please call me at 480-760-5590 or Dr. McCarty at 480-965-6292.

Sincerely,

Susanna Steeg

By signing below, you are giving consent for your child _____ (Child's name) to participate in the above study. You also grant the researcher the right to use your child's image and interaction with his/her teacher—whether recorded on or transferred to videotape, film, slides or photographs—for presenting or publishing this research.

Signature

Printed Name

Date

If you have any questions about you or your child's rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you or your child have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

Examining Teacher Learning on Three Planes of Analysis
Child Consent

I have been told that my mom or dad or guardian said it's okay for me to take part in a project about my teacher's learning.

I will be asked to participate normally in our classroom reading lessons, even though Miss Steeg will be video-taping my teacher and my class during normal classroom activities. That means I might be video-taped, too.

I am taking part because I want to. I know that I can stop at any time if I want to and it will be okay if I want to stop.



Sign here

Print Your Name Here

Date

APPENDIX C
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

To: Teresa Mccarty
ED

From:  Mark Roosa, Chair 
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 07/23/2010

Committee Action: Exemption Granted

IRB Action Date: 07/23/2010

IRB Protocol #: 1007005332

Study Title: Examining Teacher' Learning on Three Planes of Analysis

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(1).

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE OF FIELD NOTES

Jean's classroom, 8-25-10, 8:00 am

(I came in early to help Jean put her homework folders together, add paper for the ones needing it and compile the weeks' homework packet.)

The class listened to ZBC and did some sharing. Two more girls brought in donations for Helen's Hope Chest and Jean helped them talk about it.

As Jean took attendance, she had the students repeat the short date, 9-20-10.

C-I saw buffalos!

You need to talk to her about your animal project!

(to CJ) We're not going to make bear noises, though.

OK, I need two people who haven't been attendance or office people. Does anyone have t-shirt money or carnival money?

Pass it up. Does anyone else have carnival money so you don't have to stand in line?

Jean had the students vote on names for the tortoises, they had to listen to three choices and vote. She commented in an aside to herself that they had already had a long voting process (voting for student council reps) so she was going to make this quick.

Jean had them turn and pair/share in whispers about their weekend. They were all dying to share and she noticed this and made accommodations for it. It's QUIET as they share.

(The phone rings and Jean answers it. As she's gone, the noise level climbs incrementally. She fixes it with a quick sh-sh-sh that's neither forceful nor judging.)

J-Did you get those things off your brain so we can think big things now about what's happening in our lives and others' lives. I would love to hear about everyone's weekends, but we just don't have time. Was it kind of fun, though? OK...

Look at this! Was there a sale at Staples? These are awesome! (kids hand her conference ticket stickers) I think we're set for awhile. Thanks!

Last week we got into circle sitting in such an amazing way. Do you remember that no one said anything? Were you one of the ones who didn't say anything when we moved to circle? Were you one of the no talkers last week? If you were one of those people, raise your hand. How many want to try that again? I have to tell you, I see the most amazing thing right now. (to H.) Stand up and show us your shirt.

H-has a shirt with Hope hope hope on it. The kids read it.

Where did you find it? Were there other colors?

At Target. No.

And look, did you notice, they made the o out of a heart with a little jewel in the middle. Spell it. Let's whisper spell it.

Making connections between kids about animals and thinking already going on in that space.

This is the "affective" component of learning...to share the personal stuff from our lives.

Continuing past effort at management and building on it for today's work.

H-O-P-E

Are you ready to transition to circle? Let's do it!
Who got to their spot without saying one word?

Let's practice our hope first.

What's the first word?

Hope

Hope is the thing with feathers, that perches in the soul, and sings the tune without the words and never stops at all. (22:40 on video) NEAT MOMENT!

Let's start with donations, we'll start with the hope shirt. OK, back up a little bit to make room, there. OK, R. good. You went with?

(H. nods)

I can just picture a little girl running around in that at home, with her stuffed bear and the blanket they will give to them. There's a monkey on it...I've seen this monkey everywhere.

Kids-(explaining it to her, can't hear)

Thanks for shopping. How do you feel?

H-good

OK, who else has donation?

I like the way everyone's listening this morning. This is K's first donation (pulls wipes out of bag)

K-wipes

And you know, baby wipes can be used for many things, too. They're good in the car for wiping your hands, or if you want to just clean up something.

K-I've done it before

Oh, you're going to do it every month? OK, that's wonderful.

Wow, K, is this for a boy or a girl?

K-girl

Oh, that's wonderful. Look! Does it—oh, I was going to ask if this has the feet in it, but look, there's a picture and they don't have the jammy feet. Very warm and cozy. Thank you so much.

N-comes up

I read you the note, "dear Jean and class, thank you so much" from Helen's Hope chest.

Oh! It's for a little boy. Thomas the Tank and here's what it looks like. This is the shorty top. That's really cute. She did it for a boy AND these are for a bigger girl. Tell us about them.

N-It says love

It does, and I noticed this ruffle on the bottom, too. Isn't that cute? And flowers all over! And a bow.

N-I picked 'em.

Did you pick them? Wow!

N-I picked the ones I would like if I was getting to choose.

Did you hear that? What is she doing when she says that?

C-She's hoping.

OK, she's hoping, but she's doing something else. She's putting

This is a kind of morning meeting but it's so informal and unplanned. Nevertheless it lends continuity to the big ideas Jean is building into her curriculum about hope and poetry.

This note of hope for the families is something kids are picking up on.

Jean pays attention to the emotions...

Teaching about "other-

herself in someone else's shoes. She's saying, I like it, I wonder if someone else will like it. Is that likely to happen? I think so! There are lots of little girls who will use it and enjoy this.

N-I brought wipes too.

Wow, can you guys all say thank you?

Kids-Thank you, N.

Yes, for all the donations.

I liked what N. was thinking when she was shopping. Did you notice what she was thinking S? Would that be something I would like?

(problem across the room) CJ-(can't hear—it's something about how his bear almost died by going in the pool)

I don't think your teddy bear almost died. Tell me more.

CJ-talked more

Boys and girls, thank you for listening to CJ because he stepped out when we were doing pair/share about our weekends, and that was on his mind. And now we're talking about the kids at HHC.

S-Those kids at HHC, they grow up and have children and they will show their children their PJs

Oh, you think they'll keep their pjs that long?

S-Yeah, 'cause they'll keep 'em.

They'll grow up and have their own lives. I'm happy you're thinking about their bright future.

(Jean shared about Hyundai's Hope Drive and discussed sharing hope with children who have been diagnosed with cancer.)

J-OK, I want to tell you my story. I went to this dealer and I was sitting there, every once in awhile you have to get your oil changed and get maintenance on cars, right? So when I was waiting I looked up and guess what I saw? A sign, called Hyundai Hope on Wheels. And I already knew I was going to take this journey with hope this year and I looked up and saw what word?

Kids-HOPE!

J-Yes and what caught my eye were all these handprints on a white car. And I thought that's neat! I want to learn more about that. And because I'm a learner, I got on the computer and found out more about why the children were making their handprints.

Guess what I learned? They're special. Just like we have our friends in room XX, who are special? These children have a sickness, but they're filled with hope. This month is cancer awareness month for that group of children and tonight, in your HW, as part of your HW, if you have a computer that works, you're going to get online with an adult and look up hope on wheels. Today after I read this story and we talk about it, we're going to do a project for these children. Who would like to do that? Would you like to give some hope?

Everyone put your hand up and look at your hand. They say they use the handprint because your hand is the most important thing you can give. Why would your handprint be important as a symbol?

centeredness"

CJ's loves his teddy bear. Jean honored that share instead of shutting him down because it wasn't the right time to share.

Jean's commitment that life inform teaching and vice versa comes out in the stories she shares with children about her everyday activities and how these inform her curriculum for them.

C-Your hand feels things.
Oh, ok, why else?
(Jean holds her hand out to student)
Can I touch you with my hand?
A-You can drive the car with your hands.
(laughs) A. Think really carefully about this. Look at your hand.
Why would it be so important?
Reach out for hope.
OK, that's wonderful.
A-Your hand has hope.
How does your hand have hope?
A-Because, if you have hope, hope can be everywhere.
How can our hand be everywhere?
A-Because it goes with you.
Oh, it goes with you. Your hand is a part of you.
What else about my hand makes it unique, just to me?
K-you can write hope notes to people.
Oh, I can, and no one else can write like me. How else is your hand unique just to you?
You can clap.
That's right, that's a wonderful symbol of showing hope and happiness.
(41:08)

Jean has to do a lot of work to get children to where she wants to take them!

P-You make a friend with your hand.
How do you do that?
(mimes shaking hands)
Oh, it's human touch.
T-We can pray with our hands.
Some people pray like this (folds)...
Cross your arms.
Let's look at N. over here,
N-If you didn't have a hand, it would be a broken wing.
You know what; when I'm a teacher, guess what else I do? I put down my fingerprint because they want to know who I am. And isn't that a very special mark. So guess what we're going to do.
The children who have cancer are going to meet in Phoenix. That's close to us. And there's this white car and it's driving around to many states, and those kids get to paint their hand and put their hand on that white car and make a mark. Because it's a celebration of HOPE for a cure. Hope for a next treatment. Hope for getting better, right?
So today, we get to put our hand on a white paper car and write a hope note to them. Is that exciting? Yeah!
K-You can hold things with your hand.
Your hands can do all those things. And you get to put your special mark; you can do a lot of things with your hands.

J-I have a story I want to read to you, so gather out of the circle and come sit right here. This is a story that Mrs. H found down in the

library this morning and it talks about cancer. The title is Good Luck, Mrs. K!

(reads the story)

(59:22-story ends, discussion begins—can't hear what kids said on this video, so I'm putting it together as best I can from Jean's comments)

What did you think?

S-Once, when I was in Flagstaff, I saw this bear, and it was already dead, I didn't shot it, but it was dead, and I put my hand in its mouth and I got out a note that was a hope note on it.

J-That's an interesting story. Does someone want to talk about the story? Are you thinking about the students?

Anyone else want to share their feelings about the story? Those kids sounded like you, working hard for the school, reading and writing and thinking. And they were also teachers, too! What do you think about that? Do you teach me?

Yeah.

You teach each other, you teach me. Did they fuss with the sub while Mrs. K. was away?

No.

What did they do that was very grown up?

They were respectful to her, they kept working and kept studying, and most of all, they kept their hope. Right.

C-their teacher had to go.

Yes, she had to leave and get treatment for her...what was that word? Her cancer, right.

Have you had an experience with cancer, anybody in here? Does someone in your family or someone you know have experience with cancer?

K-My aunt passed away.

J-Was it because of her age or complications with cancer?

K-She was sick.

J- Now Mrs. K had cancer but it might have been a different kind of cancer. And when you look at the children for Hyundai Hope on Wheels, you get to pick a child and read their story. And guess what! There' one child from Phoenix and his name is Toby. So you don't have to choose Toby, but you can choose anyone. But I looked at all the different cities, and maybe there's someone from a city you know and you can pick one to write a hope note.

I think what you'll find is if you look at 2 or 3 different stories, you'll find that their cancers are different.

So who wants to put their handprint on a car in celebration of children's hope?

(lots of raised hands)

Yeah! Do you think Ms. K gave up hope? No, she didn't get a broken wing. She kept up her hope. And all those kids were hopeful too. And the best present they could give their teacher too was to embrace and accept into their family the sub. And she knew about it too.

This was an interesting connection that Jean drew—I'm quite sure I wouldn't have thought of it, to make a connection to what the students were doing to make life better for the sub.

K-There's certain kinds of cancer you die from.

Yes, there are certain kinds that are easier to recover from. Sometimes it depends on your age and when the doctors discovered it. But let's spell HOPE.

HOPE.

You never want to give up your hope. And someday, you're going to know someone in your life, maybe someone with cancer or without. And I hope you'll always remember this talk, say you'll keep your hope.

So what's that word we learned today? You'll be looking up HHOW tonight and writing hope notes to show kids that you're thinking about them.

Now, how did we do with our talking and listening? I want you to do an evaluation right now. Put your hands in your lap. I don't want you to answer out loud, but give yourself a mental score of 1-5. If you're still on your pockets after this whole morning, that would definitely be a 5. You need to reflect, and say "how did I do?" Mrs. J. noticed that there was a bit of wiggling, but I really hope that becomes something you want to work on. So, for right now, we have one thing we're going to share and it's from K. and she told me about it last week and her mom brought it in because it's special. (K shares penguin)

OK, and I forgot to tell you about tonight, as you write your hope notes, I'll give you a little strip of paper that you can write on that says something like I hope you feel better, or I hope your body fights the cancer. I hope that you are brave when you go to the treatments. From their story, you'll know more about what they need.

C-Can we draw a picture?

Yeah, you betcha.

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANT TEACHERS

Table 3

Interview Questions for Participant Teachers

Interview 1: Focused Life History	Interview 2: Details of Experience	Interview 3: Reflections on Meaning
How did you come to be a teacher?	What is presently important to you about this inquiry regarding students' talk and your literacy instruction?	Given what you have said about your learning experiences, describe the significance of learning to your life and work.
Tell me about yourself as a learner.	Up to this point in the inquiry, have you noticed ways that your inquiry has influenced your teaching practices? How?	How do you help yourself ensure that your learning is not just about you, but your students?
What do you know about yourself, as a learner?	How do you anticipate this inquiry affecting your ongoing/future teaching practices, if at all?	What would you want other educators to know or understand about learning, based on your experiences?
Share what you can about your learning journey, as it relates to being a teacher.	Describe an experience where you believe you were learning something. What happened?	Where do you see your teaching or learning taking you, in the future?
What is your past experience(s) with inquiry?	Can you think of another learning experience, with differing circumstances or results?	How do you perceive your teaching environment to affect your learning?
Who has been influential in your learning journey? How?	Who do you feel has had a significant influence on your learning? Describe the kinds of interactions that lead you to think this.	What is your perception of how your learning influences students' learning?
How have you found your own learning to become part of your teaching?	How do you perceive your students, your classroom, your school to influence your learning?	How does learning "matter" to you?
How do you go about attending to your own learning?	From a learning standpoint, what books are you reading right now? What specific things are you doing to support your learning?	Describe your experience as a research participant

APPENDIX F
TEACHERS' LEARNING TIMELINES

Summary/Timeline of Annemarie's Learning Experiences

June-December 2010

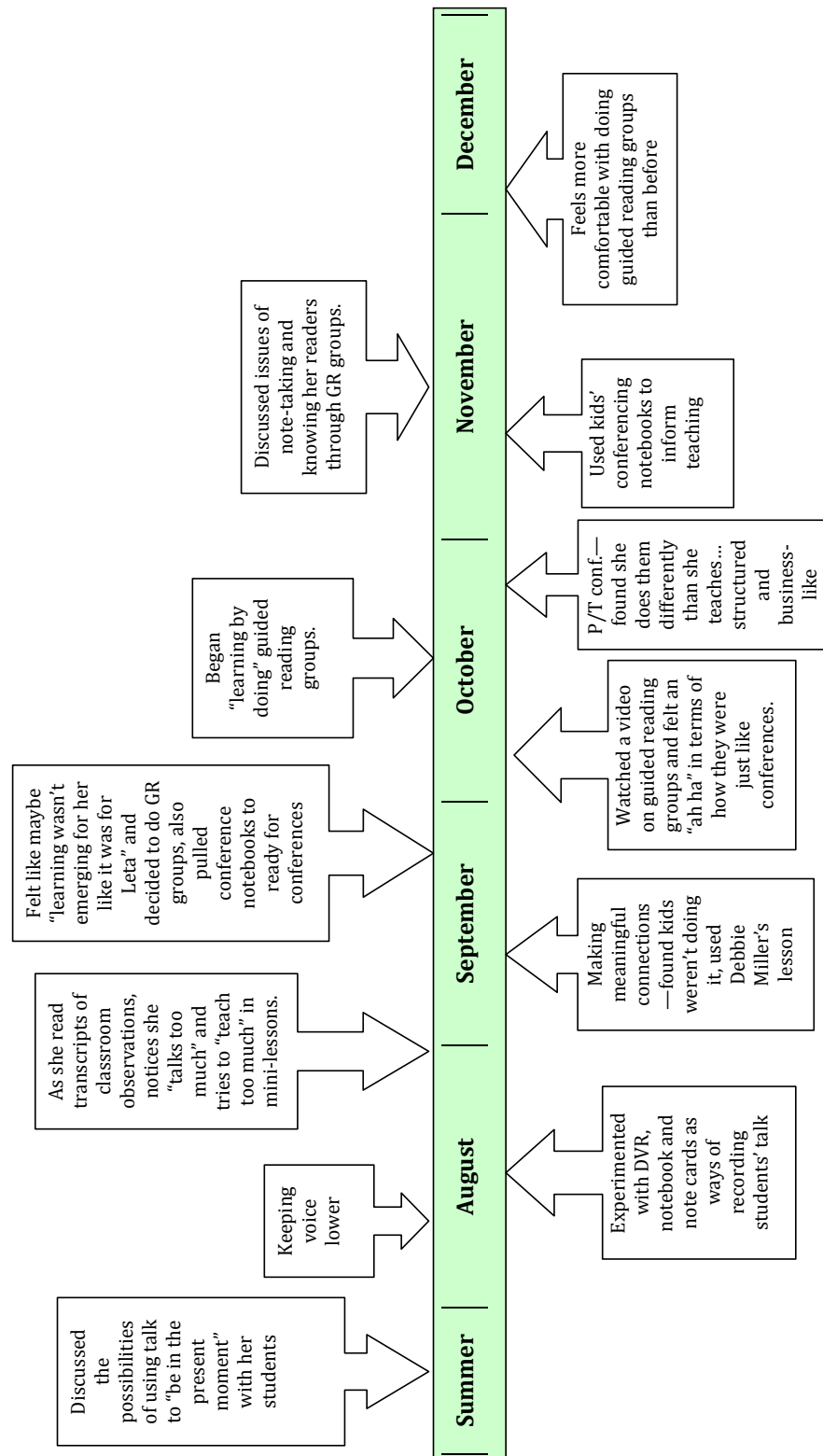


Figure 7. Annemarie's learning timeline. Major learning events for Annemarie during the study's duration.

Summary/Timeline of Jean's Learning Experiences

June-December 2010

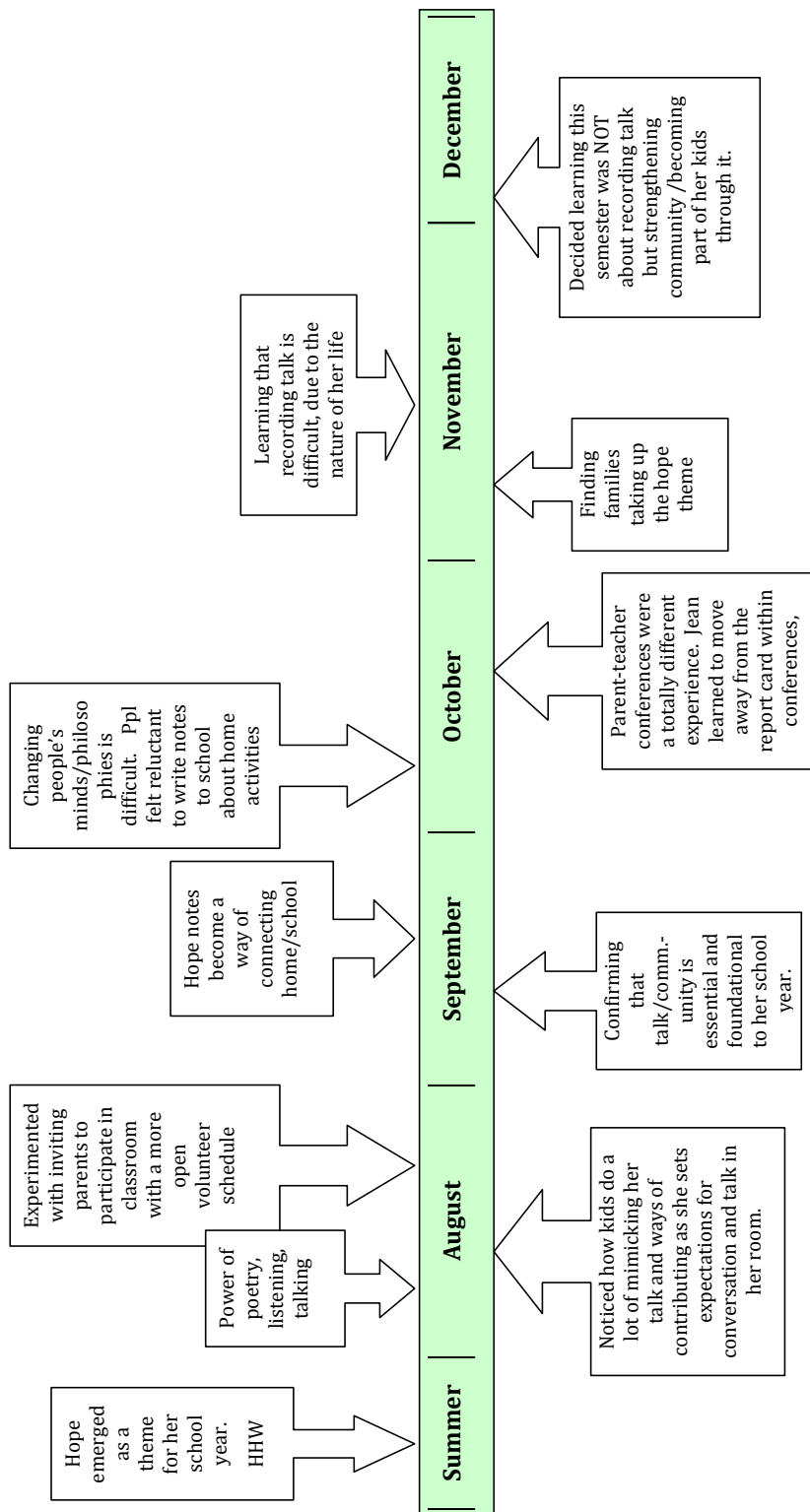


Figure 8: Jean's learning timeline. Major learning events for Jean during the study's duration.