

**TEACHING SUBJECTS:
READING THE PHANTASIES AND INTERRUPTIONS OF BECOMING**

by

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Abstract

Over the course of six months, a small group of teachers engaged in literary response groups to consider understandings of teacher identity and its relationship to curriculum as provoked by three novels. The theoretical underpinnings of this project have been heavily influenced and guided by the poststructural theoretical work of Judith Butler and Michel Foucault; the critical education theorizing of Deborah Britzman, Bronwyn Davies, Elizabeth Ellsworth; and the methodological messing of Patti Lather and Elizabeth St. Pierre.

The project engages in the theorizing of being and becoming teacher and considers the complexities that constitute teacher identity and the interplay of teacher identity with curriculum. The specific questions of this inquiry include: In what ways do teachers understand the identity of “teacher” and what discourses are at work to construct not only the teacher, but the teacher’s understanding of teacher identity? Are there moments or discourses that interrupt the norms that influence teacher identity? What occurs within moments of tension and difficulty that might contribute to understanding teacher becoming, teacher relationship with curriculum, and teacher responsibility in education?

The analysis engages in a consideration of the pressures of the discursive forces of subjection that play upon the subject, theorizing a phantasy of teacher identity. The phantasy of identity, an inner discourse of being, is helpful in understanding the psychological influences of the normative discourses on the subject and accounts for, in part, the desires, memories, and repressions of the teaching subject. The phantasy of identity, acts as a transitional object, a third space in which the desire of the phantasy becomes conscious, accounting for the excess of desire within the subjective forces.

Moments of interruptions, in which teachers question their understandings of teacher identity, are critical places in the theorizing of teacher becoming. These moments are theorized as aporias, irreconcilable tensions, that are the brief opportunities in which the subject is offered a momentary glimpse in which to consider the resonances of the phantasy of identity, and the responsibility to the other.

Preface

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CHAPTER 1

The Subject of Teaching

Joan is a grade one teacher in a public elementary school in a mid-sized western Canadian city. She has been teaching for about ten years and is in the midst of pursuing a master's degree. During one of our many conversations about teaching, learning and curriculum, Joan remembers a moment that occurred within a teaching day. This moment is noteworthy, in that it created a pause for Joan; an instant in which the routine of the busy teaching day was interrupted. Joan recalled the spring day: it was just after recess and her students came tumbling in the door full of "energy" and "excitement." She was finishing up a conversation inside the classroom doorway with her learning support teacher as the children "went to different spots in the classroom and started engaging in something. Some were writing stories, some were in the puppet theatre, some were drawing and some were building. They were doing a variety of things." It was the time of year when the days were getting longer and warmer, the snow had melted, and the ditch behind the school, now filled with the spring run off, had become the habitat for "a crazy abundance" of little wood frogs that "the kids were constantly bringing inside." A small group of children "were having a heated conversation about keeping the frog in the classroom;" debating the practicality and the ethics of confining the frogs, concerned about having a "proper container" but also about the potential of "hurting the frogs." Joan explained that, "This was all going on and my first instinct as a teacher was, like, 'Okay everybody come to the carpet, come to the carpet. Calm everybody down. Come to the carpet let's get organized.'" Instead, she remained still, scanned the classroom, and said to the support teacher, "Look around this room. Every kid is engaged and it is something meaningful." The students seemed to be "thinking about what they were doing and were very intentional in what they were doing." The

moment interrupted the course of action that Joan would have normally taken, and provoked Joan's question: "I wondered, just how often do we interrupt children's learning?"

This vignette is emblematic of the relentless tensions between and within which teaching and curriculum exist. This fleeting moment interrupted Joan's "instinct" to "get organized" and instead created a moment in which Joan was able to pause and consider the situation, the students, and herself as teacher. What is it that Joan believes about the identity of teacher that induces her to feel that she ought to gain "control" of the students? In referencing the ways in which Joan feels she must act "as the teacher," she refers to some external force, an ideal of teacher that exists outside of herself as teacher. In addition, Joan acknowledges a desire to be teacher differently, in a way that reflects her belief that the children should feel as if the work they do is meaningful to them. These identities of teacher illustrate both the forces of identity that play out on Joan's internal desire to be a teacher in accordance with her beliefs. In what ways do the external forces that are placed on teachers manifest in the becoming of teacher? From where do these forces come, what animates them, and in what ways do they regulate the teacher?

Some of the tension to which Joan refers resides in her relationship to curriculum. That is, Joan acknowledges the *what* she should be doing, and yet, desires a curriculum in which children get the feeling that their work is "meaningful" and "important." Joan values the engagements of children in play, their interactions with others, and their explorations and investments in a multiplicity of media. In what ways do teachers interact with curriculum that reflects what it is they believe about the identity of teacher? How do the forces to be teacher in a particular way overcome those beliefs, and to what extent do the forces of curriculum construct and overwhelm understandings of teacher identity? Where are the spaces in the curriculum that

attend to the difficult questions of the ethics of education, to foster a conversation, for example, of keeping a frog in captivity?

Although Joan alludes to some form of an identity of teacher, within this particular event, she also resists it, stopping herself from acting as she thinks she should (that is, gathering the students to the carpet to get them “organized”). Joan’s hesitation is key—she looks around the room, observes the activities in which the students are engaged, and considers how she might proceed. Joan recognizes a feeling of obligation to act teacher a certain way (her “instinct”) and reflexively questions that which she had previously not noticed. This moment in which she hesitates is recalled as something important to Joan, as “one of those few moments” that teachers experience, and is perhaps symptomatic of something significant going on in the becoming of teacher. What is it about moments such as these that make a teacher pause, that induce a decision in which the teacher considers the identity of teacher? How do teachers work within the restraints of curriculum and a claim to a responsibility to teaching that is something greater than that of knowledge transmission? These are the questions that are taken up in this inquiry.

The Research Problem and the Problem with Research

Within this project, it is assumed that teaching subjects are products of, exist within, and are constituted through the power-knowledge matrix (Foucault, 1978/1997). Within this matrix, teacher identity is coerced through complex engagements with power constituting the subject as teacher. In other words, the identity of teacher is produced by the discourses of power that circulate thereby constructing the teaching subject. Discourse refers to the Foucauldian sense of the term, as the manifestation of what is “not-said” (Foucault, 1969/2002) and is representative of the network of the power/knowledge matrix that comes before it. If the teaching subject is *always already* (Foucault, 1976/1990), that is, constituted by the normative discourses of power

that come before, where are the spaces or moments for the subject to give account of oneself (Butler, 2005)? In what ways does the teaching subject enact a responsibility toward itself, to the other and to the ethical endeavours of education? In other words, although the subject is preceded and exceeded by norms constituting it into being (Butler, 2005), in what ways might the subject interrupt the discursive relations that constitute the subject itself thereby responding to its own notions of desire of identity to be or become teacher in a particular way?

Britzman's (2000) work in teacher education has much to offer this discussion on matters of teacher subjection and responsibility. Subjection¹, a term used to denote the means by which "one becomes a subject" (Davies, 2006, p. 425), attempts to account for the discursive constitution of the subject. Britzman's work has been influential, particularly in regards to questions of, "What is it to live a good and thoughtful life and what does education have to do with this?" (p. 32). Referring to order, simplicity, and avoidance of difficulties, Britzman (2000) believes that too often education becomes overtaken by "illusions that defend against the possibility of thinking" (p. 32). These illusions are in part the authoritative discourses that circulate within education, pervading the teaching subject, both constituting and subjecting it. Yet, what are the moments within subjection in which the teaching subject engages in "the possibility of thinking," (p. 32) to reflexively enact self-transformation? Are there moments in which the teaching subject has the opportunity to "form oneself as an ethical subject" (Butler, 2002, p. 8)? And if so, what are the moments of difficulties and uncertainties that prompt the "dilemmas of thinking" (Britzman, 2000, p. 34) provoking the ethical questions within education and invoking difficulties such as "what do people do to make things matter?" (p. 34). Such

¹ The terms subjection, *subjectification*, and *subjectivation* all denote the means by which "one becomes a subject" (Davies, 2006, p. 425). For consistency, unless quoting an author, I use the term subjection.

questions that consider what is difficult and provoke the ethical in being teacher drive this inquiry.

To be clear, this is not an investigation of the root of power or the causal effects of power, but rather, a consideration of the circulation of power, its traces, movements, influences, breaks and constitutive nature to consider specifically the spaces in-between where the discourses falter and the subject might enact being teacher differently. Following research that recognizes the interaction between the teacher and curriculum as a complex and ever-shifting relation rather than a unidirectional transfer of knowledge (Britzman, 2003a; Ellsworth, 1997), prompts a consideration of the interplay between the teaching subject, the forces that constitute the subject, and the making of a classroom curriculum engaged with difficult knowledge (Britzman, 2000; Pitt & Britzman, 2006) that exceeds being known and resists formulaic solutions.

The importance of such work is its contribution to the theorizing of the becoming of the teaching subject and the forces in which this becoming occurs. Specifically, what is it about the forces of subjection that enact Joan's "instinct" to be teacher in a particular way, and more importantly, what happens within the subject when these forces are internalized. Further, what happens to these forces that create a moment of interruption? In other words, this work tends to the consideration of the being and becoming of teacher in the moment of the interruption that prompts a reflexivity of the subject and fosters a potential transformation—a becoming of teacher differently. Therefore, the significance is that this project contributes to the theorizing of teacher becoming, and the teaching subject's tenuous relationship with identity and curriculum.

Methodologically speaking, and because of the epistemological underpinnings of this work, this study engages cautiously with research, wary of truth-finding missions that assert

claims of generalizable facts. Attempting to push methodology that is reflective of poststructural² sensibilities—in which truth, knowledge, and language are suspect—makes a research project itself a precarious arrangement. Simply put, how does one embark on a research project when working from presuppositions where there is no “truth” to be found, where knowledge is not a static and fixed entity but rather is a construction, and where language used to convey meaning fails to fully represent itself? Therefore, there have been methodological attempts to reflect the epistemological assumptions and desires. Further, being skeptical of grand narratives, I am interested in theorizing the particulars, and therefore, recognize that in rethinking knowledge, one must also rethink knowledge production (St. Pierre, 1997). Therefore, within this project there remains a vested engagement in inquiry and in theorizing meaning while considering knowledge production itself.

Question and Purpose

The purpose of this project is to engage in theorizing the being and becoming teacher and to consider the complexities that constitute teacher identity and the interplay of teacher identity with curriculum. The focus of the study is not centred on individual teachers’ perceptions per se, but rather on the connections between the teacher “selves” that the participants discuss, and the discursive and systemic relations in which teachers are embedded. In considering ways to theorize the complexity of the relationship between the teaching subject’s understanding of identity and the discourses by which it is constituted, I seek not only the convergences but the disruptions in such subjection. As in Joan’s story, how might these moments of interruption be productive in considering the becoming of teacher? The specific questions that drive this inquiry,

² Poststructuralism is a contested term, often rejected by those are labeled as such. However, I choose to use the term because it denotes the relations between language, subjectivity, social structures and power (Weedon, 1987) and will explicate its meanings as the chapter proceeds.

include: In what ways do teachers understand the identity of “teacher” and what discourses are at work to construct not only the teacher, but the teacher’s understanding of teacher identity? Are there moments or discourses that interrupt the norms of teacher identity? What occurs within moments of tension and difficulty that might contribute to understanding teacher becoming, teacher relationship with curriculum, and teacher responsibility to education?

Project Overview

Over the course of six months, I engaged a small group of teachers in literary group discussions—a book club. Teachers were prompted to share their understandings of the identity of teacher by considering how they might see teachers in the fictitious characters of novels, and to explore the ways in which these identities related to their understandings of teacher and curriculum. Literary group discussions were based on participants’ reactions to fictional texts, and although guided by researcher questions and prompts, the discussions remained open for participants to take up particular aspects of the text that were of interest. Through group conversations about the novels, as well as individual interviews, I inquired about the teacher participants’ understandings of constructions of the identity “teacher,” the discursive interplay at work in the becoming of teacher, and the ways in which, as educators, the participants engage with curriculum. The literary response of six in-service elementary teachers was comprised of four classroom teachers working within grades one to five, one music specialist, and one former classroom teacher who was working as a support teacher. The participants and I met as a group once each month for a six-month period to discuss three different novels. In addition, each participant was interviewed individually three times throughout the project.

The act of responding to and discussing a shared reading provides an opportunity to consider and analyze both what the participant says directly, and who the reader thinks she is in relation to the text (Ellsworth, 1997). Ellsworth (1997) describes the imperfect fit between the text and the reader as a fluid and unpredictable event, a social space, “formed and informed by historical conjectures of power and social and cultural differences” (p. 38). Through their responses to literature in the group discussions, participants’ relayed their judgments, stories, and reactions both directly and indirectly. In the tradition of reader response theory (Ellsworth, 1997; Rosenblatt, 1978; 1982) in which the meaning of text is a transaction made in relation to the reader, the texts provide an avenue toward meaning making and the social construction of knowledge. Through the teachers’ narratives there are moments in which participants “express their affective investment in knowing and being known” (Pitt & Britzman, 2006, p. 387). In other words, when participants provide narrations of their experiences, they simultaneously relay what, in that moment, it is they believe about themselves and what it is they want others to make of them. For example, one participant, Heather made a reference to a scene in the text where two characters are walking side by side, finding rocks and talking, neither character perceived as having more power or knowledge than the other. Heather describes this scene as the “perfect teaching moment” relaying her beliefs about her own understandings of teacher identity and the student-teacher relationship.

While eliciting participants’ responses, texts also have the ability “to make the familiar strange” (Phelan et al., 2005, p. 108). That is, when text is ambiguous it has the potential to elicit multiple perspectives, richer discussion, and various interpretations (Tobin, Wu & Davidson, 1989). Therefore, texts as provocations have the potential to draw out participants’ own stories and reactions, to “unskin” (Sumara, 1996) or “unlayer” multiple meanings. When participants

have opportunities to respond to text or through text, the response may not only provide participants' tellings, but may also tell on the participants (Phelan et al., 2005). In other words, in responding to text there are opportunities for the researcher to stimulate a reflexive level of discourse (Tobin, Wu & Davidson, 1989), to gather insight into what the teacher participants believe by their reactions, interpretations and judgments of their responses.

The Role of Fiction

“O Lord, let us pray. ...Lord, grant that the worthy among us here shall rise above wickedness and come out of the darkness into the wondrous light of our Holy Father. Amen.”(Nathan Price in *Kingsolver, 1998, p. 28*)

Novels were used as catalysts for and informants in group conversations, acting as “commonplaces” for interpretations of identity (Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 1996). The participants were prompted to consider the ways in which various characters took up—if only momentarily—the identity(ies) of teacher (or not). The ensuing conversations, the sharing of experiences, the rationalization of opinions, and the engagement in agreement and disagreement fostered various considerations about the complexities of teacher identity and teacher becoming. Fiction, therefore, and the subsequent conversations about fiction became a site in which to engage participants in the nuances and difficulties of identity, provoking considerations of identity that differed from the normative constructions of teacher. The novels were used to provoke the reader into contemplations perhaps not previously considered, prompting deliberation on the breaks in knowledge, and allowing for difference and inviting discomfort (Britzman, 1998). Because the relationship between the reader and text is not a neutral, linear transaction, but rather a relationship in which the reader is responsible for her own meaning making, the subsequent responses of the participants became an important and contextual data source for reflecting the

participants' experiences and views (Ellsworth, 1997). The reading and talking about fiction, therefore, became a forum for meaning-making itself.

Discourse(s)

Using fiction to engage in literary group conversations allowed for discourses to emerge that revealed (multiple) understandings of teacher, and further, acted and enacted the subject, allowing for an analytic consideration of how these discourses might act upon the teacher participants, both enacting and disrupting the becoming of teacher. Discourse, as it is employed within this study, is not meant to refer to conversation or text in isolation, but rather, as Foucault (1969/1989) iterates, is considered a practice; an understanding of statements as existing within social, cultural and institutional regimes of knowledge and authority, both constituted by and constituting the systems of relations in which they exist. Through the discussions of novels I sought a space in which, “a dialogic discourse can take into account the discursive practices and their social relationships that realize pedagogy and the lived experiences of teachers” (Britzman, 2003b, p. 25). Therefore, in discussing novels in relation to understandings of teacher identity, there were opportunities for the discourses of teacher to circulate, to constitute the subject, and to demonstrate its disruptions.

Selecting the Novels

The novels chosen for this project, *Fugitive Pieces: A Novel*, by Anne Michaels, *The Poisonwood Bible: A Novel*, by Barbara Kingsolver, and *Truth and Bright Water* by Thomas King, are skillfully and beautifully written texts. I believed that their engaging plots and characters would be both enjoyable for the participants to read and would provoke rich discussions. I purposely avoided texts with Hollywood versions of teacher. In working to move conversations from dominant notions of teacher as saviour or hero, as sex object, as gendered, or

as expert, I sought characters that might help us make meaning of teacher and teaching differently. Therefore, I chose books with characters who engage in acts of teaching and learning writ large, in the hopes of exploring, “the unexpected, the thrilling, the element that unsettles, that makes undecidable the controlled, the rational, and the already decided” (Davies, 2000, p. 182). As Sumara (1996) explains, when people read together, understandings of themselves and of each other change; “as they interpret themselves, they interpret one another and their sense of community” (p. 69). Therefore, although Athos, the man who adopts Jakob in *Fugitive Pieces*, is not a teacher, his character incited an imagining of teacher. It was through characters, the ways in which the characters enacted “teacher,” and the relationships between the characters that became topics of discussion as participants attempted to convey their understandings of teacher identity.

Conversations within the Field: A Review of the Literature

This project is located in the interstices of teacher education and curriculum theory—“that site (within the larger field of education) of intellectual revolution for the past three decades” (Pinar, 1998, p. 1). The project is significant in part due to its focus on in-service educators and a consideration of teacher and teaching beyond the technical aspects of educating others. Much of the teacher education research occurring in Canada appears to focus on the difficulties within current teacher education programs, thus overlooking important inquiries of in-the-field educators. This observation is best supported through a search of the most recent Canadian Society for the Study of Education program (CSSE, 2010) where most sessions within the Canadian Association for Teacher Education (CATE) group focused on pre-service teacher education, including much contemplation of teacher education programs, a large number of sessions focusing on technology, and some sessions that considered pre-service teacher

experiences and the education of teacher educators. Although this work is arguably important in its own right, the focus on teacher education programs across Canada eclipses research about and with in-service teachers.

Further, within the CATE program, there were only a handful of sessions dedicated to in-service teacher professional development, most of which were dedicated to self-study and teachers' development through reflection, inquiry, and action research. Session titles, including those focused on technology, teacher education programs and various forms of self-study, alluded to the technical aspects of teaching. These included various perspectives on how to best (or better) teach subject areas such as mathematics and physical education, how to teach for inclusion, and how to teach second language learners. Most of the sessions in the CATE program privilege the technical aspects of pre-service teaching and teacher education programs, thus maintaining a discourse that claims better practices will lead to better teacher education programs, better prepared teachers, and ultimately better educated students. Such discourses of education thereby resist theoretical and analytic considerations of the construction of teacher itself, the power/knowledge relationships within the discursive forces constructing the subject, and possible implications of such meaning-making within the scope of teacher education.

Notably, a handful of sessions within CATE (CSSE, 2010) considered broader questions of the project of education and of teaching, contemplating a more critical consideration of education beyond its technical undertakings. For example, the panel entitled *Teachers and Their Worlds: New Subjectivities and Socialities in Teacher Education*, with distinguished scholars Drs. Anne Phelan and Alice Pitt, and their graduate students Hannah Spector and R. M. Kennedy, offered a recasting of teachers' professional lives and a conceptualization of teachers' expertise. These scholars revealed the importance of critical consideration of education beyond

its technical aspects, marking a divide within CATE between the flood of research on teaching techniques and the drought of projects seeking insight into questions of ethics, subjectivities, relations, and emotions. Therefore, because my project is situated within elementary in-service teacher education, it provides a particular perspective on in-service teachers and teacher subjectivities that is not prevalent within current teacher education research.

Collaborative Inquiry and Book Clubs

Within teacher education Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly have worked extensively with teachers' conceptions of teacher and curriculum. Through collaborative research with teachers and narrative inquiry accounts as meaning-making tools, Clandinin and Connelly (1988) have investigated various aspects of the images and experiences of teachers and the ways these influence teacher knowledge, curriculum planning and instruction. They have explored the ways in which individual teachers draw on their own experiences for curriculum planning and instruction (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; 1999), and they are well known for their research on the nature of teacher "personal practical knowledge," which aims to explicate the ways in which teachers' understandings are developed, expressed and influence classroom experiences (Clandinin, 1986; Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997). This work, spanning decades, relies on humanist notions of teacher narratives, and argues that these stories are central to teacher education, school improvement and changes in teacher practice. Clandinin and Connelly's research is expansive and significant as it contributes to the field of teacher knowledge research; that is, exploring what teachers know and how that knowledge plays out pedagogically. Although important in its own right, Clandinin and Connelly's work reflects an epistemology of a fixed self and assumes language is transparent.

Relevant to this project's particular methodology, is the research of Mary Kooy (2003, 2006a, 2006b) who asserts that book clubs can be a form of teacher development. Methodologically, Kooy draws on Connelly & Clandinin's narrative inquiry to investigate teacher professional practice and to develop a social context for teacher learning. The participants in Kooy's book clubs read fiction (both adult and children's), as well as viewed films. The texts Kooy chose represented teaching and teacher explicitly, for example *Mr. Holland's Opus*, a Hollywood film in which the protagonist's passion for music inspires a group of students, and *Miss Nelson is Missing*, a children's book where the favoured teacher Miss Nelson is replaced by a mean substitute teacher. The data sources in Kooy's research were the "reading autobiographies" that teachers prepared, as well as transcripts from interviews and book club sessions. Kooy's work contributes to an appreciation of the methodological relevance and the importance of book clubs, and the use of book clubs to provide a social context in which teachers make sense of their experiences as teachers. Whereas Kooy's work is the promotion of the professional development of teachers, the focus of my project is to contribute to the theorizing of teacher identity, subjection and becoming.

The previously mentioned research of Clandinin, Connelly, and Kooy relies on ethnographic and narrative methodologies underpinned by epistemological assumptions where narrations are considered truthful accounts and participants are constructed as fixed selves. These projects differ epistemologically from my research in that my project presupposes that identity is a social construction and is discursively constituted. This will be more thoroughly explored in the Theoretical Framework section (p. 18).

Critical Teacher Education Research

Located in the interstices of teacher education and curriculum theory, my study follows in the tradition of critical teacher education theorists such as Deborah Britzman (1992, 1998, 2003a), Bronwyn Davies (2006), Jennifer Gore (1995, 1998), Erica McWilliam (1995), Janet Miller (1990), and Thomas Popkewitz (1987). By critical teacher education, I am not referring to Critical Theory from the lineage of Marxism (for example, Apple, 1995; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983; Giroux & McLaren, 1989), but rather to research in the field that “takes into account how our lives are mediated by systems of inequity” (Lather, 1992, p. 87) while challenging assumptions of knowledge and qualitative research. That is, critical teacher education “encourages critical perspectives on the relationship between schooling and societal inequities, and a moral commitment to correcting those inequities through the classroom” (Groenke, 2009, p. 3). Generally speaking, these theorists challenge notions of voice, empowerment and emancipation within pedagogy and teacher education, and attempt to consider the movement and role of power within teacher education, social relations, schooling, and pedagogy, “seeking the flaws in existing structures and practices” (Phelan & Sumsion, 2008, p. 1). This conversation within education research attempts to explicate the ways in which social relations are intertwined with power and framed by institutionalization, and therefore, are influential in understandings of schooling and knowledge production. Because the routines and practices of teaching are entrenched and normalized as to make them invisible (Popkewitz, 1996) research to consider the ways in which power circulates through discourses was pivotal in attempting to expose the normalizations of teaching, as well as the workings of schooling in perpetuating social inequity (Popkewitz & Fendler, 1999).

Much of the critical teacher education research attempts to expose the role of power and discourse in constructing and constraining teacher identity and pedagogy. For example, McWilliam (1995) explores the discourses that construct teacher education and considers the textual practices influencing and controlling pre-service teachers' understandings of their work. In a similar theoretical vein, Gore (2001; Gore, Griffiths & Ladwig, 2004; McCormack, Gore & Thomas, 2006), focusing on pre-service teacher education argues for a focus on intellectual quality, relevance, supportive classroom environments, and recognition of differences as essential elements in teacher education programs. Drawing attention to the circulation of power and the ways in which it influences the construct of the teacher identity through collaborative inquiry has also been taken up by Miller's work with pre-service teachers (1990) and with graduate students (1992). Miller (1996) considers the ways in which power creates constraints in practice, as well as the ways in which it replicates and reinforces power relations between teachers and researchers. These theorists have been influential in explicating the ways in which power and discourse circulate within teacher education with pre-service teachers. There remains little current research occurring with in-service teachers, especially at the elementary level, who remain underrepresented as a teacher research group (Nias, 1989).

The subject of teacher. The relationship and tensions between the subjectification of the teaching subject and the interplay with curriculum is of interest as these spaces might allow for a re/consideration of teacher identity, a disruption of perceived and assumed identities, and an exploration of the circulation of power that works to subjectify the teaching subject. Consider Joan and her reference to her feelings that, "as the teacher" she needed to get the students "organized" and under control. From where do these forces reign, and how do they play out on Joan and her understandings of the identity of teacher? Butler's (1997) analysis helps in

considering the ways in which identity is subjected by and through power; power that is active and productive, constituting the subject rather than exerting itself on the subject. In the story relayed by Joan, therefore, the teacher must be considered within the discourses by which it is formed as a teaching subject. That is, the teaching subject, being subject to and subjected by power, is not the sole determinant or agent of its being teacher. Butler refers to a larger cultural and political dilemma in which the teaching subject also finds itself; namely, how does the subject understand, and perhaps resist, the very power by which it is implicated?

This conundrum of the teaching subject, that is the tensions between being teacher as subjected, and being teacher differently, signals the tension within the moment when the subject attempts to “form oneself as an ethical subject” (Butler, 2002, p. 8). These moments of doubt and uncertainty highlight the very risks in engaging in difficult conversations, the fragility and responsibility of the subject. A consideration of the teaching subject’s responsibility within education invokes such difficult queries as “what do people do to make things matter?” (Britzman & Dippo, 2000, p. 34). The teaching subject, while incurring continual subjectification in the process of becoming, responds to “the expectations, demands, and pressures of curriculum, neighbourhood and nation” (Britzman & Dippo, 2000, p. 33). While acknowledging the pressures of subjection on the teacher, I believe there is urgency for a conception of education that is of significance, that speaks to something that matters. This conception exceeds technical notions of schooling, and instead engages in ethical questions that fully acknowledge and also demand the difficulty of thinking.

Philosophical accounts of the experience of the teaching subject are being offered by scholars such as Anne M. Phelan. Phelan’s writing draws on *phronesis*, an Aristotelian term often translated as “practical wisdom” (Phelan, 2005). Phelan engages *phronesis* to explore pre-

service teachers' considerations of race and culture in teacher education programs (Phelan & Luu, 2004), the difficulty of life (2001), the conflict between student teachers and their cooperating teachers (2005), and teacher candidates' development of practical wisdom (2005). Like Britzman, Phelan's concern with the ethical charge of teaching has been particularly provoking, as I continue to seek out the greater purpose of education in regards to teacher becoming, specifically, teachers' roles in perpetuating educational endeavours beyond knowledge transfer. For example, Phelan & Vintimilla's (In press) question, "what might it mean for teachers to experience the pedagogical event as a rich possibility and not a risk to be managed, as ethical invitation and not anxious deviation?" (p. 11) resonates within this project.

Thus, my study is situated within the larger field of teacher education research, grounded by theories of subjection, identity and power, informed by the psychoanalytic, and sparked by these recent writings of Britzman and Phelan concerning the ethical endeavours of education. This study considers the ways in which teachers are constituted by normative discourses, the formative influences of curriculum, and spaces in which the subject might become differently. This project stimulates theorizing that thinks differently about teaching and teacher education, noticing the ethical *aporia* (Derrida, 1991), or irreconcilable tensions within teaching, while considering the possibilities of being and becoming teacher in a context where teaching and learning are unknowable endeavours.

Theoretical Framework

The effects of modernist educational research have inevitably influenced policy, teaching practice, curriculum and pedagogy. It is important to consider the epistemological underpinnings of educational research that subsequently influences teaching practice. As Thomas Popkewitz (1997) elaborates, the authority of the doctrines of reason have influenced understandings of

knowledge and have become the presuppositions on which decisions concerning education research are based. Popkewitz's analysis explicates modernization, a project of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, in which reason and rationality became privileged in efforts to foster social improvement. The resulting discourses link the formation of the state with emerging social sciences and psychology research, assuming that the state shapes individual behaviour through rationality and reason. As Popkewitz argues, academic work, and in this case, educational research remains focused on the state as an effective force of governing the individual. This presupposition lays the groundwork for research that assumes that progress could be achieved through the social sciences and the objectification of individuals. A modernist epistemology privileges linear, rational understandings of progress, constructs data as static and influential of social change and individual development, and understands individuals humanistically (Popkewitz, 1997), that is, as those who act with agency and self-governance. In the context of traditional educational research, what is important to recognize is that the influences on research are not only social and political, but epistemological as well (Popkewitz, 1997). Popkewitz argues that education research has been constructed on a foundation of reason, and he reveals the social, political and epistemological influences at stake. The greater normative discourse in education is critical to my project and becomes the context within which it is situated.

The notion of engaging in dialogue with teachers about teacher identity and curriculum through engagement with fiction creates places where discourse is both circulating and constituting the subject, and is therefore reflective of my epistemological presuppositions. These presuppositions, like dialogue and fiction themselves, are based on understandings of knowledge as unstable and wrought with power, truth as subjective, identities as fluid, and language as unreliable in fixing meaning (Weedon, 1987). In this resistance to certainty, these

epistemological understandings allow for disruption, contradiction and vicissitudinal movement best reflected in theories of feminist poststructuralism (Britzman, 2000; St. Pierre, 2000a; Weedon, 1987). What is called poststructuralism informs my study in that it makes qualitative research notions such as voice, power, experience, knowledge, and identity contentious, while offering “contingent observations about how individuals—including the researcher—make knowledge in and of the world” (Pitt & Britzman, 2006, p. 380). Importantly, explanations of the relationship between power, knowledge, and the subject inform normative discourses and the ways in which they are held in place by the power systems in which we exist (Foucault, 1978/1997). Recognizing the circulation and regulatory effects of power allows for a consideration of the discursive relations between the teaching subject and curriculum production. For example, how is the teaching subject constituted by circulatory effects of power, what are the implications of such effects, and what might be productive in the spaces and tensions within the normative discourses of teacher becoming?

The theoretical underpinnings of this project have been heavily influenced and guided by the theoretical work of Judith Butler and Michel Foucault; the critical education theorizing of Deborah Britzman, Bronwyn Davies, Elizabeth Ellsworth; and the methodological messing of Patti Lather and Elizabeth St. Pierre. In addition, because many of these theorists themselves have been influenced by psychoanalytic theory, this too has inevitably played a part in the work presented here. What I have come to understand about psychoanalytic theory is the theoretical attempts it makes in speculating on the formation of identity by acknowledging an internal space of the subject and allowing for a consideration of the psyche (Butler, 1997). Establishing a greater understanding of psychoanalytic theory, particularly through Deborah Britzman’s

writings and teaching, has facilitated my readings of all these theorists and has provided a lens for richer reading and engagement with the texts of data presented within this project.

Although Foucauldian theories inform understandings of the relation and formation of the subject in relation to regulatory power and becoming, they are less explicit when it comes to articulating questions of identity, specifically in relation to the incorporation of norms to an inner space (Butler, 1997). Butler asserts that theories of psychoanalysis become useful in helping to inform understandings of the formation of the subject, articulating a useful positioning between Foucauldian theories of power and psychoanalytic theories of the subject, and arguing that “a theory of subjection requires a theory of the psyche” (Campbell, 2001, p. 36). This fosters a theorization of an internal or psychic space—fertile spaces from which to consider identity by explaining that “power that at first appears as external, pressed upon the subject, pressing the subject into subordination, assumes a psychic form that constitutes the subject’s self-identity” (Butler, 1997, p. 3). Where contemplations of poststructuralism and the subject help to inform understanding of how the subject is both formed and subordinated, theories of psychoanalysis address the movements of subjection on the self and on internal spaces in relation to becoming. Thus, theoretical developments of the subject and the psyche become fertile spaces to consider teacher identity.

Britzman (1998) began drawing on theories of psychoanalysis to explore the dynamic and psychological events encountered through learning. Around this same time, Elizabeth Ellsworth (1997), drawing on Lacan and Felman, theorized the workings of the unconscious on and within the pedagogical address drawing both on film theory and psychoanalysis. In regards to teacher identity and teacher becoming, psychoanalysis becomes helpful when considering the formation of power and the influences of the subjective forces on the psyche. The role of power in the

formation and subordination of the subject "assumes a psychic form that constitutes the subject's self-identity" (Butler, 1997, p. 3). Where poststructuralism points to the discursive formation of the teaching subject, psychoanalysis theorizes the "self" and identity within subjection (Butler, 1997), considering the ways in which power produces and regulates the teaching subject through the psyche.

If we consider the subjection and the psychological apparatus on and in which subjection plays, how might we theorize the being and becoming of the teaching subject? That is, beyond understanding how teaching selves are constituted when learning to become teacher (Britzman, 2003a); what might be made of the constitution of the subject in relation to the teaching "self," and its desires and phantasies³? Is there a way to conceptualize the discursive forces on and within the teaching subject, and further, to contemplate the tensions that arise from the constitution of the subject by these forces?

In order to engage these theories analytically, I will demonstrate how a significant moment arising from a small incident might be read and theorized through theories of subjection and in consideration of the psyche. I will contemplate how discourses, narrations, and language of the participants expose elements of various pressures at work on the subject and the psyche. I have engaged here in only a brief discussion of some of the specific theoretical concepts within the relevant literature central to this study. Throughout the chapters more theory and literature will be drawn on in relation to, and in the context to which it speaks.

The Discursive Construction of Teacher

Foucault's (1980) theories of the power/knowledge relation have been important in understanding the ways in which power and knowledge are intimately linked. The workings of

³ When using the term phantasy, I employ this particular spelling to refer to the unconscious processes rather than *fantasy* as in daydreams and wishes (Britzman, 2003a).

the discursive within the power/knowledge matrix are key assumptions of this study. Within such an epistemology, notions of teacher, curriculum and pedagogy are therefore considered as discursive, as interrelated and informed by Foucault's theorizing of the power/knowledge relation. The notion of teacher, for example, cannot be understood without also contemplating the constituting power of curriculum and the pedagogy. Considered discursively, these three ideas—teacher, curriculum, and pedagogy—are interrelated, dependent upon and constructed by the other simultaneously.

The teaching subject is understood as being constituted through power that is circulatory and “always-already present” (Foucault 1976/1990, p. 82). That is, according to Foucault, power (relying on discourses of truth) produces effects, constitutes the subject, and influences the body outside of any individualized notions of being teacher. Power, operating through the discursive production of knowledge, both oppresses and constitutes the subject into being. Further, the teaching subject, constituted by power, cannot be considered outside of assumptions of discourses of knowledge. According to Popkewitz (1997), education and the discourses that permeate and perpetuate core notions within it, have been influenced by notions of modernism. Specifically, the 19th century's understandings of individuality, rationality, reason, and knowledge remain influential in current discourses of education. For example, assumptions of time and space as linear and linked to progress, and where people are constructed as objectified and as self-determined agents, shape the purposes of mass schooling to improve society through governing the soul (Popkewitz, 1997). As Popkewitz explains, schooling came to privilege linear approaches to teaching and learning, and consider expertise as transferable from teacher to student and knowledge as fixed, linear, and objective. Education's roots in modernism, and its historical dependency on psychology, privileges knowledge as objective and rational, and

constructs teaching as a problem of technique and management (Britzman, 2003a). These modernist approaches to schooling subsequently construct the identity of teacher in a particular way. That is, within a modernist conception of education where knowledge is fixed, the teacher becomes an agent of knowledge transfer, an objective expert and the means through which knowledge was transferred.

These discourses of schooling and teacher manifest in systems of education through teacher education programs, standardized tests, provincial and district policies, curriculum documents, etcetera. The curriculum may be considered broadly as the predetermined canon of what is to be taught, but also becomes a representation of the discourses of knowledge and power, representing specific forms of knowledge, and determining what and whose knowledge counts. As Britzman (2003a) explains, “every curriculum authorizes relations of power” (p. 39). In this sense, curriculum as content manifests materially within the system of education as, for example, provincial documents, tests, report cards, provincial exams, resources packages, student resources, books, visual media, texts, publisher created resource materials, instructional packages, and teacher workshops. The curriculum in this context, represents “the technologies of normalization” (Foucault, 1972/1980) that act as a system of surveillance (Foucault, 1990) inevitably regulating the teaching subject. The curriculum becomes an object to which teachers are held responsible, a discursive norm acting as a subjective force constituting the teaching subject.

The teaching subject, constituted by and constituting curriculum, is also constituted by and constitutes pedagogy. That is, the teacher does not simply implement a curriculum through a pedagogical maneuver, rather curriculum works discursively to constitute the subject, while the subject constitutes both curriculum and pedagogy simultaneously and within the normative

discourses of being teacher. This means that the curriculum, in deciding the topic, to some extent assumes a pedagogy, thus inciting the teacher to teach in a particular way. Once enacted by the subject, the curriculum is reified. Pedagogy makes assumptions about knowledge, as well as the teacher and learner. Power, operating through the production of knowledge (Foucault, 1976/1990), such as the curriculum, constitutes the subject to be teacher in a particular way and manifests in particular pedagogical practices. Both curriculum and pedagogy become the discursive representations of knowledge, but also of teacher and simultaneously; the teaching subject becomes constituted through these discourses of curriculum and pedagogy. Therefore, fluidity and tension exist between teacher, curriculum and pedagogy, placed within the discursive relationship between knowledge and power.

Although I have presented these three ideas—teacher, curriculum and pedagogy—as three interrelated and interdependent discourses, of particular importance is understanding teacher identity as discursive. It exists prior to the body entering the classroom; always, already formed and as representative of and constituted by the normalized discourses of education. Although these notions will be played out and explicated more fully throughout this dissertation, consider Joan from the introductory narrative. To understand the subject as discursively constructed means to consider Joan as “teacher” prior to her body entering the classroom. The narratives of teacher have *always already* come before, narrating the teaching subject in particular ways. The teacher narratives construct the teacher as being in a position of authority, having knowledge of curriculum (as content or fixed knowledge) and pedagogy. The narratives represent what it means to educate and be educated. Further, these are norms to which the subject must subscribe in order to be recognizable as teacher. The teacher will control, manage and assess student achievement, will implement curriculum and will assume positions of

subordination to the administration, district and provincial department of education. Although Joan questions her desire to intervene in the children's purposeful interactions, much of what it is to be teacher remains outside of individual control. Joan is narrated by the discourses of teacher, is constituted by the norms that circulate, and enacts teacher within those norms. That is, Joan performs the normative expectations of the curriculum, administration, parents, students, and the larger community. Considered in a Foucauldian sense where the power/knowledge relation become fore grounded, normative discourses—that of teacher identity as fixed, knowledge and curriculum as objective and rational, and pedagogy as a means to an end—are put into question. To consider the teaching subject as constructed and regulated through normative discourses upsets modernist notions of identity, knowledge, and teaching and learning.

The construction of the elementary school teacher. In my study, an additional layer in understanding the identity of teacher is the construction of the elementary school teacher. Although constructed through the normative discourses of education, the identity of elementary school teacher is influenced by the social construction of the child and childhood. This becomes of importance within my study as we become exposed to the discourses that circulate among this group of teachers; as elementary teachers they exist within norms particular to elementary schools and in relation to constructions of young children and childhood. Societies' understandings of children are reflected within social, historical and political milieus. Understanding that identities are socially constructed is fundamental when considering the identities of children within our society and important for understanding the construction of teacher identity within the context of elementary schools. The construction of the elementary teacher is related to the construction of the elementary school child. This becomes crucial to my

study, as will be made more explicit, because particular constructions of “child” inevitably lead to particular constructions of teacher.

It is well argued throughout the research that identities of children are constructions of the society in which we live (e.g., Baker, 1998; Best, 2007; Cannella, 2002; Cleverley & Phillips, 1986; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2007; Davies, 2003). There have been various historical constructions of the child, such as Locke’s child as empty vessel, Rousseau’s child as innocent and in need of protection from society, and Piaget’s child as biologically determined (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2007). Within North American contexts, although many of these theories have been critiqued, countered or expanded upon, beliefs from the Enlightenment remain influential and maintain a construction of the child as morally vulnerable and dependent. Childhood is seen as a period of life requiring special protection and a delay from adult responsibilities (Baker, 1998; Cannella & Kincheloe, 2002). Further, children represent a part of the population that is heavily regulated and controlled (Cannella & Viruru, 2004; Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2007; Foucault, 1976/1990; Greene & Hogan, 2005; Robinson & Kellet, 2004). This ideology, reflective of modernist thought, remains common within our society and within the discourses of education (Cannella & Viruru, 2004).

Parallel to the construction of the child as needy and vulnerable is the construction of the elementary school teacher as rescuer, saviour, moral guide, social mediator and protector. Since the Industrial Revolution, teaching has become a feminine profession and the feminization of teacher—specifically of the elementary school teacher—remains prevalent. As Cammack & Phillips (2002) state, “To imagine a teacher is to conjure the image of a woman” (p. 124). Within the curriculum and pedagogical demands of elementary school discourses, these elements of protectionism and socialization become normed within the discourses of being elementary

teacher. Teaching remains a profession constructed as “helping” or “mothering,” reflecting education’s patriarchal paradigm (Gore, 1993), thus marginalizing and silencing teachers (Grumet, 1988). Grumet argues for a legitimization of the experience of women, arguing that the field of curriculum studies has ignored women, family, and the body. Yet, the gendered discourses that enact the teaching subject continue to circulate and constitute the teacher as feminine and therefore, subordinate to the patriarchy of the system of education.

Within my study, the teacher participants are situated within the normative discourses of education and teacher where they are constructed as transmitters of knowledge, and simultaneously constituted by discourses of elementary education in which teachers are constructed as nurturers, caregivers and social agents responsible for socializing young children into society. In addition, within the elementary grades there are discourses that circulate that invest futuristic ideals onto young children; that is, grand narratives that extol young people as future leaders and activists, saviours of environmental disasters, and mediators of peace. Discourses of socialization and futurism become tangible in curriculum guides that privilege the teaching of social skills, classroom community development, community (both local and global) involvement and activism. The competing, complementary and perhaps, contentious discourses exist in simulcast, narrating and norming the teaching subject. Elementary teachers are situated within grand narratives of modernist notions of teacher (knower, deliverer of knowledge, nurturer, and caregiver) as well as more socially defined roles of teacher (as socializing agent and constructor of peaceful community). These norms, circulating in part through curriculum and pedagogy, but also through policy, media, and district priorities, are at play simultaneously on the teaching body, enacted through discursive relations between power and knowledge.

Attempting to consider the moments in which these narratives are disrupted is central to my project. Drawing back to the opening scenario, Joan is attempting to be teacher differently than that of authoritarian and knower. There is something happening in her classroom that demonstrates an image of the child as competent as she engages in meaningful work and play. The child is constructed neither as empty vessel needing to be filled nor as deficient, thus “fixable” by adding adequate doses of predetermined knowledge. The curricular and pedagogical decisions Joan considers resist preparatory skills-based and content-driven agendas, and instead value meaningful engagement with real life opportunities. There is a sense of happiness, eagerness and engagement with each other and the world around them—and both the students and the teacher recognize its worth. What is happening for Joan that allows her to create such spaces of learning, seemingly resisting normative discourses of being teacher? Further, what allows the discursive norms of teacher to creep in, invoking Joan to feel pressure to “get them organized and on track”? By what forces is Joan regulated? More importantly, to whom and what is Joan responsible? These questions of difference—that is, of being teacher differently from what is prescribed by the norms—are what drives my inquiry into teacher identity and teacher becoming.

It is noteworthy that in the modernist constructions and ideologies of children, where children have been traditionally “othered” and constructed as objects (Cannella & Kincheloe, 2002), there has been a movement to reconceptualize early childhood education which is having some influence in elementary school education. This movement has been influenced in part by the work of Reggio Emilia in Italy (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998); collaborative theorizing in Sweden, the United Kingdom and Canada (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2007); Indigenous educational philosophies, particularly those of the Maori in New Zealand (Ritchie, 2008); and

critical theorizing within childhood psychology and sociology (Greene & Hogan, 2005; MacNaughton, 2005). The reconceptualization of childhood advocates for a critical engagement with assumptions about children and childhood that challenge dominant constructions of childhood, binaries of self/other, regimes of truth, and grand narratives (Cannella & Kincheloe, 2002). Although these are relatively recent developments within early childhood education and are even less prevalent in discussions of elementary school education, the movement is important to mention because it speaks to the current context for understanding notions of child and childhood. It is also important to note because participants in my study have had exposure to these theoretical perspectives throughout their graduate and professional study.

About What Follows

This dissertation is divided into five main chapters. *Chapter Two: Textualizing the Fabrication of a Research Project* is a detailed discussion of the methodology and methods used in this project. Here, in reaction to modernist underpinnings of qualitative research, I explain and explore the notion of literary response groups as a methodology and describe the approach to analysis as an endeavour into the symptomatic. Data and theory are textualized, engaging literature, theory and texts in order to make speculative claims of meaning. *Chapters Three and Four* engage a speculative analysis with the texts from a particular moment or moments, the novels and theorists textualize meaning from resonant moments engaging with theories of the subject and the “self”; identity and the psyche; becoming and responsibility. More specifically, *Chapter Three: “Free Yourself, Sister!”* reads a particular moment with a literary response group discussion through theories of subjection and recognizability in order to theorize the inner discursive forces of the subject through a phantasy of teacher identity. *Chapter Four: The Aporia of Undecidability* considers the interruptions in subjection, engaging theories of *aporia*, and

considers a participant's question of responsibility. Finally, I conclude with some contingent observations about teacher becoming and research, considering memory and forgetting, and Foucault's critique.

CHAPTER 2

The Weaving of a *Textus*

Etymologically, the word *text* comes from the French words *texte*, meaning the "wording of anything written" and from the Latin *textus*, the "style or texture of a work," literally, a "thing woven." As Bringhurst (as cited in Etymonline, 2009) explains, metaphorically the thread is the thought, spun into yarns by the storyteller. The real *raconteur* however, is the poet, the one who, "moves from life to language...try[ing] to identify the invisible, what's between the lines, the mysterious implications" (Michaels, 1996, p. 109). The poet, the weaver of the yarn into an art form, textualizing utterances onto the page, conjures an artistic endeavour, subjective, and influenced by creative interpretations. Seeking the invisible—that which is not yet known—speaks to the limits of knowledge and entails a woven engagement with texts, thoughts, and theories becoming of an aesthetic practice. Ellsworth (2005) asserts that "the very possibility of thought is predicated upon our opportunities and capacities to encounter the limits of thinking and knowing and to engage with what cannot, solely through cognition, be known. Aesthetic practices and experiences provoke precisely such engagements" (p. 25). The engagements with the unknown and the weaving of the *textus* into interpretive knowings, with which we can take hold if only momentarily, represent both what might become, and the artistry of such representation.

The representative text with its creative interpretations becomes a site of doubt, where knowledge itself is understood as partial and riddled with gaps and overlaps. This textuality of praxis (Lather, 2007) invokes an approach to representation that reflects the fluidity of and the limits of knowing. Lather (2003) argues that this praxis is not a new concept, but rather is a practice situated on "a shifting ground that foregrounds the limits of the fixing, locating, defining

and confining that is the work of the concept. ...A praxis immanent in practices that helps us think not only with but in our actions” (p. 11). Subsequently, the notion of authority derived from one particular thread of truth or experience, from one text or narration, undermines the "belief that ‘reality’ is somehow out there waiting to be captured by language" (p. 32). Therefore, the weaving as a *textus* becomes a useful metaphor when considering a means of representation which presupposes a problematizing of self, researcher authority, narration and experience.

A Note on Narrative and Experience

Because qualitative research methods remain haunted by positivist influences (Fusco, 2008; Lather, 2007) there must be a consideration of the problematics and partialities of qualitative education research and its methods. Although education research methodologies are being called into question by education researchers (Britzman, 2000; Lather 1991, 1992, 2007; St. Pierre, 2000c), research often remains burdened by resonances of truth, experience, narrative, and representation (Fusco, 2008). And yet, history and traditions of research are hard to shake. Qualitative research relies on narrative, however, narratives within qualitative research cannot be trusted, because “too many events in a man’s life are invisible” (Michaels, 1996). Participants’ narratives of experiences are burdened in ways beyond recognition, by forces, influences, events, memories and repressions that are not discernable in the telling. The narratives of experience and of representation are always tainted by memory and subjective retellings, leaving the critical education researcher in a precarious position between proving and pretending.

Experience is understood as discursively influenced, implicating subjectivities and identity (Davies, 1989; Davies & Davies, 2007; Scott, 1992). As described by Scott, experience challenges the notion of a static and transparent accounting of a subject existing unproblematically in a current space, and recognizes the inextricable link between experience

and language used to describe it. Because of the subjectivities of self and the constituting effects of discourse, participant experience is incapable of representing a “truth” and is unable to represent a “‘reality’ [that] is somehow out there waiting to be captured by language” (Britzman, 2000, p. 32). As an unreliable accounting of “truth”, participants’ experiences remain as unstable as “prairie clay and willow” (King, 1999, p. 6). Within literary response groups, there are spaces to mistrust experience, recognizing it as subjective, partial and reliant upon language, and acknowledging, in a way, the narrations of participants as problematic as the participants themselves are talking about fiction. The process itself mocks experience as truth.

Like Pitt (2003), I am “suspicious” of narrative as an “explanatory device for understanding experience.” Participants’ narrations of their experiences cannot be treated as evidentiary proof, and because language makes experience (Britzman, 2003a), narrations become subjective and contextual (Scott, 1992). The participants’ narrative descriptions, like autobiographies, become fictions of the self (Visweswaran, 1994). Yet, as Doctorow (as cited in Morris, 2001) concludes, “there is no fiction or nonfiction as we commonly understand the distinction: there is only narrative” (p. 57). Although notions of narrative and experience are in a constant state of collapse, participant presentations—incomplete and partial as they are—nonetheless, represent particular perspectives on life. These perspectives situated as discursively constructed and as “mediated by history and context, and by the speaker and listener” (Britzman, 2003a, p. 43) can be the catalyst for considering the constitutive force of discourse on identity. Ultimately, I am obliged to consider the contingency of participant claims, while recognizing participants as knowers of their own worlds and makers of their own meanings. In addition, my own subject position will frame what I read, as well as what I read into, the texts.

Texts as Sources of Data

Within this dissertation I draw on three specific texts: the novels, the transcripts, and my own and other theorists' words. The novels which were read and discussed within the literary response group became integral texts within this study. Interestingly, and somewhat unexpectedly, rereading aloud and referring to resonant fragments of the novel in group discussions and interviews made the texts more than merely words on a page or quotes from a character. Rather, these words become points of reference, a poignant example, or a metaphor. Once read aloud, the snippets of text were recorded and subsequently rewritten into the transcripts, bookended by participants' voices, indicative of meaning making. In this form, the novelists' texts became something they had not been previously; they were now indelibly woven into a different conversation, read aloud (sometimes numerous times), and transcribed. Ultimately, these fragments of text became an integral aspect of the analytic endeavor.

In addition to considering the novels as sources of data, I also felt obligated to consider these texts theoretically. In contemplating what sense could be made of participant data and of what theories were emerging, I was compelled to consider the texts of the novelists at the same time. Novelists theorize the world around them, attempting to make sense of the unfathomable, or, as Jane describes the relationship between Athos and Jakob in *Fugitive Pieces*, "teaching each other how to live in unlivable times." Therefore, just as theory allowed me to read the novels and the participant data through particular lenses, the novelists prompted me to consider theory and data differently as well. The brilliant use of metaphor by a novelist could be used to provide a description of theory, while theory could provide a different lens with which to consider the meaning of the fiction. For example, my understandings of Butler's theories of subjection allowed me to read the discourses of the participants, or a character like Orleana in the novel,

The Poisonwood Bible (Kingsolver, 1998), in ways much different than if I had not considered them through this theoretical lens. These texts of fiction are important because they represent not only the novels with which we engaged, but also the theoretical and metaphorical ideas that stimulated the group conversations, as well as my own thinking and writing.

Secondly, the more heavily relied on texts were the transcripts compiled from the literary response group discussions and the participants' interviews. I refer to these transcripts as *texts* rather than data in order to invoke their partiality and constructedness while jarring the implicit assumption that data is stable, factual and withholds a "truth" that the researcher might uncover. The transcripts as texts were the provocations for theorizing and meaning making. The third text is this production, overtly and implicitly woven with multiple texts, including my own words, as well as those of theorists and others that I encountered while conducting, thinking about, and writing about this project. These texts, therefore, are representative both of specific pieces of writing, and however partially and broadly, a moment of social reality (Pinar, 1993). As Pinar, drawing on Derrida explains, text refers to a piece of writing but also represents the discursive nature of human reality, existing in the gap between the original experience and its reference. Text, in this sense, therefore, contributes to an understanding of the discursive formation of identity.

These multiple texts of novelists, participants, theorists, and my own analyses and arguments are woven throughout this project engaging in a textuality of praxis (Lather, 2007). The subsequent re/presentation becomes a crafting that attempts speculative claims of meaning. To textualize in this sense, means to take up data both as a piece of writing (representing as poorly as it does, a subject's spoken intent) and as an implication of social reality, a discursive representation of meaning and of attempts to make meaning. These texts alone do not represent a

truth, a pure intention of an individual, or even a static reality, but rather become telling of a moment. They are read, analyzed and textualized with theory to make sense and to speculate on a meaning. In the process of working and playing with the various texts that circulate and constitute this project, the re/presentation blurs the boundaries of authority between writer and reader, researcher and participant, theory and fiction.

The Fabric(ation) of the Writing

Although I describe the various texts from which I draw as those of novelists, participants, and theorists, their categories are more uncertain than they appear and, at times, have the potential to become indiscernible from each other. Each text becomes also/already influenced by other texts before, around and after it—they too are already influenced by other texts. Therefore, the texts remain unstable, their influences multiple, and their representations dependent on what surrounds them. The intertwining texts, while at risk of distorting themselves, remain interconnected, producing together what cannot be represented singularly. For example, drawing on a metaphor crafted by one of the writers or an insight offered by a participant might help to illustrate a theoretical perspective. Alternatively, while theory can be used to read participant texts, it can also be an appropriate lens with which to engage in the reading of the novels as well. The purpose is to use various texts to highlight, accentuate, and extend meaning that might not be possible by privileging one text over another. Moreover, by positioning the texts alongside each other, weaving the texts of novelists with participants and with theorists, gestures to their equivalent weight, no one text of more worth than another, no one theory more credible. This aesthetic engagement recognizes the space between what is represented and what is “real,” acknowledges that which is inconsolable and contentious, and tolerates the trouble with and within education research.

Weaving the novelists, participants and theorists into a text re/presents significant moments of relationship between them and evokes for me as researcher theoretical speculations on the discursively and collaboratively produced meaning making moments. The representation of meaning remains problematic, and as Britzman (2000) explains, the research remains a partial truth, similar in some ways to fiction, where the authority of the researcher is suspect. Yet, while recognizing the limits of certainty, there is still a desire to contribute respectfully to the empirical realm, to honour a formation of knowledge (Lather, 2007). Meaning is constructed and re/presented by the authority and positionality of the researcher, through what was read or not read, understood and misunderstood, spoken or not spoken, analyzed and overlooked, and of course, through the reader's own interpretations of the speculations presented (Rosenblatt, 1978; Sumara, 1998). This textual representation, like "a tangle of wires" (Michaels, 1996, p. 111), becomes a snare of history and memory, a distorted likeness of specific aspects of the research project.

Literary Response Groups as a Methodology

Employing a literary response group as a research approach presupposes that fiction can be used as a method of provocation for conversation in which meaning making is privileged and the making of meaning theorized (Britzman & Pitt, 1996). The focus of the project was to consider and analyze the discourses that construct and constitute the teaching subject and the systems of relation in which the subject is formed, and in addition, sought the moments where disruptions of the constitutive forces of becoming might emerge. My concern within this project therefore, is not only with *what* the teachers say, but from where the discourses might be derived, through what system of relation, with what effect, and in what instances they might break down. In other words, throughout the analysis, I attempt to foreground the particulars of the discourse,

consider its practice and movement within, upon, and surrounding the participants. In privileging the discursive, I was concerned more so with the influences of the power/knowledge matrix, and less so with an analysis of the individual or personal.

The literary response group meetings were designed to provoke discussions in which to elicit discussion of teachers' understandings of constructions of the identity "teacher" and the interplay that occurs between those understandings and teachers' relationship with curriculum. By engaging participants in reading and responding to fictional text, I aimed not only to produce different knowledge, but "to produce knowledge differently" (St. Pierre, 1997, p. 175). In responding to text, there were opportunities to gather insight into what the teacher participants believe through their reactions, interpretations, and judgments of characters and events within the text, as well as through their reactions to others' interpretations of the text. Fiction as a provocation was used to provoke dominant narratives of teacher identity.

Making a Case for Literary Response Groups

Although literary response groups—or book clubs—have been around for centuries and have become recently popularized within the mainstream by, for example, Oprah, they remain largely under researched by those in the academy (Long, 2003). Within the education research community specifically, there are some exceptions where book clubs are becoming more prominent both as topic of study within education (Kooy 2006a, 2006b; Long, 2003) and as a research methodology (Sumara, Davis & Iftody, 2006). In fostering contested and co-constructed knowledge making (Twomey, 2007), literary response groups allow for research to focus on specificities and complexities, and in this case, privilege the discursive. That is, a literary response group can become a method which honours poststructural conceptions of multiple and fluid identities (Britzman, 1992; Butler, 1990, 1993), knowledge as socially constructed (Davies,

2003; St. Pierre, 2000c), and experience as contested (Britzman, 1992, 2003a; Scott, 1992). This is due, in part, because group conversations about fiction fosters moments where the discursive constitution of the subject slips, momentarily exposing places of the subject becoming, and allow for consideration of “the possibilities for creative movement beyond the terms of our subjection” (Davies, 2000, p. 181).

Because the reading and discussing of novels provides a social context fostering a messy and at times, uncontrolled conversation, the method of literary response groups, in some ways, mirror the social experiences of becoming teacher (Britzman, 2003a; Ellsworth, 2005). In other words, because teacher becoming is a social process, it seems appropriate that the identity of teacher might be considered within a social milieu. Because the literary response groups met numerous times there were opportunities for participants to engage in conversations that might be picked up again later. The social and informal format of a literary response group allowed for opinions, perspectives and conversation to move from a dialectic to something more dynamic. These group conversations were often relaxed, with participants falling into casual conversations, interrupting, feeding off and joking with each other, fostering greater possibilities for the uncontrived and for the unforeseen to arise from conversations. Because of the increased number of people involved in the conversation (as opposed to a one-to-one interview) and because the participants were usually eagerly engaged in conversations about the novels and making connections to their own experiences, there seemed to be less reliance on and interference from me as researcher. That is, because the participants were eager to engage in conversations about the novels, the discussions were not always reliant on the researcher for prompting. Many times the participants directed the conversations because they wanted to talk about aspects of the books that they found, for example, interesting, confusing, or frustrating.

Because a reader's identity is perceived, interpreted and altered through reading (Sumara, 1998), the reading of fiction and the ensuing discussions became places where the readers could engage in interpretation of both text and teacher. For example, while the participants discussed the kind and wise character, Athos from *Fugitive Pieces* as a teacher, relaying their assumptions and assertions of teacher identity, the discourses of teacher that circulate simultaneously worked to reconstitute the teaching subject. Although my intent was to elicit meaning making outside of normative discourses of teacher, it seems obvious in hindsight that the conversations regarding the novels' characters can not exist outside of the discourses of teacher identity that always-already constitute the subject. Further, the conversations although reconstituting teacher identity through discourse, fostered spaces in which the discourse of teacher became, at times, apparent and cause for analytic consideration.

Importantly, the utterances made by the subjects are understood as already constituted by positions that are “fully embedded organizing principles of material practices and institutional arrangements, the matrix of power and discourses” (Butler, 1994, p. 160). In other words, because the subject is constituted through subjection, the utterances of the subject are working from discourses that have come before. In engaging with literature over a period of time, the staging is such that the narratives are already in dispute because they are either considered a version of a fictional texts or responses to fictional texts. An important aspect of the methodology, therefore, is that the participants engage in conversation about fictional narratives, situations and characters that are—literary and literally—constructions. The method itself mimics the trouble with narrative and knowing and instead of seeking clear and linear responses that propose to represent a truth, the literary response group methodology fosters dynamic engagements, as well as social, collaborative and contested reactions to fiction. By engaging with

provocations that are fictitious, there is a playful mirroring created by asking participants to engage with something fictitious. The methodology privileges fiction as meaningful, accepts discourses as constituting the subject, and provokes discussions of teacher identity.

The literary response group discussions were not linear, were not a back-and-forth transaction to the researcher's questions, but rather seemed to be busy, multiple, messy, circuitous, meandering and disrupted. This became noticeable upon reading the transcripts when the unruly path that conversations took during the literary group discussions became more visible. During the literary group discussions I was often surprised by the unpredictability of the route the conversation took and recall many times when I tempered my urge to step in, to agree, to disagree, or to steer the conversation in a different direction. The conversations were often most interesting when they were not reliant upon my questions to sustain them. The literary group discussions created a dialogic space, one in which discourses circulated, were constitutive, and at times, seemed disjointed, allowing for prolific opportunities for me to engage with the data both critically and analytically.

Novels as Touchstones

Importantly, the novels that were read and discussed often became touchstones for conversations and shared history, and therefore, became important to participants' relationships. The shared reading created a shared social history—however subjective—around which the group developed relationships with each other and as a larger social group. When participants attempted to articulate an assertion or illustrate their perspective, they often did so by referencing a character or event in the novels in an effort to elucidate for the others—because the participants had read the same text—a particular argument. For example, during the final group discussion, months after literary group discussions of *The Poisonwood Bible*, Valerie uses a reference to

Nathan Price as a metaphor, knowing that the group had a similar context for the reference. Referring back to the novels allowed for the participants to locate a previous conversation, but also referenced the greater context of the novel, its characters, plot or themes. Therefore, engagements in common readings through the literary response groups were not only useful in creating social experiences, but also fostered a shared history and context for conversations.

Literary Response Groups as a Political Space

Because this study has at its core issues of identity(ies) of teacher and interplay with curriculum, like Gibson-Graham (1994), I also see this as a political space in which there is an attempt to deconstruct current discourses and provoke assumptions within discourses and subject positions. Literary response group conversations have the potential to question and put into play larger political and social issues. More specifically, issues of teacher identity inevitably involve discussion of the purpose of education and the complicit role of the teacher. In raising and considering issues of power within the constitution of identity, the work has the potential to become political (Gibson-Graham, 1994). Through literary response group discussions teachers can re/construct and rethink the construct of teacher and who one is (Britzman, 1998), therefore allowing for participants to engage in conversation that might disrupt discursive norms about being and becoming teacher. This space, therefore, is not simply a method for data generation but becomes ripe for “discursive intervention” (Gibson-Graham, 1994), a space in which to engage with the political through a consideration of the workings of power.

I cannot know the interventions or political outcomes for particular participants within the study. Yet, there were many conversations in which the participants challenged and supported each others’ social and political assertions. For example, when Heather, a respected teacher in the group described the perfect teaching moment metaphorically as a teacher walking

alongside the student, this may cause pause, resistance or thought among other participants, perhaps disrupting notions of teacher as knower or expert. The outcome or residual implication of these conversations or confrontations cannot be known. Yet, it is important to note that just as this process does not include a fixed subject, it is also without known and foreseeable outcomes and therefore, the "conversations are interventions/actions/changes in and of themselves" (Gibson-Graham, 1994) regardless of further or follow up transformations. Within moments such as these, when assertions by participants were intended to be political interventions or not, Gibson-Graham emphasizes that whether the assertions are or result in further political interventions are unknown and that to engage in conversations about identity are actions within themselves.

Participation as Collaborative Inquiry

Within this project, collaborative inquiry is valued and enacted methodologically through the literary response groups. There has been much education research involving teachers in collaborative inquiry (Clandinin, 1985; Clandinin, Davies, Hogan & Kennedy, 1993; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) in an effort to create opportunities where teachers—and the researcher—become active participants in knowledge creation. Within such a methodology, participants are positioned as subjects within the research, as opposed to objects of the research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Connelly, Clandinin & He, 1997), thus disrupting researcher authority and creating greater legitimization of participants' subjective experiences (Clandinin et al., 1993; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). In addition, the literary response group fostered a level of reciprocity (Lather, 1986, 1991) in that the teacher participants expressed enjoyment in participating in a research project in which they were invited to read fiction, and engage in discussions about books and teaching with other participants.

Because of the shared nature of discourse (Scott, 1992) fostered within the literary response groups, there is an understanding that what the participants narrate is relative to the context of the texts and others' conversations around them. Participants as subjects are "always transformed in [their] encounter with the other, always becoming in the exchange with the researcher as it is in any other encounter" (Davies & Davies, 2007, p. 1143). The participants, therefore, were influenced by the novels, by the other participants' comments and presence, by the researcher presence and my questions posed, by our past and current relationships, by expectations of this project, and by their assumptions. This does not account for the entirety of subjectivities from which the participant might speak, nor from the unconscious influences at play. No single narrative, Scott affirms, can account for an individual's experience, nor can a single narrative accurately represent a collective experience. Therefore, although there are many subjects within the group, what emerges is specific to that particular point in time, to that particular group, in that particular moment. The particular moments cannot be anticipated nor replicated, nor narrated. Davies and Davies (2007) explain:

neither the individuals, nor the experiences of which they make an account, nor the social world that provides the context and meaning for those experiences, can safely be said to fully preexist the occasion on which the account was made of them. (p. 1141)

Simply put, the social experience of a particular moment within the literary response group does not preexist, nor can it be accounted for outside of that particular moment.

Collaborative inquiry is often viewed within teacher research as "good," as "infused with a friendly, respectful air, and which implies high esteem for teachers, their world, and their experiences" (Goldstein, 2000, p. 517). According to Strong-Wilson (2006), within collaborative inquiry teachers feel valued and elements of teacher collegiality are fostered. Yet, there are also important difficulties concerning an idealized understanding of collaboration that must be noted.

For example, although collaboration positions teachers as active participants (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993), participation is indeed limited by the researcher and researcher expectations (for example, research design, duration, interview questions, and analysis, to name a few). Further, and quite importantly, collaboration can be a difficult and ethically charged endeavor (Goldstein, 2000). Collaboration within research requires trust between and among the researcher and participants in order to create space for and to honour what it is that participants offers, as well as what each chooses to withhold. In addition, issues of power, honesty, desire, privilege, and disagreement are elements of the research that may be magnified and cause for tension within a collaborative methodology where participants are encouraged to take on greater responsibility and involvement.

For example, during the book club discussions many conversations became co-constructed, where one comment or question would lead to an intense discussion in which some or all participants would heartily engage. In order to honour collaboration, I sometimes felt that I should not intervene or interrupt the conversation. It was difficult when I wanted to pose my prepared questions, but simultaneously, did not want to silence the conversation in which the participants were engaged. In addition, there were times when I was unsure as to whether I should openly agree or disagree with a participant comment. There were other moments where it seemed reasonable to assert an opinion, supporting or disagreeing with a participant comment as they would with each other. The responsibility to both the participants as collaborators, as well as to the research project was often in tension. How often and when should I be steering the conversation into directions that I felt were “more pertinent” at the risk of shutting down a collaborative conversation which may have been important to one or more of the participants? I struggled with these moments. There were also times when I asserted an opinion during the

conversation, and then when recalling the moment on the way home (or worse, not remembering it until I read it in the transcripts), I regretted saying it. These examples demonstrate the tensions between the ideals and good intentions of collaboration, with the emotional, ethical and social implications of inviting participants into a project purporting to be collaborative.

Additionally, I recognize that many ideals held by collaborative methodologies exist in tension with complicated understandings of self, language, experience, and participant voice (Ellsworth, 1992; Lather, 1991, St. Pierre, 2000c). Traditionally, collaborative methodologies work from a position where the self is fixed, language is transparent, and experience is representative of truth. Although a humanist approach would be in tension with my postmodern views, I position collaboration within this project as a space for multiple discourses and their interruptions to emerge. The engagement of subjects in a collaborative approach, I believe, can highlight frictions that exist in a collaborative methodology in which fluid subjectivities, socially constructed knowledge, and contingent experience are brought to the fore. The productivity of this exploration allows for a consideration of collaborative methodological possibilities within poststructural research.

A Textual Strand: Participants

Recruitment of teacher participants took place in a western Canadian city through advertisements distributed throughout all of the city's school divisions, to the local Faculty of Education's graduate students, and by word of mouth from participants who agreed to join. (See Appendix A for the *Call for Participants*.) My concern when sending out the Call for Participants was receiving enough responses for the literary response groups. I had hoped to recruit four to six participants and felt fortunate that six teachers responded and participated in the project as fully as other commitments in their lives allowed. It as a testament to the

participants' dedication that even though various participants were involved with graduate work, fell ill, had scheduling conflicts with commitments at work (one participant even had a baby during the project), each group discussion had at least four participants present.

A Question of “What,” not “Who”

I have chosen not to provide narratives describing each participant in order to place less emphasis on the descriptors of the participants—the “who” they are—and a greater focus on the discursive workings which the participants take up, maintain and/or disrupt. This has been a difficult issue—one not fully resolved for me. I have contemplated the various methods of portraying the participants of this study and the motivations and rationales for each. I could have perhaps described each participant metaphorically, or I could have asked each participant to provide her own descriptive narrative. For example, I could have provided a narrative description of each participant based on information they provided and shared throughout the study, describing each person's education, current teaching position, years of experience, area of expertise, history of teaching, race, gender, class, etcetera. When contemplating each approach, I was left wondering what the value of each option might be, what would be included and what would be excluded, what the reader might gain from it, and to what end. None of these methods seemed quite right and all seemed to fall short of adequately portraying the nuances of each participant.

Although participants bring varied and varying identities, I believe that the discourses of the norms of teacher pervade subjectivities and prevail over other markers of identity within this particular situation. In other words, the dominant narrative of elementary teacher acts to neutralize other identity markers. This is not to say that identity markers such as race or gender do not matter. They do matter—identity plays an important role in teachers' varied experiences.

However, within this theoretical framing and in consideration of theories of subjectivity, recognizability and performativity, I am arguing that the dominant discourses of elementary teachers temper other identities, subverting them at the cost of being recognizable as teacher, and reconstituting the dominant narrative of teacher through performance. Therefore, it becomes very difficult to perform elementary teacher differently than white, middle class female, even if one's identity markers are otherwise. The subjectifying forces of the identity of teacher have always-already decided much about teacher identity. The circulation of the dominant narrative has saturated our thinking constructing, constituting and reifying teacher as white, middle class, nonsexual female for centuries.

Further, a descriptive narration of each participant seems at odds with the epistemology of this study. In describing individual aspects of identity, I fear focusing on an individual "self" as fixed and detracting focus from the discursive. In other words, because attention is given to the collaboratively constructed discourses and the matrix in which they are embedded, foregrounding individual identity traits seemed to be contradictory. Therefore, I have decided to allow the participants' texts to speak for themselves, so to speak, by allowing the text that emerges to partially represent the discussions that took place. This means that readers will have to allow the participants to present themselves through the texts that I provide, within the context of the novels, the greater conversations, and my own textualizations. The point is not to attempt to represent the participants, but to represent the discourses that circulate. I want the reader to remain attentive to the discourses of teacher identity not on fixing the identities of the teacher participants. I add descriptions of participants only when relevant and if they relate specifically to understandings of the intent or greater context of a particular comment or conversation. Although this too may seem greatly insufficient, it seems to me the lesser of the evils.

Relationships with Participants

All of the teachers who replied to my recruitment request (except for one) were teachers whom I knew and with whom I had worked in various schools. The teachers came from three different schools from the school district in which I was employed. The one teacher with whom I did not have a previous relationship was invited by two teachers from her school who joined the research group and encouraged her to consider participation. I wondered what was it about this study and/or about my relationships with the teachers that encouraged them to participate. It seems that because the participants knew me prior to the project, there was something about our relationship that encouraged these teachers to participate. Our relationship seems to have had a positive affect at least in that the participants wanted to join this group. Possibly they felt that, knowing me, they knew what to expect and wanted to be a part of that. Perhaps there was a desire to want to help me with the project knowing it was an integral component in completing my doctoral degree. Participants told me that because they knew me, they knew that the conversations that might ensue would be ones that they would want to participate in. Many of the participants also referred to the intrigue and interest in being a literary group based research project. It seemed an appealing and motivating reason for participants to join the study, in that they would have time to talk with other teachers about novels in the context of teaching.

Because the participants were known to me, I considered various implications of conducting research with teachers who were also my colleagues. There are arguments that both support and challenge issues of prior relationships with participants. On one hand, if the participant is known to the researcher, that is, if the researcher is an “insider” (known to the participant or of the particular identity relevant to the study), then the case could be made that the researcher may have a greater understanding of the participant’s standpoint and perspective. On

the other hand, if the researcher is unknown to the participant, there is an argument that the participant might be more explicit and descriptive in explanations, thus providing the researcher with more detailed information. Additionally, an unknown researcher, having “fresh eyes” would make fewer assumptions and might obtain something more significant in the seemingly less familiar. While both perspectives have their ethical and practical dilemmas, and either could be engaged with caution, both of these arguments remain fixed in notions of objectivity. That is, they are based on an assumption that the argued approach will lead to greater or better knowing; that there is a method that would reveal a closer approximation of the truth.

However, objectivity is a creed rooted within the traditional paradigm of qualitative research that works to enhance claims of truth telling by asserting that “the other was an ‘object’ to be archived” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 21). Although these, among other, perspectives exist with legitimacy within qualitative research, this study works from an ontological and epistemological space where eliciting a “truth” disclosed by an objective other is not what is being pursued. Rather, because this project works from a position in which knowledge, truth and experience are viewed as social constructs, and therefore, as partial and subjective, this project is not about fact finding, but rather about a consideration of the constituting nature of discourses themselves. Therefore, what became of most importance in regards to the relationships with participants was (and is) the ethical imperatives undergirding the relationships that I had (and have) with the participants both within and outside of this project.

Because the participants are colleagues and I have worked in their various schools, it may be easy to claim a position as “insider” within this research project. However, I am reminded of the false dichotomy of insider-outsider which risks perpetuating essential ideals of identity and monolithic views of a social group (Loutzenheiser, 2007). On the other hand, because I worked

with all but one of the participants at some point over my career, I was familiar with their past and current teaching contexts, their colleagues, some of their students and their general approaches to teaching. For example, when one of the participants described a difficult incident with another teacher at her school, although the participant did not name the person, I was able to deduce to whom she was referring. Inevitably, this raises additional ethical concerns about the limits of my knowing, what ought to be included and excluded in the research, what ought to be asked and brought to the attention of others, and what ought to be excluded. Although I can never claim to be an “insider” to the participants’ experiences, I do have additional knowledge of some aspects of their teaching contexts and am careful with information that may not be appropriate for the group discussions or for public display.

Anonymity. An aspect of trust was the maintaining the anonymity of the participants within this project and was important because of the nature of the conversations. That is, because the participants work in a relatively small school district and because of their relationship with me, it is possible that individual identities could be surmised by savvy readers through future publications of the research project. I have addressed the breaching of anonymity and confidentiality through informed consent procedures. In addition, the participants were asked to use their discretion in discussions about the research project, conceal the identity of other participants, and sign confidentiality agreements. As expected, pseudonyms are used throughout the project in order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. However, the act of implementing strategies and enlisting my good intentions does not alleviate contentious ethical dilemmas from arising.

For instance, one of the participants has a very distinct speaking style, vocabulary and speech syntax. Her speaking patterns are so unique that when I read the transcripts I became

concerned that she might be identifiable. The large quantity of data being collected and the small number of participants creates a risk that participants will be recognized by others in subsequent publications. This concern is based on a few presuppositions, namely, that others who know her would read parts of this project, that the participant would indeed be recognizable from the relatively small samples of data and other information presented, that identifying the participant would be of concern to the potential reader and a threat to the participant, and finally, that it is my place to assume the role of protector of this participant. The potential for a participant becoming identifiable risks both confidentiality and a breach of trust between the participants and me. Additionally, this risk produces a tension between my responsibilities to the participants, the research project, and the greater academic community (St. Pierre, 2000a). That is, I may be tempted to temper an analytical point in order to avoid outing the participant, and in so doing, risk diluting the analytical poignancy of the project.

The contemplation of the participant's anonymity illustrates the ethical dilemma between the production of "trustworthy" analysis and the maintenance and reciprocation of trust within this relationship. What becomes important is not a "true" portrait of this participant as an object, but rather portraying the significant discursive movements in which the participant engaged. Therefore, in decisions about the portrayal of this particular participant with a distinctive speaking style, I present discursive engagements within the context of the group, sometimes changing this particular participant's word choice, semantics or syntax, while at the same time, attempting to stay as close to the participant's statements, intentions, and meanings as possible. In order to maintain what I believe to be an ethical honouring of the relationships, when considering what gets shared, there were times when I chose to simply omit something that might be too "telling" of/on the participants.

Issues of power. Intricately wrapped up within issues of relationships are concerns of power, specifically the circulatory nature of power (Foucault, 1972/1980) and the impossibility of power being equalized (Loutzenheiser, 2007). Yet, because the participants and I were colleagues, I believe that the power imbalance between the researcher-participant was minimized. However, I also acknowledge that as a teacher with more years of experience and greater job status than some of the teachers (especially those that were relatively new to teaching), as well as being a doctoral student, may have created the perception that I was in a position of greater power. I tried to remain conscious of this and was careful not to perpetuate notions of my self as expert. Although I can identify as a teacher and am a colleague alongside most of these participants, I am aware of and attempted to mitigate power differences. I must also recognize and “constantly trouble the spaces where I believe I meet those participants” (Loutzenheiser, 2007, p. 107). Troubling these spaces requires a consideration of the assumptions being made in those moments, to whom they benefit and to what end. Being aware of power differences does not negate them, and working to minimize them does not necessarily equalize them. Although I acknowledge the impossibility of equalizing power within the group, I have tried to be aware of our collegial status, moments where I might have been perceived as expert to some, and the movement of power within the conversations.

Ethically bound relationships (Christians, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) are tenuous issues, not simply addressed by critical self-reflexivity, which remains rooted in humanist assumptions of consciousness (Lather, 2007). Feminist social research has been instructive in considering researcher positionality and the influences on the ethics of authority within the research project (Davies, 1989; Lather, 1991) and specifically in regards to relationships with participants (Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong, 2003; Stacey, 1988). Calling attention to issues of

power, reciprocity and empathy between researcher and participant (Stacey, 1988) feminist researchers in the 1980s asserted the importance of fostering positive relationships with participants. I recognize the importance of the choices made within this project in regards to relationships, acknowledging that my actions and decisions ultimately influence my relationships with others and have implications beyond what I am able to know. Privileging the relationships I had with the participants became a guide post in my decision making throughout the project. My intention from the outset was to ensure that relationships with the participants would be maintained throughout and after the project, believing that ethically, my ultimate responsibility as researcher must remain with the participants, guarding and respecting relationships.

Interviews

I conducted three interviews with each participant (each interview being one to two and a half hours long) over the course of the project. The initial interview occurred between the first and second literary response group meeting, during which participants were asked about various aspects of teacher identity. This included questions about how the participants might describe the term teacher, how the participants would describe themselves as teacher, and what influences who they are as teacher. Participants were also asked about their understandings of the term curriculum and their relationship to curriculum. During this first interview I also queried the participants about their reasons and intentions for being involved in the study. The purpose of this first interview was to develop some preliminary understandings of the participants' perspectives on identity and curriculum and to foster the relationship between the participant and I within the research context.

At a second interview, approximately mid-way through the project, participants were asked to discuss their understandings of education, and of the role of teacher, and to discuss

times of conflict between these ideals. The development of these questions was, in part, responsive to issues raised within the literary response group discussions. For example, my questions were formed after a group discussion about the relationship between Athos and Jakob in *Fugitive Pieces*. During the discussion, participants had mixed reactions to the characters' emotional connections to each other and inherent in this discussion was a consideration of the teacher's role in fostering relationships with students. When formulating these questions, I considered the dialogic relation between teacher role and identity (Britzman, 1992) and the tension between them "that makes for the 'lived' experience of teacher" (p. 29). Therefore, the questions were constructed to provoke opinions and perspectives on the teacher's role in developing relationships with students and the purpose of these relationships within their understandings of the purpose of education and the identity of teacher. My hope was to put into discursive motion the participants' responses to the role of teacher, the role of relationship as an aspect of identity of teacher, and to elicit the tensions between these.

A third interview, coinciding with the end of the literary response project raised questions of participants' understandings of teachers becoming "more expert" and their decision-making in regards to curriculum. Participants were asked about the characters in the novels and their actions as teachers, and about characters with which they might identify. The probing of the participants' understanding of teacher expertise was in reaction to notions of teaching experience, confidence, and the ways in which teachers take up curriculum. During group discussions participants had made various allusions to the ways in which teacher experience may lead to expertise and confidence in the ways that teachers can take up curriculum. The interview questions were constructed to elicit more information on participants' perspectives of becoming more expert teachers and to consider the ways in which teachers might work with curriculum.

During the second and third individual interviews, aside from thematic questions that arose in regards to teacher identity and curriculum I also asked follow up questions that stemmed from group discussions in regards to particular aspects of the novels. Each interview followed a similar format but was made specific to each participant in that I would refer to comments made by the participant in order to seek clarification or foster further discussion. Additionally, during all three interviews, I asked participants to share their perspectives on the literary response group process thus far. For example, I inquired about their comfort level within the group, asked them about my influence as the researcher within the conversations, and asked if they had any lingering questions or comments from previous conversations that they wanted to address.

Participant Responses as Text

Each group discussion and individual interview was audio recorded and then transcribed by a transcriptionist. The literary group discussions were difficult to represent in some places, for example, where members of the group were talking at once, interrupting each other, finishing each other's sentences or laughing. In an attempt to make the transcripts more robust and less of an "impoverished, decontextualized rendering[s] of the live interview conversation" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 178), I read them over and added details from my memory and from my fieldnotes (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). For example, I included descriptors ("picks up cell phone here"), my questions ("is she referring to her own experience?") or observations ("I noticed sweat on her upper lip. Was she nervous?"). I listened to portions of the recordings to more fully develop the transcripts, noting for example, laughter, hand gestures, or long pauses, as well as specific references made by participants that would have been context specific. Upon re-listening, I was able to add nuances such as irony or sarcasm that are difficult to represent through transcription (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

As noted earlier, these transcripts became an additional text in this project; a text that was read and reread, and ultimately, became woven into the writing presented here. In naming the transcribed interviews as *text*, my purpose is to signal to its partialities. That is, as words on a page, these textual utterances do not—cannot—represent a “finding,” nor can they fully represent a participant. The quoted texts do not stand for an identity of a participant and are not intended to represent the gist of the reams of transcripts that were gathered and analyzed. Rather, the data samples represented here in text and as text are meant to provoke and to engage the particulars of that text with theory. The participants’ texts are more representative of the discursive moment than of the subject, the static transcripts, or the “findings.”

A Textual Strand: Researcher Writing as a Fabric(ation)

“History and memory share events; that is, they share time and space. But every moment is two moments.” (Jakob in Michaels, 1996, p. 138)

“Yep, that’s very true. ... There’s always the perspective from which it is told. So what really happened isn’t necessarily what’s being told. It just depends on who you talk to.”

(Gracie)

My telling becomes one of many versions, partial and fluid, filtered through my lenses and socially situated (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). This qualification is not a dismissal of, or release from other ethical obligations within the research process, such as consent, honesty, privacy and confidentiality (Christians, 2003), nor is it a minimalizing of the validity of this work. Rather, it is a recognition of the failings and limits of representation itself (Lather, 2007) and an acknowledgement of the intolerable narratives we tell; intolerable in their inadequacies, yet knowing that narrative is all that there is. My own textualizing—this written form—therefore is the culmination, convoluted at best, of the “the interpretive gaze of the researcher” (Davies &

Davies, 2007, p. 1142) which constitutes this project methodologically and representatively. Because text within these postmodern sensibilities is treated as suspect, my own textualizing of this project becomes problematic, troubled before I begin (Lather, 1992). While questioning researcher and narrative authority I seek spaces in which to open the empirical work to meaning making.

What has become represented here represents the theorists I draw on, my epistemological underpinnings, and my textual inventions and interventions. Subsequently, this presentation is a constructed, interpreted and re/presented amalgam of texts drawn from the novels, the transcripts that represent the discussions, and the theorists that inform my thinking. Therefore, this textual strand—my writing—wrought with problems of ethics and semantics represents my engagements with fictional and theoretical texts, personal and professional conversations, reflections and desires, all filtered through my interpretive lens. In weaving together texts of fiction/theory/data/researcher I foreground issues of representation, methodological messiness, and researcher complicity. Therefore, not only does this representation attempt to tell about the research project, it will inevitably tell on me as well. The way in which I choose, foreground, and weave the many texts is grounded in theorizing about teacher identity, but is not outside of my own epistemological leanings, as well as my conscious and unconscious desires.

Because “no subject is its own point of departure” (Butler, 1994, p. 161) it is impossible to determine from where thoughts and ideas originate; content, words and language become the textualized fabric(ations) of this project. Because all of these textualizations are representations of constructions of reality, they are as subjectively factual as they are flawed, situated precariously, representing neither truth nor fiction exactly. In understanding research “as provoking, not representing, knowledge” (Pitt & Britzman, 2006, p. 394), what is represented

here therefore, is a weaving of interpretations of various texts—novels’, theorists’ and participants’—in such a way as to provoke thinking and theorizing. As the writer I am required to make decisions about which texts to select, their subsequent interlacing and placement, their eventual movement and their ultimate form. It is within the space between and among the texts and their representations that I work, offering “partial truths and my own guilty readings of other people's dramas" (Britzman, 2000, p. 32), intertwined to incite something, perhaps, yet unthought.

The Research Journal

It is important to note that, the text re/presented here—an amalgam of data, analysis, and meaning making—does not originate solely from my own thoughts and ideas. There are inevitably various others who influence the research production. As Foucault (1984) asserts, an author’s writing is not solely one’s own, but a representation of the conversations one has had with others. Various others maintain an overwhelming, yet under-acknowledged, presence within this research. There are limited ways to account for such “response data” (St. Pierre, 1997), for the feedback of others who have helped me as a researcher to “move toward the unthought” (p. 185). In order to more carefully consider and honour the response data, I recorded the feedback, resonant moments from discussions, and offerings from others in a research journal. This included notes from conversations and copies of emails that were somehow generative to my thinking. These conversations were often with other graduate students, but also included my notes and reflections from more formal occasions, such as, meetings with my supervisor and committee members. Additionally, the research journal included other texts, including theorists of education, as well as quotes from friends, song lyrics, movies, poems, or other resonant incidents that provoked thought in regards to some aspect of this project.

Aside from recording response data, I also reflected on and responded to other aspects and issues of the research process including data collection, analysis and writing processes in the research journal. Sometimes the journal entries were nothing more than words on a page, a passing and inconsequential thought. Other times the entries were deleted sentences or sections from the dissertation that I could not let go of, as well as ideas that segued into new territory, a thought to be more fully developed. The research journal, incomplete and often circuitous, “like tears following the imperfections on skin” (Michaels, 1996, p. 51) was a place to write with and through various texts as a method of inquiry (Richardson, 2000). Thus, the research process continued “to unfold in the accounting of it” (Davies & Davies, 2007, p. 1141) and in the accounting of it, led insight into my own researcher narratives, my own subjectivities and research desires (Fusco, 2008). In writing the final project I often went back to the journal to remind myself of previous ideas, to find a provocation for writing, to retrieve a saved thought or quote, or to seek others’ previously provided thoughts and feedback. Thus, the research journal as a collection of textual artifacts, worked as another source of data that has become textualized within the fabric of this project.

Data Analysis as Interpretative and Speculative

Working from a position where meaning is interpretive means that I have had to reconsider typical approaches to analysis within qualitative research. I had to rethink the desire and tradition to code data because, “just as there is no original moment to interpretation, there is no original thing as ‘data’” (Pitt & Britzman, 2006, p. 386). Coding, therefore, becomes suspect in its ability to extrapolate bits of data into patterns representing truth. Data in this context—participants’ texts, novels and my own writing—does not necessarily represent a unique perspective, nor does it represent something without origin. That is, the texts within this study

are not without place, history, and lineage. The preconditions to discourse influence what is said; statements are constituted by what comes before and exist within the context in which they are spoken (Foucault, 1969/1989). The role of the researcher, therefore, becomes that of interpreter (Davies & Davies, 2007) and the meaning made within this research becomes a project of understanding and not of explanation (Phelan, personal communication, November, 2009). In some ways, exploring the truths of data, the meaning made from the texts, is like reading fiction: it is relative to when it is read, by whom, and under what conditions, requiring trust as well as skepticism. Like reading fiction, reading data creates understanding that is temporally contingent and temporarily trustworthy.

Part of this project has been to consider what analysis might look like if attending to rupture and difference in data, foregrounding subjectivities and disrupting tendencies to confine data as “absolute truths” (Harwood & Rasmussen, 2007; Sipe & Ghiso, 2004). What might it mean to work from a position where meaning making is considered speculative (Pitt & Britzman, 2006), where claims are lightly held interpretations instead of strongly seized assertions? Guided by questions such as: why do some portions of text or bits of conversation, a quip or lighthearted reference resonate, what makes the particular so peculiar, and what does the peculiar tell us about the particulars, forces an analytical reading focused on significant moments. These moments, perhaps subtle, are of note because they point to the misfits (Ellsworth, 1997) between the text and the reader, between the participant and the discourse, between the conscious and the unconscious. Michaels (1996) explains that, “sometimes the world disrobes, slips its dress off a shoulder, stops time for a beat. If we look up at that moment, it’s not due to any ability of ours to pierce the darkness, it’s the world’s *brief bestowal*” (p. 175). These *brief bestowals*, I believe, represent a significant moment, a gift, perhaps lending itself to something yet unthought. This

analytic undertaking, therefore, works with and writes through theoretical speculations and textual representations of significant moments, not claiming a causal relationship between a particular experience and a subsequent truth, but rather, constructing a meaning that is speculative.

The Role of Psychoanalysis

Theories of psychoanalysis become useful in considering significant moments in that theories of psychoanalysis allow for a consideration and acknowledgement of the workings of the unconscious. To be clear, I am not engaging in psychoanalysis of the participants, but rather am drawing on psychoanalytic theories and a psychoanalytic approach to inform this analysis. One of the ways in which a psychoanalytic approach is useful, is that it allows for a consideration of the unconscious, recognizing the “imperfect fit” (Ellsworth, 1997) “between social relations and psychic reality, between self and language” (p. 44). Ellsworth’s conceptualization of the unconscious is that of the Other, the discourse that is neither the student’s (participant’s) or the teacher’s (researcher’s), and thus brings the social and cultural norms and prohibitions that have been repressed to the unconscious. Ellsworth argues that all learning and knowing goes through the Other and that this Other becomes a “third participant” in the “tri-ologue.” A psychoanalytic approach allows for identity to remain unstable and recognizes discourse as over-rationalist. Because the unconscious is able to escape surveillance and control, and works outside of normative discourses, a consideration of the psychoanalytic highlights the fissures between the unconscious and conscious, between the normative discourses and those that are alternative.

The symptom⁴. Ellsworth's (1997) theorizing of the unconscious and what might be learned from/in a psychoanalytic approach is useful here, especially if considered in the context of data analysis. Drawing on Freud and Lacan, Ellsworth articulates psychoanalytic theories and their usefulness in understanding (or disrupting understandings) of teaching and pedagogy. Ellsworth explains that knowledge is made unrecognizable by its passage through the unconscious. Psychoanalytic interpretations allow for the presence of the unconscious and further allows that these interpretations can be indeterminate. This means that the analyst's (or teacher's or researcher's) knowledge production, because of its passage through societal prohibitions and symbolic substitutions is only an interpretation and not an understanding. Ellsworth explains that interpretation as a textual knowledge, a functioning of language, and symbolic structures and is undecideable, that is, a process and end product of analysis and meaning making that is unknown. Winnicott, too, stressed this in his assertions of the importance of the analyst to be "able to tolerate not-knowing" (Phillips, 1988, p. 47). According to Ellsworth's (1997) reading of psychoanalysis, the role of the analyst, and in this argument, the role of the researcher using a psychoanalytic approach, is to read the discourse of the Other. This reading involves disrupting communicative dialogue and carefully considering the "misfires of language and intention" (p. 67), all which speak the discourse of the Other—a discourse full of coded repressions.

Britzman (1998) uses the term reading *symptomatically* in an essay in which she refers to the ways in which Maxine Greene reads literature. Britzman asserts that Greene reads symptomatically in order to "juxtapose these official accounts [of schooling] with fictional

⁴ I am grateful to Dr. Britzman for her expertise offered on this subject in conversations during a course she offered at UBC in July 2009. I am also indebted to Dr. Phelan for engaging me in critical conversations, posing questions, problems, and possibilities concerning conceptions of a symptomatic analysis.

worlds of a burgeoning national literature” (p. 54), arguing that “the brutality of a nation’s origins returns, like the repressed, in its literature” (p. 54). What Britzman means is that this return through literature is a “working through” (Freud, 1914/2006), a learning, or new interpretation that becomes possible in fiction. Britzman recalls Greene’s assertion that what is not yet possible in the accounting of education becomes possible first through literature and the works of artists. What is important for the study at hand is the assertion that texts—in this case, as a reference to data—can be read symptomatically in order to be considered in larger theoretical or conceptual contexts, and thus allowing for a working through, a learning, or an interpretation of something yet unthought in the becoming of the teaching subject. Reading symptomatically requires a reading for the moments that might highlight a difference in the discourse, indicating something other than the norm. Therefore reading the texts symptomatically requires a reading for the anxiety, for the gaps, the uncommon, the realities, phantasies, themes and myths.

Careful reading of moments in texts where a *brief bestowal* emerges through an anxiety, paradox, or tension, and paying attention to those moments that resonate, poses the question: of what is that particular moment symptomatic? That is, when reading the texts, there are moments when an anxiety is revealed; perhaps through an off-handed comment, a joke, or a slip of the tongue. Britzman (2006) explains these moments as symptomatic of a “teacher’s illness” or of “education’s delusions.” The illness here is not causal, not an illness of a self, but rather is a relation, indicative of a suffering, or an indication of something missing within the teaching subject. The symptom may expose, therefore, a way of teacher being or becoming while also representing (however, partially) the delusional manifestation of education. The purpose of this analysis, therefore, is not to prove, but to put the symptom into relation, to take notice of the

particular and the peculiar, to consider what might be being rendered and referenced, and to put these moments into conversation with theory; to engage in analysis as a speculation.

The symptom, therefore, becomes a productive point of departure for theorizing, that which is not necessarily “real” and remains unknowable. The texts become opportunities to read data like theory (Phelan, personal communication, November, 2009), meaning to consider what these provocative moments might conjure theoretically. What might be made of these unexpected and, in many ways, unintelligible moments? The symptom, although explored and theorized through a particular perspective, may point to multiple unknowns and to many possibilities. Therefore, reading the data symptomatically requires a consideration for language and metaphors, contradictions, doubts and conflicts that may be present, ready for the moment that “rises out of the land like the spring storms that appear on the prairies suddenly and without warning and catch you by surprise” (King, 1999, p. 219). It may be represented by the sudden and surprising moments that signify the misfit between the text and the reader, the reader and the discourse. Hence, the symptomatic is speculative—a mere wondering, a textualized fiction, and perhaps, all that can be offered within this postmodern moment.

By way of example, in the following chapter, I engage in a speculative analysis of an exchange between two participants within the literary group discussion that stemmed from one of the novels that we had been reading and discussing. The chapter grew out of my fascination with a comment made by a participant. The comment, like “a truth appear[ing] suddenly in the middle of a thought, a hair on a lens” (Michaels, 1996, p. 213), was a light-hearted comment made in jest. The comment, when I asked the speaker about it later, proved to be inconsequential to her, as she did not remember saying it. Yet, the three word phrase that was off-handed and playful, for some reason, resonated with me. I thought about it, wrote about, and talked with

others about it. What was it about this moment that was telling? What was I to do with this moment and what was the moment telling me? What was this telling doing? In analyzing the phrase and the surrounding exchange, I considered it symptomatically, that is, as an indication of something missing, read as an indication of something Other. I read the moment considering the discourse in particular, as well as the particulars of the discourse. This means that I was concerned with this specific discursive moment writ large, wondering, for example: what were the larger contextual discourses at work? What were the discursive influences on this moment? And, on what were its constitutive forces at work (and at play)? However, I was also interested in reading the particulars of this moment, considering, for example: to what was the anxiety—manifest as a joke—referring specifically? And if anxiety is a fear of loss, what exactly is at risk of being lost? These resonant moments, the unexpected hair on the lens, that signal something other than the normative discourses, and become a telling of something Other. It seems that these moments, bubble up and provide something salient, not to be judged by the number of episodes or consistency of comments, but rather, to be considered for their intrigue alone. These moments seem to be a lapse, an instant where convention might be suspended, where a slip of the tongue or a last minute thought is unburdened temporarily by its own subjectification and desires.

Analysis as Speculative and Recursive

Throughout the data collection phase of the project, analysis was ongoing, messy and recursive. Within the qualitative research realm, the research process is often perceived as linear, one phase occurring after the next. This linear and lock-step conception creates a one-dimensional figure of a complex and multifaceted process. My process within this project has been messy, disjointed and circuitous; collecting data, analyzing, rereading theory and the novels, considering response data, constructing follow-up questions, transcribing, and collecting

data, rereading theory and the novels, reading and rereading transcripts. The process was always in flux; one aspect informing another, never sequential. Analysis, whether intentionally or not, occurred as I read the transcripts, prepared questions for follow up discussions and interviews, reread entries from my research journal, and talked with colleagues about the project. Because there was an ongoing undercurrent of meaning making of what I read, it became inherent to make speculations; speculations, for example, on from where or from what a conversation emerged, or on what was or might have been intended. In “seek[ing] counter patterns as well as convergence” (Lather, 1991, p. 67) of data, my expectation was not that the variety of textual data will allow for a concise and coherent construction of understandings of teacher identity, but rather that the data would allow for the contradictions, gaps, and overlaps of meaning, as well as the temporal and temporary nature of understandings to emerge.

In constantly (re)considering the research questions in light of the accumulating texts, my questions to the participants were also recursive, allowing me to draw conversations back to previous discussions, seeking clarification, or challenging contradictions or gaps in responses. The analysis remained akin to an aesthetic practice, an encounter with “the limits of thinking and knowing” (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 25), although the tools of the endeavour remain invariably flawed. Alas, language remains unreliable and the subsequent narrative of the research “ruthlessly linear” (St. Pierre, 1997, p. 179). Therefore, what became represented here lapses into a hopelessly imperfect representation of the recursive and simultaneous nature of the research process.

Pitt and Britzman’s (2006) *Speculations on qualities of difficult knowledge in teaching and learning*, has been particularly helpful in informing my thinking and my process in regards to analysis. In the *Speculations* essay, Pitt and Britzman actively work to counter the hauntings of modernist research. Pitt and Britzman seek not to prove a generalizable point about teachers

based on their data, but rather to provoke rather than represent knowledge. Acknowledging that this project is 'speculative' reflects the unknowing-ness of research, especially that with a poststructural as well as a psychoanalytic approach. As urged by Lather (1992), I have engaged a post positivist methodology in which research authority is questioned, the meaning making process is open ended, and where my own desires have been deconstructed. In an endeavour to engage in a reflexive research process, I disrupt representation and authority, point to ongoing engagement with the problematics of qualitative research, and at the same time, textualize data as a form of meaning making. Therefore, I am compelled to claim interpretations lightly instead of asserting steadfast arguments, while maintaining a critical engagement with interpretation and speculation.

Lather (2007) questions what it means "to recognize the limits of exactitude and certainty, but still to have respect for the empirical world and its relation to how we formulate knowledge" (p. 39). How do I, as researcher, question truth and certainty, while attempting to engage in meaning-making that honours research itself. I have endeavored to seek interpretations that work to reach beyond causal relationships, instead digging into the complications and slippages of language and the workings of the discursive, while engaging in readings with and extending theory. Rather than compiling tidy narratives of understanding, the "lovely knowledge" as reinforcing "our preferences for what we want with what we find" (Pitt & Britzman, 2006, p. 390), I have instead attempted to tolerate loss as the force of learning, "what one makes from the ruins of one's lovely knowledge" (Pitt & Britzman, 2006, p. 390). In doing so, I have sought to confront complications, accept instances of getting lost (Lather, 2007) and push towards the limits of knowing, while pursuing moments of meaning that reflect the complicated subjectivities, contexts and histories from which they emerged. In the chapters that

follow I have intended to make my claims speculatively, readings that should be allowed to yield to other readings, malleable to contradictions, and open to interruptions given the opportunity. And yet, in these moments presented here, my readings and subsequent theorizing, as a representation of both history and memory, is an attempt at a *brief bestowal*.

CHAPTER 3

“Free Yourself, Sister!”: Identity, Subjection and the Psyche

The research within teacher education that addresses teacher becoming, has been of great influence to this project. Notably, Deborah Britzman’s *Practice Makes Practice*, first published in 1991, provided the groundwork for a conceptualization of teacher becoming where student teachers, while wanting to be recognizable as teachers, are caught between who they want to become and what they are supposed to be. Britzman’s research, although occurring with pre-service teachers, is pivotal in that it refers to teacher becoming through the relationship between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses while exploring what teaching does to teachers. This project considers these authoritative and internally persuasive discourses on and in teacher becoming while also theorizing the psychological movements and implications of such becoming. A major presupposition of this project is that the subject is known as *teacher* prior to the subject, and at the same time, is considered socially constructed and discursively constituted through ongoing relations with power (Butler, 1993; Davies, 1993; Foucault, 1990). Teacher becoming, informed by poststructural theory posits “human subjects as not fixed but constantly in process, being constituted and reconstituted through the discursive practices” (Davies, 1993, p. 11), and raises questions about teacher identity within regions of power—power that is not simply wielded, but rather is in constant motion (Foucault, 1975/1995). The teaching subject, therefore, considered fluid and socially constituted, is entwined with and reliant upon power. This fluidity of identity creates spaces in which to consider the construction of the teaching subject—who teachers are, who they are allowed to be, and who they are allowed to become. What is it to live—to become, as teacher—in this space, and in what ways do the workings of power implicate and influence the psyche within such becoming? By engaging in a symptomatic

analysis of a small moment within the texts, this chapter will consider the constitutive power of normative discourses on the teaching subject and the tensions between and within subjection and the psyche.

Reading the Script(ure): Being/Becoming “Teacher”

The Poisonwood Bible: A Novel by Barbara Kingsolver (1998) elicited many discussions within the literary response group meetings about teachers, the constructs of teacher identity, and of teachers’ understandings of identity in relation to curriculum. The character Nathan Price is an overly zealous missionary from Georgia who arrives in a small village in the Congo in the 1960s with his wife and four daughters. Price vigorously attempts to convert Congolese villagers to Christianity and is particularly eager for the congregation to embrace baptisms in the nearby river. The local people are suspicious of Christianity; holding traditional beliefs in higher esteem or holding various religions simultaneously. The villagers are particularly wary of Nathan Price’s insistence on baptisms in the river which is a familiar crocodile habitat. Kingsolver expertly weaves the voices of the ministers’ four daughters to relay tales of the family’s ignorance, cultural faux pas, and sheer blindness to the Congolese way of life influenced by the family’s faith and culture. The daughters’ narrations reveal the ways in which they begin to see their faith as flawed and their father as fallible. Nathan Price, on the other hand, ignores local concerns and consistently blames the villagers and their lack of faith for the misfortunes that fall upon the community and the Price family. Refusing to leave the Congo when the political climate becomes unstable, Price demonstrates increased crazed and fanatical behaviours, eventually leading to the undoing of this American family.

A particular episode in the story is illustrative of Nathan Price’s intolerant engagement with the local people and their practices and became a focal point during one of the literary

group discussions. At one point in the novel, the Price family's housekeeper, Mama Tataba tried to explain to Mr. Price that his approach to planting a garden would be ineffective and that instead, he should create long, deep mounds of soil in which to plant his seeds. Nathan Price smugly and condescendingly disregarded Mama Tataba's advice, flattened out her raised rows and replanted the seeds in shallow trenches in the tradition of his Georgian roots. The intense rains proved to be more destructive than Price's trough-like rows could bear, washing away the dirt and the seeds they cradled. After surveying the damage, Price firmly declared that he, "would make them grow, in the name of God, or he would plant them again" (Kingsolver, 1998, p. 63). Ever arrogant and omniscient, refusing to verbally acknowledge that he was wrong, Nathan Price worked throughout the night after the deluge to reform the garden into the raised rows as Mama Tataba had originally instructed. It is an important moment in the novel, revealing to Nathan Price's daughters as well as to the reader Price's intolerance and insensitivity, while foreshadowing more dire implications of his arrogance.

During the third group meeting and in response to this passage, Gracie, a relatively new teacher, referred to the gardening incident in the novel as an example of her frustration with Nathan Price's interactions with others and as reflective of teachers' relationship with curriculum:

Gracie: I've never been so frustrated as when he [Nathan Price] planted [his garden] just like his rows were in Georgia and she [Mama Tataba] went and redid it and he goes, "Oh well she's just trying to help in her own way" and they ploughed it over ...and sometimes it's like the curriculum to me, like, as teachers that's what we have to follow, that's what we have to accomplish because in some situations that's the pressure you have. You know, its like, "Did you get this done? Did you get this done? You're sending your kids to grade six so you better make sure they can do this, this and this." You know, so I find it confines how much creativity and how much um different directions you can actually go in. Like this year, I felt like because I have grade fives and they're going on to a new school so I have a new set of pressures about going through the curriculum going, "Oh my goodness! They better be able to do this, this, and this." You know and being focused on getting those done without kind of deviating into different directions.

Jane: Free yourself, Sister!

Gracie: Oh, I know—

[laughter from the group]

Jane: Free yourself, Sister!

Gracie: I know and you're thinking—

Jane: Let that burden pass you by!

Gracie: I never had children who are going onto a whole new school, you know, and so I have—I know, eventually I'm going to just walk away from that pressure—

Heather: Yes, you will.

Jane: Yeah, you will.

Gracie: But this year—this year I'm like, "Oh my goodness! I don't want to be that person who, "They don't have these skills," you know, so ... sometimes it feels like it's really regimented, as some preachers read the Bible as actually, as literal and that's what you have to follow...

At the manifest level, Gracie is frustrated and angered by the way in which Nathan Price disregards the local knowledge of gardening, maintaining his omnipotent authority over local knowledge. Gracie makes an overt comparison between the curriculum and the "regimented" ways in which Nathan Price reads the Bible. She parallels the restricted view that Nathan Price has of gardening with the limitations of and control she feels by the curriculum. Gracie also describes feelings of being under surveillance by her colleagues who seem to be checking to see if she has "done" the required teaching prescribed by the curriculum and has adequately prepared her students for the next grade. Gracie refers to the pressure and confinement she feels, demonstrating her angst and frustration she is experiencing in her teaching situation. Jane encourages Gracie to free herself from the pressures of curriculum, and then, Heather and Jane reassure her, concurring that she will be able to free herself. Gracie continues on, responding with "I know" repeatedly, affirming that she will have to "walk away from that pressure." Yet Gracie's tone remains somewhat defeated as she provides an apologetic rationalization for her adherence to the provincial curriculum.

Working with/in the Subject and the Psyche

“We his daughters and wife are not innocent either. The players in his theatre. We Prices are altogether thought to be peculiarly well-intentioned, and inane.”(Adah in Kingsolver, 1998, p. 213)

Jane attempts to console Gracie’s angst by co-opting the language of the evangelical Nathan Price, mirroring a sermon and asserting a mock ministerial plea for Gracie to “free” herself. Jane, a more veteran teacher, jests with Gracie to “free herself” from the “burden” of curriculum. Jane’s use of the terms “free” and “burden” call to mind notions of salvation and sin, while her jesting in a ministerial tone and the term “sister” is infused with metaphor and irony. The joke is met with laughter from the group. Gracie maintains her acquiescence, stating, “I know, eventually I’m going to just walk away from that pressure” yet, she does not seem entirely convinced herself. Gracie seems resistant to being teacher in the way prescribed by her colleagues and the curriculum and conveys a desire to be teacher differently. Jane’s provocation for Gracie to *free herself*, presumably intended to provide Gracie a sense of comfort and encouraging autonomy, ironically might invoke another form of pressure for Gracie to be teacher in a particular way. Does Jane’s comment suggest that there is an alternate way of being teacher and that Gracie could be teacher differently? What is it about teacher freedom that the teachers find so funny and on what grounds can Jane suggest any freedom for the subject at all?

In Jest – The Significance of the Joke

This textual exchange between Gracie and Jane is an “emotional utterance” (Phelan, personal communication, November, 2009) that manifests as a surprise and results in laughter from the group. The surprise, signaling a release from compliance (Phillips, 1988) represents a momentary fissure, a disruption in the dialogue divulging something beyond the normalized

narratives, an event outside the regime of truth, and therefore, seemingly significant. This surprise, the joke that burst into the conversation was an event, that as the researcher, I could not forget. I wondered about the joke's intention and the forces that work to maintain normative discourses, suppressing difference. What was it about this joke that signaled a rupture? What did the jest allow and what does it say about teacher becoming? The desire and resistance, the urging and compliance to which the participants responded to the joke with laughter and nodding indicated an implicit understanding of the joke. The punch line surprised and pleased the participants. It meant something to them—as if they were all in on it.

Although seemingly innocuous and playful, when considered psychoanalytically, a joke becomes significant. Within psychoanalysis humour is considered to be revealing, specifically of an unconscious suppression. Freud (1928/2006) describes humour as having two main characteristics. First, humour acts as an ego defence, that is, as a protection against an unpleasant or unwanted reality. In his essay, *Humour*, Freud uses a dark example of a man being walked to the gallows for hanging who jokes to himself about his impending doom as being a fine start to the week. In this scenario, the ego is defending against the harsh reality of his imminent death. The second characteristic of humour is that humour satisfies the pleasure principle. For Freud, therefore, humour acts as both a defence from reality and a release of pressure resulting in pleasure. A joke, which Freud considered a specific type of humour, involves the interaction between the ego and the superego. Specifically, the superego, as the regulator of external (familial, cultural) expectations suppresses forbidden thoughts into the unconscious. The ego raises the suppressed thought as a joke, releasing the pressure which results in pleasure. Therefore, the resulting joke is an emergence of a forbidden thought that has been suppressed into the unconscious (Freud, 1905/1960).

Rather than considering Jane herself psychoanalytically (as mentioned earlier, this is neither the aim of this project nor within my ability), I consider this textual exchange as a symptomatic moment. If discourse and language are considered as participants in this study, then the participants act as the psychical apparatus. Therefore, the theoretical implication of joking and the greater movements of the discursive emerging through the subjects and manifesting as a joke, refers to an anxiety within this discursive moment. The joke, “Free yourself, Sister!” signals that there is something symptomatically significant about this textual moment. If the joke is a rupture of the unconscious, a burst pipe of pressure, it lends insight into the nature of the suppressed unconscious thoughts, the movement of power on and within the subject, and the regulatory norms that are both circulatory and constitutive. The joke, as an utterance representing a discursive moment, discloses the forces of subjection, the internalization of power and teacher becoming. This exchange, therefore, indicative of something important going on, is also symptomatic of something particular about teacher becoming.

Read as such, a psychoanalytic take on this text therefore constructs teaching subjects as trapped in routine and expectations, ensnared “within a world they have little power to effect” (Britzman, 2003a, p. 166). The teachers in this textual scenario appear to want to resist the normative discourses of curriculum and colleagues, joking about the ability for the teaching subject to be free, projecting a suppressed desire to be teacher differently, while at the same time, recognizing the futility of this desire. This reading might account for the psychical movements resulting from the circulation of normative discourses regulated by the superego, suppressed into the unconscious and then released by the ego as either a defense and/or as a pleasure seeking move. Symptomatically, therefore, such a reading constructs the teaching subject as regulated by the normative discourses of the superego, while simultaneously resistant of the norms and

suppressing a desire to become differently. Yet, the textual exchange is underpinned by an irony that freedom to be teacher differently is not possible. Is the teaching subject so overcome by normative discourse of being teacher that becoming differently, although desirous, feels impossible? What greater forces are at work here that might help us understand their constituting nature?

“Free Yourself, Sister!”: A Metaphor for Subjection

“We’re supposed to be calling the shots here, but it doesn’t even look to me like we’re in charge of a thing, not even our own selves.” (Rachel in Kingsolver, 1998, p. 23)

Gracie makes comparisons between teachers using curriculum documents and preachers reading Bibles. She uses the terms “regimented” to describe the curriculum and “literal” to convey the pressures she feels to implement the curriculum. Gracie sees the curriculum as an external demand with which she, as teacher, must comply. This particular text illustrates the ways in which Gracie’s identity of teacher is being regulated by discourses outside of the “self” and provides insight into the discourses at play upon the teaching subject. Theorizing the “messy meanings of teacher identity” (Britzman, 1992) requires a concern for the constructs of teacher. These constructs, which are *always already* in play (Butler, 1993), effect teachers’ understanding of who they are, their becoming (Britzman, 1992) and who they are *allowed to be*.

Becoming Teacher through Subjection

Butler (1997), drawing on Foucault, theorizes how we perceive ourselves and the condition of possibility for the self through *subjection*. Theoretically speaking, in order to become a subject, an individual must first undergo ‘subjectivation’” (Butler, 1997).

Subjectivation, or subjection, is the simultaneous push and pull between external impositions and internal discourses enacted through a performance of self (Butler, 1993), not only *subordinating*

the subject, but also *forming* the subject. In maneuvering between authoritative discourses and internally persuasive discourses, the teaching subject reiterates the discourses, conforming to the very forces that oppress it (Davies, 2006). To theorize about teacher identity there must be a concern for how the constructs of teacher come before the subject and are *always already* in play. Additionally, there must be a consideration of how the teaching subject negotiates and comes to be within these circulating forces.

Because of the normative discourse of being teacher, of subjection and of the exploited desire to be recognizable as teacher, it is ironic and intriguing that there is an assertion to “Free yourself, Sister!” as if one can decide to be teacher other than the normative discourses by which the subject is constituted. Reading this text through Butler’s theories of subjection renders the ways in which the discursive norms work to construct the identity of teacher. In other words, it seems that Gracie is caught in a tug-of-war between centripetal forces (external, authoritative forces pulling towards a norm) and centrifugal forces (internal forces pushing against the norm, against authority) (Britzman, 1992). The subject, in order to be “activated” (Butler, 1997) as teacher is unwillingly (and perhaps even unwittingly) dependent upon these external forces, becoming socialized and subjectified in a discursive process of what Butler (1995) terms mastery and submission, producing the possibility for the subject to become teacher. As a subject, the teacher cannot exist outside of the powers by which it is constituted. It is power which appears as external that both forms the subject and subordinates the subject. While power is exerted on the subject and simultaneously constitutes the subject’s becoming, Butler argues that there must be a psychical response or impression incurred by the subject. Butler (1997), noting Foucault’s avoidance of topics of the psyche, argues that the subject engages in a turning “against itself” (p. 18) in the process of subjection, and therefore, must consider internalization as a modality of

subjection. In other words, Butler argues that, subjection marks the subject psychically (p. 3), asserting that “power that at first appears as external, pressed upon the subject, pressing the subject into subordination, assumes a psychic form that constitutes the subject’s self-identity” (p. 3).

Importantly, power is considered as both subordinating and forming the subject, yet not possessed by any one or any thing but rather as circulatory (Foucault, 1972/1980). According to Foucault, power exists only in relation, meaning that it cannot be held or wielded but rather, is exercised (Foucault, 1972/1980, p. 94). Foucault makes clear that power is also non-binariad. That is, power does not exist from the top down only in opposition, and although power exercises aims and objectives, it is not an act of one body or individual. Rather, the functions of power are inscribed locally and become connected, finding similar conditions and connecting to form systems and strategies. There are no centres of power and therefore, power does not exist in exteriority to the subject. Accordingly, not only does power act on and enact the subject (Butler, 1997) it also only exists when in motion with the subject. Although Gracie describes herself as being acted upon by external forces, these forces of power that constitute the subject must also be taken up by the subject. What the subject can be is already decided; the normative discourses that circulate and manifest in this text as curriculum and collegial pressure, constitute the subject into being.

As noted in the theoretical framework, the various discourses of subjection are examples of the regimes of truth (Foucault, 1978/1997) that circulate and frame what one can be. These frameworks are the norms that determine the terms of recognition. “What I can ‘be,’” as Butler (2005) explains, is “constrained in advance by a regime of truth that decides what will and will not be a recognizable form of being” (p. 22). The pressures exhibited by the curriculum and the

teachers upon Gracie—the forums through which the normative discourses act—are examples of power manifesting and circulating through discourse. Therefore, the regulatory norms that come before and that are already in play (Foucault, 1976/1990), decide how the teacher will be recognizable, and decide who and how the teaching subject can be, is allowed to be or, even, is denied being. It is for these reasons that Butler (2004) claims that these norms are double truths. That is, they can work both productively, as aims or hopes to guide us, but they can also be constraining, foreclosing possibilities for alternatives to that of predefined teacher. In *The Psychic Life of Power*, Butler (1997) explains that subjection is “the process of becoming subordinated by power as well as the process of becoming a subject” (p. 2). In other words, subjection is a paradox; not only does it *subordinate* the subject, it also *forms* the subject. The teaching subject cannot exist outside of this subjection and also cannot determine its own possibilities.

Yet, within this tension between internally persuasive forces and authoritative forces there is a dialogic relation allowing a space for possibilities. Butler (1993) asserts that although the subject is the product of normative frames and the normative frames constitute the subject, the subject can only be assumed or legitimated by repeating the acts required by the norms (Butler, 1993). It is within the reiterating of the norms that creates the spaces which can foster resistance, the possibility of repeating the norm with a difference (Butler, 1993). That is, within this space of becoming there is room to question the implications of socially produced discourses on identity, to decentre the monolithic meaning of teacher, and to consider that which one is becoming (Britzman, 1992). Within the processes of subjection, although the discourses become reiterated by the subject, teachers still make decisions about, for example, curriculum,

performance, and pedagogy. What occurs when the normative discourses of becoming that are reiterated by the subject are in tension with the desires and decisions of the teacher?

Recognizability

In the *Free Yourself, Sister* text the external forces of discursive power are constituted materially, and are exemplified through Gracie's descriptions of the pressures of curriculum and teacher colleagues. Curriculum and colleagues act as regimes of truth (Foucault, 1980) engaging discursive power that constitutes the teaching subject both bound by and reliant upon subjection to be recognizable as teacher. That is, the external forces of colleagues and curriculum work to subject Gracie into being teacher in a particular way. Consider the ways in which Gracie describes her colleagues, as:

always talking about the curriculum...always talking about the outcomes and the assessment and everybody's focus is, "Well, did you cover that? Did you cover that?" And you've got teachers going, "Well, I don't want to send these kids on for fear that someone's going to come up to me and go, 'You didn't teach this because they don't know anything.'" It's crazy!

Gracie describes her colleagues as those who regulate her approach to curriculum by asking if she has covered certain aspects of the curriculum and confirming with her that students have achieved competence in the curriculum areas prescribed. Gracie is fearful of being labeled as the teacher whose students' do not "have the skills" or as being seen as a "failure," and so feels pressured to take up the curriculum in ways similar to the ways in which Nathan Price takes up his Bible, following the script(ure). These external forces described as "pressures" that "weigh heavily" illustrate subjection at work, pressuring Gracie to enact teacher and approach curriculum in particular ways. The subject, required to comply with the normative discourses in order to be recognizable as *teacher*, subsequently becomes anxious when recognizability becomes threatened (Davies, 2006). In consenting to and negotiating teacher identity through

subjection, recognizability is not only a by-product, but is precisely what teachers seek. For Gracie, therefore, the pressure she feels is that to defy the demands of her colleagues and the curriculum means threatening her recognizability as teacher.

In order to conform to norms within the circulation of the regimes of truth, subjects engage in performative behaviour in order to achieve recognizability. To be clear, performativity, as Butler (1993) points out, is not the same as performance, but rather the reiterative power of discourse. According to Butler (1993), performativity is contingent on the temporal process of reiterating norms, that is, the effect—not the cause—of the discourse. Through reiteration of norms, performativity constitutes the subject, reifying the norms while doing so. The teaching subject therefore, is discursively produced, enacting performativity to incite and be incited by the norms, thus, existing in "constitutive constraint" (Butler, 1993, p. xi). The regimes of truth that construct the frameworks are the norms that determine the terms of recognition; that circulate as truths and decide in advance of Gracie's entrance "what will and will not be a recognizable form of being" (Butler, 2005, p. 22). The movement of the normative discourses defines the teaching subject and decides the ways in which the subject will be. In Gracie's case, reiterating teacher through the transmission of the provincial curriculum and teaching practice as a technical production, as regulated by her colleagues, becomes, in part, the reiterative behaviours required to be recognizable.

Accordingly, the teaching subject in order to be recognizable reiterates the norms of the dominant discourse. Although subordinated by subjection, Gracie's text also indicates resistance towards the power of subjection. Gracie describes how the regulation she experiences is "stressful" and creates "pressure" that forecloses curricular opportunities that exist outside of what is outlined in the provincial documents. Gracie explains the ways in which she feels forced

to plough over the students with the curriculum, like Nathan Price ploughs over Mama Tataba's garden beds. By stringently following the prescribed curriculum, Gracie believes that her creativity is "confined" and that she is forbidden to "deviate into different directions." Because of the regulatory discourses of the curriculum, Gracie feels constrained to become teacher in a particular way and yet expresses resistance to these external forces. The teaching subject is forced to enact *teacher* in ways different from what is desired.

Signaling the difficulty of performing teacher in ways desired and other than the dominant discourse, Jane describes how, as teachers, "none of us is always completely consistently doing what we think we should do." That Jane and Gracie are performing teacher outside of their desire, and therefore, are resistant to the external forces, demonstrates that there are some other ways in which the teaching subjects want to be teacher. The teachers are resistant to the dominant discourses, and yet, are constituted by their compliance with the norms. The irony in the "Free yourself" assertion, therefore, is that although teachers desire freedom from the normative discourses of being teacher, there is an understanding that an unmitigated freedom is impossible. Gracie is *always already* teacher and freedom to be teacher in ways other than by those which the subject is constituted represents the joke behind the "free yourself" assertion. And yet, the teachers remain resistant and seem to uphold narratives of resistance through exclamations of "free yourself." Against what is the external dominant discourse of being teacher pushing⁵? How do we account for desire to be differently and what might be productive in the resistance? Can the movements of resistance be traced?

⁵ Again, it is important to note that resistance and power do not exist in binaried opposition. Power and resistance are relational not oppositional (Foucault, 1972/1980).

Nathan Price: A Metaphor for Teacher of Technical Rationality

Nathan Price believes that if he fills the empty vessels of the villagers (like students) with the knowledge of the Bible (a predetermined and objective truth, like curriculum documents) then they will be saved (better and more knowledgeable) and he will have acted out his commitment to God to his fullest ability (successfully teaching the students). Price's actions imitate the model of teacher as expert, where knowledge is static and unproblematically transmitted to the students. Nathan Price describes the villagers as "living in darkness...broken in body and soul," and therefore, in dire need of rescue that he believes he can provide through the teachings of God's word. Through his fierce determination—"the Reverend's high horse show of force" (Adah in Kingsolver, 1998, p. 69)—Nathan Price attempts to teach the villagers about Christianity through raging sermons imbued with threats of fiery damnation. He operates from a belief that the knowledge he holds is an infallible truth and that if, through transferring it to the villagers they would be saved. Therefore, Nathan Price becomes a metaphor for the teacher of transmission rooted in values of technical rationality, where knowledge is certain and teaching is an act of unproblematically transferring fixed knowledge to the empty vessels of students.

As the Price family becomes aware that their existence in the Congo is fraught with trouble, Orleanna (in Kingsolver, 1998) describes her husband in the following manner:

Nathan would accept no more compromises.... Nathan felt it had been a mistake to bend his will, in any way, to Africa. To reshape his garden into mounds; to submit to Tata Ndu on the subject of river baptism; to listen at all to Tata Ndu or even the rantings of Mama Tataba. It had all been a test of Nathan's strength, and God was displeased with the outcome. He would not fail again. He noticed the children less and less. He was hardly a father except in the vocational sense, as a potter with clay to be molded. (p. 97)

Nathan Price, as a missionary determined to convert the villagers, imposes his religious beliefs, enforces compliance, and rejects doubts of his faith. Through determination and show of force,

Nathan Price believes he can bend the will of the people and bring them out of the darkness, thus pleasing God and saving the people by guaranteeing them entrance to the afterlife. Unfortunately for those around Nathan Price, his crystallized intentions and certainty of his knowledge blind him to people's emotions, gifts and needs, and forecloses relationships with those around him. The certainty of his convictions ignores others' perspectives, beliefs, and desires and creates such tensions that Nathan Price's and his family's existence is ultimately threatened.

Teacher Identity as Certain

Interestingly, and in demonstration of a fascinating irony, there are moments within the discussions when the participants, so certain of their understandings of teacher identity, describe themselves as holding their values as stringently as Nathan Price holds his. For example, while in conversation about the novel, Jane stresses her objections to Nathan Price, while revealing her own resolutely held values:

[Nathan Price] laid it out there without any respect, right. I think he didn't respect the people he was working with. He didn't value their way of thinking, he wasn't interested in what they knew or thought or felt or believed in; he was all about his way of thinking and was completely closed to anything else—you know *I certainly hold to some of my values perhaps as tenaciously as he holds to some of his* but one of my values is that I need to be respectful of other people and other opinions

It seems a daring statement to compare oneself with the novel's villain within a group that has unanimously and openly expressed their disdain for Nathan Price. Yet, in Jane's assertions of what it is she believes about the role of teacher, Jane admitted to holding her values of teaching as tenaciously as Nathan Price holds his. Later in the same conversation, Jane declared her certainty again, exclaiming that she is "not going to change." She then asserted, "What I believe is the right thing to do and just because someone else is doing something else that I disagree with doesn't mean I'm going to change what I do." Additionally, Heather made a similar claim in an

interview where she explained that, “I have worked really hard to become [an expert] and so I do actually feel um that I am an expert and that I have something to share with families.”

When comparing herself to Nathan Price in the text above, Jane tempered her association to him by delineating that one of her values is respect for others, of which Nathan Price has been denounced in lacking by the participants. She indicated that her values of respect for others and personal relationships with others although as tenaciously held, did not make her the same as Nathan Price. Jane asserted that because of the nature of her particular values, her certainty in her beliefs, although held as strongly are more acceptable than Nathan Price’s. Instead of slipping into an argument of relativity, whereby allowing everyone to hold their own beliefs regardless of their implications, Jane remained adamant in her certainty that although equally sure of themselves in their understandings of their respective identities, she held something that Nathan Price did not.

This attribute of teacher identity, that of valuing a respect for and personal relations with others, varies from Nathan Price’s identity attributes. Yet, both Nathan Price as obdurate missionary and the teachers who assert the importance of the relational, both hold their identities and opinions of such strongly. These two teachers assert a certainty of their positions as good or right and are resolve to uphold them. Yet, there remains an uneasy tension in positioning both parties in the same camp. That is, although both parties uphold a certainty about their identities, there also remains a striking difference. What can be made of this certainty regarding identity? Can this position be productive, or does it foreclose productive spaces of uncertainty in regards to knowledge, pedagogy and learning? If the teachers are so certain of teacher identity, then why is it that they succumb to external pressures of normative discourses?

Internally Persuasive Discourses of Being – Insight into the Phantasy

The normative discourses of curriculum appear to be bumping up against and into something, something the subject rejects or resists, in this case, something other than some aspects of normative discourses of teaching. For example, Gracie expresses concern about “being focused on getting those [curriculum outcomes] done without kind of deviating into different directions.” What are these “different directions” that Gracie wants to “deviate” into? During the interviews and group discussions, the teachers expressed feelings of being pressured by and perhaps also guided by internal discourses. For example, Gracie referred to having “a vision in my head of what I wanted” and that her beliefs about teaching “don’t align” with the teachers’ beliefs around her. Referring to forces other than the external discourses at work, Gracie described “setting your own standards.” When Jane extols Gracie to “free herself” and encourages her to resist the burden of curriculum, what is it that Jane is hoping that Gracie will embrace instead? If Gracie is to “free herself” of the normative pressures, then she would embrace what other way of being teacher in particular?

The teachers’ expressions of “different directions,” the “visions in their heads,” and their “own standards” refers to internally persuasive discourses of being (Britzman, 2003b). These internally persuasive discourses, are described by Britzman (2003a) who draws on Bakhtin, as “renegade knowledge” (p. 42), that which exists in opposition and contradiction to normative discourses. It seems that the teaching subjects’ internally persuasive discourses exist in tension with the normative discourses of subjection, and gesture towards the subjects’ unconscious process of being—a phantasy of identity. That is, the internally persuasive discourses of being seem to emerge from or represent aspects of a phantasy of teacher, and are in conflict in some ways with the normative discourses constituting teacher identity with which the subject is in

relation. The phantasy of teacher, influenced by the past and the present, the repressed and the deferred, returns in ways both recognizable and strangely altered. Therefore, the phantasy of teacher is by no means predetermined or predefined. The phantasy has been and is subject to a multitude of discourses and events, and is therefore, constituted (although always temporarily) by a play of historical, political, and social forces. I use the word “play” here to indicate the unknowability of these forces. When speaking psychically, it is important to consider the latency, unconscious and undetermined effects that experiences and encounters may have on the psyche. The phantasy of teacher, therefore, is inaccessible and unknowable in its entirety.

The subject encounters movements through childhood, emotions, and ideas, lending form to the imagining of the phantasy of teacher, aspects of which emerge through the participants’ stories and tellings. The participants articulate historical, political and social forces that they believe have influenced their understanding of teacher identity, and therefore have formed and informed aspects of the phantasy of teacher, becoming the unknowable aspects of the unconscious process. In addition, there are a multitude of other events that unconsciously impress upon the subject’s “educational biographies” (Britzman, 2001, p. 72), working unconsciously to form, un-form and re-form the teachers’ psychical phantasy of identity. The forces and events both within educational settings and everyday events impress upon the psyche fostering an uneven and uncertain development of teacher becoming (Britzman, 2007). The phantasy of teacher held by participants is not a static object, and although psychically present, is always at risk and yet, never fully realized. Always at risk, because of the forces of subjection that threatens to eliminate, oppress, or at least alter the phantasy; and never realized, because it exists psychically, and therefore is fluid and ever-changing and is subject to implications of the conscious, the unconscious, and to reality. Theorized as such leads me to question in what ways

does the phantasy of teacher identity, that is, the unconscious process of the discourse of teacher identity differ from and engage with the normative discourse of teacher?

Tension and Conflict between Inner and Outer Discourses

What is important about this theorization of the phantasy of teacher identity is that it represents aspects of an internal force against which the normative discourses of teaching are at work. Jane's assertion to "free yourself" signals her recognition of the tension between the external pressures by which the teacher is subjectified and the internally persuasive discourse of teacher. The external pressures appear to bump up against this internal discourse, signaling to an unconscious phantasy of identity, and at times, threatening the teaching subject "self." The teaching subject, in the throws of subjection is confronted with the disjointedness of the external discourses of becoming teacher.

Ellsworth (2005) becomes helpful in working through this theorization, as she challenges the binary of reasoning and sensation, arguing that pedagogical experiences are fluid, sensory and unpredictable. Her argument links knowledge making to direct experiences, what she calls bodily experiences with objects, spaces and time. Ellsworth claims that "...we do not *have* experiences. We *are* experiences" (p. 27), and that such experiences can elicit a bodily sensation. Such sensations are described by Gracie as "pressure" that can be "crushing." Gracie describes moments where her colleagues' advice goes against her "gut feeling," and that she feels she is not being true to the ideal carried "in my heart." Drawing on theories from architecture and media, Ellsworth details the ways in which anomalous places implicate bodies in a learning experience, explaining that the experience of learning is a moment where the pedagogical address is "*not coincident*" (p. 7), put the learning self in motion. These moments that are *not coincident* are critical, representing "instances of the 'giving way' itself and the...sensations and

movements into jumbles and varieties of thought, mark the time of the learning self” (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 8). These moments of bodily sensation, the pressures Gracie feels, for example, signal the moment of *not coincident*, the meeting of anomalous external and internal discourses. Similar to the experiences of pressure described by Gracie, the *not coincident* moment marks the instance where external discourses are noticeably misaligned with internally persuasive discourses.

The subject that experiences a bodily sensation, the feeling in Gracie’s gut and her heart, do so not because there is a convergence of the ideology between the external and internal discourses, but because they are divergent or anomalous, thus indicating tension between the subjective discourses to become teacher and the internally persuasive discourses held by the subject. This sensation of conflict creates unease and, recognizes the subject as “simultaneously being with oneself *and* being in relation to things, people or ideas outside oneself” (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 16). The incidents of *not coincident* highlight an interruption of sorts, a moment between the external and internal discourses, thus locating “the experiences of the learning self as a self not in compliance but *in transition* and *in motion* toward previously unknown ways of thinking and being in the world” (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 16). Therefore, the sensation of pressure described by the participants marks the meeting between analogous discourses—in this case, the external normative discourses of being and the internally persuasive discourses of the phantasy—and is significant in terms of teacher becoming.

The *transition* and *motion* to which Ellsworth (2005) refers were described by the participants in visceral terms. For example, Gracie dramatically describes feeling sick to her stomach whereas Jane refers to the tension between discourses as feeling “incongruent,” a conflict between how “a vision in my head often does not look like how it comes out in

practicality.” Jane asserts that one of the difficulties of being and becoming teacher is having “these ideas and the huge challenge is to translate that into our real work with children.” That is, the conflicting discourses provoke a cognitive effect, becoming a “provocative of thought” (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 25), giving verve to the internally persuasive discourses when in a *not coincident* relation with the external discourses. The participants, therefore, are able to articulate the pressure of the conflict through the internal discourses manifesting in a bodily sensation provoking cognition, alerting the subject of the conflict. Importantly, when the participants experience a bodily sensation, they may be alerted to the *not coincident* and may, perhaps provoke thinking, a moment of questioning, wondering or doubt.

The conflicting force “gives form to the sensation of simultaneously being with oneself *and* being in relation to things, people or ideas outside oneself” (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 16).

Paradoxically, it is that the forces are anomalous ideologically that constitutes their emergence.

The force only becomes experienced as pressure once the external force is experienced as variant—or anomalous—to the phantasy teacher. Therefore, if the forces were analogous ideologically, there would be no conflicting tensions, or bodily sensation of pressure, and therefore, not necessarily a recognition. Jane describes a situation where she was having a conversation with her grade three and four students about how the city began and what the area might have looked like before it was a city. Jane explains:

Of course, it eventually went back to, “Where did we all come from?” and “What about God?” and different conversations. Part of me is saying [to myself], “How much time do we have? Are we going to get to math?” and the other part of me is saying, “If we have any chance for peace in the world this is the most important conversation to have.”

Jane describes the “parts” of her in conversation illustrating the conflicting discourses at play, and explains that these “out of head conversations” are ongoing for her. Jane recalls the scenario because of the *not coincident* moment between the normative discourse of curriculum (“Are we

going to get to math?") and the internally persuasive desire to address the "most important conversations" of peace. That these discourses are in tension provoke a bodily sensation thus creating a cognitive recognition of something happening.

An Aspect of the Phantasy of Teacher

When external normative discourses conflict with the internal discourse of being teacher, there is insight into what the subject's phantasy of teacher might entail. For example, the teachers, while mocking Nathan Price, are also mocking a construction of teacher that is traditional and that they read as omniscient and oppressive. The participants are critical of the ways in which Nathan Price ministers the villagers, asserting that Nathan Price's approach is about the imposing of his ideas on others, without concern for the villagers' values, histories, or contexts. The teachers expressed their opinions by saying, "Nathan Price just shoved things at them [the villagers] and didn't care how they interpreted it whatsoever!"; "Nathan would probably say he wants people to choose—he doesn't really. He needs them to do what he says. And to be what he wants them to be." During the group discussion, Valerie takes on the role of Nathan Price and mimics him by saying:

'I have this idea, I'm going to teach it to you and it doesn't really matter what your preconceived notions are. I'm not looking for connections. ...Here it is and you're going to learn it and don't ask any questions along the way.'

The participants' descriptions of Nathan Price's interactions with the villagers convey his top-down approach to teaching. For example, the teachers accuse Price of "transplanting" his ideas onto others and of "shoving" knowledge at them and as "definitely there to enlighten [the villagers]." These examples illustrate Nathan Price's character as similar to that of a teacher as transmitter of knowledge, thus revealing the participants' denunciation of such a model. Gracie, Jane and Valerie reject Nathan Price's teaching methods and are resistant to the dominant

normative discourses of teacher as expert or knower and notions of the identity of teacher as that steeped in technical rationality. The teachers, through their abhorrence of Nathan Price, also relay an assumption of teacher identity that rejects the transmission model of teaching circulating through the dominant norms of curriculum and collegial pressure described by Gracie.

A rejection of technical rationality. The expectations of an education based on technical rationality inevitably construct the teacher as knower or the expert, having specific skills (termed best practices, effective strategies, and the like) to transfer knowledge (as defined by an objective, truth-bound curriculum) to the student (constructed as empty vessel) who then presumably absorbs the transferred knowledge unproblematically. Like Nathan Price, this identity of teacher becomes constructed as one who implements knowledge without concern for context or consequence. Within this construction, the teacher, “as scientific problem-solver” (Eisner, 2002, p. 379) charged with application of the scientifically-based theory, is expected to transfer the prescribed curriculum to the learners. In this approach the teacher is not required to engage difference or invite uncertainty, effectively denying a learning that might foster thinking over regurgitation, inquiry over compliance, and difference over conformity. Overtaken by “illusions that defend against the possibility of thinking” (Britzman, 2000, p. 32), Nathan Price’s convictions and actions remains rooted in scripture. In believing in his objective and universal truth, order, and simplicity, there is an implicit faith that this will allow him to avoid and save him from having to face life’s difficulties.

Through the conversations about Nathan Price and the participants’ criticisms of his approach to teaching the villagers, the participants’ disclose their own perspectives and values of what it means to be teacher. Gracie’s text, for example, demonstrates both her anger towards Nathan Price and conveys aspects of her own phantasy of teacher:

I think that's important as a teacher to question what's going on and how you can integrate with your learners in a way that they're comfortable and being valued. He didn't value—I don't think Nathan Price valued anybody in that society at all.

In rejecting the Nathan Price teacher identity, that is one who ascribes to technical rationality, it becomes apparent that the participants ascribe to some other way of being teacher. In criticizing Nathan Price's approach, the teachers express their rejection of the transmission model of teacher and instead assert other beliefs and understandings of teacher identity. Later in the conversation, Gracie describes her role as helping students to develop intrinsic motivation and to "guide and encourage" students. Jane too makes overt references to the importance of fostering the development of "inner set of morals and ethics and integrity." Jane explains:

I'm always explaining about why I do certain things, I'm always reinforcing the fact that, "yeah, this is what I believe, so this is what I do." As I talk with teacher candidates doing something and I think, "Oh well, let's think about remembering this and this and this"; that reminds me to do it in my own practice... I think that as I observe my teacher candidate I'm just remembering all my foundational beliefs... I see the places where it doesn't fit, you know?

Jane's text depicts aspects of internally persuasive discourses at work. Consider her references to "what I believe," or how she wants to be practicing, or remembering her "foundational beliefs." These references point to aspects and attributes of Jane's phantasy of teacher.

Although Gracie uses more physical terms that are represented through bodily markers (such as her head, her heart and her gut), participants allude to internal discourses. Joan articulated clearly her understandings of teacher identity as revolving around the greater responsibility of education. Joan explained:

It's about people and what kind of people you want—we want—living in our world and taking care of our world. ... There is a larger influence because you are thinking about, well, what's your whole purpose of education. Are you there just to school kids or are you there because you believe in that caring and respectful and thought provoking and questioning and listening relationships create "good"—I'm putting that in quotation marks—create good, the kind of citizens that we want to be part of our world ultimately.

Jane takes the ethical responsibility further by describing a teacher as, “someone who has to think about how we are going to save the world. You know, environmentally, peace-wise, those kinds of things....Who else is going to do it?” The participants’ make these overt references to a phantasy of teacher that sits in contradiction with the normative discourses of subjection that uphold traditional constructions of teacher identity. Gracie explains that she is often compared to another teacher in her school who teaches the same grade. She says,

This is what I struggle with, he’s a traditional teacher and I struggle...because he just goes textbook, textbook, textbook and I’m not like that. So I’m struggling with the program that he runs and the program that I run and what parents are thinking...I have a vision in my head of what I wanted my classroom to look like...I wanted it to be more creative and more hands-on, ...facilitating an environment for change and for expression.

This text describes the tension Gracie feels between the subjective forces of being a “traditional teacher” and her desire to be a “more creative” teacher. Heather explains that:

traditionally a teacher is someone who teaches something to somebody else but I don’t see myself that way. I see myself as—for me—a facilitator; someone who works alongside somebody in order for that person to learn but also to ask questions.

Like Jane, Joan and Gracie, Heather explains the importance of relationships with students, developing a strong classroom community, and integrating understandings of students’ responsibilities. The teachers’ descriptions of the identity of teacher are heavily underpinned by a desire for the identity of teacher imbued with some sort of responsibility, a desire to be teacher in a way which is *not coincident* to the dominant discourse constituting teacher as transmitter of knowledge.

Although both Nathan Price and the teachers demonstrate a degree of certainty in their respective understandings of teacher identity, an imposing distinction is that Nathan Price’s identity remains wrapped in the technical rationality of practitioner-proof practice where control, efficiency and certainty of knowledge are central to his identity (Dunne, 2005). Subjected in a

system of technical rationality, the teacher is expected to engage more as a scientist, applying objective theory to the practical. Through Jane's plea for Gracie to free herself, and her descriptions of teacher as one who appears to have an understanding of teacher as one embedded in an education with an ethical imperative, it seems there is something more to becoming teacher than subjection alone.

The Phantasy of Teacher Identity and the Transitional Space

It is at this particular juncture that we have an intriguing and irresolvable tension; a conundrum of the teaching subject, seemingly engaged with and by an unconscious process of the phantasy of teacher identity, while situated within the paradox of subjection. The teaching subject, existing only through subjection, seems to maintain an ethical expectation of teacher "within" the "self" that is put in motion when it is *not coincident* with the discursive norms by which the subject is constituted. The theoretical tension of this proposition acknowledges an accounting of identity formation wherein there is a rejection of a self, while simultaneously holding an ideal of an inner "reality," specifically regarding the phantasy of teacher identity within the unconscious which assumes a "self." However, because power assumes a psychic form (Butler, 1997), it is necessary to consider the implications of power on the psyche, and specifically the roles of desire, submission, and resistance.

Butler (1997) poses the question of whether the subject desires something other than social existence. It seems that the phantasy of teacher identity plays a role in the desire to be something other than the subjected form, making becoming an edgy tension. If becoming is, as Butler asserts, "an uneasy practice of repetition and its risks, compelled yet incomplete, wavering on the horizon of social being" (p. 30), then it seems that what makes that becoming so uneasy is the tension that exists between the discursive forces of subjection and the phantasy of identity.

Further, it becomes a risky endeavor, because in becoming teacher as subjected, if *not coincident* with the phantasy, requires a giving up of, or closing off of a part of the “self.”

Part of what is at the basis of the desire for something other and the source of the ensuing tension is that the normative discourses of subjection are in conflict with the subject’s unconscious phantasy of teacher identity. The phantasy of teacher held by the subject is at odds, or at least at play, within subjection. That is, if the subjection is a process of constituting the subject to be teacher in a particular way, the phantasy of teacher seems to have some role in this, if only recognizable in *not coincident* moments. Tension created in tandem between normative discourses of subjection and internally persuasive discourses of being constitutes and constituting one’s phantasy of teacher. However, a phantasy in the psychoanalytic sense of the word, exists as an unconscious process and can not simply be called on or accessed by the subject. The subject’s phantasy is fluid, ever-altering and remains mostly unconscious until some aspect of it is situated in conflict, perhaps creating a bodily sensation of pressure or tension.

Winnicott’s work on the transitional object is useful in helping to theorize the workings of the phantasy of teacher within the inevitable subjection of the teaching subject. Winnicott, an English pediatrician, psychiatrist, and psychoanalyst was tremendously influential in theorizing the transitional object. Within a psychoanalytic setting and based on his observations of the infant with the mother, he theorized a child’s development in understanding the movement of objects from a psychic to an external reality. The transitional object, he believed, worked to relieve the child’s anxiety in this transition from being merged with the mother (a state of absolute dependence) to that of separating from the mother (a state of relative independence) (Phillips, 1988). Thus, the transitional object was initially theorized by Winnicott in order to conceptualize the infant’s transition from dependence to independence—a becoming, of sorts.

For the infant this transition occurs over a period of time culminating with a discarding of the transitional object which is “neither lost nor internalized” (Phillips, 1988, p.116). While Winnicott initially theorized the transitional object as an actual object of the child (for example, the breast, a blanket or a toy), the term can also be used conceptually to refer to a space. In the adult, the transitional object as a space, according to Ellsworth (2005) is used:

to alleviate the anxiety of the ongoing work of putting inner realities in relation to outer realities, learning about the world by negotiating similarity and difference and being in radical difference from others while simultaneously needing to be in relation to others and the world. (p. 77)

Therefore, the transitional object as a space is where inner realities (desire and phantasy) are put into relation with outer realities (normative discourses of subjection), negotiating encountered pressures and differences. Within Winnicott’s theory there remains a sense of the self being in relation to the world, like the teaching subject existing within the power matrix of subjective forces.

The transitional space, therefore, acts as “an intermediate area of experiencing” (Winnicott, 1971/2005, p. 3) and is used “to imaginatively put our selves in a transformative relation with the outside” (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 60). The transition of teacher becoming occurs over a time and place that is unknown and infinite, as the subject is in an unremitting transition of identity. The phantasy of teacher identity is never fully realized through a humanist form of agency or through acting out the phantasy, nor is it ever discarded, fully overcome by the dominant narratives of subjection. The phantasy of teacher is intricately woven into the unconscious, in a constant state of breaking down and assemblage, constituted and reconstituted through history, relationships and memory. An aspect of the phantasy of teacher identity within the transitional space, therefore, creates an illusory experience, a concern for the “intermediate area between the subjective and that which is objectively perceived” (Winnicott, 1971/2005, p.

3). In other words, within the transitional space, the phantasy of teacher identity can be put somewhat into relation with outer reality, with normative discourses of subjection. It is within the transitional space where an aspect of the phantasy of identity, because it is in *not coincident* with the normative discourses, generates discomfort and unease.

The transitional space can be used to “creatively put ourselves in relation” (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 77). A defining characteristic of the transitional space is that in order for it to exist—and the only way it can exist—is when it is put to use (Winnicott, 1971/2005). It is the emergence of the phantasy of identity within the transitional space that allows the subject to be in relation with external dominant narratives of the identity teacher. The transitional space does not simply exist, but rather becomes constituted only through use. The phantasy of teacher identity in relation with the external forces within the transitional space is what simultaneously and paradoxically allows the transitional space to come into being. An aspect of the phantasy of identity emerges in *not coincident* relation with outer discourses within the transitional space, thus creating the space in which to consider the relation with and between external and internal realities.

The transitional space is at once in relation to the internal and external discourses, while being a constituent of the subject, inseparable from its use and its user (Britzman, 2003b). The transitional space, according to Britzman then, is indecisive and fluctuating, can be idolized and forgotten and, at times, overpowers the subject. Therefore, it is not fixed or necessarily within one’s consciousness. Further, it seems to me, that this confusion signals the becoming; the subject is provoked by pressure, the forces are put into relation with the transitional space, inciting curiosity and thinking. Because the teaching subject is also always at risk of and subject to becoming differently from the phantasy of identity, and thus always at risk of losing the self, the phantasy of identity when within the transitional space can act as a stronghold. That is, the

transitional space becomes a place from which to experience the relations between external and internal forces and a place from which to resist loss or contemplate possibilities.

Thus, the phantasy of teacher identity when enacted within the transitional space, becomes a place from which the teaching subject may draw on within the turmoil of vacillations between the external and internal discourses; a third space from which to consider, if only temporarily, the ongoing becoming of teacher. Alternatively, although the subject may experience the tension of the *not coincident*, the subject may well repress or displace these sensations. These repressions inevitably return, continuing to complicate the being and becoming of the subject. For example, when Jane attempts to support Gracie by encouraging her to free herself and resist the external pressures, Jane and Heather both follow with an assurance of “you will.” They both attempt to comfort Gracie by reinforcing the notion that she possesses the will to actively and successfully resist the subjectifying forces through an act of her own will or agency. Of course, as the theories of subjection have already demonstrated, this act of individual will cannot sufficiently trump the constitutive forces of the regimes of truth leading to subjection. And yet, Gracie maintains a desire to become teacher differently. Her phantasy of teacher identity remains unconscious but manifests within the transitional space and a repressed tension surfaces:

When all you're talking about [in the staffroom] is outcomes and curriculum and, you know, how you're going to finish all this and you look at the curriculum and you have to tick, tick, tick everything off and you're like, you're somehow wound up in that. ...And you don't mean to be and you're a little embarrassed to be because that's not where I come from and that's not what I necessarily feel is right but when you're surrounded by so much of that...

Gracie recognizes the ways in which the forces of subjection have overtaken her desire, describing herself as having “wound up” being teacher in a way she does not desire to be. Gracie describes this being teacher as occurring seemingly without her knowledge, an unconscious

compliance. The tensions she may have felt in the subjection process may have been ignored or repressed, but now surface as an “embarrassment.” The forces that subject her (as noted in her references to the teachers in the staffroom or the pressure to check off curriculum outcomes as completed) override her will, and it is at this moment, with the phantasy of teacher acting within the transitional space, that Gracie may sense a space of relation, a moment of confusion and a chance to foster curiosity and thinking (Britzman, 2003b).

Importantly, if the phantasy of teacher identity is considered to emerge within the transitional space, this might help to account for the tension in subjection, the resistance to becoming and the efforts made to become teacher differently. The transitional space helps to account for the ways in which the teaching subject engages with psychical aspects of self, while working within a theoretical frame where the very idea of self is in question. Because power initially appears as external, subordinates the subject and then "assumes a psychic form that constitutes the subject's self-identity" (Butler, 1997, p. 3), we must consider the psychic form that power might take. The engagement of the phantasy of the teaching subject within the transitional space, therefore, plays a role in the becoming of teacher by putting the subject (including the psyche) in relation with the normative discourses of subjection.

For the participants, the becoming of teacher is wrought with tension. They refer to external expectations of colleagues and curriculum, as well as a desire to be teacher differently than what the external discourses dictate. The desire, emerging from the phantasy of teacher identity, cannot be accessed entirely or brought to the conscious, and therefore, is enacted in reaction to the *not coincident* moments within the transitional space. The transitional space allows for the inner and outer discourses to be in relation, while creating confusion between reality and phantasy and highlighting such tensions to which Gracie refers are physical reactions

to the powers of the normative discourses. In the following text, Gracie vacillates between acknowledging the external pressures of her teaching colleagues while simultaneously resisting these pressures, signaling these *not coincident* discourses coming into relation in the third space:

...everyone [teacher colleagues] is always questioning [me] and they're saying, "Why do you think that way?" and, "How could you do that? How can you?"...But I'm just trying some different things. It's stressful. I am stressed every time—you go try something new...and it feels like you're not following the master plan, as they [my colleagues] see it...But you know that's not who you are, you're not going to follow that path...I've struggled a lot this year, with this notion of following this path.

Gracie's text illustrates both the external pressures she feels, the stress it causes when anomalous external discourses encounter her ideals, and her subsequent resistance to acquiescing to the demands of the external pressures. Yet, the stress is induced by her desire to be recognizable as teacher. Gracie extols that she is "not going to follow that path," referring to the transmission model of teaching that some of her colleagues endorse, where the curriculum is seen as a prescription for the students' ailment of ignorance. Gracie resists these external pressures, referring to a phantasy of teacher identity within the transitional space. It is within the transitional space that the teaching subject can consider the *not coincident* sensations and the subjective forces of becoming.

Therefore, the phantasy of teacher identity in relation within the transitional space works to allow the teaching subject to transition from a dependence on an externally defined (nebulous and possibly incongruent identity of teacher) to a relative (but never realized) state of independence. In other words, the transitional space has the potential to bridge the outer and inner worlds (Phillips, 1988), allowing the subject to move between and within perceived states of dependence (when the teacher is subjected by external discourses) to a state of perceived independence (where the subject is enacting teacher as aligned with the subjective phantasy of identity). I say, *perceived* because as the theories of subjection describe, neither of these

positions—dependence or independence—is entirely possible or realizable. When reconsidering Jane’s plea for Gracie to “Free yourself, Sister!”, it can be seen as a metaphor for the subject’s desire for freedom from the normative discourses of being teacher acting within the third space of relation. The statement is ironic because while Jane is offering counsel she is also consoling her own phantasy of teacher identity. The relentless tension of becoming teacher—the forces of subjection and the subject’s exploited desire to be recognizable as teacher—induces an inevitable loss or a wreckage of the phantasy of teacher identity. Because the subjective forces are always in circulation and because the phantasy of teacher identity is a malleable schema at best, the phantasy is constantly in a state of flux and always at risk of encountering loss. Loss of the phantasy of teacher identity is a gradual loss, many *not coincident* moments causing an altering of simultaneous destruction and reconstruction. Yet, the phantasy of identity is never lost in entirety. It remains unconscious and when an aspect of the phantasy is put into relation within the transitional space it may exist consciously, momentarily, negotiating difference while simultaneously reconstituting itself.

Becoming/Differently

The phantasy of teacher as an unconscious process influenced by numerous narratives and psychical influences signifies for the subject a sense of teacher “self,” threatened by subjective forces and creating subsequent anxiety. When the phantasy is *not coincident* with the external discourse, the sensation of tension creates an anxiety, an anxiety of a fear of loss of the self. Within this tension between the phantasy of teacher and the normative external discourses of being teacher, the transitional object can act as a third space, fostering a relational space in which to consider possibilities of becoming. Britzman (1992) argues that within a space of becoming there is room to question the implications of socially produced discourse on identity,

to decentre the monolithic meaning of teacher, and to consider that which one is becoming. Therefore, I assert, that the transitional object, a space where the subject is alerted to anomalous forces allows for the subject to question and consider its becoming. As Butler (1997) explains, it is through the turning back of the self, in a form of self-beratement that creates the self in conscience. Conscience, according to Butler (1997), “is the means by which a subject becomes an object for itself, reflecting on itself, establishing itself as reflective and reflexive” (p. 22). Subjection takes advantage of the subject’s desire for existence, thus circulating power via the norm reinstating itself through the psyche. The attempt of the subject to ban or prevent an action, leads to an act of doubling back. This doubling back creates an objectifying of the self, facilitating reflexivity and accumulating as a conscience.

It is through the subjection of the subject, the exertion of the power of subjective forces on the subject thus subordinating the subject which causes the power “to assume a psychic form that constitutes the subject’s self-identity” (Butler, 1997, p. 3). This turning back, the reflexivity, occurs within the transitional object when the phantasy of teacher is put in relation with the subjective forces. The transitional object as a space from which to consider external and internal forces in relation, signals subjection but also points to the subject’s conscious moments of engagement with becoming teacher. Therefore, although becoming teacher is socially negotiated (Britzman, 2003a), it is also influenced by the phantasy of teacher identity as manifest through the transitional object. The transitional space is a place of relation—the location of the anomalous discourses and the space in which the doubling back and the objectifying of the self leading to a(n) (elusive) consciousness of becoming.

The role of the transitional object within the becoming of teacher is significant. Understanding the role of the transitional object, a space in which the normative discourses of

subjection can interact with the psyche, creates an space in which the subject might consider its own becoming and perhaps, becoming differently than the normative discourses prescribe. Although the teaching subject “depends on powers external to itself” (Davies, 2006, p. 426), the subject, while in relation to the external discourses has an opportunity to relate creatively with the space of the transitional object. Winnicott (1971/2005) believed the transitional object as fundamental to play and creativity allowing us to “work and play at our own limits as participants in the world” (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 79). The transitional object as a space in which the subject engages in play of becoming is “an intermediate area of experiencing to which inner reality and external life both contribute” (Winnicott, 1971/2005, p. 18). Therefore, it is within this space that the teaching subject can put oneself in relation, consider one’s participation and the self in the making. It is within this space, a place of “dialogic of discontent” (Britzman, 1998, p. 52), that the subject may consider something previously unthought, lose a part of the self, transition to something new or become different. It is in the transitional space that Gracie considers the pressures of her colleagues and curriculum, the conflict of these normative discourses with her own desires to be teacher, and for a brief moment, experiences reflexive consciousness.

Walking Away

“Free yourself, Sister...Let that burden pass you by!” Jane extols Gracie to unshackle herself from the burden of curriculum, the demands of the other teachers, and other external pressures of which Gracie complains. Jane encourages Gracie to be free from these pressures and subsequently, in this liberation, take action in becoming teacher different from the normative and subjective discourses. Gracie replies by saying, “I know... eventually I’m going to just walk away from that pressure,” concurring with Jane, expressing her own desire to be free from the

external pressures. Both Jane and Gracie sound adamant, almost desperate for Gracie to be teacher differently; to embrace the transitional object of their phantasy of teacher, allowing her to negotiate the transition from dependence on (subject to external forces), to an independence (or embracing of the phantasy that represents a false independence). Gracie believes that “inevitably” she will be able to “walk away” from that pressure. If Gracie is not going to be the teacher that the curriculum and other external teachers demand then, presumably, she will be teacher differently. It is here that, as Jane does, Gracie employs the phantasy of teacher as a transitional object aware of the mal-aligned forces and seeking freedom of becoming. Yet, alas, no such freedom can be found. There is no liberation from the construct of teacher identity that *always already* exists, no will great enough or unrestrained enough to resist subjection.

It is important to note the humanist understanding that teachers have of their identity; believing they have some control over who they are as teachers (Jane: “Free yourself!”; Gracie: “I will.”). Yet, paradoxically, it is also noteworthy that teachers understand that their “freedom” of identity as elusive. Jane’s jesting points to the irony in being teacher. That is, in suggesting Gracie free herself she also acknowledges the difficulty (near impossibility, perhaps) in doing so. Although formed through forces of subjection, the power that circulates within the psyche can be put into play in the transitional object, a space of relation between and among the forces. The phantasy of teacher emerges in part and at times as the *not coincident* moment counter to the normative discourse, and operating as a transitional object, the place in which the subject can put the differing forces into play, can become a moment of creative relation. “*Free Yourself, Sister*” becomes an exemplar moment of a transitional object; the phantasy of freedom of will and identity emerging as a joke playing with metaphor, discourses, desire and subjection. A moment signaling teacher becoming and alludes to the possibilities of becoming differently.

As Orleanna, Nathan Price's wife expressed, "*Some of us know how we came by our fortune, and some of us don't, but we wear it all the same. There's only one question worth asking now: how do we aim to live with it?*" (Kingsolver, 1998, p. 9). Orleanna's question to herself is one worth thoughtful consideration for the teacher. The teacher may have some notion as to how they become teacher, identifiable aspects of the phantasy of identity; the subject may be able to identify social, historical or cultural influences on the phantasy of identity naming factors of education, her experiences as a student and teacher, influences of colleagues and friends as contributors to identity of teacher. These are accumulated and circulate somewhere beneath the surface, along with the burdens of trauma, desire and repression, inspiring a phantasy of teacher identity within the unconscious. The phantasy of identity resides as an inaccessible process within the conscious. What becomes accessible are the narratives teachers tell and the ideals to which they subscribe. Although the subject may or may not know what influenced or influences its becoming as Orleanna states, the discourses are worn all the same; regardless of what desire, the subject becomes teacher, constituted by the discourses that both reify and subordinate. By being in creative relation to the discourses, both internal and external, the subject emerges, sometimes incurring loss of the phantasy through subjection, all the while seeking recognizability. As Jane urges Gracie to free herself, there is an acknowledgement of being teacher differently, an attempt to aspire to the phantasy. It is an engagement in play, creativity of thought, and a consideration of possibilities.

Perhaps there are only these small possibilities within the spaces of the transitional object.

Gracie: eventually I'm going to just walk away from that pressure...[but] I don't want to be that person who, "they don't have these skills," you know so in that was sometimes it feels like it's like really regimented as some preachers read the bible, to be it is actually literate and that's what you have to follow.

When the phantasy can be engaged as a transitional object there are possibilities to become differently—although these remain limited. The becoming of teacher is *always already* and, yet, in constant motion. Britzman (2007) explains that in order for the teacher to choose to become a critical subject within the incomplete project of becoming teacher, the teacher must understand herself “as subject to uncertainty” (p. 3). Teacher becoming then is an endless labor of understanding oneself in relation to others, and more importantly understanding oneself in relation to the normative discourse of teacher, one’s own understanding of particular desires and spaces to allow for the phantasy of teacher—the elusive and unconscious, yet ever-present force within. Perhaps, in the becoming, the endless anxiety of being in relation, what is important is not the workings of the normative discourses or of the phantasy of teacher, but the work of the subject within the transitional space.

CHAPTER 4

The Aporia of Undecidability and the Responsibility of Teacher

In the previous chapters, informed by theories of subjection, I have illustrated the becoming of teacher as *always already* subjected to being teacher in particular ways, constituted by the circulating discursive norms. That is, Gracie as teacher is constituted to be teacher by the discourses manifest and by through colleagues and curriculum. Gracie also expresses desires to be teacher differently—the phantasy of the subject as an unconscious process is at play, and at times, becomes a bodily sensation of *not coincidence*—what Gracie describes as “pressure.” In the following section, I consider subjection from a different perspective, that is, where might gaps and fissures exist within subjection. For if the subject were only constituted by normative discourses, then teachers would be much the same: desire would be mitigated, the phantasy repressed and the teaching subject performed as dictated by the normative discourses. Yet, in what ways and in what spaces, I wonder, might the subject enact teacher differently than prescribed? Where and how are the spaces of tension productive? What might be significant in contemplating moments of rupture in the becoming of teacher, and further, to what or whom is the subject responsible within these moments?

“Why Am I Doing This?”: Decision in the Face of a Crying Child

During an interview Joan relayed a story from her first year of teaching, in which she explained an incident during a math lesson. Joan explained that as she prepared to do the math lesson, she looked up and took notice of one of her students. Joan described the scenario:

there’s this little boy, Mitchell, and I started doing [the math lesson] and I looked over at him and his face was like he was going to start to cry. And I looked at him and I thought, ‘Oh my God!’ because that was me! That was me in grade four!...And here, now I am the teacher, I’m in the power position, I’m sitting at the front of the classroom ...and I was like, ‘Oh my god! ...Why am I doing this? What’s my purpose?’”

Joan described being distraught by this event. The math lesson, a seemingly routine occurrence within her classroom, invoked a small child to cry. Joan read the crying as an indication of the child's unhappiness, perhaps feeling stressed or scared by the lesson about to take place. Joan believed that what she was doing—this particular math lesson—was causing the child anxiety and further, she related the crying child to her own experience as a student. Joan's witnessing of the crying boy created a moment of dissonance for her. The lesson was interrupted and the moment became—and remains—significant. Joan needed to make a decision in the face of the crying child: should she proceed with the lesson, and if so, how?

By naming this “a pivotal moment” and a “major moment in my learning,” Joan recognized the significance of the event. But why is this event so significant? Joan taught, a boy cried, and she remembered herself as a child. What is it about a rupture in the continuity of the lesson that is significant in the becoming of teacher? Joan explained that the math lesson she was doing with the students was what she had learned during her student teaching and was “what the [cooperating] teacher did. It was my first year teaching so I was just doing what I thought I should do.” Joan was doing what she thought she should—teaching according to what was prescribed, and yet, the disruption caused her to ask, “Why am I doing this?” In this moment that the lesson was interrupted and Joan's reaction to it ensued, the normative forces of being teacher had become momentarily disrupted. Therefore, although the subject was performing *teacher* as constituted by the normative discourses, the disruption of the moment created a space for the consideration of being teacher. The disruption created a pause in which the subject reacted and had a momentary realization. “Why am I doing this?” signaled the moment where the subject became known to the self, identifying the formation of “self” through the discursive norms of being teacher. Joan explained, “I wasn't really thinking about who these kids were and what I

believe about these kids, you know? Not really thinking about that, right?” It was a realization for the subject that the act of teaching, while assumed as an individual act, is “in actuality... socially negotiated” (Britzman, 2003a, p. 31). What Joan noticed, therefore, was her own becoming as constructed by the normative discourses of *teacher*—normally circulating imperceptibly—now more obviously outside of her “free will.” Joan realized that she was doing what she “thought she should do” while “not really thinking about it.” The event demonstrates a momentary realization of the discourses playing upon the subject, while at the same time, recognizing the ways in which the subject is also being played by discourse.

The teaching subject, both subject to and subjected by the normative forces of teaching, incurs something outside of becoming, a moment beyond what the discourses of teaching have prescribed. “I was only doing what I thought I should do?” Joan rationalizes as she recognizes that, in this moment, she has caught herself being formed outside of her own desire. To be clear, the subject is not only and always formed by discourse, but is constituted by the normative discourses and in relation to them; a perpetual movement between and among external and internal discourses. In the moment described here, the phantasy exerts itself. The rupture highlights for Joan, her own becoming as teacher, foregrounding the powerful discourses of teacher that come before the teaching subject, constructing the teacher differently than what the subject might desire, and creating a space where an aspect of the phantasy bumps up against these external discourses. The subject, performing teacher as constituted, is disrupted by the crying child creating a fissure in the subject’s becoming, a space of consciousness in which she realizes the *not coincident* (Ellsworth, 2005). An aspect of the phantasy of teacher, while remaining an unconscious process and inaccessible by the subject in its entirety, remains as a force that summons a sensation of the *not coincident* between the phantasy and performance.

As previously discussed, the *not coincident* refers to the bodily sensation (Joan feeling surprised and distraught), and occurs in reaction to the bumping up of anomalous forces. In this case, the incongruity is underscored when the crying child disturbed the prescribed math lesson, creating for the teacher a bodily sensation, a sense of something awry, perhaps a discernment of the unintended distress created by the pedagogical approach. This minute moment of discomfort calls forth a sensation (“it was a wake-up moment”), signaling an event that has been repressed (“That was me in grade four!”) and a desire to be teacher in a particular way (“How could we connect and learn together?”). Joan named the moment as being “significant”; a jarring between the phantasy of teacher and the normative discourses of becoming—the *not coincident* compelling her to take notice.

“Life Intervenes”: The *Aporia* of Undecidability

This scenario illustrates the play of subjection upon the teacher, but moreover and central to this chapter, also illustrates a momentary disruption that occurred for the subject, an instant in which the normative discourses could no longer carry the lesson, when education’s desires for a universal pedagogy fail because “life intervenes” (Britzman, 2003a, p. 229). Because education asserts teacher identity as static, “already out there, a stability that can be assumed” (Britzman, 2003a, p. 29), the subject is unprepared for the rupture, for the moment when the stability of identity is unhinged by the face of the crying child. The lesson is interrupted and the subject at a loss, seemingly situated within an irreconcilable tension of how to proceed, an *aporia* of undecidability (Derrida, 1990). Within this *aporia* of undecidability, in accordance with a Derridian reading, the subject is caught in a space where the norms of teaching—what Derrida terms as the “universals,”—fail to tend to the particulars of the moment. That is, the normative discourses of teacher have failed to produce the promised results. The subject is at a loss, forced

to perform teacher in the moment of rupture without the script, and therefore, is faced with a decision. The interruption generates an *aporia* of undecidability—the impossible space of deciding and not knowing. How might the teacher proceed?

According to Derrida (1990), such a decision is not a simple matter of equations; it is “not of the order of the calculable” (p. 963). Rather, the decision exists in a suspension of undecidability, and that the decision is undecideable is critical to Derrida’s conception of justice. If the dilemma were not undecideable, then “it would only be the programmable application” (p. 963). Therefore, the decision is just only in the deciding—in the obligation to engage in the contemplation of the decision. Moreover, even after the decision is made it becomes reconstructed with narratives of continuity (Edgoose, 2001), disregarding the tensions of the *aporetic* moment of undecidability. Therefore, and paradoxically, the decision is neither just in the moment of suspension nor once a decision has been made. A just decision exists within an *aporia* of undecidability, acknowledging the impossibility of reconciling the outcome in advance. In the mitigation between the universals of education and the particularities of the experience, according to Edgoose’s (2001) reading of Derrida, the educator remains charged with the “impossibility of [the] task” (p. 130). Although there is an urgency to decide, justice is not guaranteed—it is always “*avenir*,” to come. This is not meant in a futuristic sense but rather as a possibility, a chance of the arrival of justice, existing only in the “perhaps” (Derrida, 1990, p. 971). Therefore, it is within the *aporia* of undecidability that there may be moments for the potential for a just decision to arrive.

Within this irreconcilable tension the moment is both undecideable, and yet, urgent. The math lesson has been interrupted, the child is crying, and the subject feels unknown to itself. What to do with the crying child, the math lesson, the other children? How might the subject

respond to the sudden crisis of identity and how does it respond to the self-reflexive appeal of “Why am I doing this?” Remaining suspended in Derridian undecidability is not productive as it risks “a paralysis of indecision” (Edgoose, 2001, p. 129), therefore, invokes an *aporia* of urgency (Derrida, 1990). That is, in the face of the crying child, when the lesson has been interrupted and when the subject is at a loss as to how to be teacher, a decision must be made. The decision does not have the luxury of time to “furnish itself with infinite information and the unlimited knowledge of conditions, rules or hypothetical imperatives that could justify it” (Derrida, 1990, p. 967). Even if the decision could be delayed, according to Derrida, the decision “remains a finite moment of urgency and precipitation” requiring immediacy regardless of the consequences and outcomes. Hence, not only does the subject experience the *aporia* of the undecideable, where a decision is impossible and irreconcilable, the subject is also faced with the *aporia* of urgency, where a decision must be enacted.

Of particular importance within the *aporetic* moment is that the decision “is not merely the oscillation or the tension between two decisions” (Derrida, 1990, p. 963). That is, it is not only about deciding between carrying on with the lesson and stopping to tend to the child. Rather, the undecideable is the obligation of the subject, “to give itself up to the impossible decision” (p. 963) to engage in the contemplation of deciding, to weigh the options and possible outcomes, and within this contemplation resides an inevitable regard for the other. Within this *aporia*, when the subject attends to the particularity of the other, the subject must “address oneself to the other” (p. 949), and as Derrida iterates, the address is a singular address, particular, and not simply an application of a universal. According to Derrida (p. 949), “the condition of all possible justice” is within the *aporia* in which the subject is open to the other—the address of the particularities of the other.

Responsibility for the other, therefore, emerges from the “unreconcilable tension between the universal and the particular, between the legal and ethical; between law [droit] and justice” (Edgoose, 2001, 128). The subject’s responsibility exceeds accountability and certainty and refuses to be accommodated simply by enacting duty or appropriate behaviour. Rather, responsibility refers to the recognition of the demands being made on the subject to respond to the other in the face of the irreconcilable decision between incommensurable positions. The insistence of a response in the presence of the other, reveals the subject’s responsibility; a “demand of gift without exchange...without reason and without rationality” (Derrida, 1990, p. 965). Joan’s reaction to the crying child starkly illustrates her recognition of the demands in the face of the other: “Suddenly, I’m looking at this little person...I’m looking at him and I’m just, like, oh my God! What am I doing?” In this instant, Joan becomes responsible, recognizing the presence of the other, literally “looking at him,” and in his presence, is required to make an unreconcilable decision. Within the *aporia* of the undecidable moment, the subject’s responsibility resides within the oscillations between the universalities and the particularities in the face of the other.

The action taken by the subject’s obligation of a response to the other is the space where the subject becomes “ethically exposed” (Edgoose, 2001, p. 130). In this instance of being compelled to act, to embrace the impossible, there remains a moment of hesitation. Joan’s hesitation creates pause to consider why the child is crying, what is she doing to contribute to the child’s distress, and who it is she believes she is as a teacher. Within the hesitation emerges the “moments of decision that characterize judgment” (Edgoose, 2001, p. 130), signaling the failings of the universals to deal with the particulars, engaging the subject in the *aporia* of undecidability and of urgency. Within this uncertain moment, with the phantasy in tension imploring a question

of “why am I doing this?” the subject must contemplate an impossible decision. “Who” or what is the subject in this moment? How will it respond to the other and to its phantasy in tension, and thus consider its own becoming? The forces of subjection are momentarily interrupted and the teacher subject is situated in a moment of becoming in which it is required to address its responsibility to the other.

“And Then I Catch Myself”: Being Teacher Differently than Desired

The *aporetic* moment becomes significant in considering the becoming of teacher. Here, Joan is enacting teacher as prescribed and is *surprised to find herself doing so*. She is surprised to see herself as teacher in ways she has not subscribed. The surprise emerges when the lesson is interrupted, worrisome emotions ensue, and Joan is forced to face a decision. The surprise is significant for the subject as it signals something new, a thought previously unthought (Winnicott, 1971/2005). The places between the participants’ desires to enact their understandings of teacher and the subjection of identity constituted through the discursive power of a certain curriculum jar the consciousness and creates pause. These moments manifest when teachers said things like, “and then I catch myself,” illustrating the times when the participants were shocked to realize what they did or what they had asked students to do. For example, Gracie asks herself with astonishment, “Did I really do that today?” She continues, “Did we really just do that today? Like, seriously, sometimes you can’t even get your mind around it because you don’t even know how you really got there. You’re just going through the motions of things.” The catching of the self seems to be indicative of a *not coincident* moment, an arrival of the phantasy. It is a moment of a realization of the tension between the authoritative and the internal discourses. For as much as the teachers might attempt to resist and subvert the subjective

discourses, they catch themselves being the teacher in ways they had not intended, that is, being subjected and then being surprised by it.

The “going through the motions” seems to refer to being teacher as prescribed by the forces of subjection, an example of the performativity of the teaching subject. The significance of these participant text samples is that they illustrate moments where teachers desire to be teacher differently than the ways they find themselves enacting teacher. These moments suggest that the teaching subject, although subjected by and subject to the normative discourses of being teacher also incur moments of *not coincident* sensations that manifest as realizations—the surprise—of being teacher differently than what might be desired. In contemplating action in a moment where Joan is surprised by her pedagogy, Joan becomes “oriented to the particular needs of the other” (Edgoose, 2001, p. 130). In this moment prior to the response, in the undecidable moment of acting, lies the responsibility to the child and also to the “self.” It seems, therefore, that these moments demonstrate *aporetic* spaces where impossible decisions might be made by the teaching subject in the becoming of teacher.

“What Am I Responsible To?”: Decision in the Face of Difficult Knowledge

There are an infinite number of hesitations that infuse daily classroom interactions and to which teachers must respond. Jane describes a small, seemingly minor event: a request from a child to share something with the class. In elementary schools, such requests by children to share a story or object with the teacher and classmates are commonplace, occurring multiple times each day and may often seem trivial. In Jane’s story, she explained that one of her students, Rajvir⁶ asked to share a small collection of photographs with the class. Rajvir wanted “to know whether that would be a problem, whether he shouldn’t bring those photos.” The

⁶ A pseudonym.

photos, according to Jane's description were an artist's rendering of an event in which Punjabi Sikhs were subjected to religious persecution at the hands of Muslim leaders. Jane's students, who were eight and nine years of age, held various faiths, including, according to Jane, "a Muslim child who is very strong in her faith." Does Jane honour Rajvir's request, allow the potentially disturbing photos and risk offending the other students? Or does she deny the request to share the graphic photos in a class discussion, carry on with the lesson as planned, thus risking the relationship between her and Rajvir? Or are there alternative responses which Jane might consider? Within these various alternatives, how does Jane honour—and what is her obligation—to her phantasy of identity and its desires to be teacher in a particular way? The interruption becomes *aporetic*, and yet, in this *aporia* of undecidability, the imperative to act remains.

According to Derrida (1990), the *aporia* signals the space between the failings of the universals—a singular address, "a generality, a norm" (p. 1940)—to account for the particulars of the situation. However, this space does not simply represent a tug-of-war between two poles, a dichotomy of dualistic differences, but rather characterizes the multiplicity of tensions, for example, between the child's request, the teacher's desire, the subjectifying forces, and a consideration of the other children. Within this gap where the universals of address to the other fail, the subject is summoned to take responsibility in the face of the other (the child), the others (the other children) and the "self." Therefore, within the *aporia*, in attending to the impossibilities, the subject exposes its ethical responsibility (Edgoose, 2001) to education, to the other, and to itself. What becomes difficult, therefore, is that in the subject's responsibility to the other, the subject itself becomes implicated. That is, the obligation of responsibility to the other

can create a dissonance of the subject's understanding of the world, provoking a crisis of the "self."

Although there is no knowing the decision to be made or the outcome that may follow, the hesitation can be productive. Within this hesitation Jane provokes the questions that remain at the heart of the *aporia* and at the core of the educational endeavour itself. Within this hesitation, Jane may have contemplated various choices, imagined potential outcomes, and considered different approaches or pedagogical decisions about how she might proceed. At the same time, Jane considers an ethical imperative, asking rhetorically, "What am I responsible to? What do I hope the students take away?" These questions represent an *aporia* of undecidability in regards to the identity of teacher, the curriculum, and the larger project of education. That is, Jane is considering a greater responsibility—beyond those technical aspects of education to which the normative discourses respond, beyond the application of a universal curriculum. To what and to whom is the teaching subject responsible? If the teaching subject is responsible to the other, as suggested by Derrida (1990), then in what ways can the subject respond to the other? What are the curricular and pedagogical choices, the openings in which the subject can uphold responsibility? Further, what responsibility does the subject have to itself?

"Not for This Life Only": Responsibility to the Other

This particular moment in Jane's class, then, a request by Rajvir to engage in a conversation of potential difficulty, represents an *aporia* of undecidability for Jane, a moment in which she must consider an impossible decision. The undecideable *aporia* represents the moment of not knowing and yet of responsibility, provoking the subject to consider "what am I responsible to?" For Jane, although the outcome cannot be known ahead of time, the decision is also one in which she considers in light of what she hopes to provoke with the students;

conversations in which the students and teachers might consider difficult knowledge and their own responsibility to the other. Michaels (1996) asserts that, “If moral choices are eternal, individual actions take on immense significance no matter how small: not for this life only” (p. 160). Michaels might consider the moral choices as *aporetic*, as tremendously important, as the decision has unknowable consequences, yet are resonant beyond the immediate. Jane must contemplate the risks of the conversation including the various possible responses by the students and the subsequent implications. In what ways can the subjectifying forces that constitute the subject prepare an appropriate response—especially when the outcomes remain enigmatic?

In contemplating an impossible decision, Jane must consider many factors. For example, Jane explained that with a particular past group of students she would definitely not have engaged in the photo sharing as she felt it would have been too risky. Jane explained that with the past group she thought that the conversation would have invited “slanderous comments” by some students and would have therefore, been detrimental to students because some students in the group were “mean, mean, mean.” Yet, disallowing the photos risks offending Rajvir. That is, what message is being sent when the request he makes in which he is personally vested is denied? Rajvir must feel as though he has a relationship with the teacher in which he believes it is appropriate to make such a request. Rajvir must have trust in Jane. Protecting the other students from possible conflict and offense may deprive them of an opportunity to consider alternate perspectives and to consider themselves in relation to each other and the world. If part of Jane’s responsibility to her students is, in her words, to learn “to live together” and that the “whole social piece is the most important thing,” then discussing such topics may allow for an

engagement with how to live together and to understand the social dynamics in which humans co-exist.

Jane's concerns over allowing this type of conversation with a past group of students and her desire to engage students in conversations regarding peaceful co-existence, illustrates the various aspects of contemplation and some of the factors that would have gone in to such decision making. The outcomes of allowing difficult conversations are risky, including offending others, creating conflict between students, and inciting anger or fear. Options and implications abound, yet the outcomes remain unknown ahead of time and their consequences unpredictable. Once the decision is made, the results exceed knowing—the *aporia* remains impossible.

“This is a Jane Message”: Responsibility as an Implication of the Self

Britzman (1998) describes “difficult knowledge” as the “learning from an event” (p. 117) which risks implicating the learner in knowledge. Education should allow for students to think, to have opportunities to think differently, and to take responsibility for that thinking (Ellsworth, 2005). Yet, these desires are often repressed by education's narratives of universality, evading the particulars and the possibilities of moments of responsibility. Decentring normative discourses risks revealing the power/knowledge structures that underpin the fabricated foundation of truth—this truth that education holds dearly, as demonstrated for example, in its modernist notions of knowledge and curriculum. It is on a foundation of truth that the system of schooling and its curriculum is built. Britzman (2001) explains that when pedagogy challenges or decentres authoritative discourse, “it has the potential to ‘unleash’ the unpopular things” (p. 78), shaking the foundation of what was thought to be true, thus transpiring into the risk—and the potential—of schooling.

Glimpses of Joan's phantasy of identity become apparent in her desire to provoke conversations that elicit the difficulties of living together and the ways in which to do so peacefully. Joan explains that, in part, she hopes that her students learn to "solve problems, to talk together and [understand that it's] okay to be different." Joan's desire to engage students in conversations about differences and the difficulties of life and living exposes another factor in contemplating the *aporetic* moment. Jane not only contemplates the dilemmas in deciding between sharing the photos and not sharing the photos and the potential difficulties within each of these responses, but also considers her own desires—of her phantasy of identity—as to conversations and issues with which she hopes to engage her students. Jane's desire to teach students ways in which to recognize "that we are different, that we value different things" is what she describes as, "a Jane message." Yet, this message, representative of her phantasy of identity, is another tension within the impossibility of the *aporia*. Jane's phantasy of identity professes an ethic that she insists guides her approach to curriculum, an unapologetic acknowledgment of her purpose in overtly transmitting an agenda about the importance of living peacefully. Jane, therefore, in contemplating how to proceed from the *aporia*, must also consider the desires of the phantasy of teacher identity. In this case, Jane's desire to teach her students values of acceptance and to cultivate understandings of difference are also factored into Jane's decision making.

In this scenario, therefore, the appeal from the child induces Jane to hesitate creating an *aporetic* moment in which Jane considers the specific request, the classroom context, her students, and her phantasy of teacher identity. Jane's phantasy of teacher as a transitional object is in part, what she references when making decisions about taking up such difficult knowledge (Pitt & Britzman, 2006). In other words, Jane's purpose, to convey an ethically-bound message

to “live peacefully,” is guided by a phantasy of teacher identity. The example of the request for a classroom discussion of religious persecution conveys an understanding of the phantasy of the identity of teacher as closely related to an ethical imperative of her desire to promote goodness in her students and in the larger society. Should Jane proceed with the conversation hoping to engage in conversations that align with her phantasy of identity, even though it may risk disenfranchising or distressing the students? Or should Jane repress the desire of the phantasy in consideration of the particularities of the students? The *aporia* fosters not only a crisis of response in the face of the other, it can also create a crisis of the “self.” To what *is* Jane responsible and how can she mitigate responsibility to others and to her “self” especially if they are in conflict?

“Something Happened”: Teacher Responsibility to the Curriculum

Although the outcomes of the pedagogical attempts remain beyond control, the *aporia* fosters a space in which teachers exert desires of the phantasy of identity onto curriculum and into pedagogy. Faced with the impossible decision, the *aporia* may become a moment where the phantasy of teacher may exert force and the teacher attempts to subject the curriculum. The curriculum, although it can take the form of provincial documents materially, also manifests discursively. Curriculum, therefore, is not an implementation of knowledge writ large, but rather becomes an event, a series of decisions and incidents that occur in reaction to something, arriving belatedly, its implications unknown and unknowable. In other words, the particularities of the response of curriculum can be a movement in which the subject attempts to orchestrate curriculum outside of the normative forces, responding to the particularities of the moment, and mitigating both a responsibility to the other and to the self.

The participants' desires to be *teacher* in a particular way, responsive to a phantasy of teacher, do not provide autonomy from the subjective forces of the curriculum documents. Part of the teacher phantasy is to take up and play out a lived curriculum, privileging the situational and responding with responsibility to the other. Yet, the teachers remain bound by subjection—bound, yet sometimes aware of their predicament and assertive with their desires. Although aware of the tension in which they exist, a place between desire of the phantasy and the wish for curriculum, is an acknowledgement of the ultimate impossibility of teacher autonomy. When the teachers refer to the moments of catching themselves, of being teachers in ways in which they did not subscribe, they reflect the belated realizations of the moments in which the subject enacts both teacher and curriculum in ways other than what was desired. Yet, the teachers continue to seek spaces in which they can be in relation to curriculum in a way that more closely aligns to their phantasy of teacher identity.

Jane describes her responsibility to the curriculum as being “responsible to the big ideas of the curriculum.” She explains:

I'm responsible to provide opportunities for [the students] to come to know some things and I can't influence their take up of that...I would never say that it is my responsibility to make them do or learn anything but I believe that my responsibility is to provide an environment where they can try.

The teachers in this study made repeated references to understandings that the teacher cannot control “whatever direction that the learning takes,” often positioning curriculum as “something that *has happened* more than what or where we should be.” Describing curriculum in this way, as something that might happen or that already happened, signals the uncertainty of the pedagogical attempts. The curriculum's arrival is belated, “the force of an event is felt before it can be understood” (Pitt & Britzman, 2006, p. 382). The curriculum, as described by the participants as something that “needs to be lived with children,” alludes to its temporal nature and the inability

to know it in advance. Meaning may or may not arrive. In other words, although the teachers may have desires, make plans and orchestrate intentions regarding the curriculum, there is an acknowledgement that whether meaning arrives and in what forms remains beyond teacher control.

The *aporia* illustrate the particularity to which teacher and curriculum respond. The hesitation that interrupts the normative discourses becomes a space in which the teaching subject must decide. Yet, Jane must make this decision, not based solely on her desire to assert her phantasy of identity, but also in the face of the others. What is Jane responsible to? Her phantasy of identity? Rajvir? The other children? The curriculum documents? These *aporetic* spaces of indecision and impossibility become the places where the particularities of the subject, the other, and the curriculum merge. Within the *aporia* of the impossible decision remains a requirement of responsibility of the teaching subject who is charged with responsibility for others, as well as for the responsibility of the future of the others (Edgoose, 2001). If moral choices are eternal, then how, indeed, might Joan proceed? The *aporia*, therefore, becomes an ethical space in which the phantasy emerges, the teacher responds, and the curriculum occurs.

Curriculum as “difficult knowledge.” These moments illustrated textually here are examples of the everyday life for the teaching subject and demonstrate the importance of the moment of the *aporia*; the places where impossible decisions are made in regards to teaching, curriculum and pedagogy. The teaching subject’s responsibility is not to privilege the particulars over the universals, but rather to consider the particulars in light of the universals. The decision is not to choose one over the other, but to consider the play and potential between the universals and the multiple particulars. For example, what might a consideration of the particular request or a pedagogical attempt mean in light of the universals of curriculum; what might a particular

response and responsibility to curriculum be in light of the normative discourses of teacher, the subject's phantasy and identity? It is in this space in which curriculum might emerge as difficult knowledge.

It is important to note that regardless of the desires and attempts of the teacher, there remains a gap between these ideals of the phantasy and the curriculum as it gets enacted in the classroom. Jane explains that as teachers, "none of us are always completely consistently doing what we think we should do. ... There are times when, for whatever reason, I'm not doing it exactly the way that I want to be doing it." The subjection of being teacher overrides the phantasy, foregrounded momentarily in the mis-fits between the subject's desire for and the seemingly unconscious enactment of curriculum. The incongruent moments, signaled by an anxiety and resonating through repression, might facilitate a fleeting consciousness of identity, fostering a momentary awareness in which teachers might push against the discourse of being teacher or acquiesce to it. These spaces between performing teacher as subjected and the phantasy of teacher as desired are significant. They illustrate not only the teachers' desires to be teacher differently, but the ways in which they find themselves enacting teacher counter to the desires of the teacher phantasy, and sometimes, a moment of realization emanates from such tension.

These discursive pressures of curriculum, to which Gracie consistently referred to as "pressure," are in part, the normative discourses that constitute teacher identity. Butler's (1993) explanation asserts that the normative frames determine the subject and that the subject can only be assumed or legitimated by repeating the acts required by the norms (Butler, 1993). The norms are historic and present prior to recognition taking place. Yet, it is within the act of recognition,

within the reiteration of the norms that creates the space for resistance, a space for the establishment of something new.

“Nothing is Sudden”: Becoming as a *Gradual Instant*

In the moment of responsibility to the other, the subject has a responsibility to the self; an openness to being and becoming differently. Importantly, and as discussed, the subject is produced as recognizable under preestablished norms, emerging “in relation to an established order of truth” (Butler, 2002, p. 12). Butler’s theory has been useful in describing how teachers emerge, how their terms of existence are defined, and how they become subjected as teacher. Importantly, in the repeating of the citational codes there is the possibility of reiterating the norm with a difference (Butler, 1993; Butler, 1997). According to Davies (2006) this means that subjects “can reflexively and critically examine their conditions of possibility and in which they can both subvert and eclipse the powers that act on them and which they enact” (p. 426). Therefore, the subject has some degree of agency with which the subject can turn back on itself, a moment of reflexivity in which to rework and resist its constitution. I posit that, it is within this *aporetic* moment of indecision that signals the moment of becoming teacher differently. When Jane asks rhetorically, “What am I doing? Why am I doing this?” she invokes her own subjection, requiring a recognition of and a response to the self. The hesitation, the space where the subject is responsible to the other, and yet, is faced with the impossibility of deciding, is where the subject might be teacher differently—only momentarily—because of the responsibility and the urgency to both decide and act.

Between the push and pull of subjectification, it appears there is a place of, what Britzman (1992) once termed, “creative agency” (p. 26); a space for making conscious decisions about how to respond to various authoritative and internal discourses. This agency is a moment

of reflexivity in which the subject considers its own becoming and perhaps, destabilizes the discursive forces that are exerted upon it. Therefore, as we understand the teaching subject, although existing through subjection, also has, if only for brief moments, *aporetic* spaces in which to face the other and the self. These moments become spaces of reiteration, when “one fails to reinstate the norm ‘in the right way’” (Butler, 1997, p. 28), or perhaps, reinstates the norm in alternate ways. The spaces of reiteration, although tenuous, perhaps barely conscious and always fleeting, illustrate a moment within teacher becoming in which the subject can momentarily exceed the subjective forces that constitute becoming. And yet these moments, the moments of difficulty and discontent, litter classroom life and often go unnoticed. Within the narratives of being teacher, there is little tolerance for not knowing how to proceed, for indecision and for uncertainty of the results of teaching.

Importantly, the moment is temporally contingent. Just as Derrida (1990) suggested that the undecidability gets reconstructed by continuity, so too does becoming teacher become burdened and (re)constructed through the forces of subjection. The reiteration of becoming differently is only a momentary space of action in which the normative forces of being teacher are destabilized and where the subject is faced with indecision. The moment of responsibility is fleeting. As Derrida (1990) explains, “once the ordeal of the undecidable is past (if that is possible), the decision has again followed a rule or given itself a rule, invented it or reinvented, reaffirmed it, it is no longer *presently* just, fully just” (p. 963). The norms of subjection wash over the gap of undecidability, collapsing the fissure like the inevitable and unrelenting waves erode a footprint on the sandy shore. The child stops crying, a math lesson proceeds, the teacher enacts and is enacted by the subjective forces of being teacher. The reiteration of being teacher exists only momentarily, extending not beyond the instant and not outside of the discursive

norms. The impossibility of the decision persists, the teaching subject acts, and yet remains subjected. The moment is always and remains impossible—brushed over by memory and perhaps repressed.

Yet, something also lingers. Although the trauma of the crying child occurred in Joan's first year of teaching, eight years prior to our conversation, Joan recalls the moment, describing it as "pivotal" and "such a big moment for me." Although the moment to decide has passed and the normative forces resume their subjective forces, something remains, remnants of the rupture, perhaps repressed, return. It seems that after the tide of subjective forces wash in again, something has changed, the sand has tumbled over itself, and while any obvious difference may be quickly eroded, the granules of being are somewhat reorganized nonetheless. Although Joan explained this moment of interruption as significant and "pivotal in her own learning," these moments of hesitation are not always signaled by something as obvious and compelling as the crying child. In Michaels' (1996) words, "nothing is sudden.... Just as the earth invisibly prepares its cataclysms, so history is the gradual instant" (p. 77). These moments, therefore, steady and often imperceptible, accumulate ever so regularly and unremarkably, *gradual instances* of the subject's becoming. These moments of hesitation that "riddle our education experience" (Edgoose, 2001, p. 140), remain most often indiscernible impositions on the teaching subject, a continuous demand of being in relation to and being responsible for others.

What of the many moments of hesitation and decision that go relatively unnoticed, or not considered after the urgency to decide has faded? If the responsibility to the other lies in the *aporia* of indecision, outside the discursive norms of being teacher, then we must consider, "the nature of the classroom as an ethical site" (Edgoose, 2001, p. 131) and the *aporetic* moment as significant. The seemingly small hesitations of impossible tensions of undecidability are the

spaces in which the responsibility of being and becoming teacher lies. Yet, paradoxically, to consider these moments of hesitation, these “*gradual instances*” of becoming are almost imperceptible, impossible to notice, yet linger within the psyche. It is like attempting to consider “at what moment does wood become stone, peat become coal, limestone become marble?” (Michaels, 1996, p. 240). These moments, although significant, arrive like a regular heartbeat, perpetual, inevitable and yet, most often, imperceptible. Therefore, the *aporia* of suspension, a *not coincident* sensation signaling the discontinuity in being and becoming teacher, may arrive in the face of the crying child, yet I believe, most often these moments arrive and pass unobserved, drowned out by forces of subjection, overlooked in the material madness of classrooms. What might it mean to consider these moments more carefully, as a moment of responsibility to the other and as a place to become teacher differently? How is the responsibility for the other noticed within the multitude and minute moments of hesitation? How can the significance of the *aporia* be recognized when a child is not crying?

Teaching as a Tolerance of Uncertainty

Difficult knowledge emerges in these moments of difference and dissonance, summoning the subject to consider its relation between the self and other. Joan’s question of “why am I doing this?” and Jane’s plea of “what am I responsible to?” considers this very dilemma and highlights the importance of the *aporia*. Within the disruption Britzman (2000) argues, “There are no practices to follow. Instead, one must be willing to risk thinking again and again” (p. 34). The teaching subject, in the moment of the *aporia*, must engage in a willingness to think, to risk, to take responsibility for the other. The disruption, within the moments of hesitation and the *aporia* of impossibility, creates a space to engage with that which is difficult and within the engagement with the difficult resides the ethical responsibility to the self, the other and curriculum.

There is no singular response, no generalizable reaction to the particularities of others. There is no reconciliation of these tensions, only that one must act and, in doing so, must risk; risk offending the child by denying the request, risk engaging a difficult conversation, risk losing control, risk recognizability as teacher, and risk refuting the phantasy of identity, and thus aspects of the “self.” The teacher, while being situated discursively within the subjectifying forces of being teacher, in this moment, can engage difficult knowledge, yet all the while remains constituted by and within the normative discourses of being teacher. Importantly, if the hesitation goes unnoticed by the teaching subject, the moment to consider the teaching “self” ethically, to engage curriculum as difficult knowledge, and to enact responsibility, may be lost. The moments of hesitation, as perpetual and unceasing as raindrops in a drizzle, are unpredictable and innumerable, and therefore, too often remain unnoticed and inconsequential. Yet, the importance of the *aporetic* moment persists, inducing a cognitive effect, a provocation of thought (Ellsworth, 2005). The moment passes, and perhaps, the residue of the *aporia* resonates, lingering like the dampness after rain, the moral choices eternal, refusing to be dismissed, haunting teacher becoming and education’s desire.

Within the narratives of teacher identity, the moments of risk, of undecidability, and of impossibility remain subverted, the tensions and uncertainties repressed in order to maintain recognizability as teacher. The teaching subject, constituted through discourses of certainty, where identity, curriculum and knowledge are decided in advance, resists the moments of interruption and undecidability, as the normative discourses of education construct these as moments of failure rather than as obligation to education, the self and the other. That is, these narratives of undecidability rupture the narratives of teacher as knower and curriculum as certain. The teaching subject, therefore, when faced with the *aporetic* moments, may resist

acknowledging the tensions, the hesitations or the deliberations. For example, Joan's sharing of the math lesson with the crying child was prefaced by her relaying her embarrassment of the story. Jane's sharing of the request by Rajvir is couched in her already determined agenda of, what she termed her "Jane message" of needing "to learn to live peacefully." Both participants rationalizing the moments of contemplation; Joan argues inexperience, while Jane asserts her certainty of identity. Neither acknowledges the importance of the *aporia*, of not knowing. It is not that the indecision is vacant, but rather I argue, *not knowing* is not an accepted form of teacher being. Both scenarios reveal the failure of the discourse of the teaching narrative to tolerate uncertainty, to accept indecision, and to acknowledge the potential of these *aporetic* moments. These narratives of undecidability rupture the normative discourses of teacher as knower and yet, the moments are significant because they demonstrate the importance of the *aporetic* moments; moments in which teachers enact both a responsibility to the other and a responsibility to being teacher.

CHAPTER 5

Watermarks and Troubled Texts

"We can never know, never look at history with anything but a narrow and distorted window. We can never know the whole truth, only what's been recorded for us and what our cultural and political predisposition understand. ...[H]istory is never much more than a mirror we can tilt to look at ourselves." (Kingsolver, as cited in Kanner, 2009)

The trouble with the education research project is that the research is burdened with trouble before it begins (Lather, 1992). Critical education research has made contentious notions of voice, power, experience, knowledge, and identity (Britzman, 2003a; Ellsworth, 1992; Gallagher, 2008; Lather, 1991; St. Pierre, 2000c) and has become a metaphor itself for difficult knowledge (Pitt & Britzman, 2006). As researcher then, I remain attentive to the epistemological intricacies, theoretical complexities, and methodological dilemmas (Gallagher, 2008), in constructing, conducting and representing teacher research. Yet, how can I represent this landscape of which much is unknown, unknowable, and largely unrepresentable? As Michaels (1996) writes:

Maps of history have always been less honest. Terra cognita and terra incognita inhabit exactly the same coordinates of time and space. The closest we come to knowing the location of what's unknown is when it melts through the map like a watermark, a stain transparent as a drop of rain. On the map of history, perhaps the water stain is memory. (p. 137)

What are the watermarks on the mapping of research and how are they represented? Where truth is understood as multiple and contextual, I look to the residues left in the wake of research in hopes of making "contingent observations about how individuals—including the researcher—make knowledge in and of the world" (Pitt & Britzman, 2006, p. 380). The blemishes, blurred meanings, and bleeding edges might tell about the specificities of complex problems and

situations (St. Pierre, 2000a). The watermarks, like stains of memories, become the significant moments to which we attend. What remains transparent, what is ignored or repressed, and what sense might be made from these markings, if only temporarily?

The grand narratives of change, of reform, of restructuring education are worn out, exhausted by the workings of greater discourses of power/knowledge. Perhaps what becomes instructive is to consider our actions, that we as teachers, researchers and academics, take in response to an awkward moment, the face a crying child, or the seemingly forgotten. It is not the smooth lessons, the compliant children, or the tidy research narratives that matter or induce difference; rather, it is the moments of rupture. Within the rupture, the *aporia* ensues, and a decision must be made. In these many moments of interruption, the *gradual instances* of becoming persist, quietly reminding us of our responsibility to the other, and our obligation to critique, to question power and its discourses of truth. It is in the *aporetic* moment that this opportunity—and this obligation—arises. Afterward, in the lingering, one must consider one's own implications in that which is difficult. It is within these moments in which the teacher has both an obligation to itself, to others, and to education as lived through curriculum. In this final chapter, I will attend to some of the contingent observations that I, as researcher, can make attempting to (re)consider the question of research itself given its poststructural and psychoanalytic influences. I will also consider the insights garnered about teacher identity and its relationship to curriculum.

Mistrusting Method: Reflections on Messy Texts

As noted through this dissertation, this study exists at the limits of my own knowing, where I toil to be comfortable in the discontent of research that does not know itself before it begins. That is, as graduate student and novice academic, I recognize the risks of, and yet attempt

to reconcile the ways getting lost can be a productive way of knowing as I think and write through this exploration (Lather, 2007). I acknowledge my preliminary understandings of psychoanalytic theory and of maintaining a faith in poststructuralism while simultaneously attempting to engage with these theories with healthy suspicion and tentativeness. Although I may risk recognizability as a “researcher,” this project attempts a methodology situated in discomfort, and seeks an ontology, an ethical analogy for being researcher. That is, while working through the various aspects of “producing” research, I remain aware of the ethical implications of the choices involved, of professing to know and to know the other, attentive to the presence of the author, and to the limits of representation. The levels of mistrust might be considered multiple; that is, throughout my project, language, narrations, and experiences of both the researched and the researcher that have been called into question.

As such, I have sought and continue to seek messy texts (Fusco, 2008), aiming to challenge modernist approaches to research, while embracing difference and multiplicity. The contribution of messy texts is that they remain “open-ended, they refuse theoretical closure and they are useful for reflexively mapping multiple discourses that occur in a given social space” (Fusco, 2008, p. 175). Messy texts require recognizing the complicity of my role as researcher, while calling for an explication of the places where my epistemological, ontological and methodological leanings bumped up against the pragmatics and practicalities of research, the expectations of others, and the working and playing with the data. While rejecting claims of objectivity as a researcher, I have an ongoing commitment to thoughtful and reflexive analysis. In describing these moments of tension, I illustrate not only what occurred during the research process, but also what was learned, what remains in flux, and where the research process fails me

as researcher. What remains, in James Clifford's terms (as cited in Britzman, 2000), are partial truths and fictions, implicating the researcher, the researched and the reader (Britzman, 2000).

The writing itself has been a method of discovery (Richardson, 2000), an attempt to engage *with* while analyzing the data, an inquiry of writing through texts, while writing a text. The form, in failing to comply with the modernist tale of research and recognizing the impossibility of presenting a "complete" version of the study, has become a loose structure, reactive to the process, not knowing its form in advance. The subsequent *textus*, that is, the texture and style of the work, attempts to be one of an aesthetic, privileging texts over truths, and attempting a process of writing *through* instead of writing *about*. The use of fiction, as well as the interweaving of novelists', theorists' and participants' texts, have all worked to create this *textus*, an active attempt to not only producing knowledge, but to produce knowledge differently (St. Pierre, 1997), acknowledging the failures of language and the trouble with representation while relying upon a responsibility of the reader.

Wood's (2008) question, "Is there a way in which all of us are fictional characters, parented by life and written by ourselves?" (p. 110) provokes a consideration of research in which the participants' narrations (including my own), are considered as that of fictions, of sorts. Research, like fiction, "no matter its pretense to present a self-contained narrative or cultural whole, remains incomplete and detached from the realm to which it points" (Visweswaran, 1994, p. 1). This is not to say that research is *only* or *merely* fiction. (This would be comparable to saying that fiction does not reflect life or the "reality" of life). Rather, the purpose of the metaphor is to gesture to the construction of the research claims themselves, highlighting their constructed and subjective form. In recognizing the narrations and representations of research as fictions, the lens of the research becomes refocused on the circulating discourses, their

constitutive nature, and the momentary lapses of the norms. As demonstrated throughout this project, my concern has not been with the narratives of the participants' experiences revealing "truths" about teacher identity, but rather has been an engagement in an analysis of knowledge production itself and an investigation of the discursive production and psychic implications of becoming of teacher.

The reader, at this point, may be concerned and even critical of these assertions, asking, if it is all suspect, then what remains? It is important to note that countering claims of "real" research are not new and that research is, in part, about "seeing what frames our seeing—spaces of constructed visibility and incitements to see which constitute power/knowledge" (Lather, 2007). Lather has been instrumental in conceptualizing research methodology and to reconsider and "reframe validity as multiple, partial, endlessly deferred" (p. 119). Therefore, validity here is not a conception of truth and does not claim a transparency of data and language, but rather, validity is considered a form of representation and an interrogation of what is real. What remains therefore, is what resonates, the moments of discernments and discomforts that illustrate both what is seen as well the frames through which I see it.

Literary Response Groups: Attempts at Moving in Different Directions

In attempting to disrupt qualitative research methods and to rethink what the production and representation of knowledge is, I sought a method in which discursive practices and processes of participants might inform understandings of identities that are ascribed, resisted, or embraced. Literary response groups create spaces that allow for disruption of the clear, linear and unproblematized narratives of experience and provide an analytical space where the production of knowledge itself can be considered. My purpose was to facilitate conversation where

normative discourses of teacher identity might be played out, and also, where notions and moments of difference and disruption might circulate.

The workings of a literary response group reflect poststructural propensities in which narrative and experience are considered disjointed, non-linear and deficient representations of truth. Circulating through the unconscious, narrative becomes similar to fiction in that, although it can never represent a truth, represents a form of truth, an approximation, subjective and constructed. Like a “catastrophe and slow accumulation” (Michaels, 1996, p. 48) narratives attempt to represent events, while simultaneously resonating with accumulations of other histories, memories and desires. Literary response group discussions of fiction as a method to elicit conversation about identity, seems an apt method and metaphor for narrative and experience. For if narrative and experience are troubled by language, then it seems fitting to trouble teacher experience through fiction—thus pointing to the construction (and somewhat falsity) of what can be narrated by language.

The point of engaging fiction was to provide an alternate forum in which to consider teacher identity, and to point to the fiction of narrations of the subject. Therefore, representing participants’ narrations through and with fiction become appropriate textual forms with which to consider and play with language, narration and knowing. As Tecumseh, the teenage boy in *Truth and Bright Water* (King, 1999) explains:

Sometimes the best way to get my mother talking about a particular topic is to change the subject and then work your way back to where you wanted to be. It starts her mind moving in a different direction, and after a while, she may forget about what she didn’t want to tell me. (p. 216)

Similar to Tecumseh’s approach with this mother, the novels were attempts to divert narratives and invite the unconscious, to create fissures in which to invite a surprise or disruption.

The fiction acted as provocations within the literary response groups, but is also a metaphor for the aesthetic endeavour of this project itself. Valuing the novels, their authors and their texts as theorists, by writing with them and by writing them into this project, reflects the construction of truth and the refractions within representation. The novels were embedded in the textus of this project, and also in our collective psyche. As the characters functioned as metaphors within our discussions—for example, Athos as a caring and loving mentor, Nathan Price as tyrannical transmitter—they also became a part of the discourses of identity that were in constant relation to the participants' phantasies of identity. The characters and novels were obviously referenced throughout the literary group discussions, *and* within the individual interviews, provoking tension both with how we read the characters, and with how we read the characters in relation to our own phantasies of identity. The discussions of the characters, the agreements and disagreements put the phantasies of identity in relation with the external discourses, creating opportunities to consider becoming. Therefore, although the subject's phantasy of identity may be overcome by the normative discourses, the literary response group was, at times, a space in which the subject's phantasy may be consoled and remembered.

Within the literary response group, the participants negotiated the differences between the phantasies of identity with the external discourses of being teacher. The *not coincident* moments when there were disagreements about characters, differences in opinions, and disruptions of beliefs became moments in which participants negotiated these differences of discourses, between forces becoming. The literary response group, therefore, was a space in which the subject's phantasy was in play and in relation with external discourses of becoming, potentially disrupting or reifying it; a space of play in which teacher identity is reconsidered.

When Jane asserts “free yourself” and the participants respond with “you will, you will,” there is signaling to the notion that as “discursive boundaries shift, so do our identities” (Britzman, 1992, p. 26). Therefore, like the subjective forces, the terms of recognizability within the group are modified, differing from the dominant norm, and thus signify the ways in which the subject in relation to others is central to identity. The participants engage in a discourse of resistance to subjection through the “Free yourself” assertion, while recognizing its irony, an acknowledgment of the impossibility of “freedom.” Yet, within the literary response group, the acknowledgement of the resistance to the subjective forces through the subject’s creative agency becomes a part of the discourse within the group; an attempt at subverting the dominant norms thus energizing, perhaps reifying the phantasy of identity. In other contexts the phantasy of identity may exist in tension with the dominant, but within the transitional space of the literary response group, the tension can become productive in considering identity, a space in which to work through differences.

Interviews: A Haunted Process?

In hindsight, I wonder if choosing to conduct interviews alongside the literary response groups, inadvertently undermined the value of and my argument for the literary response groups as a method. Specifically, I wonder if interviews as a method sit in mild contradiction to the methodological attempts of this project; that is, the collaborative group conversation around an object of fiction that fostered spaces for disruptions from normative discourses and moments in which to contemplate meaning making. Although I attempted to “facilitate collaboration and a deeper probing of research issues” (Lather, 1991) during the participant interviews, it felt as though conversations were often sustained by my questions and agenda. Of course, it could be argued that these are problems with the interviewer, or the particular interviews as I structured

them—and this argument may hold some degree of validity. However, I assert that the norms of the research interview, specifically the identity of “researcher” and “participant” come before the interview itself, haunting the process. The researcher and participant meet, the participant is expecting to be questioned by the researcher who has dutifully prepared notes and questions. The interviews, formed from modernist discourses of the research interview, carrying normed assumptions of identities and processes that are difficult to disrupt. The transaction itself is *always already* structured in a particular manner and exists within discursive norms prior to each interview event.

Of course, there were times when the interview did indeed feel like a conversation and when I felt as if the participant and I did further develop our relationship. Interviews can and often do become more fluid conversations, less stilted exchanges, thus sustaining constructivist arguments about interviews as “a live social interaction” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 178). However, the back and forth of the interview conversation with only two people, driven by the researcher questions and agenda, limits the disruptions, jokes, surprises, and interruptions between and among participants themselves. Unlike the literary response group, an interview places the subject alone and centred (outside of other social contexts), asks about and expects individual narrations of experiences (thus enforcing a presumption that experiences are unproblematic representations), and engages with language didactically (arguably, a limited and uncreative normative exchange). Even within the literary response group, when conversations slid into silence, participants often looked to me, as researcher, to reignite the discussion. However, because we were a group of teachers who (mostly) already knew each other prior to the research process, and because we were in a group setting talking about a third object (that is, the novel), the conversation could often be carried by the participants and their engagement with

the novel. These moments, where the participants engaged with each other in talking about the book, about themselves and about being teacher, without me driving the conversation, were times when the conversation moved and shifted into directions I had not planned or anticipated. As a method, interviews did not detract from my study. However by conducting interviews alongside literary response groups, I feel I have inadvertently undermined my argument for literary response groups as a legitimate, and therefore, stand-alone research method.

...and What of Forgetting?: Ignore-ance and Repression

“There is no sign of Monroe, but you can see where he’s been at work with his paints and brushes. The entire east side of the church is gone. Or at least it looks gone. I don’t know how Monroe has done it, but he’s painted this side so that it blends with the prairies and the sky, and he’s done such a good job that it looks as if part of the church has been chewed off.” (Tecumseh in King, 1999, p. 44)

Listening to silences and gaps, contemplating what has and has not been said, allows for a consideration of the workings of the unconscious. What gets told and remembered therefore, is as important as what gets silenced and forgotten. Where memories are assemblages of the “real” and the imagined, a compiled fiction of sorts, silences represent what is forgotten or repressed. In the quote above, just as Monroe is repressing the church with paint into the memory of the landscape of the First Nation, so too does the unconscious work to erase what it does not want to acknowledge, what it fears, or what it does not understand. An obvious silence in this dissertation has been the novel *Truth and Bright Water*, by Thomas King (1999)⁷. This gap could have been addressed in a footnote, arguing lack of time, space, or “interesting” data, thus relegating the novel to the realm of “not important” because of its apparent lack of resonance.

⁷ Thanks to Drs. Loutzenheiser and Farr Darling for pointing out this omission and for calling attention to that which seemed to have been forgotten.

However, what if there is something else at work? Referenced least often throughout this dissertation—its absence noted in hindsight—begs the question of, why has *Truth and Bright Water* been largely ignored? Has this been an inadvertent oversight or is it a provocation to consideration what this silence says about the texts and theories, researcher and research, teacher and education?

Truth and Bright Water (King, 1999), is an exemplar of disjointed narratives, a text that rejects linearity, tidy plots, and neat endings. The novel artfully depicts the simultaneously tumultuous and mundane events of two teenage boys over the course of summer on a reserve in western Canada. The descriptive scenes of the parched prairie are almost palpable, and create rich imagery and a vivid landscape, while the elements of mythical realism and the unreliable narratives of the text and the characters call into question “reality” itself. At times, the scenes within the novel feeling more like a mirage than an “actual” event, more dreamlike than story. King’s literary techniques require the reader to consider and make their own meaning of the text, to tolerate the frustration of interrupted conversations and incomplete storylines. By contrast, the fairly linear narratives of holocaust survivors and of patriarchal missionaries presented familiar historical themes and plots and identifiable characters. That is, both *Fugitive Pieces* (Michaels, 1996) and *The Poisonwood Bible* (Kingsolver, 1998) contained arguably romanticized and dichotomous constructions of saviours (Athos) and of the oppressed (Jakob, the daughters and wife of Nathan Price, and to a lesser degree, the people of the Congo village). Additionally, there were characters that were identifiable as teachers. For example, Athos represented an idealized notion of teacher that was intelligent and caring, who engaged in pedagogy that reflected Jakob’s (the student’s) passion and interests. Athos’ teachings occurred in meaningful situations, eschewing the notions of skill and drill that are rejected as teaching techniques by the

participants. While Athos was a teacher the participants could easily embrace, Nathan Price as self-righteous and severe missionary, was a teacher they could easily reject. Perhaps because *Truth and Bright Water* focused on two teenage boys meandering through a scorched and solitudinous summer, the characters were not as readily identifiable as teachers compared to the characters from other books.

Ironically, *Truth and Bright Water* (King, 1999) although set closest to home geographically (a First Nations reserve in western Canada) seemed furthest away from the participants' experiences both personally and as a text. By that I mean, that the text's structure, content, and characters seemed less accessible or perhaps, less engaging for the participants. I recall our first group discussion about the novel (which was also the last novel we encountered) in which much of the discussion that day was centred on questions of textual structure, linearity, and storylines; of what was "real" and what was not: and why certain events and elements were present in the novel at all. I recall worrying that the participants might not be enjoying the book and was anxious about sustaining the conversation.

The text seemed to create fewer and less obvious connections for the participants. Was this because the text was not as easy to relate to, that data was overlooked by the researcher, or that its value was overshadowed by more "exuberant" responses to the other novels? Is the omission a repression, an unintentional forgetting? The act of ignoring, in a psychoanalytic sense, is not a blatant desire to ignore, but rather represents a resistance to knowledge that is most often unconscious (Ellsworth, 1997). Described by Ellsworth's readings of Felman as "an active yet often unconscious refusal of information" (p. 57), ignoring signals the ways in which the unconscious maintains a "passion for ignorance" (Britzman, 1998; Ellsworth, 1997). Ignoring, forgetting and repressing are the clever work of the unconscious, coded yet always

present in and through the discourse of the unconscious. Ignorance is a passionate matter because of the ways in which it “provokes a crisis within the self” (Britzman, 1998) in that it reveals for the subject its own implication in *difficult knowledge* and its inability to respond to such knowledge adequately.

Responding to the question of repression and forgetting conjures some preliminary considerations, all of which require a revisiting of the various texts to develop a more nuanced and in-depth analysis that I will look to in the future. For now, however, I would like to engage in some preliminary thoughts as many of these questions require much more consideration than what is manageable or appropriate in this chapter. Before I begin, however, I must assert a caveat, that the questions and statements are not evidenced by texts or theory; they are a preliminary textual consideration of forgetting. These considerations illustrate where I might start the writing and *working through* such contemplations in future work. The “fault” of the absence of *Truth and Bright Water* within this project remains mine alone, and as discussed above, as with all textual representations of research, is reflective of the constructions, projections and repressions of the researcher. The question of forgetting or repressing, require a consideration of the symptomatic, and a self-reflexive contemplation of research in considering what gets represented and what gets repressed.

I, too, recall a different sense of engagement with this book than with others. To what might that be attributed? What are the considerations of my and the participants’ identity as elementary teachers (as discussed in the Introduction, as *always already* constructed as white, middle class, asexual women) that hinders the engagement with this text? It was written by a male author who identifies himself as of Cherokee and Greek descent and it features teenage boys as main characters. Did these factors make the more difficult for the participants to identify

with? Were the literary techniques used by King less familiar to this audience? I wonder what is it about the issues presented, the characters, and the history of First Nations peoples that plays into this. What issues of race are at play? What is it that is particular to the “white” Canadian imaginary, and history that might create unconscious apprehension when reading a text authored by and focused on First Nations people? How does the “*ignore-ance*” (Ellsworth, 1997) of this novel mirror the effect of the church on the history of Monroe as person of First Nations and his urge now to paint it over, repress its history and affect? In what ways are these repressions symptomatic of relations with the other in teaching and in education? Could the troubled engagement with the novel be a metaphor for the ways teaching and teachers consider the other? Knowing that “there is nothing arbitrary when one considers the workings of education’s unconscious” (Britzman, 1998, p. 68), might this symptom illustrate education’s unconscious perpetuation of othering through *ignore-ances*, repressions and forgetting? As a researcher and for the teaching subject, what is forgetting symptomatic of, and what can be learned about how I engage in making sense of difficult knowledge? However, because of the nature of this chapter, this will be a consideration for future analytic endeavours.

The purpose in raising this is to provide an example of the ways in which this project has been an attempt at writing as an inquiry (Richardson, 2000). Therefore, as writer and researcher, I cannot simply go back and write in an omission—the omissions are infinite, the gaps greater than the substance, and the inquiry ever fluid. When the writer rejects the modernist propensities to provide a full accounting, the readers must be willing to allow for gaps, engaging with one’s questions and assertions regarding *what’s missing* as a reflection of one’s own desires. When writing is inquiry, it becomes a method for contemplation, for trying things out, for considering that which is not yet thought. The question, therefore, of what happened to the King novel, is not

in keeping with the methodological endeavours of this project. That is, a symptomatic analysis is not driven by attempting to “cover” the novels or to equally address the novels. Instead, what might be attempted in light of this question is a rereading of the texts of data, seeking the significant in order for it to be considered symptomatically, to consider the moment, the psyche and the discourses in which it is stimulated.

Implications for Research/Implicated Researcher

This reflexive consideration of the analytical engagement with and representation of what is forgotten, ignored or overlooked within this research project is educative. Although preliminary, the initial speculations on what was ignored and repressed are important aspects of research. For what is learned through these observations, is not merely the importance of what was illuminated through a symptomatic engagement of what resonated, but also what might be learned about the researcher and the researched, teacher and education, through an engagement in what was *not* as obvious. Speculations and contemplations of what was ignored signals the difficulties of research—and of teaching. Researching and teaching are difficult, not just because of their challenging nature (Freud would say, in fact, that teaching is impossible), but also, difficult because they allude to the ways in which the researcher and teacher are implicated in such knowledge production.

As indicated, an ignore-ance is the willful and emotional resistance to knowledge; willful because it requires the discomfort of engaging in uncertainty and accepting one’s own complicity in the ignoring. It is this acknowledgement or realization of the subject’s complicity that also makes it an emotional resistance. For acknowledging one’s complicity in a particular knowing, may not be favourable to the subject. For example, in contemplating my own ignoring of the novel, *Truth and Bright Water* (King, 1999), there may be uncomfortable implications or

realizations of my complicity in ignore-ances that concern, say, issues of race. As researcher, then, I must be both concerned with and amenable to that which has not yet been thought, to the willingness to engage with the discomfort of uncertainty of knowledge and to the possibility of considering my own implications in what is unknown. The discomfort of addressing ignore-ances is critical, even if, and assuming that the provocation is never fully “answered.” Research means engaging analytically in what becomes illuminated as well as what remains shadowed, requiring the researcher to engage with knowledge that may not become knowable and considering one’s own complicity. It is in such engagements with knowledge and uncertainty that the researcher considers one’s own complicity and therefore one’s responsibility in the research endeavour.

Symptomatic Analysis: An Unmappable Terrain of the Resonant Moment

As with all research, the participants’ claims and my interpretations are reliant upon language, even though language cannot be trusted and lacks transparency (as if transparency is ever possible). What the speaker intends and what the listener “understands” are rarely aligned (Ellsworth, 1997), as meaning trips through the unconscious, stumbling on repressions, negations, and a host of other obstacles and detours of the unmapped (and unmappable) terrain of the unconscious. The accounting of the participant, as well as of the research “is betrayed by the slippage born from the partiality of language of what cannot be said precisely because of what is said, what is intended, what is signified, what is repressed, what is taken, and what remains” (Britzman, 2000, p. 28). Narrations and experiences, reliant on language, like this subsequent dissertation, are subject to the disruptions of the unconscious, making research analysis a fact-finding fiction.

Theories of psychoanalysis have been useful in considering the character of the ethereal presence and the “interference” (Britzman, 1998) of the unconscious, recognizing the meaning making possibilities in resonance, speculations, and suspicions. Within this project, theories of psychoanalysis tolerate a fiction of a self, its murky narrations and the crisis of representation. This is, in part, because psychoanalytic theory takes seriously an “inner” life. A psychoanalytic influence supports attempts to counter the “demands for certainty, stability, and transparency of method” (Britzman, 2006, p. ix). This approach, recognizing that “the hegemony of certainty leaves us with pitiful products” (p. ix), seeks an aesthetic engagement, allowing the research to become, what Freud calls a “working through” (Freud, 1914/2006), cultivating a project that does not know its end in advance, content with bearing speculations as its fruit.

This research has convened theory and text in its meaning making through an analysis that attempts to take seriously the resonant moments, acknowledging the unconscious and the uncanny. What is it about these moments of resonance that echo, call for attention, and yet are not readily recognized, quantified, or classified through traditional techniques of coding and sorting data? A symptomatic analysis, while seeking the resonant, tolerates and also summons suspicions of narrative, language and representation within the movements of the discursive. The resonant moments hailed and foregrounded within a symptomatic analysis tell about the research, but also tell on the researcher. What is resonant is also subjective, belying universality, yet remains symptomatic of something missing.

“Free Yourself” (Myself?): A Working Through

The text of “free yourself, sister!” illustrates a moment that resonated, repeatedly finding its way into my research journal, my conversations with colleagues, and my thoughts as I continued to research and read and write the texts of this project. What was it about this small textual moment in literally dozens of hours of interviews and hundreds of pages of data that became such a great focus? I could not free myself of the force of the incident, could not shake the memory of the event. There was something about the off-handed comment that struck me as an important moment in the research and a critical telling in regards to teacher becoming. Yet, when I asked Jane about her comment to Gracie in a follow up interview, Jane responded, “Did I really say that? That’s very funny” (Jane, int #2, line 832). That Jane could not remember and I could not forget seemed similarly significant.

Using the texts and theory to inform each other illustrates how the analytic and theoretic writing becomes a “working through” (Freud, 1914/2006). Psychoanalytically, the data of this text becomes another character in the scene of both the research and the “self” (Britzman, personal communication, July, 2009). That is, the texts, the researched, and the researcher are all influential elements in the meaning-making endeavour, players in the scene of analysis. Therefore, considered psychoanalytically, “Free yourself, sister!” must be considered for why and how it resonates with me as researcher and graduate student, especially because it did not resonate at all with Jane, the participant who spoke it. To be “free,” considered through experiences of a graduate student, could be read as a mirroring of my own desires; to be free of my own feelings of subjection. To research, analyze and write about the texts in ways that maintain integrity to my epistemological and theoretical underpinnings, while complying with the discursive norms of the academy and demands placed on any graduate student by their

research committee, were often in tension. In other words, in appreciation of Gracie's experiences of subjection and desire to be free, I see imitated my own sense of subjectification and desires as a graduate student, simultaneously yearning to be recognizable as competent researcher, and desirous of "freedom" from conventions of research and expectations of the academy that I found restricting⁸. "Free yourself, sister!" resonates as it reflected my own desire to be free of the data/da-da/daddy—that is, the patriarchal academic discourses that work to regulate the research process and product⁹.

The moment is a metaphor both for the teaching subject and the researcher. The moment is subjective, dependent on the subject, its desires, and the sensation of the *not coincident* to call its attention. The question is not necessarily how to interrupt the subjective forces of becoming; for these forces are incessant, *always already* present circulations of power (Foucault, 1975/1995). Rather, the question is how to call attention to the moments of disruption, to recognize and consider what might be significant within these moments. In my project, the resonant moment is central to the analytic endeavour of the researcher, but is also mirrored in the theory of the becoming of teacher. In considering the becoming of teacher, I contemplated what resonated for the teaching subject. The resonant moments became places worthy of closer consideration and were opportunities in which, through their very dissonance, the subject may have become differently; where the disruption was a diversion from normative subjective forces of being, and where the subject might consider its responsibility to the other.

⁸ Thanks to Shannon Moore and Ashley House, my committee members, and Dr. Britzman for pointing out, on separate occasions, what I could not see, specifically that the resonations of "free yourself" could be about my own insecurities and frustrations as a graduate student. The data/dada/daddy reference is owed to Dr. Britzman (personal communication, July 2009).

⁹ To be clear, in referring to the "patriarchal academic discourses," I am not making specific reference to my committee members or *people* within the academy, but rather to the academic *discourses* that, through subjection, constitute graduate students, thus, regulating, normalizing, and oppressing subjects into being.

Teacher Becoming

“A camp inmate looked up at the stars and suddenly remembered that they’d once seemed beautiful to him. This memory of beauty was accompanied by a bizarre stab of gratitude. When I first read this I couldn’t imagine it. But later I felt I understood. Sometimes the body experiences a revelation because it has abandoned every other possibility.” (Jakob in Michaels, 1996, p. 53)

In what way is memory significant in the symptomatic analysis of becoming? Similar to fiction, memory discounts objectivity, rejects what might be “real,” reverberates through the unconscious, and can be a play of the imaginary. When memory returns, it brings with it a compilation of the residues of the event, the desires of the subject, and the influences of the unconscious. When the participants recall incidents that they sometimes describe as significant, it is important to recognize these as representative of pivotal moments of becoming. These moments are remembered because of the lingering of the *not coincident* in which the phantasy of identity is in conflict with the discursive forces of becoming. The lingering helps to draw attention to the subject’s phantasy of teacher identity even after the moment has passed. Importantly, these lingerings, recurring through the retelling of the memory, work in and through the phantasy of identity, remaining both consciously and unconsciously present, influencing the becoming of teacher only through being present.

Jane’s assertion to “Free yourself, sister!” represented the pressures of the discursive forces of subjection on the teacher in play with the unconscious phantasy of the identity teacher. Gracie, as teacher, is subject to the discursive regimes of truth (Foucault, 1978/1997) to be teacher in a particular way, and while seeking recognizability, actually desires subordination in order to be recognizable. In the *not coincident* moments the teaching subject recognizes the discordance between the normative discursive forces and the phantasy of teacher identity—that

is, to be teacher differently than prescribed. The phantasy of identity, an unconscious process, or inner discourse of being is helpful in understanding the psychological influences of the normative discourses on the subject and accounts for, in part, the desires, memories, and repressions of the subject. The importance of the phantasy is that when in conflict with the normative discourses of being, resides in the transitional space in which the desire of the phantasy becomes conscious, accounting for the excess of desire within the subjective forces.

Because the becoming of teacher lies within the realm of the normative discourses of teaching, and because the aporetic moments interrupt the normative discourses of becoming, these spaces become critical in contemplating the becoming of teacher differently. Yet, the subject remains overburdened by the normative discourses of becoming—the regulatory and oppressive discourses of education through government, politics, curriculum, and administrative minutia—leaving little room for critique within such subjection and discursive regimes of truth. For example, the subject-specific curricula documents created and implemented by each province's department of education, privileges knowledge as fixed, objective and transferable, inherently promoting the transmission of knowledge, a technical approach to education. Such a curriculum subjects the teacher in discourses of technical rationality, rejecting teacher judgment, or engagement with difference and uncertainty. Because of these powerful and burdensome discourses, the teaching subject must not just encounter and acknowledge, but seek alternative spaces of critique, disruptions to narratives of becoming teacher.

The rupture of the phantasy of identity exerting itself against the discursive norms elicits a sensation of forces being *not coincident*, create a bodily experience, a visceral sensation, felt in the head, heart, and gut, signaling a moment of becoming (Ellsworth, 2005). This sensation does not induce a change writ large, but rather, manifesting materially it prompts the subject to take

notice or to take the form of a memory, and therefore, the moment of resonance will linger. If an event creates a *not coincident* moment inducing a bodily sensation, the event might linger and the lingering might draw attention. The lingering of the not coincident moment reminds teachers of an intention that has been forgotten, and acts like “a desperate energy...that crashes into us from behind” (Michaels, 1996, p. 253). Because the moments of interruption, of *not coincident* occur often and under the barrage of the other discursive forces of becoming and materiality of the classroom, I believe, these moments are often overlooked, dismissed as unimportant, embarrassments of not knowing, or simply an unplanned interruption. I suspect that the teaching subject does not often catch itself or attend to these moments; the normative forces of becoming drown out the phantasy of identity, leaving only echoes of bodily sensations. Yet, what might result if these moments were hailed as important spaces of consideration to contemplate the disruptive forces, the myriad of impossible decisions, and the tension in the responsibility to the other and the self?

Importantly, moments of the *not coincident* and of the *aporia*, although significant in the becoming of teacher and of teaching, do not generally elicit grand transformations of teacher. Rather, they provoke the subject, representing the “*gradual instances*” of becoming, each moment accumulated within the unconscious process of the phantasy of identity. In the matrix of the subjective forces of becoming, it seems that the subject’s only hope to become differently and to disrupt the norms is to attend to the moments that linger and to consider their resonance. Within the space of becoming, between the push and pull of subjectification there is a moment of ethical reflexivity in which the subject makes conscious decisions about how to respond when the various authoritative and internal discourses are at odds. As Butler (1993) explains, although the subject is the product of normative frames, and the normative frames determine the subject, it

is within the reiteration of the norms in the moments of interruption that create opportunities for responding differently. Within these moments there is an opportunity for the creative agency of the subject to “reflexively and critically examine their conditions of possibility and in which they can both subvert and eclipse the powers that act on them and which they enact” (Davies, 2006, p. 426). The moment of bestowal is fleeting, but the memory might linger. The lingering becomes fertile ground for the *gradual instances* to accumulate and germinate, tiny seeds of transformation, never grand, barely noticed, and yet eternally significant.

Becoming and Responsibility

The *aporia* illustrates the importance of the moments of not knowing and of the impossibility in which the subject must consider the other. The importance of the decision is not so much how to proceed, but what responsibility does the subject have to the other, to education and to itself. Within moments of *aporia*, the forces of subjection are momentarily disrupted, thus signaling the phantasy of identity exerting itself, being put into play within the transitional space and creating a third space in becoming. The forces of subjection are temporarily disrupted, creating a fissure from which the phantasy of teacher exerts itself, and, within the *aporia*, the subject is at once responsible to the other. This responsibility is critical as a moment in which the subject might act beyond the subjective forces to consider the particulars of the moment and the ethical imperative of a response. The teaching subject, therefore, must consider to what it is responsible to in this moment; in what ways might it respond to the other, and what form does this responsibility take. The aporetic moment can be the opportunity for the subject to consider the difficulties and uncertainties in being teacher, to contemplate the difficult questions of what matters, such as “Why am I doing what I am doing?” or “To what am I responsible?” This is the

moment of ethical reflexivity in which the subject has the potential to enact self-transformation (Butler, 2002).

What was gained by Joan's memory of the crying child was a provocation for Joan to consider her own phantasy of identity, to tend to the ethical desires of teaching, and to enact teacher differently. These "*gradual instances*" are the slow accumulation of being and becoming teacher differently, within and against the barrage of constitutive forces that override the phantasy and exceed desire, potentially disrupting the normative discourses of being teacher. Yet, these instances, these minute events that remain largely unnoticed, are not only where the transformations in teaching lie, but also where the transformations of education exist, at the edges of becoming, where the subject engages in an ethical reflexivity, contemplates its phantasy of identity, and enters the domain of the ethical. Teaching should be willing to consider the "anomalous places of learning: [the] peculiar, irregular, abnormal or difficult" (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 5) as spaces for provocation. The *aporia*, erupting from discontent and uncertainty, fosters contemplation of being teacher and of ethical reflexivity.

Encumbering teachers through external discourses of management and regulation detracts for the more significant work at stake, that is, the being of teacher in relation and with responsibility to the other, while nurturing an identity of teacher that allows for the phantasy of being to be exerted. Yet, teachers are engulfed within education's system of certainty, subjected by regulatory norms and charged with the impossibility of teaching, presupposing to know the learner, the learning self, and modes of pedagogy. Education persists in perseverating on and perpetuating a system of certainty in which curriculum content trumps thinking and not knowing is considered a deficiency. What is required within systems of education, for example, in teacher education programs and teacher professional development is a shift in thinking about

constructions of knowledge, the teacher and teaching, where uncertainty and difficulty become central. In positioning knowledge as uncertain and teaching becoming as an ethical engagement of reflexivity, I see spaces in which through the teaching subject might hold hope; allowing for teaching that is yet unthought, opening curriculum to the unforeseen, and rejecting guarantees. What might it mean for teachers consider resonant memories of teaching and their pedagogical implications for the being and becoming of teacher? What happens when the subject fails to be reminded of what it is doing or why, when the *not coincident* becomes mundane and easily ignored? Who do teachers become when they no longer feel pressure, tension, or react to the crying child? What happens to teachers and their becoming when they fail to contemplate their actions (“Did I really do that today?”)? Are these teachers tired and worn out, overcome entirely by subjection, fatigued by the pressure and burned out by the burden of being teacher?

Further, if curriculum is understood, not as a document to be implemented, but rather as a discursive formation, representing identity (Pinar, 1993), then the recursive relationship between teacher identity and curriculum must be more closely examined. That is, if the curriculum is about the teaching subject’s responsibility in relation to the other, might education more carefully consider the teaching subject, the process of the phantasy of identity, and the movement between and among the discourses at play. What do teachers’ understandings of identity mean for their relationship with a curriculum of certainty within the context of education that privileges a certainty of knowledge? In other words, what do teachers do with provincial curricula when they believe that, “the social piece is more important than the academic piece” (Jane, interview)? What might curriculum look like if it relied on or was at least attentive to the *aporetic* moment, when impossible decisions are paramount to the teaching subject’s responsibility, and when difficulty is embraced and contemplated? Curriculum in this regard,

when relative to the *aporia* and the other becomes something that matters—an interaction, with and a responsibility for others.

Becoming and Critique

“At a distance, the bridge between Truth and Bright Water looks whole and complete, a pale thin line, delicate and precise, bending over the Shield and slipping back into the land like a knife. But if you walk down into the coulees and stand in the concrete arches, you can look up through the open planking and the rusting webs of iron mesh, and see the sky.” (Tecumseh in King, 1999, p. 1)

In a context where education is assumed to be an endeavour greater than knowledge transfer, how might education foster teacher becoming in ways that allow for acknowledgement of the subject’s responsibility to the other? Education needs to make time and space for conversations of particulars, of tensions, and of mistakes, instead of attempting to continue to implement the normative discourses of teacher through the regulatory forces, such as those of the curriculum. Phelan and Vintimilla (p. 11, In press), ask provocatively, “What might it mean for teachers to experience the pedagogical event as a rich possibility and not a risk to be managed, as ethical invitation and not anxious deviation?” I posit that this study creates an argument for the importance of such a question, for the invitation to consider the deviations and detours, to consider curriculum as an engagement with uncertain knowledge, where the moments of responsibility lie in the *aporetic* and disruptions of teaching. That is, it within the *aporia* of the impossible decision that we are offered opportunities of “creative agency,” (Britzman, 1992) in which the subject may make a decision to become differently.

They are also the moments in which teacher becoming has the potential to exert itself on the normative discourses of becoming. In a Foucauldian (1978/1997) sense, being governed both

subjects and constitutes the subject's existence, emerging within a predetermined frame of order, and as Foucault states, it is through governmentalization in which subjects are constituted.

Foucault writes that, "critique is the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth. ...critique will be the art of voluntary insubordination" (p. 47). Interestingly, arguing that critique is essential to distinguishing the limits and interactions of power and knowledge, Foucault goes to posit that critique is a requirement of ensuring freedom: "our liberty is at stake" (p. 49). Thus, Foucault extends critique from an engagement that fosters greater understanding of our existence within the power-knowledge grid, to an act of moral proportion, asserting that critique "is akin to virtue" (p. 43). Critique, according to Foucault, is an act of liberty, the right of the subject to question truth, and therefore a practice which society should endorse. Critique as a practice, according to Butler (2002), "enacts a certain mode of questioning" (p. 2). The purpose of critique is to bring regulatory discourses into relief, exposing the "relation of knowledge to power such that our epistemological certainties turn out to support a way of structuring the world that forecloses alternative possibilities of ordering" (Butler, 2002, p. 4). Critique allows us to see the limits of our thinking and knowing, exposing the norms that seek to regulate, and allowing for new possibilities to emerge. The purpose is not to expand thinking or alter knowings in such a way that they conform to a predetermined moral framework (thus reconstituting the very regulatory framework critique attempts to upset), nor is the purpose to profess new certainties based on pre-established expectations. Rather critique allows for a consideration of the ways in which power and knowledge have predetermined the limits of our thinking and is an opportunity to enact responsibility. The act of critique, although it may threaten denunciation of those in power and risk recognizability of the subject, can also be seen as a reflexive movement

(Foucault, 1978/1997); a moment that is not necessarily internal to the subject, yet has the opportunity to occur within the disrupted moment.

In this vein, critique can be read as the obligation of the teaching subject to question the discursive norms by which it is constituted. As alluded to, these critical acts cannot occur as an individual act of free will, for the subject remains constituted by and seeks recognizability by the subjective forces. The moment of the *aporia*, therefore becomes doubly important; a moment of responsibility to the other, but also an opportunity for the subject to engage in critique of the norms through which it is regulated. It is within this context of critique that the teaching subject might question, not only *What am I responsible to?*, but also *Who am I allowed to be in this moment?* If ignored, the normative discursive forces subject the teacher as prescribed, leaving little space for the contemplation of being teacher differently. These many moments of *aporia*, occurring more often than they are noticed, are significant. These impossible decisions are the matters of teacher identity and are what matters in the becoming of teacher.

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CALL FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
Teacher Identity and Curriculum

The Study:

I will be investigating the convergences and tensions between teacher identity and the “reading”—subverting, omitting, inserting and negotiating—of curriculum. This study will consider: **1) In what ways do teachers understand constructions of the identity “teacher” and what interplay occurs between those understandings of identity and how teachers “read” curriculum? 2) What spaces are created by and through literary engagements that provoke re/considerations of the identity of teacher? 3) How are elementary teachers particularly situated within the circulation of discourses regarding teacher identity?**

The Researcher:

I am a PhD student at the University of British Columbia under the direction of Dr. Lisa Loutzenheiser. I am recruiting teachers to participate in my PhD research project. Although I am a part time Learning Support Teacher at Constable Finney School in Seven Oaks School Division, this research is independent from my position.

The Participants:

I am looking for a small group (4-6) of elementary teachers with at least two years of experience. I hope to include a broad range of participants in the study, and therefore, welcome application from teachers from various geographical locations, as well as from varied gender, race, religion, culture, sexuality, age, and ability groups. Participants will participate in a literary response group, where participants will read fiction texts that relate to teaching. At each literary response group meeting participants will respond to and discuss the books in an attempt to make sense of or articulate ideas about teaching and curriculum. All participants will select pseudonyms and our meetings will be confidential.

Participation:

Aside from attending the literary response group meetings, which will be held approximately once per month over the course of the school year (from October 2008 to June 2009), participants will also participate in three semi-structured, one-to-one interviews. Participants, in discussion with other participants and the researcher, will decide on the meeting schedule. Benefits to the participants may be enjoyment in taking part in the literary response group and possible positive relationships made with others in the group. Also, it is hoped that you will benefit from having the time and space to think critically about the role of the teacher and curriculum decisions.

You may be eligible for university credit through a directed or independent study if you are enrolled in a degree program. (Please contact a professor at your institution for information and assistance).

If you are interested in finding out more, please contact Melanie Janzen.