A MIC TO THE MARGIN:
OPENING UP SPACES FOR
ALTERNATE VOICES IN SCHOOLING

by

QUYNH AURA

B.A., Simon Fraser University, 2008
B.Ed., The University of British Columbia, 2009

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

(Cross-Faculty Inquiry in Education)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Vancouver)

July 2015

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ABSTRACT

Alternate programs within schools are spaces born of alternate views and the recognition that mainstream schooling does not fully engage all students. Such programs harbour students who have come to be known as “marginalized,” among a plethora of other labels, such as: at-risk, disenfranchised, drop-out, handicapped, not meeting expectations, falling between the cracks, impoverished, disadvantaged, remedial, delinquent. Rather than becoming a place of deficit, the site of alternate settings can be a space of transformation where students begin to find their voice. In this study, former alternate school students engage in dialogue with their former teacher to (re)-explore their path within the alternate setting in writing and narrative within the methodological frames of critical pedagogy and narrative inquiry. Whispers from the margin appear as students enter alternate settings and begin to reflect upon their stories of pain and healing. In line with Hannah Arendt’s concept of primary natality, students within this educative alternate space are able to exercise their natality through self-reflection before entering the political world. As students confront their belatedness and natality in an old world, inquiry into their narrative shapes their interpretation of the world and their role within it. As student voices grow louder in the grip of narrative inquiry as a microphone for their story, transformation of Self leads to the responsibility of Arendt’s political natality and Paulo Freire’s praxis and obligation towards humanity. On this transformative platform, students stand at the intersections of social, political, and educative tensions and begin to hold a megaphone to a narrative that can continue to reflect the imaginings of alternate views from the margin.
PREFACE

This thesis was conducted under the guidance of research supervisor, Dr. Karen Meyer, and the supervisory committee with Dr. Munir Vellani and Dr. Hartej Gill. Research student, Quynh Aura, conducted interviews for the study from September 2014 to December 2014 and was engaged in the writing process of the thesis from September 2014 to June 2015. The research supervisor and supervisory committee reviewed and edited the thesis drafting stages.

Research ethics were approved under the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board for the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy. The project titled, “A Mic to the Margin: Opening up Spaces for Alternate Voices in Schooling,” was approved under ethics certificate number H14-01859.

Stories, poems, and excerpts listed under “Aura” represent the author’s own texts. Texts written by former alternate program students are presented within the grey margin space of the thesis and designated as “class assignments.” Participants gave permission to use these texts within the thesis under their chosen pseudonyms. Permission was also given to use dialogue excerpts from interviews as recorded in transcripts.

Some stories and poems within the margin have been reprinted in full with permission from several authors and publishers. Immense gratitude is given to the following for their gracious permissions to use their stories within the thesis to represent voices of the margin: thank you to the Canadian Journal of Education for lending their pivotal and thought-provoking stories in education (with special acknowledgment to Karen Meyer and Lynn Fels for their important article on incarcerated women); poet Carl Leggo for capturing life with such beautiful words in his poem “Bread Crumbs”; Megaphone for their important work in giving voice to the people and stories from street vendors; Arsenal Pulp Press for their granting of permission to reprint important stories from our community in V6A: Writing from Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside and Hope in Shadows; and NeWest Press for granting permission to reprint excerpts from Fred Wah’s momentous memoir Diamond Grill. These powerful stories continue to strengthen the force from the margin to positively represent its speakers.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Over the course of this study and the writing of this thesis, I am indebted to the support and guidance of many people:

Dr. Karen Meyer…
Thank you for your sage wisdom and unyielding spirit to act. With every word, spoken and written, you have not only helped me with a vision towards this thesis, you have guided me with a vision towards living.

Dr. Munir Vellan…
Your thoughtful engagement with the world and those in it is a model of patience in loving the world. Thank you for your words of comfort and courteous demeanor.

Dr. Carl Leggo…
Thank you for your rose-coloured glasses and unbridled love of words. Your enthusiasm for poetry is inspiringly catching.

Dr. Erika Hasebe-Ludt…
Your humble and gracious way with words has taught me to be the painter of my own portrait, but never in vanity.

Dr. Hartej Gill…
You are an inspiration for change and humanity. Thank you for your time and insight.

Urban Learner Cohort 10…
Hearing your stories has helped me uncover my own. Thank you for your warmth and vitality every Monday evening.

Meena Uppal…
You are a constant force of unconditional love and care. Thank you for always “having my back.”

Wayne and Chala Aura…
You opened up your home and your hearts. Thank you for providing more than just a roof. Your are the model of true home.
DEDICATION

To my husband and my son, who are my home.

To my students, who inspire.

To my grandmother, who anchors my spirit.
Work with marginalized students involves a review of how spaces within school perpetuates or breaks away from conditions of marginalization. It also jointly involves exploring how these structures within school become manifest in the political world. How do we know the world if we cannot see ourselves within it? Before students enter our classrooms, they are children. Children do not choose to whom they are born. They do not change the history to which they are born. They enter a world already moving hurrying to find footing.

With broken paths between Self and Other, past and future, marginalized students’ experiences become internalized conditions that immobilize them in their sense of belatedness in the world. Marginalized children cannot envision life otherwise without the nurture of natality and hope. Without active movement, they only float along prescribed roles, (re-)enacting oppressive conditions within the political world.

School can act as a transformative space for (re-)envisioning the world and students’ stories within it. School, however, can also be a place of social conditioning that unintentionally perpetuates marginalizing conditions for the same students it wishes to liberate.

The work of the margin is to imagine a space within school where movement from internalized oppression to externalized moral action and citizenship in humanity is conceivable.
We stand at the edge of a border.
A slight whisper of the lips
can send a flight in either direction.
The sound of silence
begins to pulse
with a rumbling voice
the wind carries

(Aura, 2014).
Chapter One
Whispers from the Margin

The Margin

The margin confines. It is a crowded space on the fringe of the mainstream body and remains unmoved by the rumblings of its marginalized border. The booming choir of a capacious mainstream stifles voices from the margin, not due to the main body’s volume of voices, but rather to its position of privilege. The relationship of location between the mainstream body and the margin is political (hooks, 1990). Realities of power defined by locations within race, class, sex, and education create tense boundaries between those privileged with voice and identity and those who are not. These locations exist exclusive of one another, but bell hooks (1990) reminds us: “to be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body” (p. 149). Spaces of the mainstream body and margin are defined by their relative locations to one another and effectively, perspectives of those within these spaces are moved by the relational “Other.”

The relationship with the “Other” has moved many notable thinkers to examine polarized dynamics of power and representation between the oppressor and the oppressed, wherein the oppressor has qualities of “the Occident” and the oppressed, “the Orient.” He argues for the need for voices from the oppressed to emerge, further defining the necessity for dialogue to
occur between the two spaces (Freire, 1970). Dialogue with the oppressed is the only genuine process through which the segregating polarization between the oppressor and the oppressed can be dissolved (Freire, 1970). To avoid repeating a dominating approach of action from above, the power of liberating both the oppressor and the oppressed lies within the space of the oppressed (Freire, 1970).

Both Said and Freire, though asserting the critical weight of the oppressed voice in liberating the hegemonic structure, consciously recognize the need for mutual work from both oppressor and oppressed. Humanism¹, as Said and Freire refer to, is not a task against the oppressor to liberate the oppressed. It is, rather, the community of the oppressed with the oppressor in dialogue and in struggle to liberate both forces to eradicate the polarizing structure as a whole.

Humanization, or “authentic liberation” as Freire (1970) names it, requires continual praxis² and commitment to transform the structure that sustains power imbalances between the oppressed and the oppressor. Admitting the need for humanization is inheriting the struggle for “freedom from hunger [...] freedom to create and to construct, to wonder and to venture” (p. 68). Acknowledgement of a transformed structure to engage both the oppressor and the oppressed uncovers a unified space for both voices to exist, distinct, but in harmony with one another. Continual praxis towards humanization is a journey of camaraderie; it is a path of “fellowship and solidarity” (Freire, 1970, p. 85), not of isolation (Said, 1994; Freire, 1970).

Freire, understanding dialogue necessitates authentic liberation, also points to the false divide between the oppressor and the oppressed when he states, “the oppressed are not ‘marginal,’ are not people living ‘outside’ society. They have always been ‘inside’ – inside the structure which made them” (p. 74). The distinct bodies of the oppressor and the oppressed are not divided by a definitive barrier, but rather are distinguished by the tensions – the push and pull – of power relations and authority within the encompassing structure. Similar to bell hooks’

¹ Humanism is the act of seeing one another as full Subjects of humanity, not objects of marginalized gendered, racial, economic, class, and geographic history.

² Freire names praxis as the transformative power of the oppressed to act through awareness to liberate dehumanizing and oppressive structures. Praxis must be action undertaken by the oppressed in the pursuit of true humanization because action taken by the oppressor continues to perpetuate power structures where the oppressor has authority in freedom.
argument, the distinction here is critical in reflecting a unified space where dialogue between oppressor and oppressed may materialize from a porous border to transform boundaries, while maintaining plurality of perspectives.

The tensions within this space inspire hooks to argue for a language of transgression and the need to continually push against mainstream ideologies. Rather than position the margin from a location of deficit, hooks (1990) defines the marginal space as an emergent site for an “oppositional world-view,” one unknown and unimaginable to those in the main body (p. 149). A continual “community of resistance” to confront hegemonic discourses is critical for alternate views grown in the margin to exist (p. 149). Authentic liberation, as such, embodies the understanding that struggle is inherent and ceaseless in the survival of alternate worldviews. Freedom is not to be accomplished, but rather more fully experienced in its shared endeavor. Disrupting ingrained patterns of polarized power relations between oppressor and oppressed, Occident and Orient, or colonizer and colonized, paves way for a humanist lexicon of mixing, hybridity, transgression, border crossing and freedom. These “new” words compose movement within a structure, which recognizes the role of both oppressor and oppressed, the seed of thought born of struggle from the oppressed.

Community between the margin and the mainstream opens up with dialogue and sustains itself through love. To live in communion with one another does not require a romanticized or sentimental love, but a love that places above each side a greater responsibility for the whole. Desires for justice, peace, and democracy must be rooted in community (hooks, 1999).

Navigating the Margin within Education

Spaces for navigating notions of community, to forge dialogue between the margin and the mainstream, can be cultivated within education. Freire and hooks, through their own personal teaching accounts, decenter themselves as authorities of knowledge within their own pedagogy to amplify student voices and experiences. Political leaders and oppressed groups operate in ways similar to teachers and
their students; in order for both to be Subjects of the world and not objects in the world, both must act co-intentionally to re-create knowledge through committed praxis (Freire, 1970). As such, both leader and oppressed, teacher and student, become co-authors in re-imagining a structure for true humanism and liberation that honours all voices in mutual and constant dialogue.

Positioning of the student as a Subject, much like the (re)positioning of the oppressed into a place of action, transforms the relational dynamic of the objectified student role in education as a mere “receptacle” to be “filled” with knowledge from the authoritative teacher (Freire, 1970, p. 71-72). The “banking” (p. 72) method of education, as criticized by Freire, does not allow room for students’ experiences and stories to breathe life into the curriculum of their education and world. Engagement in students’ own education and world is named as “engaged pedagogy” (p. 20) by hooks (1994b) as a consciousness that values expression from both student and teacher to mutually empower both. It is a recognition that student and teacher meet at the crossroads of education and both hold the power to change each other in their course of dialogue and interaction. These crossroads bear the opportunity for true humanism and freedom in education.

If alternate views are to exist, the cultivation of voices from alternate spaces needs to be nurtured. Before an identity is formed, whispers of voices to represent the struggles of oppressed or alternate groups other than the dominant voices need a platform from which to push, in a meaningful way, against the loudness of mainstream authority. Unfortunately, even within the space of academia, which is often heralded as a landscape for progressive thought, hooks (1994a) recognizes the fears she, herself, held growing up, materializing in her students; she fears there is no space in education where these students will be reflected and self-actualized, where they may see, as well offer a glimpse of themselves and their potential in the world. If students, perceived as marginal or not, are not able to realize their own selves within a world lacking in dialogue, they will only emerge from their education to reenact the oppressive structures of a “banking” system.

3 In Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire describes the “banking” system of education as a view that establishes students as empty vessels to be filled with information. This system operates on the premise that deposits are made into the student from an all-knowing, authoritative teacher.
void of their reflection, their voice, their praxis, and their alternate agency.

Examinations of the power of emerging marginalized voices in Said’s study of “the Occident” and “the Orient,” Freire’s dialogue with the oppressed, and hooks’ conscientious push against mainstream boundaries point to the need for a platform for marginalized voices; these voices can authentically imagine and re-imagine alternative lenses to hegemonic positions. If alternate views are born in the margin, the challenge, however, is in defining a landscape within/ beside the systematic institution of education in nurturing this space without exerting a mainstream dominance from above.

**Being Alternate – From a Deficit**

Alternate programs within schools are spaces born of alternate views and the recognition that mainstream schooling does not fully engage all students. They harbour students who have come to be known as “marginalized.” Dialogue around marginalization in society, though still obscure and lacking a cogent definition agreed upon by all disciplines, is often set around adults in a society. To understand the impact of marginalization on children in school, a brief examination of the labels these children carry is necessary. From an educational stance, children who carry the conditions of marginalization in school are often categorized with a myriad of labels: at-risk, disenfranchised, drop-out, handicapped, not meeting expectations, falling between the cracks, impoverished, disadvantaged, remedial, delinquent.

In her study on children and risk terminology, Kimberly Schonert-Reichl from the UBC Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology and Special Education researches historical common use of “at-risk,” dating as far back as public schooling itself. She outlines early “at-risk” terminology as referring to students living in impoverished conditions and requiring public intervention to avoid detrimental consequences. Though a preliminary definition, socioeconomic status is still a facet that continues to dramatically affect student success within schools. *The Canadian Council on Learning* (2009) reported several different studies indicating greater risks for children of low
socioeconomic status (SES) for academic failure, likelihood of being sexually, physically and emotionally victimized, and poorer physical health.

The concept of “at-risk” continues to expand to include students with high risk exposure to abuse, learning difficulties, alienation, emotional and behavioural problems, teen pregnancy, poor transitioning skills, low I.Q., low family cohesion, and minimal cultural connectedness (Schonert-Reichl, 2000, p. 4-7). More recent proactive measures have identified patterns in “at-risk” children indicated by individual factors (poor critical thinking), family (low cohesion, mental illness), peers (victimization), alienation from school and/or culture, and social stereotyping (p. 6-7). Specifically stressful or life-altering events are also recognized in thrusting students into marginal spaces.

In the historical view of “at-risk” terminology, Schonert-Reichl (2000) reminds us of the dangers around casual use of the term in education. Positioning of “at-risk” terminology places the “risk” factors within the individual and family, rather than on culture and society; it also emphasizes inadequacies of family structures in student failure (p. 4). Though aforementioned recent factors include external influences of cultural and social stereotyping, as well as unpredictable life events, the lived consequences of marginalization remain largely individual. There seems to be little change in the historical view of “at-risk” terminology to move or share the burdens of marginalization for children in school. This understanding remains based upon the deficit model of the child.⁴

Carrying the burden of “deficit” alone by a marginalized group is what Freire imagines as the albatross to true restoration of humanity. The internalized feeling of deficiency is a consequence of what Freire (1970) would name as a prescription from the oppressor, or the body that decrees a mainstream consciousness in which the marginalized measure inadequately with their “deficiency” against the mainstream body. Prescription, in this context, further breeds internalized marginalization and marginal behaviour by the oppressed. Inherently opposed to dialogue, prescription works to silence voices, especially those from the margin, rather than acknowledge and cultivate its alternate views.

⁴ The deficit model of the child is a position that individualizes marginalizing conditions, such as: low income, addictions, disability, single-parent homes, low family or cultural connectivity, low academic performance and I.Q. This supposes that these conditions are due to individual choices and merit, rather than systemic social patterns of inequity.
While some alternate schooling philosophies of the 1960s emerged to challenge traditional schooling methods and came to be seen as “idealistic havens” (Mcgee cited in Kim, 2011, p. 78) that served children’s multiple intelligences, interests and abilities, others were known to house marginalized and disenfranchised youth. The latter view of alternate schooling, though seemingly optimistic in developing programs to “move” students to finish school, often continues to uphold the prescriptive status quo that views marginalized students from a deficit model.

Jeong-Hee Kim (2011), Associate Professor at Kansas State University in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, observes in her assessment of alternate schooling the disconcerting image of alternate schools as a “dumping ground” (p. 78) for students who have been removed from mainstream schooling for an inability to comply with behavioural expectations. These students, she summarizes, are those with behaviours seen as “disruptive, deviant, dysfunctional” – the “trouble-makers” (p. 78). These descriptors are prescriptions, as Freire would note, made from a dominant status quo that removes “troublesome” and divergent behaviours into separate spaces that merely “house” these students; there is no dialogue of liberation from such removal. It is a removal based upon a preservation of the dominant or mainstream ideology.

Without dialogue, the dominant structure in place for schooling is left unchallenged and unquestioned, perpetuating the oppressive position of marginalized students in alternate schooling, which Kim (2011) cites as maintaining “social, political, economic, and educational inequalities” (p. 80) within societal structures. She points to another view of alternate schools as a model after prisons named the “juvenile detention centre” (p. 79). The strong correlation between students dropping out of school and incarceration rates resulted in the growing burden of alternate schools to curb their paths before they land in prison. Again, this dangerous assumption works from a deficit model of the student, realizing their apparent failures and grim future whereby merely avoiding jail is considered a success. The assumption ignores alternate students’ potential to strive beyond these prescriptive
expectations and limits their scope of self-actualization, as hooks would urge, to simply legitimate employment within society. As such, this view of alternate schooling is not “alternate” or transformative in the way that Said, Freire or hooks would understand it.

For alternate schooling to truly embrace alternate views, it cannot be like traditional mainstream schooling. Transforming measures to amend prescribed identities of alternate school students must include spaces for self-esteem, recovering hope and faith, and emotional well-being along with building knowledge, skills and talents (Kim, 2011). In short, the programs built must reflect the stories and children they house. Through amended identities, these children of the alternate setting may begin to become Subjects of their own education and world, rather than objects liken to garbage in a “dumping ground” system needing to be continually moved through and processed. Thomas Mann, (cited in Kim 2011), views this transition as seeing the “world small” and the “world big”:

To see things or people small, one chooses to see from a detached point of view, [...] to be concerned with trends and tendencies [...] To see things or people big, one must resist viewing other human beings as mere objects [...] and view them in their integrity and particularity instead. (p. 91)

Our Alternate

I teach in the margin. I teach in a space that continually resists perceptions of our “world small,” which garners a reputation without our program’s input:

Our students are intimidating. They are distracted. They are disruptive. They have category “H” behavioural issues. They are defiant. They are oppositional. They are disconnected to adults. They have Individualized Education Plans thick with a plethora of mental health challenges and patterns of harmful behaviours. They are violent. They are withdrawn. They are abandoned. They are abused. They are addicted. They are derelict. They are fragile. They are damaged. They are absent.

“Alt. kids” have been removed from the traditional school setting, a response to their inability to meet prescribed mainstream schooling

“tenacious roots that run deep are not easily brought to light”

(Strong-Wilson, 2012, p. 36).
expectations based on their behavioural, emotional, and academic deficiencies. Their removal decisively marks an absence of their reflection in the mainstream stories of schooling, which often reflect the “successful” dominant voices holding honour roll stories, Student Council stories, school club stories, scholarship stories, awards achievement stories, or sport championship stories. Stories from the margin hold far fewer influencing and mellifluous voices of abandonment, addiction, pain, and silenced anger. “Alt. students” often labour in this space to find their voices, undiscovered or muted in the mainstream school setting. Their admission is often untold until voices in the margin traverse the boundary between margin and mainstream into more commonly recognizable forms of mainstream successes reflected in academics or social involvement. I have often heard praise for our “alt. students” who venture into the realm of school sports teams or who reach academic status of honour roll, but equally momentous successes of attending three days of schooling a week through domestic violence or addictions at home is often seen through a deficient lens of tragic consequence of the private realm. The latter has little acknowledgement of “success.”

Recognition of “success” appears only when mainstream structures can be (re)modeled effectively by margin groups. This modeling is rooted in the dehumanizing effects of a kind of oppression Freire speaks to regarding oppressive structures and education. If student successes exclusively recognized through mainstream achievements include academic grades, social involvement, and achievement awards, marginalized students must work towards becoming “mainstream” in order to experience such prescribed “successes.” In doing so, dominant structures continue to be upheld by alternate students traversing the boundary from margin to mainstream.

Opportunity within this prescribed merit system does not provide a genuine space of dialogue for students in the margin and negates the struggle that can nurture true self-actualization and freedom. In cases where marginalized students accomplish prescribed mainstream successes, Freire (1970) cautions this kind of “success” as a mimicking of oppressive structures and not a liberation of the structure as a whole.
for true “restor[ation] of humanity” (p. 44).

Taking heed in Freire’s warning, a mainstream sensibility can dehumanize marginalized students by not recognizing them as fully successful students if they lack involvement in prescribed mainstream successes of academic grades, social participation, or awards achievement. Genuine dialogue between school success and marginalized students is missing, disabling the potential for marginalized students to become reflected and self-actualized in schooling. Humanization does not simply entail the reversal of dehumanizing effects. Creating a pendulum in which margin and mainstream take turns in a game of authority merely changes the face of dominance, but not the outcome. True humanization requires opening up spaces for dialogue with marginalized voices working with mainstream voices to reveal alternate forms of achievement, different from what the margin and mainstream can exclusively achieve.

Carving this space for dialogue will be marked by tension. Many of my students, though grateful for an alternate space in beginning to realize their reflection in schooling, often express a strained push-and-pull swing between margin and mainstream. They desire to continue to experience the success grown within their alternate space; but they also long to be perceived of as “normal,” not needing an alternate space, which is a reminder of their initial removal from the mainstream setting. This is, of course, not a fault of the students, but rather an inherent flaw within the prescriptions of mainstream schooling failing to identify alternate voices as part of the whole structure and not a remnant of its inadequacies.

Alternate programs within British Columbia have been developed since the 1960s to fill the gaps of inadequacies within mainstream schooling, though they are most often perceived of as the inadequacies of marginalized students. The McCreary Centre Society (2008) in BC, a not-for-profit non-governmental agency dedicated to research, education, and community involvement for ameliorating marginalizing effects for youth, surveyed several alternate programs in 2007. In their study, “at-risk” terms youth who are marginalized, are at greater risk for addictions, discrimination, bullying, mental health issues, street life

(Barry, 2012, p. 36).

**Breakfast**

A few years ago, my life was in shambles. I was on welfare and consumed by addiction. I also smoked cigarettes, and combined with the expense of feeding my habit, I sometimes had no money for food. Walking home one day, after scrounging around for cigarette butts, I passed by the local bakery across the street from my apartment building. I heard they threw away old bread in the dumpster. Curious, I lifted the lid and discovered inside some big bags of bread and croissants. I found these hard to pass up, so I hauled out one of the bags and took it home. After I finished a big breakfast, I sat back and smoked a cigarette, feeling better now that I was no longer hungry.

(Barry, 2012, p. 37).
Alternate programs, in order to meet the disconnect these youth face from schools, family and community, endeavor to provide safe, supportive, nurturing spaces that are non-judgmental.

Amidst the varying circumstances for school drop-out, including discrimination, unstable housing, addictions, witnessing and/or experiencing abuse, mental health and/or cognitive difficulties, criminal involvement and pregnancy, McCreary (2008) reported several affirmative key findings with alternate programs. Deep levels of school connectedness from alternate settings fostered healthier relationships with others and Self, as well as confidence in aspiring towards post-secondary and career goals. Special programs and opportunities within alternate schools also supported students beyond just academics to develop community connectedness. The philosophy held by alternate programs reflect a discipline in teaching the whole student, carrying with (not for) the student the burden of struggle, pain, anger, and silence.

Alternate programs assessed by McCreary in 2008 reveal engagement in reaching the whole student through employing diverse avenues of connection. Educational and clinical psychologists are available full time to support students at Abbotsford Continuing Education and the Take-A-Hike program in Vancouver. In Surrey, the Connections Program includes a Youth Care Worker who supports students with drug and alcohol substance abuse, as well as involvement with the courts. Connectedness and community can grow out of meals shared together, which the T.R.E.K program in Surrey offers to engage both students and staff.

The McCreary (2008) report on alternate programs in BC offers an optimistic future for the success of alternate spaces in ameliorating adverse destinies into which marginalized youth are often born. There is, however, a marked echo of Freire’s true humanization absent when the report suggests “the ultimate goal of alternative education programs is for youth to return to the mainstream school system” (p. 54). Though the report acknowledges this is “not appropriate for all youth” (p. 54), political philosophers such as Said, Freire, and hooks would argue this “return” should not be the goal. It is this “return” to the mainstream that

The Realization

We are greeted with a glossy white fence, the kind that often envelops peachesy Vancouver specials in the late 1990s. It’s almost a full minute walking from the gate to the front door. This house is completely symmetrical. When I squint, the big windows appear as an oversized smile, the kind that shows crushing giant, Chiclet teeth. Three thousand square feet and four people. That's 750 square feet for each person. More than what we have for the three of us. They have a clock over the entrance of the balcony door. We do, too. Except, their balcony door leads to a “real” garden, with grass and flowers. Ours leads to a concrete lot of unwashed pavement and moss, an area we share with others in the apartment to give the illusion of social space. When I look at our clock at home, I imagine the centered clock as a head and the curtains below as the draping of a tunic for someone with arms extended wide. On days when the curtains are closed to shut out the scorching afternoon sun, my seven year old mind thinks it’s Jesus with his resurrecting glow, come to save us all! There are three of us in here and there are three in His Holy Trinity. It made absolute perfect sense. Looking at the clock and draping in their home, I cannot help but think their Jesus is better. Is it blasphemous to think this way? The room makes me feel small, insignificant. How silly that I was so proud to show her my home, all 600 square feet of it. How stupid I felt that my piano took up most of the living room, the piano that ate up months of my dad’s savings. How far apart our worlds are. I don’t mind that our Jesus doesn’t look like their Jesus, or even that there are two Jesuses... I just want to know when He’ll come, but it seems He doesn’t show up on the eastside.

(Aura, 2013).
feeds the consciousness of my students that as long as they remain in the margin they are not “whole.” It is a prescription that refuses to imagine students can become self-actualized within the marginal space. It is a refusal to grant the marginal space the power of transformation and humanity.

It is of course, as hooks (1990) would contend, a continual tension and resistance from the margin necessary to keep the breath of alternate views alive and vital to liberating the oppressive structure. Change and action can only arise by articulating voices from the margin (hooks, 1990), not moving or masking them by traversing to the mainstream. Emerging from this collective voice is not only a true democratic platform for dialogue, but also a voice growing louder in beginning the journey to healing both oppressor and oppressed, margin and mainstream.

“Counterspace”

Marginalized voices have been housed in spaces termed alternate settings in education and oppressive or colonized states in political theories. The dynamic relationship between the margin and the mainstream has also pervaded the field of psychology through recognition of “counterspaces.” In addition to the social and political evaluation of relationship between margin and mainstream, Case and Hunter (2012) offer psychological assessment of contexts for “counterspaces” through internal and external agencies.

“Counterspaces” are born from challenging the deficit model of marginalized individuals in order to nurture “psychological well-being” (Case & Hunter, 2012, p. 257). Marginalization, used synonymously with oppression by these authors, occurs when there is inequitable power distribution within a social system granting one group greater social, political, economic, psychological, racial, gender, or cultural resources. Without equitable access to these resources, marginalized groups have fewer opportunities for psychological well-being, associated with “demoralization, lowered self-esteem, internalized oppressed, decreased quality of life” (p. 257).

“We were the people who were not in the papers. We lived in the blank white spaces at the edges of print. It gave us more freedom. We lived in the gaps between the stories”

(Atwood, 1985, p. 53).
In order to truly understand “counterspaces,” Case and Hunter (2012) provide a brief look at the fundamental role of contexts in ameliorating the effects of oppression for marginalized individuals. Contexts, specifically social contexts such as peer circles, family, and group associations, provide critical insight into an individual’s adaptive responses to marginalizing effects. What is more, contexts may also work in conjunction with settings, defined as “two or more people coming together for a specific purpose over time,” (p. 258) to create a space of dialogue where marginalized individuals engage in practices of well-being and self-actualization. This is the location of “counterspaces.”

In as much as “counterspaces” offer positive avenues for (re)-finding humanity for marginalized individuals, they are also sites of continual resistance because action must begin from oppressed individuals, themselves, to challenge on-going dehumanizing effects of the world around them. This internal agency works together with social contexts and settings of “counterspaces” to disrupt cycles of oppression. At the individual level, adaptive responses are taken to protect the Self to reach well-being; at the collective level, adaptive responses of a community to protect the humanity of the margin has the power to subvert dominant structures through continual resistance. Echoing the language of bell hooks (1990), a “community of resistance” (p. 149) emerges within “counterspaces.” Alternate spaces such as these are not new ideologies for the margin, having also been named “safe spaces,” alternate settings,” “empowering community settings,” “free spaces,” “sites of resistance,” “sites of resilience,” and “critical spaces” (p. 261).

Psychological understanding of well-being for marginalized individuals, as Case and Hunter (2012) propose, not only includes sites of resistance within “counterspaces,” but also the adaptive response work of narrative identity. Narratives weave the qualities of storytelling with the important traits of a particular group of individuals or people (Opsal cited in Case & Hunter, 2012). Narrative identity, then, further expands upon the “Self” the group uses to identify themselves through story (Snow & Anderson cited in Case & Hunter, 2012). Experiencing reflection in narrative identity work provides the initial word in the story.
of self-healing, well-being, and self-actualization for the margin. Work with oppression narratives is of particular importance because it “makes the invisible visible” (p. 263). In a dominant structure that views the margin as an object of society, “counterspaces” give voice to its identity as a Subject.

Views of the margin from a psychological stance do not explicitly speak to the dialogue Freire and hooks attest to in necessitating transformation; however, reflection through narrative for marginalized individuals paves way for possibility of transformation, the journey from object to Subject. Realizing this “reimagined personal narrative” arises from internal agency (Case & Hunter, 2012, p. 264) in transforming the individual, but actively sharing this narrative holds the power of “fictive kinship” (p. 266), a connection to others born through story. Kinship as the site of connection also bears the possibility of restoration, revolution, and social change. Though not explicit, it emerges from the bonding of two forces, when alone neither is fully transformed.

Methods of adaptive responses within “counterspaces,” notably those that can be shared, work as narrative forms of story, poetry, song, and art forms (Case & Hunter, 2012). hooks (1994b), aware of the power of narrative within her own educational praxis, uses journal writing shared with one another to locate student voices within the classroom. Narrative embodies possibility of transforming the psychological Self and social and political Self in relation to the Other. It holds the key to the site of dialogue within an alternate space where margin and mainstream meet.

**Megaphone**

Self-proclaimed Vancouver’s street paper, *Megaphone* holds a microphone to the emerging marginal voices in the Downtown Eastside. As a narrative site where margin and mainstream meet in print, *Megaphone* is written by voices from the Downtown Eastside. Vendors receive entrepreneurial opportunities to buy the magazine for $0.75 each and sell them for $2 each for profit (*Megaphone,* November 2014). Lending their written platform to the marginalized, *Megaphone* allows voices from the Downtown Eastside a space for financial stability,
entrepreneurial spirit, and self-healing. *Megaphone* states, “Our goal is to provide a voice and an economic opportunity to homeless and low-income people while building grassroots support to end poverty” (p. 2). Though, their work is much more. Carving a space of possibility offers a glimpse of hope in an area all too familiar with voices of the margin and the growing need for a space to heal. Some marginalized voices find their way into the area and dissolve into whispers unheard. Other voices come frail, but begin to echo in volume through narrative. A narrative space is the microphone for voices in dialogue to come through.

On a field trip to the Downtown Eastside in 2013, projects from the neighbourhood offered sights of an alternate kind of success for our students. Our students journeyed through stories of the streets, feeling the converging themes of loss and community all at once and all too familiar. Until then, stories they read were often portraits of other people at other times. The street stories from the Downtown Eastside confronted for the first time, but resonating like the familiarity of a common idiom, opened up a space of recognition for our students without judgment. Shared voices of abuse, intonations of poor choices, inflections of addictions, rhythms of broken homes resonated between the bodies telling and listening. Accessibility to this space provided opportunity to lace among them strands of the bruised heart, bonds of compassion, and fragments of identity previously left abandoned by stories of unacknowledged pain. For the students, the brief journey through this storied space held a microphone to their margin as *Megaphone* had previously held its instrument to the Downtown Eastside.

On the narrative stage, mainstream prescriptions release their grip to allow its marginalized speakers to breathe a sigh of expression. A venue began to open up for “alt. kids” to breathe words of home, script dialogues of past, and paint stories of Self through story and poetry. Back in the classroom, a boy who was quiet about his father’s ALS diagnoses for two years wrote a poem titled, “Home,” addressed to his father; a girl wrote an ode to her mother, hinting at the abuse at home from “strangers” called family; other poetic sentiments poured in about siblings, mothers, fathers, and neighbourhoods.

(Barry, 2012, p. 37).
The sounds of the free written voice mark a transformative narrative space removed of prescriptive expectations that can drive mainstream schooling structures. If schooling devotes such efforts to carve out this narrative space for marginalized students as it forms mainstream spaces for students of academics, music, theatre, and sports, school will become a genuine space where marginalized students may feel heard; there will they come to existence.

The margin is blessed and cursed with pivotal responsibility amidst its interminable struggles. It can bear the loud birth of change, but be voiceless at the same time. Roused action from the margin on a written platform records these voices, never to be dismissed, so alternatives to the mainstream may continually be (re-)imagined. Writing is the microphone for marginalized student voices, as well as the healer of its speaker.

**Thesis Structure**

In this thesis, dialogue between the margin and mainstream, while recognizing the distinct voices of each space, also orchestrates both voices into an additional tone born of, but different from, its original sounds. Read exclusively or together the space between the margin and mainstream, intentionally shaded in grey and white, respectively, throughout the thesis, offers the voice of the margin, the voice of the mainstream, and the voice of both together. Text from the margin records voices from former alternate program students, academics, literary writers, as well as myself, designated under my surname: Aura. The shifting play of spaces between the grey margin and white mainstream allows multiple experiences of the texts to unfold alternative perspectives. Voices of the margin in grey stand independently in their rawness without analytical interruptions from the main body. Yet, the main body provides a scope through which the margin can emerge in praxis as the margin provides the main body with its heart.

The journey of the thesis begins with whispers from the margin in Chapter One, a preliminary rumination of diction in “margin” and “marginalization.” Here, voices of the margin are first spoken with
vulnerability. Branching from this trunk, a review of “alternate” within an educational milieu begins to provide voice to marginalization within school and possibility of freedom from this structure through dialogue in writing and narrative.

Chapter Two reviews literature to help give light to the whispers from the margin, building a choir of allied voices from various collected authors and disciplines. Beginning with “The Healers,” voices from storytelling share the internal and external agencies at play with narrative in healing the speaker as well as the listener. Narrative is experienced and practiced as a dynamic facilitator for possibility of change. The literature moves to “The Inquirers” who speak to the curious inquiry of narrative used intentionally to provide a reflective path bridging internal healing and external praxis. Exercise of continual praxis is the next movement towards “The Radicals” who work, sometimes in tension, to critically engage marginal voices. Bridging the world to the classroom, “The Cosmopolitans and Curricularists” provide intersections for students, teachers and world to meet amidst tensions void of power and marginal hierarchies. At these intersections, students exercise their natality in confronting their sense of belatedness, taking healing forward to an inquiry of Self in the world.

**Figure 1** – *Structure of thesis through metaphor and themes.*
Figure 1, above, metaphorically organizes literature with Hannah Arendt’s thoughts on natality. Lateral movement of metaphors begins with “whispers from the margin” where marginalized voices first come to be, beginning the initial utterances of their stories. Next, “microphone” represents deeper awareness of story and the thoughtful presentation of story to others. The volume of story deepens. Finally, “megaphone” signifies a powerful instrument used to amplify story towards action. The written narrative serves as a “megaphone” in its ability to reach far and beyond the reach of physical contact.

Vertical movement in Figure 1 organizes literature under each representative metaphor. Literary voices for writing as healing are categorized under “whispers from the margin.” Healing is the initial act of (re-)discovering Self through story. This journey often begins as a personal endeavor and requires the company of primary natality, which allows marginalized students to begin again through healing the past.

As the Self heals, the work of narrative inquirers and Arendt’s sense of belatedness brings about awareness of the storied Self within the world under “microphone.” Here, story becomes louder, organizing clarity of purpose. One who is healed is able to truly reflect upon pain and authentically pass on its moral lesson.

“Megaphone” corresponds with radical thinkers, cosmopolitans, and curricularists to move story towards praxis and democratic humanization of marginalized students within school. Arendt’s political natality acts with Freire’s praxis to move the Self towards humanization, continually working against oppression and the objectification of the marginalized. The written word, precisely, acts as a “megaphone,” ringing its message beyond the reach of physical contact. Story becomes empowered through an amplified voice whose purpose is to act and transform those who hear it.

Chapter Three organizes methodology, methods, and analysis. Critical pedagogy and narrative inquiry are lenses through which student voices emerge. Writings from Freire, hooks, and Giroux shape the critical pedagogical lens within the study. As a methodology in this study, narrative inquiry works with critical pedagogy in creating awareness of
mainstream social structures and alternative imaginings of the margin through story and writing. Qualitative interviews are conducted guided by the following protocols:

**First Branch: Healing**
1. How do stories heal?
2. What is the relationship between storyteller and story-receiver?
3. What is the impact of narrative for both storyteller and story-receiver?
4. What values do narrative inquiry and stories hold?

**Second Branch: Recognition**
1. Where do venues for narrative inquiry and writing exist in school?
2. Who are the students in the margin?
3. What existing conditions in schools contribute to the marginalization of these students?
4. What spaces exist in schools for students of marginalization to express their voices? Where can their narratives be heard?

**Third Branch: Transformation**
1. How do stories shape a platform for marginalized students' voices?
2. How can marginalized students be reflected in schooling through narrative and stories?
3. In what ways do stories and writing create a democratic platform for the equal expression of student voices?
4. In what ways do stories and writing overcome barriers of marginalization in schools?

Narrative reflection from student and teacher, classroom and world, move to the sound of loudness in reverberating alternate stories for future thought in Chapter Four. Participant voices are analysed in Chapter Four and synthesized with literary voices from Chapter Two. Conclusions in Chapter Five summarize findings within the study and review participant voices in action. Conclusions in this study are rather beginnings, opening up space for the alternate microphone in echoing stories of the margin. Work in between the margin and mainstream is cognizant of the continual push-and-pull of dialogue between these two spaces in action. Authentic transformation necessitates commitment to on-going reflection and inquiry for the alternate to be imagined and
(re-)imagined. We need the written word to record the healing, story, and relationships along the way. Without the expansive reach of the written narrative, the imagined alternate becomes only a fleeting occurrence in our imaginaries.
Chapter Two

Review of Literature: Mic Me Up

The Healers

In 1952, Alvina Treut Burrows wrote “Writing as Therapy,” published in *Elementary English*. In honour of Burrows’ work in education and research, children’s book authors Bernice E. Cullinin and Lee Bennet Hopkins contributed a profile on the researcher author in *Language Arts*. Having taught in the public school system in Baltimore County, Maryland, Burrows devoted her teaching career to middle school children and then to research in language arts (Cullinin & Hopkins, 1983). Listening to a lecture from John Dewey fortified Burrows’ beliefs in the Progressive Education movement of the time and eventually led her to engage with teaching on the Chief Sequoyah Reservation in Tahlequah, Oklahoma; thereafter, she continued to fight for children’s rights, particularly in literary heritage (Cullinin & Hopkins, 1983).

In “Writing as Therapy,” Burrows (1952) posits the necessity of writing as an extension of children’s needs for communication from birth, wherein the crying and whaling of infancy to release tensions manifests itself in the expressive form of the adult written voice. Against the backdrop of writing as a structured form of rote memory in schooling where school teachers would point to blackboards dusted with chalked vocabulary words, Burrows (1952) ignited a different purpose for writing: the use of language in writing to convey an innate emotional need in being. Through the expression of the written voice, a transaction is made between the storyteller and the reader, to whom Burrows names as the “sympathetic listener” (p. 138). A relationship is formed between the two figures through which writing becomes a therapeutic relationship of mutual and obligatory bond, what Burrows might contest as a necessity greater than the need to memorize technical writing structures for vocational purposes.

With a background in English and Educational Psychology, Christina Baldwin continues Burrows’ philosophical position on the
The women’s voices can always be heard saucily discussing other women’s gossip. They are loudest in supermarkets and nail salons. I relish in appearing like a foreigner eavesdropping on “community news.”
Some women have overdrawn eyebrows, thick and mean
Lips outlined with a pencil too dark.
Stories of old are often nestled in narratives new.
Hoi xua... Back then...
In these spaces, Saigon is still named the capital, a refusal to let go of the past.
Men often crowd cafes with boisterous chatting and cigarette smoke.
I remember sleeping in a booth as a child late on a weekday
as my father’s stories carried on entertaining throughout the night.
Pavement sidewalks here seem ignored by city cleaners dark stains and globs flattened and cemented into pattern.
I walk, at once at home and not home
straddling the divide between Self and Other, Past and Future.
(Aura, 2013).
Baldwin and Burrows’ work with story and writing dates relatively contemporary, but resonates from long traditions of storytelling and narrative in many cultures, notably Aboriginal traditions. Stories are the messengers of personal experiences told and heard to connect family and community. Stories of Raven, Bear, Wolf, Salmon and Eagle carry in their journeys images of human traits and consequences of agency. To remind us of the ongoing need for traditional creative therapies for reconciliation, Linda Archibald writes of arts research for *The Aboriginal Healing Foundation Research Series* (2012). Art therapy, generally defined as the process of “personal expression to communicate feelings,” incorporates: Expressive and Creative Arts Therapy involving “visual arts, movement, drama, music and writing,” Music Therapy, and Storytelling (p. 13). Materials used to facilitate the movement of such expressions may include paint, clay, wood, pastel, found objects, and stone (p. 13). Seemingly straightforward projects, such as learning how to bead, building a drum, beginning storytelling or crafting moccasins, hold powerful implications in the midst of reconciliation for Aboriginal individuals in (re)-connecting with their “rich history” and “Spirit” (p. 30).

As a means to approach decolonizing healing, art therapies, as found by Archibald, Dewar, Reid, and Stevens (2012), create spaces for:

- “decrease in isolation and depression;
- revitalization of the role of community Elders;
- increase in emotional and social support for Metis youth;
- increase in self-esteem; and
- restoration of cultural identity” (p. 31).

A project of social and monetary magnitude, *The Aboriginal Healing Foundation* was funded in 1998 with a grant of $350 million dollars to support Aboriginal communities within Canada towards a process of healing from generations of internalized colonization (Archibald et al., 2012). It emerges from recognizing the effects colonization has not only on Aboriginal communities, but Aboriginal communities as connected to Canadian society as a whole. Healing weaves together broken strands of communities and identity through art, one strand of which is storytelling and writing to mend wounds with
words. Noteworthy is the implications dialogue has with these words created between colonizer and colonized, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, government and community, Self and Other.

Markedly, Cherokee and Lakota healing philosophies embrace dialogue and relationships in self-restoration. Lewis Mehl-Madrona, who is part Cherokee and Lakota and works as a university professor trained in medicine and clinical psychology at Stanford University, espouses the need for story and community in healing practices. In *Coyote Wisdom: Power of Story in Healing*, he asserts from Cherokee and Lakota philosophies: “We evolve through relationships” and healing requires the “restoration of ‘right relationship’ ” (2005, p. 4-5). Not only do stories provide us with community relations, values, traditions and symbols of our perceived world histories, stories also hold the power of healing through internal agency and community connectivity.

“Narrative medicine,” or the “storied approach to health and disease,” (p. 42) as Mehl-Madrona names it, explores individual stories through a sequence of considered story types to support the storyteller in the healing journey. Beginning with Creation Story, healing moves to Stealing Fire Story, Story of Transformation, Story of Connectivity and Story that Heals. Creation stories are first explored in Mehl-Madrona’s practice to discover patients’ understanding of where their illness originates. This initial marker in the healing journey allows a point of departure from where alternative paths can be imagined as the process of storying continues. The point of departure, the origin of the illness, also provides information for the speaker and listener about what stories the individual has “eaten through [the] ears” that may have been “digested and assimilated to [their] bodies, a process that is sometimes called internalization” (p. 36).

The path in narrative medicine continues with an exploration of Stealing Fire stories, which challenge and inspire the individual to “steal back” and restore their health (p. 43). Stealing Fire acts as a metaphor to initiate change in challenging the origins of illness and then enabling alternate environments and roles through which that change can occur. The act of “stealing” reveals the obstacles and challenges involved in restoring health, an act that is earned through deliberate action and not
simply given by The Creator. Recognizing the need for action begins the path to transformation. Story of Transformation allows others to view the possibility of change and through that possibility, individuals may reflect upon their own agency to imitate transformation. In Story of Connectivity, Mehl-Madrona draws upon studies in physics to illustrate how the need for connection and cohesion with others pervades diverse realms of being. Human relationships comparably function as synchronicity and coherence systems in physics, claiming, “everything is related on all levels” (p. 95) and the fundamental endorsement of holism rejects our thought on our own ability to be truly isolated and autonomous. Ultimately, the endorsement of holism is an endorsement of community. It is a reminder that we may individually tell a story with one voice, but the community of listeners creates a choir of support towards Story of Healing in realizing we are continually connected to the Other.

Although Mehl-Madrona approaches story through an alternative medicinal lens, his experiences with story and narrative medicine can be contoured to reflect pedagogical lenses of marginalized youth in education. Creation Story can be adapted to address not only origins of physical ailments, but also conditions leading to marginalization for youth. Acknowledging the marginalizing effects studied in Said’s colonial paradigm, hooks’ tensions between margin and mainstream, and Freire’s polarized oppressor and oppressed model converges with Creation Story; it is the spark igniting the beginning of a restorative narrative of Self in awareness of Other. Awareness, then, bridges the gap between thought and action, wherein Stealing Fire Story emerges to provide possibility of action to alleviate marginalizing conditions. The deliberate diction of “stealing,” not alluding to thievery, implicates the challenges and obstacles faced in the praxis of liberation. The journey in healing and liberating oppressive models is interminable; it requires continual dialogue between margin and mainstream. As the face of each space changes through time and contexts, the nature of dialogue between the two spaces will inevitably and organically morph to accommodate the changing voices. The organic nature of such constant change invites
continual obstacles and challenges to “steal” back the fire for the
margin.

Story of Transformation and Story of Connectivity further
deepen praxis, calling to audience and listeners to join the work of
dismantling polarizations of margin and mainstream. The work of the
margin is not alone as embodied in Stories of Transformation and
Connectivity. Relating to other stories and characters requires working
with external agencies other than the Self to build a choir of voices
fighting for pedagogical freedom. Freire highlights this work by
emphasizing the oppressed and oppressor must work together to avoid
the pendulum swing of mere power shifts between the two spaces to
allow for a truly alternative space where both may be liberated. By
working together, margin and mainstream, patient and illness or
oppressed and oppressor exercise action of external agencies, which
reflectively also work to heal internally. Thus is the work of Story of
Healing. Transformation and Connectivity in story lead to healing by
allowing the creative process to “awaken” an “inner wisdom that has
been accumulating throughout our evolutionary path” (Mehl-Madrona,
2005, p. 130). Mehl-Madrona argues that values and characters imbue
within Story of Healing sights of new protagonists no longer seen as
voiceless and marginalized. Opportunities to overcome obstacles and
suffering allow “growth of the soul;” this is the storied journey towards
healing (p. 130).

Existing and reflecting within our stories, Mehl-Madrona stresses,
is only half of the story cycle; “telling and communicating” are the other
half (p. 137). Praxis must necessitate a space of exchange where
narrative can be expressed from teller to listener. It is effectively
through the space of exchange that creates community of connections
and relations in transformation. The telling of story heals because it is an
effort of creation and “creative acts change us” (p. 149); however, the
assistance of an external agent is vital to help individuals identify the
elements of their story, including themes, characters and values (p.168).

The Healing Heart – Communities: Storytelling to Build Strong and
Healthy Communities collects stories from professionals in counseling,
creative arts, mental health, teaching, administration, social work, and

(Aura, 2014).
health education who have worked as external agents to provide a space for wounded voices from homeless shelters, group homes, substance abuse, and domestic violence groups. The use of story within these communities provides an avenue for “new beginnings” and “second chances,” a gesture of bringing forth a memory and conducting a new interpretation (Cox & Albert, 2003, p. 3). Experience of story is liken to the Hindu god, Lord Ganesha, who symbolizes and brings forth wisdom and learning from memory through storytelling; a story is another beginning and opportunity for renewal (Cox & Albert, 2003). Stories, then, are parts of ourselves we (re)-collect through the telling of them to “heal old wounds” and through the identifying of them in others (p. 15). We connect with others through recognizable marks of storied scars and narrated pains.

With experience as a teacher, administrator, counsellor, creative artist and therapist, Galata worked with over 18,000 students of diverse ethnic, racial, and socio-economic backgrounds working through challenges of gang life, addiction, sexual promiscuity, foster care, abuse, and dropping out of school (Cox & Albert, 2003). He found the inefficacy of “traditional” counselling methods in working with this demographic of youth, stating, “an hour’s worth of therapy each week” cannot be expected “to have a significant impact” for youth who have been “homeless since the age of eight, who [have] survived on the streets and dropped out of school in Grade 7” (p. 22). Storytelling, Galata discovered, was a successful approach in conjunction with other art forms of theater, dance, and poetry to help these youth find relevance in their world and uncover meaning on the path to self-recovery.

Compass House, a facility for runaway or homeless youth, uses storytelling to help youth “find the tools they need to cope” and “discover other possibilities for choice” (Czarnota cited in Cox & Albert, 2003, p. 30). Czarnota, who works with youth at Compass House, believes story weaves threads of love, trust, and compassion between her and the youth she meets; story begins to unravel the desired “truth” of lives and living.

The Eight-Year-Olds

Evelyn wears the same pink shorts and T-shirt to school for a week, they are dirty, she is dirty. Some kids hold their noses and laugh, but she smiles and plays and tries to read, tries to paint, her small brown hands are dirty and scraped, her chipped pink nail polish is almost gone.

She’s a Native girl from Hazelton, not a city girl
So when drinking parties go on too loud and too long
Evelyn and her sister camp out by the tracks in an empty fridge box.
They take food from the market, and some blankets and pillows from home, and a candle in a jar.

Five nights they sleep there, and come to school each day, until they are picked up by police when the box catches on fire.
Evelyn screams, and her sister screams alone in the night by the city tracks, and she comes to school the week after, her eyes big and brown as she chooses art paper. “Pink, please”

(Hopkinson, 2012, p. 17).
In communities carrying the weight of heavy abuse wounds, story has been used to bridge offender and victim, Self and Other, past and present. Chown works in group-homes for male sex offenders and uses narrative to nurture “a sense of self-worth” and “encourage problem-solving,” as well as “help the men develop empathy for their victims” (Chown cited in Cox & Albert, 2003, p. 59). To mend broken bridges between Self and Other, mental health therapists use storytelling as a means for victims of domestic violence to safely discuss their experiences through a “dissociated viewpoint” before disentangling threads of their narrative experiences (p. 64). The safe space of story has also housed stories of substance abuse where insights are grown into personal behaviour and effective communication with others, finding results in better parenting skills later on.

Transforming the image of the protagonist in story has a way of creating hope within the storyteller, as well as the community of storycatchers. Hope provides vision of beginning and allows history, personal or shared, to turn back to the heart and fill it “with stories that inspire action” (Baldwin, 2005, p. 230). Hope, then, is to do something (Baldwin, 2005); it is created from story to ignite agency from storyteller, margin, or oppressed to unite with storycatcher, mainstream or oppressor to create a community of continual dialogue in transformation and liberation.

The Inquirers

The journey of story has been a collaborative junction for F. Michael Connelly and D. Jean Clandinin. Both are prominent Canadian voices in the power of narrative inquiry and its role in school curriculum (Sage, 2014, F. Michael Connelly, para. 1 and D. Jean Clandinin, para. 1). In “Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry,” Connelly and Clandinin (1990) make the distinction between story and narrative, naming story as the immediate phenomenon (or experience of story) and narrative as the phenomenon joined with a method of inquiry or analysis. Purposefully, narrative inquiry extends Burrows’ therapeutic nature of writing, Baldwin's healing story of space, and healing stories of
Aboriginal traditions to include a form of story that takes shape with intention and can be studied for meaning.

Though a relatively new field within social sciences, narrative inquiry borrows from long traditions of humanities and many other diverse fields of study (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). The methodology emerges from arguments for understanding human experience through the storied vessel of narrative, multiculturalism, school reform, teaching, [...] anthropology, counselling, ethics, nursing, organizational theory, social work, and women’s studies” (p. 477). Positioned in the study of the experience of life, narrative inquiry is situated in qualitative research.

Experiential learning, John Dewey writes, “amid all uncertainties,” is what holds true education in place (cited in Cassidy, 2001, p. 22). Experience is the “one permanent frame of reference,” Dewey continues, that allows learning to thrive (p. 22). To conceptualize Dewey’s thoughts on experiential learning in education, Cassidy further explicates story is a vehicle for reflecting upon and recounting experience. Story provides an organizational framework for its authors to discover meaning in and shape their lives, connecting lived experiences to “an ongoing and meaningful life story” (Bruner cited in Cassidy, 2001, p. 22). Calling upon psychology and cognitive science, it is noted that the brain uses “storied formats” to decode the surrounding world into “units of meaning” to allow “retrieval of experiences within the world” (p. 22-23).

Significantly, these experiences must be linked to “emotion, circumstance and history of the event” in order to form true knowledge (p. 23). Thus, narrative must also be associated with emotions and context to arrive at true meaning and knowledge (Cassidy, 2001). Writing of concrete emotions, narrative, itself, Cassidy asserts, can be the context to help the brain store information experienced.

Emotion inevitably connects. It allows a spectator to share in another's life story, to be included and invited on a journey that reveals our inherent similarities. When we hear a story, “we become involved in [it]” (Cassidy, 2001, p. 25). Story is the door that welcomes others in and narrative inquiry is the reflection on story’s effective reach. Narrative inquiry, then, must not simply be taught using “predetermined skills and
generic concepts” to fit presumed future circumstances (p. 25). The methodology, in order to discover or establish authentic meaning of experience, needs to provide a space capable of allowing participants to (re)-explore their personal feelings, histories and contexts. Like Burrows' call for writing as therapy, narrative inquiry must be more than a vocationally prescriptive skill; it must be an open venue for expression, which is spontaneous, organic, and fluid like the on-going experiences of life and living.

Though it is observed as qualitative in nature, narrative inquiry can also hold solid ground in social sciences as empirical narrative through the collection of empirical data (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Compiling forms of empirical data may include, as listed by Connelly and Clandinin (1990): letters, observations, pictures, journal records, interview transcripts, others’ observations, autobiographical writing, class plans, personal philosophies, written rules and principles, and storytelling. The possible empirical use of narrative inquiry, however, should not suggest the evidencing of causality as a function of the process. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) borrow from Stephen Crites, who was a Professor of Religion at the University of Connecticut (Crites, 1971), in citing the essentiality of the distinction between “events-as-lived” and “events-as-told” (p. 7) in order to preserve the phenomenological heart of narrative inquiry. Writing to capture “Truth” falls prey to the “the principle of time defeasibility” in which primary attention to accuracy within time inevitably provokes “the illusion of causality” (p. 7). “Storied-time,” as Chatman (cited in Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) extends, is used in place of “discourse-time” to express a powerful narrative that is intentionally selective in its memory and structure to avoid the “illusion of causality” (p. 7).

“Truth” in stories is not as important as “truthfulness,” the latter of which allows space for and understands the value of interpretation, the true spirit of inquiry. To value interpretation and the unpredictable tangents listeners may draw upon story is to value the relationship built between narrator and listener, much like Baldwin’s storyteller and storycatcher, through the space of story. The story is not to be some ends to an epiphany of all-knowing “Truth” of sorts, but rather an
organic process that has potentiality in continually transforming its participants through engagement and not prescription.

Drawing upon “truthfulness” in narrative inquiry, Carl Leggo (2008), professor and poet at the University of British Columbia proposes three dynamics of narrative inquiry in which one builds upon the other: story, interpretation, and discourse. Story presents the experiences of the person through a “journalist’s” lens asking initial questions of “who? what? when? where? why? how?” to sketch outlines of occurrences (p. 1). The next dynamic of interpretation explores the significance of the story and the last dynamic emphasizes how a story is told. It is within this last dynamic of discourse that Leggo offers the rhetorical power of narrative in shaping the strands of story that will connect and communicate with others. The “events-as-lived” (Crites cited in Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 7) in “storied time” (p. 7) work within Leggo’s dynamic of discourse to hold the power of narrative within “truthfulness,” rather than “Truth.”

To add to the narrative dynamic of discourse, connection can be drawn to Connelly and Clandinin’s (1990) mention of Deborah Britzman, Distinguished Research Professor in Education and Psychoanalysis at York University (York University, 2014, Deborah Britzman, para.1), to speak to the meaning of voice in narrative inquiry. Britzman suggests an individual’s experience is inextricably linked to and woven by the person’s articulated voice; it is this voice and how it proceeds to speak of story that determines the kind of relationships and reflections that emerge from its telling. Discovering voice is not only the initial quality of therapy and healing in story; it is also the tone that sets up how a narrative’s characters will meet and interact.

The numerous fields of study using narrative inquiry as an effective methodology of acknowledging self, transformation, and connection to others does not exempt it from criticism. The nature of personalized storied experiences and subjectivity has been seen as challenges to theoretical controls within narrative inquiry (Atkinson, 2010). Jeong-Hee Kim has engaged with narrative inquiry since 2002 and summarizes in her article, “A Romance with Narrative Inquiry: Toward an Act of Narrative Theorizing,” various criticisms of the methodology. Kim
(2008) adds that narrative inquiry’s critics suggest the methodology’s heavy weight on storied experience rather than on the “science of narrative” in theory to help develop “understand[ing], analy[sis], and evalu[ation] of stories” (p. 254). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) have also acknowledged criticism about the methodology as “not theoretical enough” (cited in Kim, 2008, p. 255). Critics have also raised concern around narrative inquiry’s danger of “romanticizing the protagonist” (p. 254) with patterned notions of heroism, reducing people to characters and objects and thus adorning the positivist view it initially attempted to avoid. Others have marked narrative inquiry shares more in common with art forms based upon “talent or intuition,” (p. 255) rather than with research. All assertions are valid concerns necessary in the field of research and for assessing effective forms of analysis.

These claims, however, have rooted perceptions in thinking experience can be contained and bound in “cause and effect” relationships. Problematic is not the nature of empiricism, but rather the dismissal of the significant offerings of an organic and continually changing structure. Narrative inquiry is inherently open-ended, fragmented, idiosyncratic, and uncertain (Atkinson, 2010). Although frustrating from an empirical eye, narrative inquiry’s seeming “textual ambiguity” (p. 93) invites didactic dialogue of openness in its presentation of fragments and uncertainty. It moves away from all-knowing truths, a dynamic Paulo Freire often warns about in cultivating a hierarchy of “oppressed” and “oppressor” positions within knowledge and student-teacher relationships.

To affirm narrative inquiry’s position in qualitative research, Kim (2008) addresses the use of the methodology by calling on Mikhail Bakhtin’s theories of the novel. She invokes Bakhtin’s novel organizations of “polyphony, chronotype, and carnival” (p. 256). In polyphony, many voices are recognized in the creation of the text without one having authority over the other. The “many sounds” of a polyphony text do not arrive at a single truth within the novel; it captures validity through the “interaction” among the “unmerged voices” (p. 256). Beyond the multiplicity of voices within a text, Bakhtin’s chronotype, relating to “time and space,” organizes a need for social and historical reflections in

A thousand stories have come into the world in this place in the last 10 years since the Summer Visions Film Institute for Youth came into being. Located in Templeton Secondary in Vancouver’s Eastside, the institute was founded in response to the need of many of the local youth who had no work and no place to go in the hot summer months. (Fraser, 2012, p. 343-344).

Atous and stories have come into the world in this place in the last 10 years since the Summer Visions Film Institute for Youth came into being. Located in Templeton Secondary in Vancouver’s Eastside, the institute was founded in response to the need of many of the local youth who had no work and no place to go in the hot summer months.
order for the text to represent “believable individual experiences” (p. 257). In a sense, it contextualizes story. Lastly, carnival, based upon festivals, offers the reception of praxis by recognizing all individuals as “active participants” open to diverse cultures void of hierarchical organizations (p. 257).

Bakhtin’s movement within the novel organizations, as Kim (2008) summarizes, is consistent with the progression of writing and narrative as: 1. healing, 2. inquiry, 3. praxis; and metaphorically as: 1. whispers, 2. microphone and 3. megaphone. In the first branch, the initial recognitions of writing and narrative as an act of healing provide the “whispers” ignited within the space of the margin where all voices are heard and worthy of restoration. Through the practice of inquiry and investigation, a structure is formed for whispers to transmit to microphone, where writing and narrative carries purposeful meaning organized through what Bakhtin would assert as the necessary lenses of society and history. Megaphone captures the nature of praxis in broadcasting whispers of the margin into a booming voice demanding to be heard. Analogously providing a megaphone for all voices, Bakhtin’s carnival theory of the novel further acts to place marginalized voices on the same platform as privileged ones.

Bakhtin’s theory of the novel reiterates the connectivity and necessity of each organized structure working together cohesively: recognition of all voices through polyphony, reflection of voices through society and history in chronotope, and action to establish a level platform for marginalized and privileged voices in carnival.

To address critics’ concern for narrative inquiry’s questionable degree of science and theory within the methodology, Kim (2008) warns that a strong adherence to theory over experience pushes narrative inquiry into a positivist realm of cause-and-effect relationships, favouring an ultimate authority of view. It is necessary, then, to engage the essentiality of narrative inquiry’s plurality and organic movement to counteract a dominant authority, or ideological oppressor Freire would comment. As such, Kim (2008) names additional considerations to preserve the heart of narrative inquiry’s role in research, including: lived theory, aesthetic inquiry, and readership horizons (p. 256). Theory,
itself, asserts authority of view; thus, to truly represent organic and experiential narrative, theory in narrative inquiry must also be experiential and ongoing to become “lived theory” (p. 258). Lived theory, according to Kim (2008), is an ongoing dialogue between theory and reality, continually reflecting the experiences of story with attention to understanding meaning without becoming confined to a permanent traditional theoretical view.

Aesthetic inquiry similarly works to counter an authority of view by opening up interpretive landscapes through “arts-based inquiry,” calling upon the multitude of emotions, cognitions, imaginations, contexts and experiences that converge between viewer and text (Greene cited in Kim, 2008). This is not only the heart of narrative inquiry; it is the heart of qualitative research (Bresler cited in Kim, 2008).

The vital development of lived theory and aesthetic inquiry within narrative inquiry leads to Kim’s (2008) next consideration of reader horizons. The dialogue between the reader and text offers another space of meaning different from the reader and text viewed exclusively. Narrative inquiry places value on the reader’s own constructed meaning, giving the implied reader “an opportunity to acquire a new horizon” (p. 260). This “new horizon” is a “negotiation” between Self and Other, an organic fusion of understanding and relationship between the text and reader (p. 260). Tightly woven, aesthetic inquiry welcomes and values the plurality of views and experiences, allowing the reader an influential role in discovering meaning through dialogue with the text. Such engagements require, as proposed by Kim (2008), an ongoing lived theory to move away from absolute truths of meaning, dangerous to the authenticity of experience, history, and story within narrative inquiry.

Advocacy for narrative inquiry within other disciplines of Social Work and Psychology shares Kim’s understanding of the need for plurality and an ongoing experiential framework. In studying marginalized populations, including “runaway youth, drag kings and queens, and HIV-infected children,” Wells (2011) proposes narrative inquiry as a powerful means to reach these often-silenced voices in traditional quantitative Social Work research (p. 542). In her field of Psychology, Estrella (2007) practices narrative inquiry as research to
“offer the possibility of disruption to the dominant discourse within theory” (p. 376). If research intends to find meaning and validity in knowledge, it needs to be viewed as “re-search” (p. 376) of lived experiences to facilitate the transformative qualities of experience in order to authenticate meaning. Narrative inquiry allows individuals to lead their own voices in story to “move subjectivity to the foreground” in a discipline that has long legitimized quantifying participants as objects of study (p. 378-79). In Wells’ and Estrella’s experiences, narrative inquiry allows individuals, particularly those marginalized, to become more than merely objects studied through an authoritative lens of research aiming to find “solutions” while reducing experience to simple cause-and-effect relationships. Reducing research to such aims dismisses the essentiality of participant voice as Subject in authenticating experiences. Participant as Subject, or as “co-author,” is a movement away from positivism’s “manipulation and instrumentality” within Psychology and Social Sciences acknowledging the need for subjectivity and connectedly, “emancipation” of perspectives (Estrella, 2007, p. 381).

The Radicals

The growth of narrative inquiry’s legitimacy in research arises from a loudening voice questioning the conditions of silencing. Narrative has the ability to move object to Subject allowing marginalized voices a space through which they author their stories and find empowerment. Not only does the (re-)discovery of Self in relation to Other open up a venue for new knowledge and inquiry, it has imperative implications that echo within larger structures of freedom and democracy. Further, giving voice to the marginalized does not act solely internally to emancipate silenced voices; it also drives force against hegemonic ideologies that may blindly shape and determine our worldviews otherwise.

In responding to the original challenge of working in the margin, the task of understanding how narrative can be powerfully manifested in marginalized spaces requires the initial work of Paulo Freire. As an author working and fighting from the margin, himself, Freire offers accounts of and for the voiceless. Freire dedicated his life to critical
pedagogy and education first in Brazil where he taught literacy to adults and was consequently imprisoned and exiled for his philosophy and educational movement (Freire Institute, 2014, Paul Freire Biography, para. 2-3). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire's monumental work in critical pedagogy for true humanization, describes the conditions by which the structure of oppressor and oppressed exist and what is required to necessitate transformation of a democratic kind where both voices are viewed with equal influence.

Freire (1970) describes the fundamental "vocation" of human beings as “humanization” (p. 43). He uses the term “vocation” to call forth a sense this is an innate quality, which drives all humans towards our foremost need and instinct: freedom, vital to true humanization. The process of “dehumanization” (p. 43) is that which hinders the path to humanization and in the case of the oppressor and the oppressed, it is both those named who internalize an oppressive structure and enact a hierarchy debilitating to creating true humanization. It is precisely their role in this relationship that Freire warns the oppressed must not simply mirror the oppressor in seeking freedom; this is not how the hierarchy will collapse. Action, as well, may not be taken by the oppressors in an attempt to alleviate the conditions of those whom they oppress. This would only serve to continue the oppressor's dominant role as provider for the oppressed, what Freire calls “false charity” (p. 45), while the oppressed live still in a deprived role underneath their “providers.” The action must be initiated from the oppressed and through this commitment to praxis the oppressed will not only liberate themselves, but will transform the oppressive structures that can then serve as a model for all people towards humanization. This, Freire asserts, is how both the oppressed and oppressor may be transformed.

What is perhaps essential in this engagement is the dialogue between the oppressor and the oppressed, a “working with, not for” (p. 47). This same relationship is a necessity of Burrows' “Writing as Therapy” and Baldwin's *Storycatcher* where author and reader, storyteller and storycatcher are in mutual relationship through the space of story. This space of story is where Connelly and Clandinin assert interpretation and voice set the platform for the equal hearing of sides,
much like the space Freire requests as a precondition for transformation on the way to humanization. It is through listening to story that we may transform, or as Baldwin (2005) states, “edit” (p. 126) our own narratives; in as much as this, there is an implication that the listener holds the weight of change just as much as the storyteller, if not more in his reception to a transaction the storyteller has initiated. It is precisely this reception Freire points to in his affirmation that initiation of action must begin with the oppressed, but it is the oppressor who must also undertake transformative change in his response to the engagement.

Freire (1970) conceptualizes genuine dialogue to hold six qualities: word, love, humility, faith, hope, and critical thinking. Word in dialogue powers reflection and action and “in speaking their word, [...] people, by naming the world, transform it” (p. 87). The word both initiates self-reflexivity to heal its speaker and sounds the first utterance towards praxis. Qualities of love, humility, faith, and hope weave together to form an open attitude towards the engaged Other with respect and commitment. To love another is to be committed and humble in refusing arrogance that disrupts genuine dialogue and creates superiority. Faith and hope paint a portrait of optimism and possibility for all to engage in humanization and dismantling silencing structures. Finally, the quality of critical thinking understands the ongoing course towards humanization as a transformative process, “which does not separate itself from action” (p. 92). Dialogue, as with story and narrative inquiry, requires voices of oppressor/oppressed, or storyteller/storycatcher and author/reader, to both appear in the call for humanity and emancipation. “The pursuit of full humanity,” Freire advises, “cannot be carried out in isolation or individualism, but only in fellowship and solidarity” (p. 85).

Noting Freire as one of her major “mentors,” bell hooks also situates her work in social activism and writing for transformation of oppressive structures (The European Graduate School, 2012, bell hooks Biography, para. 1-3). In Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics, hooks (1990) writes and speaks from the space of the margin, the only space that can construct works of resistance. The location of oppression is one of utmost concern for hooks. In a chapter titled “Choosing the
Margin as a Space for Radical Openness,” hooks refuses to describe the margin as a space of deprivation. Reflecting Freire (1970) when he states “the oppressed are ‘not marginal,’ […] living ‘outside’ of society” (p. 74), hooks recognizes that the margin is a space not part of the “main body,” but it is still part of the “whole” (hooks, 1990, p. 149). Its power may not be as ostensible, yet it is within this space of struggle that resistance and alternatives to the oppressive structure of the complacent main body can be imagined (hooks, 1990).

The potential vastness of this power to transform arises from those oppressed, from those in the margin. For hooks, it is not about the need for those in the margin to achieve recognition by traversing the boundary into the world of the mainstream; it is about highlighting the ability of this marginal space to give voice to alternate worlds imagined only through continual resistance. She gently invites those outside the margin to “enter [its] space;” she “greets them as liberators” (p. 152) and there, in the margin, will liberation fight to exist.

In Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations, hooks (1994a) perceives of the difficult task of “border crossing” for those marginalized “who lack material privilege or higher levels of education” (p. 5). To “cross a border” is to deny the legitimacy of hierarchical structures that disempower and to transcend the limitations of prescribed roles and possibilities. In order to facilitate “border crossing,” polarized patterns of “colonized/colonizer” structures must be dismantled to create a space of freedom for all (p. 5). The extent to which “border crossing” is possible within a culture is a measure of its true democracy, though it must be fought for and not simply given.

Mobilizing initial resistance to “cross borders” must not be arbitrarily carried out in solitude; it must entail “systematic” and “political[…] practices of teaching and learning” (p. 22). Implicated in its intentionality is the movement’s collective commitment to transgress. A community working towards a united liberatory purpose bonds together in ideals of continual learning, experiencing the world more fully, and genuine dialogue for evolvement. As a professor, hooks (1994b) builds and nurtures a community of transgression within the classroom beginning with individual student voices. Students write in journals and
Care is that condition of being attuned to oneself in the world. In our everyday state we realize with concern and a general kind of anxiety that we are thrown into an existing world not of our choosing; we are ahead of ourselves in terms of projecting our possibilities; and we are lost within our “fallenness” or dispersal into the “they” and inauthenticity. Thus, we’re confronted with our worldliness, which is at the same time both determining and contingent. We’re anxious about the contingencies and our possibilities; now our own being matters: “a being for whom its own Being is an issue.”


share stories with one another to find their personal authorship and to direct authority away from hooks as the main storyteller. In this place, education is the initial site of resistance that honours all voices as Subjects of story. “We are,” hooks says, “all subjects of history” (p. 139).

Using one’s voice as Subject and author of history and narrative is not simply about telling one’s story. This linear transmission, without pulling in the listener, sits within dangerous limits of individual indulgence. The telling of experience must be accompanied by the listening of experience (hooks, 1994b). The speaker must tell the story with intention and strategy so as to gain liberation in speaking freely about other Subjects, not just one’s own personal subjectivity. The ability to speak freely about all Subjects is the democratic resonance of political and educational transgression. Also, however, the listener must attend to hearing the speaker critically and respectfully in a mutual transaction where the listener creates meaning from listening and responds in genuine dialogue. In true dialogue, speaker and listener hold equal power in creating meaning of story and history, as with the healing properties of story for storyteller and storycatcher. Story has the ability to heal its speaker, as well as its listener through mutual transaction.

Narrative inquiry, as formerly mentioned, extends dialogue and healing into an inquisitive space, connecting the mutuality of voices to larger frames of thought. As such, narrative inquiry re-substantiates and synthesizes the reflexivity of healing in story with dialogue of praxis to move both individual and surrounding world. Vitally, the task of achieving a mutuality of voices must eliminate prescribed notions of roles and boundaries. Work between the oppressed and oppressor, Freire advises, must not be one of antagonism.

To find voice and begin dialogue, both hooks and Freire call upon the power of the word. Freire (1970) names the word as the first quality of true dialogue and hooks (1999) expresses her reverence for words in their capability to touch, transport, and impassion listeners. In *Remembered Rapture: The Writer at Work*, hooks (1999) simply calls words “pure magic” when “spoken with passion” (p. 36). Words of passion are driven by emotion (hooks, 1994b), a quality detrimentally often left silenced in the “rational” realm of classroom education.
Emotion through words creates a passion that can serve to ignite dialogue and connect individual voices in an orchestra of emotive action. Action driven by true passion breed investment and commitment; so long as its guide is humanization is it the praxis of necessary undertaking. Words hold immense power in driving action and as such require closer consideration.

Words, when skillfully crafted, do not only serve the aesthetic pleasure of language; they also hold power in conveying lenses of truths (hooks, 1999). Words are strung together in the longing to tell one’s story. It is a longing to recover past, to release, and to affect listeners from a personal location. Echoing Burrows’ (1952) “Writing as Therapy,” words carry forth an intrinsic need to continue our infant nature’s need to communicate through wailing and crying from birth to a more sophisticated medium of the written voice. Both Burrows and hooks, in this view, express the word as a social act, which cannot be exercised alone without involving the movement of a listener in its meaning-creation to move beyond shallow indulgence or entertainment.

The sociality of voices must be represented in the malleability of words. Dialogue in words, to genuinely represent the engaged voices, must be fluid and malleable to accommodate the never-fixed and ever-changing voices it seeks to embody. hooks (1999) directly adopts this understanding in her pseudonym, after her great-grandmother. Her pen name “bell hooks,” intentionally spelt in lower case, is a consistent reminder to “deflect away from self and ego,” to give up a “recognition […] directly identified with [her] work” (p. 114). The removal of upper case letters, typical in formal designations, signifies a removal of hierarchy of self over ideas and also a rejection of a “fixed identity” (p. 114). In shaping such a name for herself, hooks, in two words, detaches from prescribed notions of authorship that often morph authors into objects of their own stories and histories. Borrowing from Winterson: “the writer should refuse all definitions; of herself, and of her work” (p. 162). Rejecting objectification of Self, even within one’s own authorship, further sustains what it means to have true dialogue with other voices, to transform with time and place and never settle upon a satisfactory structure, which could eventually become a fixed hierarchy.
genuine dialogue sought to initially dismantle. Continual questioning and transformation, the nature of genuine dialogue, is also the essence of narrative inquiry as defined by Kim (2008) in her proposal of lived theory, constantly in movement to assess ideologies and theories to escape authority and dominance of perspectives.

Henry Giroux, a prominent voice in critical pedagogy and education amongst many universities in the US and Canada (henrygiroux.com, 2015), establishes the word as a fundamental force in language that can serve to dominate and to silence. School curricula, Giroux (1991) criticizes, has been guilty of silencing marginalized voices through Eurocentric dominant curricula and moving backwards in a resurgence of standardized testing tunneled towards commonality rather than diversity. Simply supplementing the existing language of curricula with inclusive buzzwords does nothing for opening space for critiquing the current model. “New solutions” “given to old problems” (p. 507) reiterates patterns of old. Thus, a new language within education curricula must be established to break with dominant epistemological traditions (p. 507).

Language, especially in the space of education, holds the power to implant beliefs of importance for some stories and silence others. Education harbours moral and political implications, which Giroux stresses require asking: “whose history, story, and experiences prevail in the school setting? [...] Who speaks for whom, under what conditions, and for what purposes?” (p. 507). Oppressive language used in schools is not only a means for cultural commonality; it interferes with the formation of a democratic society that, in its limited language, espouses only certain truths, values, and morals while dismissing difference and plurality in the name of standardized citizenship (Giroux, 1991).

Like hooks, Giroux (1991) uses the term “border crossing” to conceptualize a space that accommodates the nature of multilayered voices and histories. Though it does not fit neatly into a prescribed model for a “master narrative” in a “monolithic culture” (p. 515-516), “border crossing” remaps and decenters epistemological dominance reducing the power of Subjects in history; there are no Subjects, Giroux (1991) says, only experiences weighted against history. hooks might
contend we are all Subjects of history. In this view, voices of story and history demand to be heard, empowering the speakers of words. Yet, hooks is sensitive to the continually transforming voices needed to persistently transgress against oppressive structures, which inherently in its moving form reduces risk for marginalized subjectivity to become objectivity or settled authorship. As such, hooks and Giroux, though seemingly disparate in calling upon the Subject of story, both affirm the language of “border crossing” to move marginalized voices to continually shift illusions of monolithic epistemological truth in knowledge.

The use of language is often associated with literacy. As Freire and Giroux know well, literacy as the ability to read and write is not only a pathway to vocational opportunities, as employers would desire, it is also a form of admission to deconstruct pedagogical and political ideologies (Giroux, 1988). Empowering voice is an act dependent on the tools of literacy and so literacy is a “form of privileged cultural capital” (p. 63). Borrowed from Pierre Bourdieu (2011), cultural capital describes a form of asset that allows individuals to change their social status.

Literacy, for Bourdieu (2011), is a form of institutionalized cultural capital. Without it, marginalized groups are denied entry into true dialogue and democracy. Most importantly, illiteracy is not a deficiency of the poor or subordinate; it is a deficiency of the whole ideological frame serving to exclude rather than include based upon obtained cultural capital (Giroux, 1988). Literacy, then, is inextricably linked to voice and admission to become socially active and “socially constituted agents” (p. 64). To be literate is to be an active agent, but also to be a critic of discourses, understanding the hegemonic and counterhegemonic implications of language (Gramsci cited in Giroux, 1988). Re-expression is just as significant as initial expression, as re-evaluation is just as important as evaluation, in exercising dialogue and democracy.

Giroux cites Aronowitz in relating functionality with literacy: to be “functionally literate” includes the ability to “decode messages of media culture, counter official interpretations of social, economic, and political reality,” as well as feeling “capable of critically evaluating […]
An Act of Interruption

We sit in a cement block room in the correctional centre’s recreation building with a number of women, our heads bent over interview transcripts. They are volunteer participants on a peer research team sanctioned by the warden and other authorities, including our university’s research ethics committee. The collaborative project investigates the health of incarcerated women. We are reading and discussing women’s narratives that the peer research team has transcribed. We are intent on teaching the peer researchers how to decode and tease out themes from the transcripts. Each room has chart paper taped to the walls and rows of yellow, blue, and pink highlighters. I am typing on my laptop, diligently recording the women’s words as they respond to their assigned transcript. "Wait," I interrupt, "what does ‘cracking the gate’ mean?" The women look at me, amused. Already they have educated me on the meaning of “blue shirt” and sitting on “the shelf.” In adjacent rooms, other groups of researchers spontaneously speak, from transcripts. Each room has chart paper taped to the walls and rows of yellow, blue, and pink highlighters. I am typing on my laptop, diligently recording the women’s words as they respond to their assigned transcript. "Wait," I interrupt, "what does ‘cracking the gate’ mean?" The women look at me, amused. Already they have educated me on the meaning of “blue shirt” and sitting on “the shelf.” In adjacent rooms, other groups of co-researchers from the university and peer researchers from the prison are similarly engaged.

In each room, attempts at decoding become sidetracked as the peer researchers spontaneously speak, from their own experience, to stories revealed and concealed between transcript lines. We become engaged in a different kind of decoding. The discussion turns to what matters: the women’s concerns about survival on “the outs” and their frustration with being put on “the shelf.” One woman says, “I’m doing tie, I need positive things in here to do on the outs.” Others pick up her theme. One complains about “negative talk, shit like that.” Another chimes in, “You’re stuck in the same place. Back where you started.” And then one woman sings out, “Can you imagine...What if, instead of going to prison, women were sentenced to education?”

Everyone laughs. But there is an unwavering challenge embedded in the woman’s question. I stop typing. We are interrupted. The women, all inmates at this minimum-security facility, look to me, their faces now serious as they contemplate the question. I’m not sure how to respond. It’s complicated. If education is truly a gateway to economic independence and social well-being, their experiences of education are likely those of failure. I look around the table, wondering about their school experiences and “realities” through different perspectives, which continue to grow increasingly complicated throughout development. This is particularly pertinent to marginalized groups because through the process of reaching complexity, possibility opens up for those in the margin to gain alternative knowledges and insight to confidently question oppressive regimes. As Freire would reiterate, this is necessary action taken by the oppressed towards true humanization to liberate the structure as a whole.

Bridwell (2012) uses post-feminist theory as a filter in her constructive-developmental lens to further define the unique

(Meyer & Fels, 2013, p. 300-301).
For these women, recidivist statistics in fact corroborated a particular narrative for the inmate returning to prison, “stuck in the same place.” As such, “doing time” in the gap between past and future meant a temporary “time-being” away from their everyday lives and communities, or what the women called “the shelf.” Being “put on the shelf” is a common expression that refers to people or things being treated as no longer useful or desirable, in a state of disuse, out of circulation. It has connotations of being dismissed or abandoned.

(Meyer & Fels, 2013, p. 307).

marginalized group with which she works. Through the post-feminist filter, the theory extends further to emphasize how race, gender, and class work to paint a portrait of identity and development. The single homeless racialized mothers of Boston experience marginalization on several levels, including: race, class, marital status, and education. Effective of their marginalized status, Bridwell (2012) critically identifies the women’s “defiance” and “silence” as reactionary “survival strategies” towards their “social inequalities” (p. 130). This purposeful notice reminds us of the greater construction of oppression at play, that there is a “superior other” to whom the women are “defiant” towards, shifting the impulse that may simply blame the women for their own temperamental personalities and disadvantaged circumstances.

Though they had only intentions of gaining a GED by joining the literacy program, the women engaged with not only their minds, but also their spirits, hearts, and bodies. These Bridwell calls the “intangibles” (p. 136); they are qualities that elude measurement and assessment, but they are essential in developing the openness vital for action. For Bridwell, the development process must be transformative for such openness to occur. Simply stated, (but persistently trying), transformative learning frames the process of confronting our “taken-for-granted frames,” (p. 130) our dominant views, habits and mind-sets to move towards open, reflective and alternate ways of knowing so that action may be guided by, as Freire would call it, true humanization.

Education in Bridwell's study presents not only a site where cultural capital, as Bourdieu and Giroux would call it, is gained through literacy, it also reveals education as a site of simultaneous healing and social agency. In seeking to gain cultural capital through literacy, the women in Bridwell's study gained “intangible” (p. 136) lessons of self-reflection in healing internalized marginalization while understanding and acting against the external conditions precipitating that marginalization.

In observing an alternate school she views as sitting between “a dumping ground” (p. 78) and juvenile corrections services, Kim (2011) also witnesses the intersection of self-reflective healing and social agency within education in a case study of one of the students. Kevin Gonzales, Kim names him, works through his depression and unstable
home life, (his mother frequently changes employment, the family moves often, and his father is an addict who is absent from their lives,) through poetry and journaling. He is very well aware of the disadvantages he faces and the difference in teaching and school environment at his Borderlands alternate school compared to his previous mainstream school instruction, which he described as devoid of social agency and full of “lost souls” (p. 91).

It seems both Bridwell’s Boston women and Kim’s Kevin Gonzales are very conscious of their own marginal status and the need to push against authoritative structures, though their initial actions may have been perceived of as a personal rebellious attitude or defiance. Without avenues for expression and agency through alternate schooling or GED programs for marginalized women, Kevin and the Boston women may still be antagonized by larger mainstream culture as deficient or even simply angry. The site of education to provide intersections between Self and Other, reflective healing and action, and dialogue and praxis is essential to authentically initiating a democratic platform towards full humanity. This sort of pedagogy is the fundamental origin of democracy (Atkinson, 2010; Giroux, 1988; Giroux, 1991; hooks, 1994a; hooks, 1994b).

The Cosmopolitans and Curricularists

In their extensive work in critical pedagogy and education, Paulo Freire, bell hooks, and Henry Giroux frame their lenses through dialogues of democracy manifested within educative action and social and political transformation. These authors pay particular attention to how marginalized or oppressed voices can become active and transformative through truly democratic practices. Though briefly mentioned, they allude to the ongoing tensions commitment to dialogue and praxis entails (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994b; Giroux, 1988). It is these tensions that require deeper inquiry in our increasingly complex world of layered, (sometimes paradoxical), identities, relationships, systems, nations and spaces. This is the work cosmopolitanism.
A Cosmopolitan Scope

Kwame Anthony Appiah’s (2006) book titled *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* postulates cosmopolitanism as an idea dating back to the Cynics who identified “citizen[ship] of the world” in fourth century BC. The statement reflects the Cynic’s skeptical sentiment against tradition and paradoxically outlines “citizen” as someone belonging to a specific city, while “world” alludes to a cosmos or universe of greater extension (p. xiv). Cosmopolitanism, in this view and continued today, acknowledges our belongingness to a community within a community where care of the local is also extended to care of the global. Under this greater network of relations, Appiah’s cosmopolitanism realizes we live amongst differences and rejects positivist generalizations of universal truths and beliefs.

At a glance, cosmopolitanism seems to resemble postmodernist perspectives, including even its situated opposition to modernism. Halpin (2001) defines postmodernism as a rejection of reducing humanity to an essence, as well as a repudiation of “totality” and “homogeneity,” “truth” and “certainty”, while celebrating “difference” and “fragmentation” (p. 402-403). Lyotard further identifies postmodernism as a movement against the metanarratives of modernist views situated in a scientifically-driven landscape of “unity and totality,” “truth” and “progress” interested in “ends-means” production of knowledge (cited in Aoki, 1993, p. 262). Cosmopolitanism, however, does not end its stance at rejecting positivism and settling upon the acceptance of fragmentation and multiple truths alone. It is also not simply a proponent of relativism, which Appiah (2006) argues is not a door to tolerance but rather a dismissal of truly discussing difference. Cosmopolitanism extends its reach to the difficult task of naming the challenge, not the solution (Appiah, 2006), by bringing together recognized tensions of difference at the crossroads of contact. In this way it is an “ideal” and an “adventure” continually driven by morality and “shared humanity” (p. xx-xxi).

Cosmopolitans recognize cultures coming into contact may not share parallel reasoning for behaviours and customs, but they suppose that all cultures have enough of a shared vocabulary to understand they
all exercise certain values (Appiah, 2006). Appiah uses the example of politeness. He states all cultures may display politeness differently and disagree upon its expression, but each culture has its particular idea of politeness; thus, politeness is a shared value even if the reasoning or expression of politeness cannot be agreed upon. The initial contact of conversation is “enough,” Appiah (p. 84) says, without the need for persuasion or consensus. Borrowing terminology from hooks and Giroux, Appiah’s crossroads allow for borders to touch. It is not necessary that they end up on the same passage of understanding, but enough that contact allows for border-crossing and transformative movement. Freire (1970) might further assert the need for initial contact to move towards the common drive of “humanization,” the people’s “first vocation” (p. 43). Cosmopolitans understand a driving precursor is necessary to ignite the desire for contact. Appiah reflects Freire’s call upon humanization and with the hopeful drive of a common humanity, initial contact may open up.

To embody a cosmopolitan disposition, Appiah also proposes notions of pluralism and fallibilism. We live by values, but we cannot live by all the values we know to be worth living; so, people will live by certain values within each society and they may be different from our own. The recognition and acceptance of all values exercised by each society, even if not exercised to the same extent within our own, is a commitment to pluralism.

Appiah uses the example of a shattered mirror to represent this aspect of cosmopolitan thought. Though the sight of a shattered mirror may create discomfort in its brokenness or connotative allusion to bad luck in our western thought, it embodies pluralism by reflecting the multitude of angles and uniqueness each piece provides, yet each shard is bordered by the next to create a whole. The master of Cubism, Pablo Picasso, perhaps unknowingly embodied cosmopolitan sentiments in his creation of an art form that rejected depicting the subject from one vantage point. Cubism disassembles the subject into various two-dimensional fragments and rearranges the parts to create a whole where each part reflects a different vantage point (Rewald, 2015; Schjeldahl,
subject is still perceivable as a whole, yet its component parts retain the uniqueness of view.

The weight of Appiah’s shattered mirror may not seem apparent until its converse is discussed. The whole mirror bears no resemblance to pluralism; it reflects one image, one metanarrative. These mirrors are to the liking of Hitler, Stalin, Mao or Pol Pot who “want everyone on their side, so we can share with them the vision in their mirror;” “their mirror is not shattered, it is whole,” but “we have no shard of it” (p. 145).

A commitment to pluralism would deviate from the dangers of a monolithic ideology. It would also admit that any fragment of pluralism holds truths, as well as fallibilism, what Appiah (2006) defines as knowledge that is “imperfect” and “provisional,” “subject to revision in the face of new evidence” (p. 144). The ability to identify any held knowledge as suspect to err embraces willingness to openness, decentering one’s own held beliefs in the name of progressive thought. Possession of ideology without fallibilism, and relatedly pluralism, prizes Self over Other in the personal pursuit of authority. Such a view is Appiah’s unbroken yet unyielding mirror.

Appiah’s cosmopolitan proposal, though described as dating as far back as ancient Greek philosophy by Appiah, himself, has considerable repercussions in the educational landscape. The dangers of an unyielding mirror in curriculum has its influences from modernist views of education, which have endorsed language such as, “teaching the curriculum,” “implementing the curriculum,” and “assessing in terms of fidelity to the curriculum” (Aoki, 1993, p. 259). Strategic words “teaching,” “implementing,” and “assessing” implicate the curriculum of instruction as derived from an authoritative system leading education in one directed movement.

Ted Aoki, a distinguished Canadian voice in curriculum and education and noted as a “pedagogue of pedagogues” (Pinar and Irwin, 2005, p. xxi), describes a C & I (curriculum and instruction) landscape, which tunnels students through systematic highways of curricular instruction created “outside the classroom” (Aoki, 1993, p. 257) for “faceless people in a homogenous realm” (p. 261). Critical of modernist views in curriculum, Aoki calls upon French philosopher Jean-Francois
Lyotard to identify the influence of modernist views in education. Modernity, Lyotard posits, embraces technological and scientific advancement, which “legitimizes itself” through “metanarratives” (p. 262). It is moved towards “grand stories” and goals of “rationality,” “truth,” “progress,” and “unity and totality” (p. 262).

The danger in the modernist curriculum is in its “facelessness,” where Freire (1970) would add that students become dull “receptacles” to be filled in a banking and depositing system of education (p. 71-72). An education based on a banking method prioritizes control and standardization over the organic experience of growth and individuality, “necrophily,” or killing life (p. 77). Incredulous of modernity, postmodernity grew out of a reaction to metanarratives (Lyotard cited in Aoki, 1993). Modernity posed a crisis not only in education, proposing a metanarrative of curriculum, but also in metaphysical philosophy (Lyotard cited in Aoki, 1993). The polarized landscapes of modernity and postmodernity, Aoki (1993) realizes, cannot be merged; however, modernism can be decentered to create space for alternate narratives.

Cosmopolitanism, however, would say it is not enough to acknowledge alternate narratives. Curriculum, teachers, and students carry weighted histories and we meet at intersections within classrooms. Tensions border our stories in contact and there needs to be more than just acknowledgement of difference.

Plurality, or multiplicity, is not a product or element to be achieved, but is rather “a site of relations,” difference and pluralism is “the between” and “grows from the middle” (p. 260). The space between Subjects at intersections, to which Aoki alludes, resonates in Freire’s description of dialogue as a space between oppressor and oppressed. Aoki and Freire may not have aligned themselves with cosmopolitanism, but their philosophy lends itself to a cosmopolitan disposition. Dialogue and the “in-between” provide a language for the meeting of cosmopolitan tensions in curriculum and pedagogy.

**Pedagogy at Intersections**

Pedagogy within classrooms and education hold the power to reflect students’ stories and potential social agency within the world. The
classroom is a site of immense power. Voices of teacher and curriculum can work to dominate, silence, and dictate or nurture, amplify, and engage student voices. Pedagogy can be asphalt highways tunneling students through one-way traffic en masse like in Aoki’s curriculum of instruction. Or, it can be a lived curriculum meshwork of little gravel pathways with impressed footprints, a networked history of those who have walked the passages. Pedagogical impressions of the latter capture the unique contact of individual and collective histories. Contact, critically, offers the prospect of relationship, a quality of pedagogy where Self and Other, teacher and student, are connected in a bond.

Aoki (1993) reminds us pedagogy comes from the Greek pedae or children and agogue meaning “to lead” (p. 266). Pedagogical encounters, defined by Foran and Olson (2008), further call upon the educational relationship that binds teacher and student. Within the pedagogical bond, the adult has an obligation to the child to act responsibly and morally. The experience of the child through the adult, how we “see, feel, sense, reflect, and respond to the call of the child before us,” van Manen (2012, p. 10) describes has resounding implications on how the child will engage with the Other and with the world. Responding to the child in this way must also encompass a level of human emotion that deeply connects the adult and child, as well as provides deep engagements with the world for both (Bollnow, 1989; van Manen cited in Finlay, 2012). A cosmopolitan pedagogy, then, is one that provides the intersections for teacher and student to meet through contact where acknowledgement of Self with Other and Self in Other enables, Freire might hope, dialogue and praxis within education.

An Encounter with Natality

What these engagements might look like within education requires a brief call to Hannah Arendt’s theories on natality. As a prominent political theorist of the twentieth century, Arendt left Germany at the onset of World War II and began structuring her political ideas around the complex structures and human conditions that precipitate such world events (d’Entreves, 2014). Though she does not claim to be an educational theorist, her considerations on the role of
education pave a sentiment closely aligned with Freire and hooks who similarly take on the perspective of the margin.

Arendt uses the term natals to refer to humans and their capacity to begin (Bowen-Moore, 1989). Her interpretation of humans as natals, as opposed to the Greek discernment of humans as mortals, proposes an understanding of humanity based upon the hopeful faculty of birth rather than the reminder of its imminent mortal death. Natality as the power to begin holds significant value within education, especially for children dwelling in the margin.

Primary natality, Arendt calls it, is a faculty that allows students to begin in a world not yet political where they can play and re-enact roles in the educational setting without the political consequences of the adult world (Bowen-Moore, 1989). Mistakes can be made in the educational setting while still being guided by amor mundi, or the love of the world. Carrying the weight of their stories, children come into the midst of the classroom, of the teacher, and of the Other to confront their Self at the crossroads of these paths. Through contact and dialogue with the world and the Other, primary natality builds a lens of possibility for transformation from which children may gaze at the world within the classroom setting.

For children in the margin especially, natality offers hope to (re)-envision their Self in the world and transforms their stories to imagine a world greater than their own. Arendt’s primary natality enables children to practice in the world without the consequences of the world. Within this pedagogical setting, children are able to reflect and (re)-find their stories through a healing narrative. In this way, primary natality embodies the offerings of narrative as healer allowing children the space to find their Self without judgment.

Natality, Levinson (2001) acutely points out in her article titled “The Paradox of Natality,” both inspires action inherent in humanity’s nature to begin, but is also paradoxically belated in the sense that we are continually born into a world that has already begun without us. The old is perpetually amidst the new as children are born as natals into an old world and must negotiate their newness within the world’s preexistent histories and stories. As such, Levinson (2001) underlines the vital
process of self-creation for children as a “second birth” to “respond, react, and reconfigure” themselves to assuage the belatedness they feel in the world (p. 16-17). Within education, teachers as the adults in children’s lives must facilitate a space where they are able to understand their belatedness without feeling paralyzed by it. Children must negotiate, then, this “third space,” a term Arendt borrows from Homi Bhabha and recalls as the “gap between past and future” (cited in Levinson, 2001, p. 29).

If children are to straddle the past and future by embracing their natality as well as their belatedness, they must also open themselves up for self-inquiry after their initial acknowledgement of primary natality. The hope of primary natality first offers children a space to transform and heal their Self and story through reflection without political consequences. Arendt’s further detailed space between past and future next allows children to then thoughtfully examine their Self before transformation may occur. This echoes the work of narrative inquiry to create a site for meaning-making and reflection with intention. Narrative inquiry, though perhaps not a defined intention of Arendt’s, provides a familiar position from which to engage children’s belatedness and primary natality through narrative. Through storying their belatedness, children may come to recognize the world in which they were born. Yet, the act of their story still exercises their natality.

Returning to Bowen-Moore’s (1989) deconstruction of Arendt’s theories, political natality marks the fullest realization of natality’s capacity to begin, moving action from the realm of “the nursery” (p. 42) into a world of political consequences. The world of politics, for Arendt, coincides with freedom and an obligation to a community in which members commit to plurality and amor mundi. Arendt’s movement to political natality, born from primary natality, recalls another familiar lens reflecting Freire, hooks, and Appiah. Whether it is named Arendt’s natality, Freire’s dialogue and praxis, hooks’ engaged pedagogy or transgression, or Appiah’s cosmopolitanism, these authors have all established the liberating conditions of true humanity as associated with plurality and the inclusion of alternate views. Importantly amongst the
acceptance of differences is the thread of humanity binding our obligations to one another to act communally for the love of the world.

To inspire love of the world, children must begin to write their belated texts into the fabric of an old scroll. They must insert this narrative into the world before they can fully see themselves as part of the world. According to Hill (1979), storytelling embodies Arendt’s conditions of natality by enabling children to author themselves in a narrative home to overcome their “strangeness” (p. 288) in the world. The imagination of story carries the possibility of reconciling oneself with one’s own story, as well as relating to the world by humanizing it.

Through discovering this story, Arendt declares, we learn to be human. The shape of the story, the amplification of certain parts, the angles adopted, and the voices revealed are elements chosen by the author to relay an experience of the story that can have the effect of transformation, an invention which is truthful and telling, but not mundane in its meticulous reporting. The loyalty for the author is in the faithful emotion and humanity of story.

Teacher as Natal

As children enter belatedly into an old world, inserting their story requires guidance from adults to create a space for beginning. This role belongs to the teacher in a child’s educative space. To exemplify the role of the teacher, hooks (1994b) uses Vietnamese Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, to speak of a great teacher:

When you [the teacher] come and stay one hour with us, you bring that milieu…It is as though you bring a candle into the room. The candle is there; there is a kind of light-zone you bring in. When a sage is there and you sit near him, you feel light, you feel peace. (p. 56)

The milieu Hanh brings forth is what hooks (1994b) interprets as engaged pedagogy. The milieu of engaged pedagogy empowers students through acknowledging the value of their voices, but also concurrently empowers teachers. In the journey of asking students to

(Aura, 2015).
become vulnerable in sharing their stories, hooks contends teachers must also risk vulnerability to meet their students at pedagogical intersections. Cohen and Bai (2012) quote Buber, a Jewish philosopher: “all actual life is encounter” (p. 260). Encounter involves a meeting point through which the engagers see each other and must face the person within this space. The space of meeting is vibrant with potential. The most transformative quality of teaching, then, is not in the transaction of knowledge, but in the encounter of people removed of authority in sharing storied experiences. Since “we teach who we are” (Palmer cited in Cohen & Bai, 2012, p. 263), engaged pedagogy necessitates that the teacher is also a learner committed to her own self-actualization along with her students. To help others heal, she must first self-heal.

As a learner, Haig-Brown (2008) asserts, the teacher has a responsibility to pass on what has been learned to truly practice Arendt's most realized form of natality, political natality, and Freire’s pedagogical praxis. This passage entails making manifest the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual realms of “living in relation” (p. 13). “Being a teacher,” hooks (1994b) reminds us, “is being with people” (p. 165).

The Seven Ages of Teaching
And so the story of the seven ages of teaching goes:
The first age captures primary zeal
Eager to receive a “dog's breakfast”
Inexperience does not waver our eagerness
Degree in English, but we'll teach PE!
Six preps and weekend marking
sets the second age of sophomore grind
We begin to cut out our partying friends
For individuals more conducive
to Monday mornings.

The third age sees the end of a
temporary contract, loss of familiar faces
and setting to zero.

Placement at a new school prepares us
for the fourth age
of new application and resiliency.

Stability finds sweet justice in the fifth age
When other teachers no longer mistake us
for a student
And even students we don't teach
Know us by name.

As our roots find grounding
We are shaken, in the sixth age
by adolescent dissonance
We no longer share pop culture.
The latest rapper names sound like diseases
And clothing trends look more like circus wear.

The last age finds us wistful
And we know when the time comes to pass on
Our duty to another answering the call.

(Aura, 2013).
Chapter Three
Methodology, Methods, Analysis

Methodology

Work from the margin necessitates the methodological lens of critical pedagogy and narrative inquiry, the two methodologies used in this study, to open up dialogue and borders between different power relations, hegemonic influences and perceptions of the mainstream status quo, and alternate perspectives. As a methodological frame, critical pedagogy addresses inequalities within social structures and evaluates the role of education in either preserving or dismantling these inequalities. In its dealings with social inequalities and inequities, as well as oppression and dominance, critical pedagogy grows from an inherently political disposition of questioning the effects of dominant structures and imagining alternate views for a more liberatory world.

In outlining critical pedagogy as a methodology for Social Justice and Activism, DeLeon (2007) identifies the essential role of schooling as an arena for various ideological implications. As such, schooling is political. Recalling primary and political natality, Hannah Arendt distinguishes between the child's pre-political world and the adult's political world; however, she recognizes schooling as a space that rehearses political roles and scenarios without “real” adult consequences. Critical pedagogy might argue that a child’s “pre-political” world is not void of real consequences since ideologies rehearsed in school can become lived ideologies of the world. When these ideologies within school perpetuate inequalities, inequality becomes the lived reality of the world.

Inherently political, critical pedagogy addresses oppressive conditions shaped, intentionally or unintentionally, through systemic structures cultivated through cultural capital (values, certain forms of knowledge), economics, ideology, and hegemony (DeLeon, 2007; Di Angelo, 2012). This methodology also explores liberatory practices such as: resistance, praxis (including reflection and dialogue) and consciousness. Borrowing from critical pedagogy, the work in this study...
attempts to amplify marginal student voices by addressing the conditions that create marginalization in schools and additionally uses narrative inquiry as possibility of liberating alternate voices and views through writing and story.

Marginalized students in alternate programs, as discussed earlier with Schonert-Reichl’s (2000) work with “at-risk” youth and terminology, have been indicated as greater risk for low economic status, physical and emotional abuse, poor health, pregnancy, low I.Q., low family connectedness, alienation, and academic failure. Political conditions of economics and cultural capital addressed in critical pedagogy reveal these conditions to be manifest of a culture in society and in schools that favours individual merit in success and similarly often places risk factors upon the individual as well. Adopting a critically pedagogical lens with narrative inquiry, the stories of the students in this study reveal the upstream struggle against mainstream school ideologies of student success and acknowledge marginal students’ idiosyncratic paths in discovering their own forms of success through story and writing. This journey includes moments of consciousness and resistance, other characteristics explored in critical pedagogy.

Of particular interest to this study, consciousness, or what Freire calls conscientization⁵, is the indispensable awareness that first must occur before the need for resistance and action can take place. In becoming aware of their own story – of pain, of struggle, of disengagement, of marginalization – students’ consciousness first brings awareness and healing to Self. Upon the recognition and understanding of their own story, students can then carry forth this healing and awareness to others through their duty to action after understanding. This duty is a commitment to humanity that one cannot ignore once one’s own healing through consciousness begins. Passing on humanity, in this sense, enables alternate views to continually be nurtured at each intersecting meeting of voices in dialogue.

A means to fuel the course of action is the sharing of story. Once one’s own consciousness has been realized, it is difficult not to extend this awakening to others in some way. One perspective to facilitate action through the work of critical pedagogy lends itself to

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⁵ conscientization is a term used by Paulo Freire in Pedagogy of the Oppressed to refer to the awareness gained in realizing the oppressed conditions by which people can then act genuinely through praxis to become Subjects of history, rather than objects of history.
narrative inquiry. Denton-Borhaug and Jasper (2014), Gosselin (2011) and Downey (2015) are authors who have observed the power of using story and memoir to access consciousness in life through a critically pedagogical lens. Using memoir as a personal story to touch the Self opens up spaces for students to uncover the forces of marginalization in their own struggles, as well as situate them amidst larger mainstream society or culture. What this also enables is a safe space through which students can first explore and question these conditions before they are ready to politically take action.

“Counterstories,” as these authors refer to them, are methods that straddle both critical pedagogy and narrative inquiry methodologies. Counterstories, as the act of countering suggests, exist to subvert preconceived notions structured and cultivated by the dominant stories society tells. Intentions of countering these dominant stories, however, are not to replace them, but rather to continually interrupt the status quo to offer alternative views and ways of understanding. Counterstories and dominant stories need to co-exist with each other, not eradicate each other. Through counterstories, students in the margin exist with their own voices to tell their own stories. Counterstories, as such, are not easily digested into prepackaged components and often exist and leave the reader in tension. Thus, is the reality of the margin without censorship.

Teachers working in the margin from alternate programs live in counterstories. Downey (2015) writes of teachers working in “failing inner city schools” (p. 15) where preconceived notions of the margin also implicate teacher identities in its “failing” conditions. Teachers, in the process of working in the margin, cannot, themselves, remain neutral even if they attempt to be. Teacher stories can transform students in their presence in ways beyond the curriculum could measure. Revered UCLA basketball coach, John Wooden (2001), insightfully quotes, "No written word, no spoken plea can teach our youth what they should be. Nor all the books on all the shelves -- it's what the teachers are themselves." Since critical pedagogy is political, those dwelling within counterstories are also politically affected, whether they intend to be or not. Narrative inquiry, when woven with critical recognition, can transform the margin and the minds of its inhabitants.
pedagogy, is also political in dealing with stories of consciousness and resistance. To evoke Appiah’s cosmopolitanism once more, the intersections at which teacher and student meet alters both individuals and Freire might add that the teacher learns from the student in mutual dialogue just as much as the student may learn from the teacher. To ignore the teacher story in this transaction is to negate the full meaning of dialogue and cosmopolitanism. As such, my story of Self cannot be absent from the readings of student stories; they were already affected when we met before their written form.

Methods

Critical pedagogy and narrative inquiry are methodologies used with the study of and within the margin because they work to examine power relations, conditions of inequality, and forces of transformation. Methods most aligned with critical pedagogy and narrative inquiry to examine these conditions include interviews and narrative reflection. These methods were utilized in this study as potential means to open up spaces for former students to reflect upon their past work in the alternate program and determine their own course in writing.

Contacts for students are kept within the alternate program’s administrative contact list, which I used to recruit former students from the alternate program. With school administration approval, I used the program’s contact list to connect with potential participants from graduating years 2011 to 2014 via phone and email. Considering the inclusion of narrative reflection and the reviewing of past student work, I chose the most recent graduates with thoughts that they may still be in possession of their school portfolio work and have better recall of these experiences. Initially, I compiled a contact list of fourteen former students with attention to gathering participants to represent diversity among: ethnic backgrounds, ages, economic status, genders, family structures, academic success in school, and school involvement in extracurricular activities.
From the list of fourteen contacts, I chose to contact nine former students who would reflect the diversity I hoped for in the study. Six former students replied and these first six responders reflected the range of diversity for the study and were thus chosen. Three participants were female and three were male. One participant graduated on time in 2012; two graduated a year delayed in 2013; two graduated on time in 2014; and one participant did not complete high school graduation in 2014. There was a range of ethnic representation from the participants, which included: East Indian, Caucasian, and Aboriginal from Dene and Metis backgrounds. Varying family situations from participants included three from homes with both parents, two from single-parent homes, and one adopted from previous foster homes. Three came from financially stable homes and three came from homes where financial instability was known. Three participants were known recreational drug users; one participant was vocally against using drugs; one had successfully been sober for more than three years; and it was unknown whether the last participant was a recreational or experimental drug user. Varying forms of physical and verbal abuse have been discreetly discussed with three of the participants, but due to the sensitive nature of the topic they cannot be confirmed. Two participants come from homes with parental drug addictions and one participant comes from a home with parental disability. Unfortunately, one participant failed several times to meet over a three-week period to submit proper consent forms and had to be dropped from the study. Thus, the study was reduced to five participants.

Of the five participants selected for the study, each owned an idiosyncratic path in coming to terms with their past and recognizing its role in shaping their storied future. The open-ended nature of the interviews, conducted one-on-one, allowed participants to freely reflect upon their experiences within the alternate program in a safe space. Discussions were structured to first allow participants to ruminate upon their journey in the alternate program, including their academic, as well as social and emotional experiences. As their former grade 11 teacher in the alternate program, I held close relationships with the students and was often witness to some of their personal struggles. As such, the initial
blend of one-on-one and group interviews intended within the study remained intimately one-on-one interviews due to the sensitive issues brought up within the discussions; some issues were too personal to be exposed within a group setting for the short amount of time dedicated to the study.

After discussing participants’ experiences within and outside school during their high school years, I gave attention and time to reviewing written work participants produced during their time in the alternate program. Written pieces reviewed by participants and myself included poems, essays, journal entries, creative writing, short stories, and letters. Elements of narrative inquiry appeared in reviewing participants’ past written work to breathe life back into their past storied Selves. This time, though, they had the advantageous eye of their “future” Selves in reading the narratives of their “past” Selves.

In discussions with four of the participants, each was surprised with the memories and stories brought back by their writing. Surprise ranged from embarrassment to pride in reviewing the emotions and ideas written from their grade 11 to 12 years. For two of the participants, this writing was generated three years earlier and for the other two participants, who were newly graduated, their writing was produced more recently in the previous year. Unfortunately, for the fifth participant, his work was lost and opportunity to review his written work was unavailable. Consequently, discussions about his writing were organically composed upon memory.

Through narrative inquiry in this study, self-reflection occurred at two intervals in participants’ lives. First, teachers construct written assignments within the alternate program to enable students to “bring themselves” to the curriculum, to experience a lived curriculum Aoki would suggest. Working from the margin, alternate program instructors understand students carry stories rich with struggle, tragedy, resilience, bravery, and heart beyond and above the prescribed curriculum learning outcomes. As such, assignments cater to students’ personalized experiences and allow them to reflect upon their choices, values, and life events to move them towards awareness and self-empowerment. In one example, students’ personal stories of struggle are embedded within the
The environment ceases to be environment, and in its place comes into being a pedagogic situation, a lived site pregnantly alive. Within this site, Miss O soon finds that her pedagogic situation is a living in tensionality – a tensionality that emerges, in part, from in-dwelling in the difference between two curricula: the curriculum-as-plan and the lived curriculum (Aoki, 1993, p. 257).

Social Studies 11 curriculum through assignments themed around “identity through struggle” as related to Aboriginal and Immigrant identities within Canada. Even within a curriculum typically perceived of as “objective” and disparate from personal identities, assignments in Math 11 Apprenticeship and Workplace, under the Financial Services curriculum content, include allowing students to choose from saving to start their own business, planning a travel trip, or saving for a car or school. Seemingly simple, these personalized assignments are goal-driven and allow students to explore their own values in rationalizing their decisions and envisioning a future of possibility within their choices. This first instance of reflection provides students with the initial opening for consciousness and situating themselves within their present.

The second moment of possible narrative awakening occurred during the study when participants, former students, reread their past work and reflected upon their old Selves, situating themselves within the Future by reminiscing about the past and experiencing the timed space between the two. Discussions included questioning of: perceived changes, memories of the event of emotions, results from the event, high school experiences, family and peer relations, possible different approaches, process of writing, ease of writing, and feelings after writing about the events or emotions. Often, discussions were organically moved towards participants’ present and past lives, as well as my own. Thus, is the nature of spontaneous intersections of interviewer and participant, teacher and student, past and present.

The first interviews with each former student ended with an inquiry centred on writing for each participant to undertake. Inquiries from participants included writing modes that ranged from poetry to investigative essay writing to journaling. One other participant wished to outline a writing workshop, for alternate youth and youth in care, similar in structure and purpose to AA (alcoholics anonymous) and NA (narcotics anonymous) meetings he attended. Another participant also wished to record ideas around a writing workshop for high school students, however, for different reasons of improving technical writing and receiving support for improving written expression.
Second interviews were scheduled one month after the initial interview to allow some time for each participant to work on his/her written inquiry. During second interviews, the writing process, challenges, motivation, outcomes, and drafts of written work were discussed. In two of the second interviews, I spent time with the participants to write together on a spontaneous theme grown from the discussions. In both of these interviews, we used poetry as expression.

Over the course of almost two months, I met with each participant twice in two interviews spaced a month apart as detailed earlier. Interviews took place at the school in participants’ former grade 11 classroom or at a local restaurant at the mall to meet the convenience and comfort level of each participant. Each interview was approximately one to one and a half hours long and included recollections of students’ past experiences in and out of school, narrative reflection in reading past work, and spontaneous joint writing ventures between participant and interviewer from an emerging theme from the dialogue. In the time we spent together, our paths curved to meet old stories with new eyes to build new dialogue from participants’ reflections. Although the course of our meetings did not culminate in “final” productions of participant work and ideas, they did allow us to reconnect and dwell in writing as an impetus for healing, creativity, and transformation.

The collaborative and natural progression of the interviews and written inquiries opens up space for participants to self-reflect and co-lead as mutual partners in dialogue. Through mutual leadership, participants “cease to be objects” (Baum, MacDougall & Smith, 2006, p. 854) within the study, but rather are empowered through viewing their written past and determining the nature of their own written future. By taking a narrative glance at their past, they are able to not only situate their old Selves, but possibly reconfigure their future Selves by re-interpreting significant events and emotions written in their lives.
Analysis

Themes for the study organically emerged out of discussions with former alternate program students. Thus, the themes were not named and data not categorized until after discussions had been transcribed and re-read. Naturally, by adopting the lenses of critical pedagogy and narrative inquiry, many themes emerged to reflect the methodologies’ foci. Other themes emerging from the data unrelated to the methodologies will also be discussed in Chapter Four.

After all interviews were conducted with the participants, I transcribed interviews and saved them electronically. The data includes a total of ten transcribed interviews with each interview averaging one hour in length; each participant has two transcribed interviews for a total of approximately ten hours. After re-reading all transcriptions, the following themes discussed in the dialogues emerged from the data:

1. self-reflection
2. writing as healing and release of emotions
3. writing community
4. writing as an outlet for exercising and pushing creative boundaries
5. writing to explore investigative issues
6. writing to improve academic written expression
7. writing transformation
8. writing reflecting marginalization and challenges.

Next, themes were highlighted and colour-coded within the transcripts as follows with examples from the data provided:
Table 1: Writing themes emerging from participants – Examples of participant responses categorized under eight emerging themes. Names have been changed and pseudonyms included have been personally chosen by participants.
Discussions with all participants began with self-reflection and commentary on their high school experiences. These remarks were highlighted under the yellow theme of “self-reflection.” Many of these reflections included commentary on participants’ academic and social experiences in and out of school, including teachers, classes, course work, friends, health, drug use, and family among other issues.

The theme of “writing as healing” emerged when participants shared how writing helped them work through difficult events and feel a sense of emotional relief.

“Writing community” appeared as a theme when participants revealed they felt a difference between writing in private and writing with/or sharing with others through which the latter gave them a sense of community and companionship.

Participants mentioned writing as a formal educative tool in creative and academic expression. These remarks were divided and categorized under the three themes of: “writing as an outlet for creative expression,” “writing to explore investigative issues,” and “writing to improve academic expression.” Writing was seen by participants as a way to communicate creative ideas and emotions through experimenting with forms, rhythms, topics, and structures. For example, one participant recalled an “accidental” short story he constructed in which important elements in the story, such as the protagonist, setting and character traits, were randomly drawn for him. From these assigned elements, he constructed a creative short story. This experience helped him to push his own creative boundaries to develop a story, but also ultimately, as he realized later, unleash his own Self within the protagonist.

The theme of writing to explore investigative issues, complementary to “writing as creative expression,” emerged from a participant who saw writing as a means to explore non-fiction issues within her community. She believed writing was a medium she could use to accurately and confidently represent her thoughts, rather than expressing her ideas verbally. She often felt misunderstood in conversations, unable to explain herself accurately, and preferred the patience and space of a written text to convey and share her opinions.
Another instance where the theme of writing was considered an educative tool was as a way to improve academic expression. Participants felt the process of writing, especially the practice of constant editing in the alternate program’s Writer's Workshop⁶, was essential in forming academic work, as well as their personal stories, in and out of school. Students understood their work would often be edited more than once before a “final” draft would be created for their “textbook⁷” portfolios. The continual editing process within the program shapes written text with each edit as a sculptor continues to shape clay on a wheel until it is complete.

Finally, the themes of “writing transformation” and “writing reflecting marginalization and challenges” unfolded as participants began to connect their writing and writing process with important milestones within their lives. All participants also revealed a desire to pass on their transformative experiences in some way to others, whether it was to create literature to share their story, form workshops and gatherings for writing, or volunteering at different institutions for youth in care or the homeless. Some of these moments were previously realized and some materialized as the interviews progressed.

The path of writing often involves unexpected turn-offs and hidden alleys. As my former students began to see their stories unfold in their writing, I also saw myself in their words. The inevitable journey of writing sees us intertwined within its web of words, whether we desire for it or intend for it or not. Our known or unknown Selves are revealed through the process of self-reflection in narrative inquiry and critical pedagogy. In exercising these two methodologies for this study, it is difficult, rather near impossible, to escape the impact these participants’ storied Selves would have on me and on revealing my own storied Self.

Participants critically reflected on the ways in which they were alternate, essentially first reflected in their placement in an alternate

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⁶ The philosophy behind the Writer’s Workshop includes practice of immediate editing and proofreading to allow students instant feedback to reflect upon their work. Editing includes questioning from the teacher to think deeply about a topic and synthesizing content with personal experiences. Proofreading includes working to improve upon technical language, such as grammar, sentence structures, and choice of diction. This process not only aims to improve students’ academic literacy, it also fosters deeper understanding of content through connections with students’ lived events.

⁷ Students create textbooks in the program, one for each academic subject. Assignments, after having gone through the writer's workshop, are designed and organized into personalized project pages that are bound into a book at the end of the semester. Students, then, have personalized academic texts they have authored.
program within school. Many of their own stories of marginalization, whether they named it as such or not, reconnected me to my own past where pushes and pulls of marginalization shaped the presence I am able to hold today. In their writing on critical pedagogy, McClellan and Johnson (2014) refer to this as a collision of identities. Notably, this collision of sorts is a mutually impactful force where there is no authority of expertise between teacher and student, interviewer and participant. Identities are affected by encounters with one another and continue to be influenced by the Other over its course and even after their course has ended. In this sense, the teacher’s positionality, as Di Angelo (2012) names this quality in critical pedagogy, is carefully examined and her identity discovered to be not so distant from that of her students’. The collision of identities here pushes self-reflection within oneself individually, but also self-reflection upon one’s multiplicity as woven with others’ identities.

Encounters of colliding identities also occur in the written form. In the study, I reviewed participants’ past work with them, as well as produced written work with two participants in the duration of the interviews. These narratives, while providing participants with written experiences described under the eight themes named, also provide access to and expose my storied Self in my relation to their texts. The storied Self, according to Richardson (cited in Sparkes, 2002), is a “highly personalized and revealing text” (p. 73) where authors’ lived experiences are vulnerably shared. Along with exposing the emotions, spirit, and physical bodies of their Selves, authors also compose narratives of morality, ethics, politics, compassion and empathy, showing us how to live in life with their words (Sparkes, 2002). Working together with narrative inquiry, critical pedagogy pushes these narratives to connect author and reader by acknowledging the inevitable and mutual affect of this narrative relationship. Certainly, the “child’s history matters,” (Wiebe & Yallop, 2010, p. 186), but “the teacher’s history also matters” (p. 186). We cannot affect students without understanding that our students will affect us. Reading and creating participants’ narrative Selves invite not only their gaze upon their past and present, but also

“Aim what I see. I am how I see. And when I see them, I will likely reflect upon what it means for me to experience ethnicity in British Columbia as a human being endeavoring to become more human. I reflect upon it as a unique life in many ways, at times distorted, but nevertheless a life which on occasions by my very acting within them, I tried to give meaning to my being, doing my damnedest in my own personal becoming”

mine on their narrative and our collective glance upon the third identity we create together.

Formerly described in Chapter 2 with Lewis Mehl-Madrona’s (2005) text, *Coyote Wisdom: Power of Story in Healing*, narrative identities in communion with others is a form of narrative medicine. The journey of healing is not travelled in solitude. Stories hold the power to reach farther and wider than a single verbal utterance, able to augment its author’s voice by acting as a medium of greater amplification. Through story, I have connected with my students’ lives on a more intimate level than if it were spoken to me in person where the limitations of perceived authority and professional boundaries exist. Through story, I can unveil my own vulnerabilities and expose my past, which continually changes as it touches new narratives. Through story, my continually changing past discovers new alternatives and new natal beginnings with each student narrative it encounters.

In our acts of reading, and in some instances writing, each other’s narratives – whether in poetic form, short story or essay – healing inescapably appeared to touch all of us in the dialogues of our meetings. By inadvertently patching up wounds and sores through their writing, my students also wrote part of the path for my own healing in the reading and sharing of their work.

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*(Xavier, transcript, November 17th, 2014).*
Chapter Four
Discussion and Possibility

“We are all walk with a heavy sense of the world, treading the earth with past and future alternating with each footstep. Our bodies in motion continually negotiate the space in between. Children, especially, are vulnerable to the heavy steps they take, looking forward with insecurities and sometimes weighted by a past they did not choose. Along the way, I have stumbled upon my role as an educator in the alternate setting in providing a space where negotiating past and future does not compromise possibility, transformation, and hope. Children of the margin, especially, need a space to reflect upon their stories of struggle and pain in order to experience transformation that will allow them to grip their futures with confidence and full humanity. Much of the time, this path starts with healing.

When students arrive at their “new” beginnings in the alternate program, they exercise natality in its primary sense, to echo Arendt, confronting their belatedness in this world within a class setting. It is our moral duty, then, as educators to ensure this space does not discourage this “meeting” of Selves and collision of identities within their personal and contextual histories. The climate we create shapes the path of praxis students take, or do not take, in their futures.

Working in the alternate program, in the margin, has continually shaped my path. My course of travel transforms its shape with each new

(A weighted past means a foreclosed future (Meyer & Fels, 2013, p. 307).)

“Silenced. We fear those who speak about us, who do not speak to us and with us. We know what it is like to be silenced. We know that the forces that silence us, because they never want us to speak, differ from the forces that say speak, tell me your story. Only do not speak in a voice of resistance. Only speak from that space in the margin that is a sign of deprivation, a wound, an unfulfilled longing. Only speak your pain. This is an intervention. A message from that space in the margin that is a site of creativity and power, that inclusive space where we recover ourselves, where we move in solidarity to erase the category colonized/colonizer. Marginality as site of resistance. Enter that space.” (hooks, 1990, p. 152)
meeting and intersection with student stories. Reaching out to recruit participants was a matter of opening up these stories again, often with their impressions still a distinct imprint on my path. Responses came quickly to the call of participating in my study discussing the program and their reflections on their own paths in writing. There were, however, promises of participation that were unfulfilled. Thus, is the instability of lives in the margin, with cycles of challenges often repeating themselves after the structure of school is gone. Within the time frame of this study, five participants were readily committed and able to attend all the interview sessions scheduled. Their reflections and stories make up the data in this study and serve as a renewed bridge in understanding the space within and between margin and mainstream. With monikers they've chosen themselves, these are their narratives.

The Sound of Loudness

“[…] the past conveys significance, the present conveys value, and the future conveys intention. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 9)

Taize

When I met Taize three years ago, I was told she would be a “wild card.” Most of the students we interviewed for entry into the program expressed sincere interest in the alternate program and commitment to its three standards around attendance, completion of assignments, and appropriateness of behaviour. We conduct interviews for potential entry into the program, but unknown to the student, we accept every applicant unless there might be a conflict with another student. The interview allows a time for us to meet the students and be acquainted with the first impressions of their story. Our administrator was uncertain whether Taize would comply with any of the standards, even with the knowledge that the program was perhaps her last chance at high school graduation in the district.

Taize came in and let her mother do most of the talking. She sat quietly and answered questions succinctly, avoiding personal questions, such as “What was grade 8 like for you?” with “I don’t know” or “Fine.”
I would go there and no one would talk to me. I'd be like, I don't wanna be here, I just want to sit in the back room now.

(Taize, transcript, September 19th, 2014).

Overall, she was quiet and unassuming, but strong, unlike the many stories we had heard about her. I taught her older brother, who was a well-liked member of the program and on every teacher’s “good” list. He was a charming student, a favourite of many teachers, and described as a “bright” student who “wasn’t working towards his full potential.” The great discrepancy between expressed ability and potential ability is a common report of students in our alternate program. We were unsure, however, whether that potential was initially there with Taize. Her eyes were distant, but not empty. They were eyes with deep stories. We knew we needed to rein them in and catch those fleeting stories before they vanished. We accepted her into the program not knowing what to expect. Her mother was grateful and did not fail to continually let us know.

During class, Taize often kept to herself with large headphones on to seemingly shield herself from the rest of the world. Though she often tried to conceal herself, entering and leaving the class with the slightest footsteps, all those around her felt her quiet presence. Her desire to be reclusive only further fueled others’ curiosity about her, gazing at her from afar with reverence for her philosophical quality, but shying away from approaching her through intimidation. It was not until our short story and poetry unit that I realized Taize lived her life through poetry. Her written words breathed sentimental life into a figure that had long dismissed the world as cruel abandonment. Her story came in fragmented pieces of poetry she shared with me through assignments or a journal she had kept. Written assignments were not a challenge for her and other students often looked to her for the “right” answer in class. By the end of the year, Taize received the Top Academic Student Award in the program and not one student was surprised. She graduated with honours by the end of her grade 12 year.

When I met her at the restaurant for our first discussion for the study, Taize looked healthy and enthusiastic. It had been three years since I last saw her. I gave her a big hug and we began by talking about her job and where she had moved. It seemed I had reconnected with her story, but skipped a few chapters along the way. We spent the initial part of the interview filling in those chapters. Our discussion curved in
capricious directions including Taize’s drug use, decision to be vegan, her younger sister, her brother, her mother, and the ambiguous “incident” that pushed her to run away from home in grade 8. She spoke quickly and energetically to my probes about past experiences and writing. She recalled hating attending school and no one talking to her in classes. “I don’t think anything can benefit mainstream,” Taize added, “I think if you’re in mainstream and you can do it, that’s awesome, but I couldn’t because it was impossible” (Taize, transcript, September 19th, 2014). Taize’s poetry was her voice and words her companion when none was around. “I’m ok with writing my poetry,” Taize reflected, “but I feel like, if no one reads it, what’s the point of writing?” Her writing and voice, even if she first asserted its privacy, admittedly desired to be shared and to be in company with others.

Attending the alternate program allowed her to be seen and heard. Her “voice,” though, was a written one. She was no longer invisible. During our discussion in the study, I felt her voice, now audible in person and in writing, represented a young mind angry at the world’s corruption, wanting to right its wrongs. Her old soul captured stories so empathetically you’d think each pain in the world was truly her own. To engage her zealous energy, we decided to write about revolutions for our next meeting.

In our second discussion, Taize admitted she had trouble staying on the topic of a revolution and wound up writing about an anti-revolution when she felt like an “insignificant human being” (Taize, transcript, November 7th, 2014). She also revealed she was embarking on a joint written venture with her partner in authoring a poetry anthology. Each was to contribute 101 poems. She admitted to going as far as allocating time at home where she and her partner would find a space to write. When asked how her writing process starts, Taize described it as a sensation that happens in a moment where she thinks, “I gotta write now!” An emotion often presupposes the idea Taize takes on to lead her in writing. Fuelled by an emotion, Taize also feels the sharing of her writing creates a different experience of the writing. It does not change the purpose of writing, but rather, it gathers the emotions that are released in the writing in a bind of contact and relationship with another.
This contact retrieves a certain relief of exposure for its writer, whether she is aware of it or not.

Though she may not have looked fondly upon the structure of schooling, I’d like to think Taize found a sense of home in her poetry. She expressed what she did not say in the written word and understood that without alternate programs, marginalized students would be “homeless.”

**Kaileen**

The first week of school in the program three years ago, Kaileen sat in class attentive and shy. She looked young for her age and had a glimmer of curiosity with a work ethic many teachers hope for in a student. Her voice was barely audible when she bravely contributed her thoughts in class discussions. Over the next few months into the school year, Kaileen soon found herself embroiled in a series of peer-related conflicts in the class that revealed her still fledgling desire to be liked by her peers, masked by her feigned maturity in her content of discussion and behaviour. This was a repeated pattern from her grade 9 year, which ended with her in the library alone most days and not wanting to attend school. Despite what others may have thought about her, she was still a fragile child who carried a heavy story she was not ready to disclose. She never did disclose that story to me.

In our first meeting of my study, Kaileen appeared enthusiastic and eager. She gleamed confidently and spoke with carefully chosen words, like one rehearsing for a coveted position. She openly spoke about her love of writing and desire to challenge herself intellectually through this medium in its various forms, including poetry, essays, creative writing, and non-fiction. Together, we revisited Kaileen’s poetry, non-fiction writing, and short stories from grade 11 and 12. In (re-) reading a piece through which she expressed much violence, Kaileen was instantly mortified, confronting her Self from three years previous. To assuage her embarrassment, I discussed the significance of the emotion that drives the writing and not the literal intention of what is written on paper. She recognized the deep growth she had cultivated in living her past challenges, almost unable to recognize the words of this
seemingly much younger wounded Self. Words, in writing, were an extension of her truths, where, in person, they seemed to be misunderstood and adversary to her peers. Kaileen relayed this perception in a metaphorical poem she wrote titled, “I am a Bible” with statements such as, “I am full of wisdom, strength, and integrity. Yet, I am seen as a waste […] I don’t mean to fight, I don’t mean to hurt. My words get twisted […] Everything I was, now seen as a sin” (Kaileen, transcript, September 23rd, 2014). She often retreated back to the written word to find a space of acceptance and clarity. Kaileen also observed the transformative quality of fiction, allowing her the freedom to create characters shaped after “someone [she’d] want to be, someone courageous.”

At the end of the first discussion in my study with Kailleen, she was eager to propose an investigative writing assignment, rather than a fictional piece, one in which she could explore controversial issues around her community in writing. She seemed ready to confidently share her written intellectual opinions with others, using her present state of clarity and self-assurance. Through writing, she was ready to intellectually and emotionally engage with the Other in a healthy encounter that did not compromise her own being. When with fiction she created characters to embody someone she wished she could be, she seemed now able to portray herself in writing with non-fiction authorship.

In the time between our first and second meeting in the study, Kaileen sent me several drafts of her writing and we worked back and forth to refine her non-fiction piece on language controversies within her community. This process was a continuation of the Writer’s Workshop, which Kaileen would have been very familiar with in the alternate program. She voiced her appreciation for the continual and immediate editing process that forced her to (re-)view her writing in different ways before a “final” piece was written. The act of (re-)viewing forces upon us a reflection of Self where the gap between the first and second drafts captures more readily changes for improvement. The space between is the space of growth and change, without which there is no insight. Kaileen also observed the temporal allowance of the

Well, when you speak, it's kind of just like, it's at the moment. You can't really go back and think deeply about it. With a pencil and a paper, you can just, you can take your time. Like, usually when you speak, somebody's waiting for you.

(Kaileen, transcript, November 10th, 2014).

I am a Bible
People follow me, read me
Deceive me, and leave me
I have written guidelines, written truths
Written lies, all with muse
I am full of wisdom, strength and integrity
Yet I am seen as a waste, a catastrophic denial
I don’t mean to fight, I don’t mean to hurt
My words get twisted, my work deserted
I never say anything – people assume
I never want to kill, damage or ruin
Turned around, my knowledge is smeared
Lost and defied, I slowly disappear
A new age has dawned – no longer needed
They no longer believe, they no longer agree
I am a bible, written by a stranger
A clever judgment, no longer appealed
I am a bible, a once good thing
Everything I was, now seen as a sin

(Kaileen, class assignment, 2011).
written word, where deep meditation can come about reviewing the written word when fleeting verbal utterances quickly dissipate. Having a written permanence to her ideas seemed important to Kaileen, who still longed to be heard.

**John**

John joined the program for only one year in his last year of high school. He advocated for himself to enter the alternate program because his brother had entered it previously. He was social and didn't seem to need much guidance with peer relations and home life. One of his close friends, however, struggled with addictions after his expulsion from school. We spoke with reservation and heavy hearts about this friend whom he saw now and again, but chooses to “stay away from” (John, transcript, October 9th, 2014). When asked why John didn't follow the same path, why he was able to make different choices, he remarked it was due to his strong family ties to his parents’ warnings and an uncle who was a police officer. He had a foundation that filled him with healthy options and created a cushion for any falls he may have had.

John came into the program with an intended desire to receive more support in his academics. He recognized the individualized attention offered within the alternate program and referred to mainstream as a “system” where he felt “shoved around.” Though I don’t recall John struggling with peer choices or adverse behaviour, he still felt he was “kept in line” in the program without a chance to slip into invisibility since teachers were with their students all blocks of the day, everyday. The close relations also extended amongst his classmates.

When asked if the occasional personality conflicts and bickering of the nature of being around the same strong personalities daily were worth it, John replied, “Yeah, totally. I wouldn’t change it.”

John admits his strengths and interests were not in writing and commented that poetry “wasn’t his thing.” He recognized, though, that writing was one of the ways through which community was built and writing was “self-therapy” for many students in the program. John’s need to self-express any trouble or angst was mediated by the strong adult presence in his life; thus, his focus was on writing as a vocational tool to
efficiently extend his skills. When asked what he would want for future alternate program students, he believed a writing workshop would allow them to achieve their vocational goals as he had experienced, allowing them to catch up to their potential ability and prepare them for after high school.

Xavier

Sitting quietly in the room with his shoulders hunched low, Xavier came to the introductory interview for the alternate program three years ago with his foster mother, who had recently adopted him. He was a boy with deeply dark eyes who looked older than grade 11 age. Our administrator openly informed us of Xavier’s severe depression and medication. I read in his file later on, and voiced by Xavier, himself, when I came to know him better, he was also diagnosed with ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) and FAS (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome). He often sat in class with to staying after school, often taking double the amount of time for his work because his mind needed to organize. It didn't take long for Xavier to divulge of his past, including recollections of severe bouts of addiction, abuse, foster care, and violence. In his grade 11 year, he was finally one year sober and proudly brought his “year celebratory cake” to school.

In our first discussion for the study, he recalled his abusive father, addicted mother and older brother who introduced him to drugs at the age of eleven. By age thirteen, he had moved in and out of ministry care six times, moved foster homes fifteen times, and divided his time amongst three different family homes. He attended five different schools and dropped out of high school twice by grade 9 before finally attending our alternate program in grade 11 (Xavier, transcript, September 22nd, 2014). He recalled, at his lowest point, having psychotic episodes, extremely paranoid of his surroundings and believing radio songs were targeting him. Xavier, some might label, is an “at-risk” alternate student “who made it.” He has struggled with a range of marginalizing conditions – addictions, foster care, violence, abuse, and developmental disorders – and has willingly discussed his battle and victory against those obstacles.
Writing, he claims in our first discussion of this study, played a pivotal role in his healing and catharsis. Journaling and creative writing, specifically, have notably helped Xavier release feelings of anger, angst, and sorrow with his family’s past, as well as help to extend his understanding of Self through creative expression. Notably, Xavier comments that even in fiction writing there is “something of ourselves, even if it’s so small and minute and we don’t notice it.” Xavier and I read an accidental short story he wrote where important elements of the story, such as protagonist, setting and plot twist, were randomly assigned. He developed the elements into a thriller short story where the protagonist owns a restaurant with a haunting secret for his meat products. As Xavier re-reads the story, he picks out a statement, “I wish I had a partner in crime.” Looking back, he felt this line, though not pertinent to the plot, exposed his desire within the alternate program to have a companion with whom he could share his story and relate. He wrote himself into the protagonist and through this character expressed ideas he was not ready to share in his own reality.

At other times, journaling reveals to Xavier written evidence of his growth over time and even in the most difficult times, he forces himself to write. “Water,” Xavier explains, “is something we live with as humans, […] but if it sits there long enough it becomes stagnant and poisonous.” This analogy likens Xavier’s need to write for emotional release with a necessity in life; even water can become toxic when left to sit too long. Unacknowledged emotions can lie within, spurring the root of a toxic story.

Having been a part of numerous AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) and NA (Narcotics Anonymous) meetings, Xavier believes in the power of sharing story. Inspired by story segments in NA newsletters, story for Xavier is a written text. The relationship he is most comfortable with is the one he has “with the pen and paper.” Through this medium, Xavier reveals himself in a community with others in healing and camaraderie. If we can sit next to someone and know who he is, then we can open up as well (Xavier, transcript, September 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 2014). This is the beginning of community.
In our second discussion for the study, Xavier shares his dream of continuing the humanization he experienced by helping foster youth in care. We sketched out in words a workshop that could engage alternate youth, led by a focus to experiment with different types of writing. Where John’s vision of a writing workshop was to benefit students academically, Xavier’s would be a community of youth bonding over writing and sharing stories. The sharing, Xavier emphasized, was the crucial component of the workshop for youth to have an outlet for life’s challenges (Xavier, transcript, November 17th, 2014). Perhaps like him, they might see something in reflecting upon their written lives that passed too quickly in their lived realities.

*Jeavon*

In grade 10, Jeavon had been suspended several times for fights and smoking weed. This was a drastic change from the grade 8 student who was on the honour roll. Teachers and administrators were becoming increasingly concerned with Jeavon’s worsening drug use and violent anger. The alternate program was recommended to him and I remember Jeavon looking apathetic in the introductory interview two years ago. It seemed that he was “ending up” here because he had become “that bad.” His mother worried about what his entering the program might entail. Little was known about this alternate program and they were exhausting their last hopes, entrusting it could help Jeavon turn his life around.

In our first meeting for the study, Jeavon, now newly graduated, reflected upon his challenges at the end of elementary school when his father was diagnosed with ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig’s disease). By grade 9, he had “stopped caring” about school and “started drinking and smoking more” (Jeavon, transcript, September 24th, 2014). That was the same time his father was submitted to a wheelchair. He just “wanted to do his own thing,” which included turning towards peers, smoking, and drinking.

Jeavon’s tall and thick stature walked slowly in the hallways. He sat distantly by himself in class the first few weeks and I questioned whether anything would interest him in class. The personalized learning

*My dad…my dad being in a wheelchair. […]He got diagnosed when I was in grade 6 or 7.*

*What kind of things were you feeling at that time?*

*I think I didn’t care about anything. I wanted to do my own thing.*

*(Jeavon, transcript, September 24th, 2014).*
model of the program allowed many opportunities for Jeavon to discuss his pain and anger, (through poetry, creative writing, humanities issues around struggle and marginalization), but he never wrote about his family or personal life. He finally softened his demeanor when he began to socially connect with some friends in the program. I also noticed a sense of pride grow in Jeavon’s work when he received his grades at the end of the semester. Regaining his work ethic yielded the academic results he once knew.

Jeavon clearly identified the difference between mainstream and alternate schooling in his own experience. He recalled doing bare minimum for “50%” in mainstream assignments and didn’t recall an occasion where an editing system was in place for his work. Assignments would receive a mark and that would be it; with the lack of an editing process you “don’t really know what’s wrong,” he remarks. Like John and Kaileen, Jeavon recognized the Writer’s Workshop within the alternate program as a necessity to his “cultural capital,” a possession of literacy that enables him greater chances of educative success.

Further, the absence of an editing process cuts short the communicative space between reader and writer, limiting the dialogue a teacher may develop with her student through written assignments. In editing and proofreading Jeavon’s work, I continually wrote in the margins of his assignments thoughts on where his own personal story stands amidst the text. In what ways can you relate to this event? What would you have done differently if you were the protagonist? What values are most important to you? Describe a pivotal moment in your life. In his grade 12 year, Jeavon finally wrote about his father. During our discussions, we reviewed a poem Jeavon wrote titled, “Home as Self.” The task was to explore three different modes of home: home as a physical space, home as a person, and home as a feeling. For the first time, Jeavon expressed long-buried feelings in written form:

8 “Cultural capital” is a term Henry Giroux borrows from Pierre Bourdieu to designate a form of capital that allows individuals to change their social status, one of which is the literacy of a privileged group. Literacy, as a form of institutionalized cultural capital, truly allows individuals to engage with democratic dialogue and systems (Bourdieu, 2011, p. 82).
In the last few lines, Jeavon, himself, realizes that the act of expression leads one down a path that irreversibly connects to others along the way; he “can’t change because now [he’s] opened [his] mouth.” Though he prefers to keep his writing private, Jeavon sees that “most of the kids who come through [the program] have been through some kind of challenge that got them [there].” “Everyone,” Jeavon comments, “has his own demons. So, writing does get it.”

**Turn Up the Volume**

“My words don’t have the impact that writing does for some reason. It makes sense when I see it written in ink. It validates my feelings.” (Mayzes, November 2013, p. 9)

Stories of the margin took root in my practice as a teacher in the alternate program. My students voiced the value of the written voice in documenting their experiences in somehow making them “real.” As Xavier mentioned, the written story is evidence that the event occurred. It records a text from which its author can move and transform. The written story is also one that leaves a path of footprints for others to explore. Coming into contact with another, the story nurtures a relationship between reader and author in the written voice that deepens the bond between the two.

By meeting up with my former students in the study, our stories converged once more, layering our bond with a different hue. During the interviews, I looked upon the young adults in front of me while (re)reading their stories of adolescence with them. Past and present closed in on each other in our space. Temporality dissolved as the
present gazed upon the past, altering the course of the future. The students and I both looked upon their written pasts – in poetry, short story, and non-fiction – with the present insight of possibility for changing our path in the future, having now gained understanding in reflection. To capture this fissure of time and place, the written word acts as a recorder of history to commemorate those in the story and pass it on to those in waiting of that story.

**Temporality, Sociality, and Place of Story**

Sensitive to the conditions of narrative inquiry, Connelly and Clandinin (2006) describe three qualities that shape an “inquiry space” (p. 479) when working with participants in a narrative space. Temporality allows us to see a person with his past and present, to unveil how past histories have led to the present story. This serves to reducing objectifying and limiting a person to one realm of being. In order to express the practice of narrative inquiry, one must know “what happened the day before, the day before that, the month before that, and so on” (p. 480). When writing of participants, I found it necessary to include vignettes of former students’ lives so that readers may know of them as I have, may hear them as I have, and may reach out to their stories as I have. Patience is required in confronting stories of the margin because they are not numbers to be sifted through or skimmed quickly. They are stories drawing up a face. The more stories you have, the clearer the face will appear.

Two other qualities of an inquiry space include sociality and place. Sociality encompasses the personal and social circumstances of the person, including “feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480). All of these conditions help to form the person’s historical and emotional context through which they live in and view the world. Beyond data, participants in inquiry represent complex and plural identities in contact with other complex and plural identities. The condition of sociality displays the greater context of characters by which the person is influenced and plays an incalculable role in the path the person takes. Understanding the students’ sociality provides more direction in mapping the steps they
took to come to their narrative story. The subjects become real when we are able to walk in their narrative shoes.

The relationship between participant and inquirer is a pivotal relationship under sociality. One has the overwhelming ability to change the expression – behaviour and thoughts – of the other. The alternate program was a space where my own history of the margin and students' marginal identities collided. I could not deny the closeness of bond within this marginal space in creating a third story of experience I had with each student. The time and space of my study allowed a rare occasion where a consequential fourth dimension of story was layered upon our last narrative intersection. As such, my involvement within the study was not only as research inquirer, but also of research participant, finding myself at times working to understand the “new” narrative relationship we created together or the narrative history the study unearthed in my own life.

The last condition of inquiry, Connelly and Clandinin (2006) mention, is place. The impact of the physical and concrete space of inquiry on the study is the condition of place. To lessen the sometimes sterile and discomforting connotations of research, I proposed less formal places for discussions with participants' comfort and familiarity in mind. So, local restaurants and the alternate program classroom were suggested as convenient and agreed upon locales of dialogue.

To See from the Future – Reflective Inquiry

Space and time form the very arena of reality. The seismic shift in this arena caused by relativity is nothing short of an upheaval in our basic conception of reality. (Greene cited in Einstein, 2005, p. viii)

Einstein claimed, space and time – in contrast to Newton’s intuitively sensible description – are not fixed and unchanging. Instead, they’re fluid and malleable. (Greene cited in Einstein, 2005, p. ix)
In the early twentieth century, Albert Einstein proposed the Theory of Relativity, which refuted our concept of space and time as rigidly linear. By invoking Einstein in my discussion of narrative inquiry, I wish to draw upon parallels between the concept of time in physics and time in narrative reflection from my study. In living, there is biological time, which continues unaffected by human interference. There is also narrative time, whose story can transport us into the past and future, where reflection and epiphany in one realm can change the course and understanding of the other temporal realms. It is the challenging task of the teacher, according to Levinson (2001), to invite students into this dimension, this gap between the temporal realms where time is malleable and transformation is continually possible.

The initial act of reflection opens up possibility for students to view themselves from the past with the awareness of the future. It is facilitated, as the participants recognized, specifically through the written past, which collects in writing emotions and thoughts that human memory alone may have forgotten. Reading various personal and creative written pieces during the study, the participants and I straddled temporal realms and found new pathways discovered by the passage of time. Participants recognized emotions of resentment, loneliness, abandonment, and appreciation in re-reading their work during our discussions for the study.

Kaileen felt embarrassed with a non-fiction piece she wrote in grade 11 that described stealing and violent acts towards others. She was reluctant to read it, confronting a person with whom she no longer identified. The distance between her past Self and present Self, though in biological time only two years, seemed much longer in narrative time that she almost did not recognize her previous persona. Xavier reflected upon the loneliness he felt during his schooling, yearning for a companion to relate to, as exemplified in the protagonist of a thriller short story he wrote. His character “longed for a partner in crime” as he longed for an understanding companion. Taize remembers a short story she wrote about two young girls on the street titled, “Rebel to Save Me,” which I surmised from our discussions was at least partially based on her experiences when she ran away from home for almost a month at the
age of thirteen. Jeavon re-reads a recent poem he wrote about his father and the concept of home, acknowledging for the first time in writing in the alternate program his father’s deteriorating health.

In most instances, understanding of the past in connection with the future created a third space different from the past and future experiences alone. This third space is a result of reflective inquiry and recorded in writing for such revisiting to be possible. It is what Arendt calls the “gap between past and future,” a space where “the past conditions but does not determine the future, while the present looks at the past not only in terms of what is or has been, but also in terms of what might have been” (cited in Levinson, 2001, p. 29). The written word and its author must be careful not to dwell on the past, however, and remain future-oriented to avoid becoming stagnant or self-indulgent.

Reunion and Release – Writing as Healing

The written text can call forth within us stories and emotions we vocally swallow and hide. Calling this “textual emotion” and “textual understanding,” van Manen (cited in Finlay, 2012, p. 2) knows the grip a written word may have in drawing emotions out of “otherwise sober-minded people.” Reader and writer can be brought to tears in their simultaneously intimate and worldly engagement (Finlay, 2012).

Words acted on behalf of emotions for many students in the alternate program. They act as guides often leading us in directions we wouldn’t have been able to find ourselves. When collecting written assignments as a teacher, I often found voices in writing that were too insecure or timid to speak up in class. My intimate engagement with a piece of writing often acted as a place of contact for the student and me. Contact is a critical point of departure and van Manen (2012) has identified five points of contact in practicing pedagogy: 1. Familial contact, 2. Deferential contact, 3. Value, 4. Response, and 5. Devotion. Familial contact first allows for the contact of relationship where the child becomes secure in trust. Deferential contact respects the child and value in contact is a point of seeing the child’s worth. Here, the child experiences accomplishment and success in order to feel valuable. Response in contact captures the child’s sense of otherness and

(Xavier, transcript, September 22nd, 2014).
Journaling helps me because I can physically see how far I've come. I can see what I've been through. I can see the old mind-state, how I've grown up, where I've been, what's been going on, how things were tougher before and how they're nice now, all the things I'm grateful for. It's physical evidence that I've moved on and done good with my life and that things are better now.

(Xavier, transcript, September 22nd, 2014).
Nonetheless, she still believes sharing her work is part of the validity she feels in writing.

Although Jeavon and John did not speak of a close relationship with writing as other participants in the study had, Jeavon admitted to “feel[ing] better” after having written his poem about his father, who suffers from ALS. John, as well, saw the “self-therapy” effect writing had on many other students within the alternate program. Both commented on the editing process of the Writer’s Workshop in the program in enabling them to improve their academic work, as well as develop a sense of structured writing.

Freire states, “Every reading of the word is preceded by a reading of the world” (cited in Leggo, 2008, p. 58), which is a sentiment I found resides with the participants in the study. How one views the world becomes how one writes. Participants seemed to have a relationship with writing that filled a perceived missing gap in their lives. John desired to obtain support in his academic work when he entered the alternate program and saw writing as an effective skill. Jeavon valued education deep down and had a desire to return to his work ethic from grade 8. Both John and Jeavon saw writing as a tool, which they continued to sharpen and refine within the program. This resonates with Bourdieu and Giroux’s previously mentioned description of literacy as cultural capital that enables its owner access to voice in democratic systems. The more skillful one is at crafting the written word, the more likely one is able to decode surrounding messages and influence others.

Kaileen used writing in place of her voice so she was able to take the time to express her thoughts and opinions clearly without the scrutiny of a verbal confrontation. She longed to be heard by her peers without misunderstanding and conflict and saw writing as this “vocal” instrument.

Xavier and Taize felt writing was an extension of their emotions, pouring into text the moment’s sorrow, anger, resentment, and joy. This is perhaps why poetry, creative writing, and journaling were their modes of choice for expression. In our discussions for the study, Taize and Xavier also appeared to have the closest relationship with writing. Taking into consideration their past experiences, it seems writing played a vital

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(Jeavon, transcript, September 24th, 2014).

I feel that writing and reading, both of those, can really help a child discover their emotional feelings because you’re not always able to say what you want. For me, it’s easier to type something or write something than for me to actually speak and confront somebody. So, I feel like for people like me and for children like me it would be a lot, it would be really easy to open up.

(Kaileen, transcript, September 23rd, 2014).
part in their journey of healing. Their text documented their greatest moments of pain, but also their greatest victories of past.

In their writing and storytelling, Taize and Xavier overcame what Hill (1979) calls “one’s strangeness in order to make oneself at home in the world” (p. 288). Arendt continues, “the story reveals the meaning of what otherwise would remain an unbearable sequence of sheer happenings” (p. 289). Writing the pain helps to ease the sensation of the pain by allowing reality to confront reconciliation and understanding through the written text, acknowledging vulnerability in a safe dimension. It is only by “speaking of [the world]” that we “humanize what is going on in the world and in ourselves, [...] and in the course of speaking about it we learn to be human” (Hill, 1979, p. 295). The meeting of reconciliation and reality offers a sort of “reunion”, to use hooks’ (1999) terminology, and the healing one encounters in the process provides a sense of “release” (p. 84). We view our past from a future that writes the pain from a different temporal lens, allowing the advantage of time in healing and perspective.

**Common Ground – Writing as Community**

A transformative society practices living in community guided by love, hooks (1999) proclaims, a value that our imperialistic culture has forgotten. To love one another is not to yield to another’s ambitions, but to construct a large enough landscape that even in disagreement, the boundaries of peace and humanity hold steadfast those in dialogue. “Conversation” is the casual metaphor Appiah (2006) uses to signify these intersections of identities where mere contact with one another is enough. Consensus is not required. Vitally, however, we cannot antagonize the Other, Freire (1970) adds, if we are to “purs[ue] full humanity” (p. 85). True humanity is that which is in communion with others. To be an “effective person,” Burrows (1952) writes, one must work to connect with others in the web of human relations, present one’s ideas clearly and accurately, and value mutual respect and love (p. 149). In her advocacy of writing beyond literacy, Burrows (1952) distinguishes writing as written therapy to connect one with others in the
language of thought and emotion. It is more than a vocational tool or service.

When we write of pain or joy, we somehow transfer those cathartic emotions on to a listener who may be moved in the same way. The unforeseen relationship created between the two, writer and listener, is mutual and can stabilize emotions as a “constructive force” (Burrows, 1952, p. 138). Xavier has written about his fears of inadequacy in an impromptu joint poem venture we experimented with in our second discussion for the study:

Doubts
Everyday I wake up with the same thought
How will I do today?
Though my intentions are just
and my plans are grand
My dreams and reality collide
like a vicious head-on collision
I'm left with doubt, I'm left with regret
Though I know I am failing
I feel like this uphill battle
will bring out the worst and take my best
Where does this leave me?
Hard work, heavy steel
Crossword, literature spiel
Cursed with talents that leave
wicked and savage men battered and broken
Who am I?
Testing, prying
Breaking a spirit and cutting a soul
Weak disciples are brought to their knees
with the pain these brutal tasks inflict
Why am I here?
After being moulded from the pieces
they left you in
you don't feel like your first name
fits you at all anymore
What have I become?

I am consumed with your coming existence
Will I be the mother you need?
Will I be able to give you the life you deserve?
Becoming a parent is a role
that harbours between excitement and fear
Both have the ability to engulf me
paralyzing optimism
It's easy to throw advice and judgment
holding an arrogant eyebrow against
raising children today
But you will arrive with your own destiny
And I can only hope
We are navigators and explorers together
on the same path
you will come to existence
in a slight few months
I pray that I can take your fragile life
and provide you with
the support beams for your dreams.

(John, transcript, October 9th, 2014).

(Xavier, transcript, November 17th, 2014).

Though we hold different scenarios against these emotions, his words resonated a rawness of sincerity close to my own fears and doubts. The speaking of emotion makes them real and the sharing of emotion lets them heal. We see similarity within each other, where Self and Other become two parts of a whole rather than polarized ends. As Baldwin
To Speak of Love, Birthday Cards

In my family, we are an angry people. Not the violent, outward aggression easily observed, but the quiet anger that dangerously eats away at us before we admit sentiment. For my grandmother and father, the wounds are always still fresh. Our household has always been shrouded in pensive silence, words unspoken, emotions swallowed whole never to be fully digested. Sentiments were expressed in birthday cards. Words too sweet to compensate for their silence too harsh. Text gave way to emotions my family could not express.

* * *

For your birthday granddaughter...
Love and a Happy Birthday...
Because you're always dear and sweet and very special, too.
This greeting's filled with memories And loving thoughts of you. And because it is your birthday It's coming to express A wish that this and every day Will bring you happiness!

A daughter is a precious gift
When a daughter is born, she fills your life with so much happiness – it starts when you first hold her close with pride and tenderness. And as she grows, your loving feelings grow and deepen, too – You take such joy in what she says and all she learns to do. Then through the years, the special times and sharing play a part in all the happy memories you treasure in your heart. Thoughts of you bring pleasant memories of you as a little girl and feelings of pride in the woman you've become. Your birthday is another reminder of what a wonderful daughter you are... how much you have always meant, and how much you always will.

For a granddaughter who means so much...
A granddaughter fills the heart with warm memories, hope and love.
A granddaughter is someone special who can make your whole world brighter with a smile as warm as sunshine and a way that makes the heart lighter...
She's part of all the memories that grandparents fondly treasure – And when a granddaughter is dear like you, she's loved beyond measure!

A granddaughter has a special place in the family and a very special place in the heart.

For my daughter on her birthday...I loved teaching you things when you were a little girl... but did you know how much I was learning from you at the same time? Seeing your reactions to the world, listening to your fresh, new outlooks, and sharing in things that were important to you taught me a lot about the responsibilities – and joys – of being a parent... And watching you turn out to be the wonderful young woman you are has reinforced something I've known all along – you're a very special daughter!

(Aura, 2014).
between “here” and “there,” margin and mainstream, allowing its recipients to cross back and forth and thickening familiarity with one another. Kaileen, through the years, has learned that she can be accepted without always being in agreement. Such is a true community of love and respect, to honour another’s presence and voice in disagreement and without compromising our own.

Community is “look[ing] into someone’s eyes and […] honestly say[ing] that you know the person that you’re sitting across from,” Xavier says (transcript, September 22nd, 2014). Mentioning his experiences attending AA and NA meetings, the sharing of story helped Xavier open up. He believes “just a basic understanding of one another, […] even just hearing someone say a few words, you can get a feel, a little, of how the person’s like by how they say [something], how they are.” The structured meetings Xavier attended provided a known time for people to join. He further details the importance of a defined place and time for people to meet and to know what to expect at each session. For him, a community of writing/writers would be a small group of youth coming together to explore different writing techniques, as well as “speak” about their emotions and obstacles in the written voice.

Seeing Confidently - Writing as Accomplishment

The power of words to draw out emotions provides its author with a sense of relief. Participants have conveyed how words can deliver a cathartic release in its mere expression and how community can develop with the exchange of written stories. Words may heal, but hooks (1999) asserts that as a writer, one’s writing must not simply be self-therapy where anything is said in any way. To connect to the Other, we must carefully craft the written voice with intention and caution. Thus, the written voice requires commitment to refinement and technical craft if we mean to tell our stories effectively.

For students of the margin, the fast-paced mainstream moves too quickly, leaving gaps still open in their learning and attachment. As they grow older in high school, the discrepancy in academic accomplishment and self-identity between the margin and the mainstream continues to grow as well. The importance of refinement of
academic writing offers an opportunity for “pride in workmanship” and “accomplishment of […] writing an effective letter, courteous request, or clear explanation of a class exhibit” (Burrows, 1952, p. 138). Burrows calls this “utilitarian writing” (p. 138).

With a nod of gratitude towards the editing process in the alternate program, participants acknowledged the significance of immediate editing in refining and opening up their writing. In our discussions for the study, participants spoke about the process of not only correcting grammatical concerns in their writing, but also extending it to include a synthesis of content and personal examples. Though this attribute of the Writer’s Workshop in the alternate program appears to be simply a standard educational tool for vocational purposes, participants identified the lack of this process in their mainstream education experiences. All participants mentioned noticeable differences in the dedicated time and opportunity for reviewing and reflecting upon written assignments in the alternate program than in mainstream schooling. John recalls feeling lost and “shoved around” in the mainstream system, while Jeavon doesn’t recollect opportunities in his mainstream classes to edit written work or create second drafts before a final mark was given. All participants remember failing or almost failing many courses in their early high school years within the mainstream setting due to family instability, poor peer choices, or a lack of support. Given the opportunity in the alternate program, the participants had risen to the occasion of diligent editing with the teacher and graduated with their best attempts recorded. Kaileen, Taize, Xavier, and Jeavon graduated with honour roll status (a minimum of 80% average). When I met with the participants for our study, Kaileen was in the process of applying to college and John was in his second year in a college apprenticeship program. Four of the participants also achieved a “B” (73%-85%) or higher in their grade 12 provincial exam marks.
Not only are students of the margin at greater risk for falling behind in academics and literacy, recalling Bourdieu's "cultural capital," if the discrepancy continues to grow, they also fall behind in cultivating an emotional literacy grown around a sense of belonging. This is what we might call "emotional capital" in garnering a language and greater vocabulary to make sense of their emotions and world. So, without the support, the vocabulary they obtain to construct their story and world becomes limited or undiscovered. Words define our thoughts of Self, Other, and world. Without an effective command of the word, our scope of understanding and ability to "decode or demythologize" our "cultural traditions" and "wider social order" becomes narrowed (Giroux, 1988, p. 64). Words become a currency by which we can navigate our utilitarian options, emotional landscape, and relationships intersecting Self, Other and world. Without it, we cannot exchange its value for capital within wider society and thus become less empowered against the status quo.

To distinguish the language of utilitarian or academic writing from emotional life writing, Aoki (1993) uses the terms curriculum and instruction (C&I) and lived curriculum, respectively. He describes the technical language of a C & I landscape as "prosaic" and "abstract," while the lived curriculum is "poetic," representing real people and languages (p. 261). He claims the "two discourses are different in kind" and "resist integration" (p. 261). I would argue, however, the two should be integrated towards the common goal of humanizing both author and viewer of its text. The C & I landscape, though prescriptive, "prosaic," and "abstract," describes a form of mainstream landscape that is prevalent around us. Without exposure to this landscape, marginalized students may not navigate the text of this landscape effectively and may be further oppressed from its exclusion. Opportunity to engage with both the languages of the C & I mainstream and the poetic personal lived curriculum allows marginalized students to cross back and forth between the two landscapes. In doing so, students may consciously inject their written story into the C & I landscape. Meanwhile, they may also maintain consciousness of how the mainstream C & I landscape affects their personal lived stories.

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I think sometimes, yes. I feel like when you're able to share it, you feel much, you feel really proud of what you've done. Most of the time I feel really proud and all I want is for people to read it. Send this to other people and be like, "What do you think?" It's not necessary, but it does make you feel good, especially if you get to hear the opinions of other people and you get to contrast what you both think.

(Kaileen, transcript, November 10th, 2014).
The creative quality of the personal story emerged in several forms as mentioned by the participants in the story. Kaileen, Xavier, and Taize wrote short stories with protagonists who expressed qualities or experiences from their own lives. Kaileen admits to liking fictional stories and poetry where she can “create anything out of [her] mind” and feels “really free to write about whatever” (transcript, September 23rd, 2014). With each word of her story, she creates a world where she can play with scenarios and characters without straying too far from her familiar story. This critical sense of play provides Kaileen with what Bowen-Moore (1989) summarizes from Arendt as “a type of mirror experience of natality” where the child exercises life scenarios without its real consequences in order for the “world to become less strange” (p. 33). Writing, in Kaileen’s experience, structures the imagination of a natal child, forming different identities the child may experiment with before editing the traits that suit her best in the world.

Xavier remembers getting lost in writing several short stories, spending countless hours editing and creating the right atmosphere for his thriller stories. Even with stories so far from the reality of his living, including a personal adventure of a ninja, a vigilante doctor, and a restaurant owner with a mysterious source of meat, he often finds similarities between himself and the protagonist’s persona. For Xavier, journaling is “painting a picture that’s exactly as it is, as you’re seeing it;” writing fiction, he continues, is “abstract art” (transcript, September 22nd, 2014) where meaning is grown in the reader’s mind without necessary confirmation from the author. The “truth” of the piece is in the “truthfulness” of the relationship between the author and reader through the story. The power of fiction, van Manen (2012) adds, enables its author to explain what he cannot do so in a straightforward manner; rather, it evokes “images of understanding of the significance of an experience” (p. 18). Details may be forfeited or intentionally selected in order to preserve the integrity of experience and emotion conveyed to the reader (Hill, 1979). Xavier wrote his emotions into characters that mirrored him in some form.
Taize brings us back to the discussion of relationship between author and reader when she feels differently about her writing when it is read back to her. On a mutual assignment for our second discussion in the study on revolutions, Taize writes a poem bordering on anti-revolutions. I read her poem during our second discussion and re-read certain parts that resonated with me out loud. I asked her if the poem sounded different to her after visibly seeing her react to her own writing and she commented, “it sounds so depressing!” (transcript, November 7th, 2014). We talked about her state at the time of writing and she admitted, “I was feeling very, I don’t know, pointless. I think everything is insignificant.” Even with a theme that we came up with for the study, Taize subconsciously inserted herself into the poem about revolutions and it captured an emotion in a particular moment. That is the power of poetry; it allows “life [to] stand still for a moment” so we may “take time to examine it, to have conversations about values, ideas, and insights” (Howard, 2010, p. 53).

A Gorgeous Reflection

I stare into my mirror, and I try finding something I hate, but there’s nothing I can find I don’t think is great. There’s nothing bad I can see as I look at my reflection, from head-to-toe, inside and out, I can only see perfection.

Hair perfect for me, delicate cut, black with a hint of blue, it shines in the light and softens all the way through. Crimping at the ends as it hangs down across my face, straightened shape of perfection and a messy disgrace.

Eyes perfect for me; perfectly shaped coffee beans, sweet little chocolate drops, the eyes meant for queens. Mocha rings wrap the colour as they sparkle in the light, with a touch of hazel flames forming as they ignite.

A nose perfect for me, the ideal peach from a peach tree, round, soft, small, and cute; everyone would agree. The best of them all, right colour, right shape, right size, the perfect nose surrounded by the perfect cherry pies.

Cheeks perfect for me, chubby, adoring little cherry pies, the cheeks that could glow like a million fireflies. Adorable cheery blossoms blossoming all year round, but only when the sweetness of the smile surrounds.

A smile perfect for me, brightens the day with delight, sugary pink candy treats surrounding pearls of white. Delicate, ruby red lines flow across from cheek to cheek, painted glitter across each lip, creating a smile so unique.

A body perfect for me, overweight, but it’s perfection, perfectly curved in all the right places, a beautiful reflection. A great body, maybe not for most, but for me it’s just right, because when I look in the mirror, I see a gorgeous sight.

(Taize, class assignment, 2011).
effective prose. Each has told a story through the medium of writing.
What is important to note, however, is that the transformative quality of
writing lies in the *sharing* of story. Healing is an act involving others
(Mehl-Madrona, 2005) where the living and telling of the story is the
teller's experience, but the *retelling* of the story to another allows for the
*reliving* of the story (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Transformation
inhabits the *reliving* of the story wherein *retelling* it to another somehow
deepens the understanding of the story. Also, the reliving of the story
may occur continuously with re-readings of the story. Writing records a
story in time that has the potential to act upon the listener (Mehl-
Madrona, 2005, p. 36) each time it is remembered or heard, changing it
slightly with every subsequent encounter and new position of reading.
Like the nature of physical relationships, the written relationship can also
transform and change organically with its partakers.

For students of the margin, the written relationship between
author and reader occurs only after much trust and attachment has been
fostered. Thus, the active relationship between author and reader,
pedagogically student and teacher, is of utmost importance and
precedes the written relationship. Cohen and Bai (2012) state this
relationship is “the most powerful and authentic transformative agent” in
education (p. 261). As educators, we ultimately “teach who we are”
(Palmer cited in Cohen & Bai, 2012, p. 263). New to an old world,
children enter classrooms bright-eyed and ready to absorb the world.
Or, they are already heavy-hearted with a deep story in their steps.
Either way, the point of critical dialogue, Giroux beckons, begins with
the teacher (cited in McClellan & Johnson, 2014). Teachers have the
power, through their classrooms and who they are, to construct a natal
space where students may confront their belatedness in this world.

For the participants in the study, the alternate program acts as
the third space between their sense of belatedness and the world where
they journey through “a second birth” of “self-creation” (Arendt cited in
Levinson, 2001, p. 16). The third space works with the margin and
mainstream in mirroring back to the two spaces not an identical
reflection, but an image of possibility in joint venture. The third space –
the alternate – embraces true transformation.

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**The Endless Road**

If I could paint a picture of who I really am,
I would paint a picture of a road that has no end.
I would paint a little child walking along my path, leaving out the bitter monsters that controlled her past.

Piney trees would streak the canvas to protect that little girl, keeping her safe from the evil, outer world.
Once she looks up at the glowing, lively sky, she would never have to shed a tear, never have to cry.

There would be no reason to navigate where she must go, when she travels on down that timeless, endless road.
But somewhere off in the distance, that endless road did drop, a “Dead End” sign sits, waiting for her to stop.

As she edges nearer to that end not meant to be, she wouldn’t understand what it is that she must see.
Concentrating on her steps, her hush then would explode, stepping on the hazel earth that ended the endless road.

Now unable to continue, yet unable to stop, she would kneel down on that pebbly path without a drop.
She would sit there a moment, realizing what it must be, that “Dead End” sign and endless road was really simply me.

That road you couldn’t continue, yet not able to stop, unable to change that solid path, that wasn’t supposed to drop.
That path that couldn’t be changed, yet could not be finished, I’m the endless road that can never be diminished.

*(Taize, class assignment, 2011)*.
Arendt’s natality, Levinson (2001) summarizes, involves the “reaction, response, [and] reconfiguration” (p. 17) of the Self and the world, much like the transformative quality of narrative inquiry Connelly and Clandinin (2006) describe as the retelling and reliving of story. This short, but evocative prefix – “re-” – tells of acts sub sequential to an original event of the past or of moving back to an event of the past. To engage in reaction, response, reconfiguration, reliving and retelling, students come to understand they must contextualize their “new” beginnings in an already old world where events have occurred before their entry into the world. In this world, nothing is truly “new,” only a revisiting of the past creates “newness” in alternate possibilities.

It is, thus, critical for teachers in this third space, myself included, to commit to the pedagogical path students explore and act as their safe boundaries. Many students of the margin come to the alternate program with heavy stories that weigh down on each step they take. They often know no other story than one of instability, detachment, and sometimes tragedy and anger. Despair, Halpin (2001) warns, “is the enemy of progress because [...] it lacks a faith in the future” (p. 396). Marginalized students, due to a lack of exposure, see a future no different from their dejected pasts. Their journeys through the alternate program, then, must be one of patience and optimism because it is often difficult to fathom a hope, the sound of which one has never heard.

Contact, as summarized from van Manen (2012) previously, paves way for a relationship of trust and love. Along with these qualities, the guidance from a secure mentor shows the future holds possibility for transformation; hope is imaginable. Hope allows marginalized students who have been anchored by their pasts the ability to move forward first through contact and relationship, then through dialogue and praxis. Hope dwells in the third space because it lies between present and future. It is in constant tension within this space (Carabajo, 2012). To live in hope requires a teacher’s commitment to unconditional optimism, care, and humanization. Of course, such demands are not easy in the margin when faced with students who test the limits of such qualities to see if they’re real. We must remember to continue to show
them, that yes, they are indeed real. Humanization is not a product to be achieved. Such a product would expire in its complacency and fail to express its genuine goal. Humanization is an ongoing endeavor to which there is no end and those in the margin must continue to (re-)discover home in the push-and-pull of tension.

Hope is a quality for the individual as well as the whole. It moves people forward but also propels social initiatives. Thus, the task of the alternate third space is to initiate dialogue so students may first “name the world” (Freire, 1970, p. 137). Naming the world is a condition of seeing the world with an awareness of Self and Other with dedication towards humanization and possibility. It allows marginalized students to contextualize their Self within the world and understand the relationship between their margin and the world’s mainstream. They must be aided to see, however, that these two spaces cannot antagonize each other. Like Freire, hooks understands the importance of the margin and mainstream working together. She sees mixing and hybridity as a form of freedom for its travellers to cross boundaries regardless of their margin or mainstream status (hooks, 1994a).

Arguably, whether they are aware of it or not, participants in the study straddled the border between marginal identities and mainstream successes. They mentioned struggles they experienced in their high school years, including instability at home, poor peer choices, abandonment, addictions, academic difficulties, abuse, disability, and disorder. Though these struggles may not be completely due to marginalizing conditions, they were perhaps exacerbated by these conditions. Schonert-Reichl (2000) mentioned earlier “at-risk” conditions might include circumstances such as: single-parent homes, low-economic status, poor health, major life events (like accidents and ailments), abuse, learning difficulties, alienation, low family cohesion and cultural connectedness, and social stereotyping.

Working in the alternate program, participants confronted their belatedness, born in a web of stories and relations they did not choose. The written word gave them a voice where one was not ready to be spoken. Along the way, the participants achieved what one might argue as mainstream success. Among the five participants, they attained
honour roll status in academics and provincial exams, attended post-secondary, improved upon attendance in school and employment, became financially stable, and even reduced or eliminated drug use. Uniquely, the participants in the study accomplished their social and academic feats in an alternate space, which gave them access to cross borders to the mainstream without sacrificing their own identity of the margin. Their ability to suspend in the transformative space between margin and mainstream is an implication of the importance of confronting their belatedness through narrative inquiry and reflection within the margin.

All participants voiced in the study that stories of the margin in the alternate program should be shared with others. This may allow the mainstream a glimpse into the real lives of those who inhabit the margin, moving the strangeness of Other into the familiar. In doing so, those in the margin do not merely mimic oppressive structures, as Freire (1970) warns against, but are able to find their Self without dismissing the necessity of either the margin or mainstream. Such awareness allows for alternate possibilities to be continually imagined.

Margin as Home – Writing from the Margin

Levinson (2001) makes a distinction between “who” we are and “what” we are. Teaching in the margin requires teachers to expose the vulnerability of who they are. “what” we are touches the mind, while “who” we are touches the heart. Our labels of authority in “what” we are as teachers are often related to authoritarianism for students and seen by young people as “inimical to their own freedom” (Freire, 1970, p. 154). For this reason, adolescence often calls from within rebellious action, which opposes this perceived authority. When we teach “who” we are, we meet students on even ground, seeing eye-to-eye and allowing ourselves to be mutually impacted by contact. Our identities, Aoki (1993) reminds us, should be ongoing because we continue to “become” in the world, organic and fluid rather than fixed and unchanging. We continue to “become” ourselves in the world, admitting that we are moved by student stories as much as ours can move them.
The researcher-participant relationship in narrative inquiry, much like the teacher-student relationship, is a close one that can help deeply connect and empower both members. Noddings writes, “we approach our goal by living with those whom we teach in a caring community, through modeling, dialogue, practice and confirmation” (cited in Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). We cannot fully understand our participants, our students, without having lived their lives with them. This of course, is not in the literal sense, but rather in the emotional and spiritual sense that allows us to find a thread of commonality. Through the stories that connect, we learn of humanity as it is lived (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

In meeting my students in our alternate space, I met myself. Our contextual histories may have been different, but our stories of pain, struggle, anger, joy, and hope are connected through our marginal pasts and alternate residence. Together, we have seen financial insecurity, broken marriage, alcohol abuse, and severed cultural ties. Together, we learn to embrace the margin’s rough edges that sometimes cut, but also its delicate seed of hope. Together, we breathe in this third space without severing the roots from the transformative margin.

Children of the margin often feel they are incapable and thus think they have nothing to offer others of intellectual or social value. Freire (1970) warns that children who live in a loveless and oppressive environment “drift into total indifference” (p. 155). Indifference is the enemy of transformation. It stifles the hope that change is possible. That is why the practice of freedom in natality is critical to the child’s performance in the political world. Differing from Arendt’s notion of political natality as outside the pedagogical realm, I argue again that the political world impacts and is impacted by students of the margin. The “real” world of some students includes alienation, abandonment, abuse, and tragedy. They must not come to believe this is the status quo. Thus, there are consequences as to how children “play” and explore in the primary natal realm that dictates how they will act in the political realm thereafter. The alternate program is often students’ last chance at transforming the Self to meet the political world. In this sense, primary natality and political natality have a much closer relationship where

(Aura, 2013).
primary natality instructs the outcome of political natality. Students’
dwelling in the third space of the alternate program must be one that
guides them towards a liberation of Self through a healing of Self. Until
this is facilitated, action towards humanity cannot be authentically
imagined.

To heal we write. We write our stories together and listen to one
another tell our tales. The margin in the alternate classroom stitches
together the picture of humanity with pieces of all our stories. This
fabrication covers the child into adulthood where he will know how to
act upon the world because he has been transformed once already. He
will enter the world with the warmth of this fabric over his shoulders.
Though he may re-visit the same story many times in his life, his dwelling
in the third space allows him to continually imagine the alternate, where
each sub sequential visit will move him to deeper awareness and greater
humanity.

(Aura, 2013).

Suspended in Saigon
She falls asleap as we continue to watch the
news. It’s Friday evening and she’s not used to
seeing me. On Sunday mornings my grandmother
moves quickly between the electric stove and
round dining table, never stopping to season
because flavours are memorized by her hands in
pinches and dashes. She is a one-woman kitchen,
eyeing my approach through her peripheral and
guarding her role like a warrior. “Sit down, you
won’t know what to do.” But this evening she is
tired, lying on her white, carefully maintained
couch with a hand over her forehead. She is
pensive with vignettes of years long passed. Her
eyes are closed, mouth slightly open. I notice the
deep wrinkles more when she is still and quiet.
They are vines and roots growing deeper with
every year, etching her face with traceable stories.
In these moments she can’t help but speak of the
past. She is suspended in it. Not to tell me, inform
me, or educate me, but rather to release something
inside of her that has not completely left. The war
came too soon and left too late. In an instant she
lost who she was before ever really finding
it…her…herself…self… With her home taken over
by the war’s political victors, all her family
members lost or dead, she became a stranger in her
land. A suspension of solitude. Since then, all the
years have been one long moment without
opportunity for travel or intimacy. She frequently
resorts back to her years in Saigon, but not
nostalgically nor willingly. Her memories leave a
bruise, a scar to painfully mark a violent attack.
She accepts the effect of them reluctantly. Always,
the scars look fresh.
Looking from the Past

I revisited student stories of the alternate program for this study, opening up past experiences and emotions of the margin. Sometimes this included (re-)telling tales of family tragedy, personal demons, school difficulty, social anxiety, drug dependency, and a deteriorating sense of home. The heaviness of these contexts weighs down on its traveller, confining the potential space for hope.

Alternate programs reviewed by Kim (2011) have been previously described as “dumping grounds” (p. 78) or “juvenile youth detention centres” (p. 79) for youth who are seemingly divergent, disobedient, or non-conforming to school standards. If perspectives and treatment of alternate program spaces in school cultivate such descriptions, students within these spaces will internalize inefficacy from hegemonic school structures that end up oppressing their sense of natality.

Like the oppressed illiterate adults of Freire’s (1970) Brazilian school system, conditions of marginalization without dialogue work to further perpetuate oppressive structures convincing the oppressed they add no value to the system. They continue to move along prescribed roles without acting towards humanization. As such, they become stagnant in their sense of belatedness without hope to move forward. In this sort of oppressive society, the oppressors become complacent with power and the oppressed become immobile with internalized helplessness and devaluation. Translated into a school system, this structure favours students who can meet standardized goals, such as, academics, sports and arts achievement, attendance, and service, while students of the margin fall further behind in these achievements without access to the authentic liberatory alternate space between margin and mainstream. Left to move alone in the mainstream setting, those who are “successful” mimic achievement to survive the mainstream setting.
rather than healing their Self to move towards active humanization of the social structure as a whole.

It is not to say these achievements in academics, sports, arts, attendance, and service are not worthwhile attributes. Somewhere along the way in schooling, children of the margin need to understand their stories of struggle are important to their identities of Self and can be used towards their liberatory practice. They are not stories to be dismissed or sanitized for the comfort of mainstream acceptance.

As a teacher of the margin, I still wish upon my alternate program students prescriptive successes of schooling, (academic achievement, post-secondary options, involvement in extra-curricular activities), because I understand their necessities in the greater social network and feelings of accomplishment. I do not wish, however, that these children relinquish their stories of the margin to do so. Children who are born into the margin, more than others, need a loving space to exercise their natality. Defining this space allows them guidance to confront their belatedness in a way that instills hope. It is often this struggle of the margin that also drives the vision towards humanization, an image of the human fabric where alternatives can be continually imagined. The importance of the alternate space rests upon its persistent push against hegemonic ideology that views the margin from a deficit.

Students of the margin in the alternate space are sometimes labeled with a plethora of names that reflect this deficit view. From studies mentioned previously, they have been called: delinquent, at-risk, deviant, disenfranchised, drop-out, not meeting expectations, disadvantaged, falling between the cracks, and remedial. Living in this type of alternate program students who, though may have graduated, have not reflected upon these marginalizing terms become social individuals who have internalized these labels within the political world.

Through the interviews for the study, all former alternate program student participants expressed feeling lost, lonely, misunderstood, angry, or abandoned from at least one of the marginalizing conditions, such as single-parent homes, addictions, academic difficulties, abuse, and disability. Though we cannot predict
the outcome of their high school experiences without the alternate setting in their senior high school years, we know all participants felt the mainstream setting did not work for them. Feelings from participants included needing closer attachment to adults because of poor peer choices, drug use, running away from home, and feeling lost in the academic pace of mainstream. All desired a space to belong where high school success allowed them the third space between margin and mainstream to confront their belatedness to move forward in healing and story without comprising their authentic Self.

Looking from the Future

Stories are texts that can be continually revisited, changing slightly with each new reading. Our relationship with story also morphs to represent a clearer image of who we become over time in our (re)reading of the text. Writing story facilitates imaginable change that has the potential for healing its author while transporting that transformation to others in its sharing. The power of story has been understood within healing in Aboriginal traditions (Mehl-Madrona, 2005). But not until the last couple of decades has story and narrative inquiry impacted such a range of disciplines, including: education, anthropology, counselling, ethics, nursing, organizational theory, social, women's studies, cognitive science, and psychology (Cassidy, 2001). The current methodology of narrative inquiry has been accepted as formal qualitative research in many areas because the “storied experience of life” (Cassidy, 2001, p. 22) has connected the cognitive brain to reality, as well as individual experiences as “units of meaning” to the greater “retrieval of experiences within the world” (p. 22-23).

Critical pedagogy, with associated thinkers such as Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, and bell hooks, has existed to continually evaluate dominant social structures and its impact on marginalized groups. Though not commonly correlated with critical pedagogy, Hannah Arendt, Edward Said, John Dewey, and Kwame Anthony Appiah have also been cited in this study as writers who have worked to present alternative stories in politics, education, and global relations. Critical pedagogy questions how the status quo can effectively oppress various
groups and position oppressors in power, as well as analyse the type of power accessed, such as cultural capital, literacy, and the exercise of full humanity. Access to full humanity entails recognizing one another as Subjects, not objects of economic, racial, gender, sexual or disability labels. Humanization also includes a commitment to continually view one another as humans, familiarizing the strange and uniting Self with Other. Even in contextual disagreements, our common task remains towards an obligation towards morality.

Working from the margin, the alternate space is always necessary in imagining different possibilities. The alternate space is, thus, a democratic and liberatory space, engaging both Self and Other, individual and world, in the pursuit of full humanity.

Uniting authors of narrative inquiry with critical pedagogues in the alternate space within education transforms alternate programs from a space of deficit to a space of transformation that is not a burden to the mainstream setting but a necessity. If schools wish to enable its marginalized students to become active and empowered citizens, they must also value and create spaces where the margin can exist while celebrating these student voices.

 Participants in the study recognized the impact of the alternate space within their personal narratives, as well as their school narratives. For most of them, this space was the last opportunity they had to imagine and configure a life confronting their pasts while (re-)discovering their vitality for hope for the future. As the young generation of the political future, all children can benefit from the third space of the alternate setting, not just marginalized children. Implications of the alternate point to a much-needed outlet where children are free to confront their past and contextualize it in a safe space. They must be able to exercise a version of themselves that is capable of hope, healing, transforming, and acting on behalf of humanity.

Text has the power to record relationships between people and the world. The written word, as suggested by participants in the study, allows students to explore different personas, release their emotions and tensions, and record evidence of their transformations and growth. Recorded narratives reflect back to students their lives in storied form.

and allow them the advantage of time in reading and re-reading to become aware of their Selves in writing. Healing arrives when students gain awareness of Self as related to Other and world. With this understanding, they are compelled to move forward, transferring this healing to others. This sharing of healing is the praxis of humanization. The understanding of oneself in the world leads to the understanding that one must act for others in the world as well. This awareness begins with the movement of healing from within to the external world outside. The underpinnings of citizenship move in this way to continually act for the moral and democratic greater whole.

“I want to be an ambassador,” Kaileen (transcript, September 23rd, 2014) comments when asked about what she wishes to do in response to her grade 12 experiences in the alternate program. Other participants also agreed that sharing stories of the alternate program allows the mainstream to really know what happens in the space. It is a space comprised of human faces that become recognizable in stories shared.

Reconsiderations and Limitations

When relationships are forged in the margin, they become fortified with storied intersections of student and teacher meetings. Layers of student and teacher stories reveal the vulnerability of each side, connecting both deeply beyond the outline of the curriculum. Though participants richly discussed their experiences and thoughts on writing in the alternate program, I must assess the limitations of how the close student-teacher relationship forged within this space impacts the study.

As the researcher within this study, I was also the participants’ former teacher within the alternate program. This close relationship develops from the nature of integrating academics with personalized stories within the curriculum and encouraging students to confront their struggles with ongoing support from the teacher in their grade 11 and 12 years. Often, the deep development of trust allows both student and teacher to divulge personal stories within this alternate space. Though the participants were no longer in the high school setting, it cannot be
dismissed that their responses could still be affected by our former student-teacher relationship.

Participants responded promptly to the call to join the study; however, one participant, unfortunately, did not follow up with consent forms and had to be removed from the study. The nature of the study required an in-depth qualitative approach using one-on-one interviews. Due to the length of each interview, which lasted about one to one and a half hours, as well as the necessary month-long period between the first and second interviews for each participant, only five participants were successfully interviewed for the study. Given more time for the study, prolonging the recruitment process would have yielded a greater range of responses.

The participants who readily responded to the study could have been former students whom I have forged close bonds with or those who already had an interest in writing. Or, they may also be former students who are simply more comfortable with discussing their experiences openly. Students who did not personally feel successful within the program or those whom did not attach to me as deeply as others might have been more disinclined to respond to the study. With a greater range of participants, I may have found different perspectives on writing and the alternate program.

Two different settings were used for the interviews to accommodate participants’ transportation concerns. Two participants were interviewed at a local restaurant and three were interviewed in the alternate program classroom. The impact of the setting on participants’ comfort levels should be considered. The nature of the discussions may have changed if all interviews were conducted at a local restaurant or within the classroom.

**Branches Revisited**

The sinuous path towards transformation works through many branches of healing and awareness before action takes place. Indicated in Chapter One, protocols divided into three themed branches – healing, recognition, and transformation – led the discussions for the study.
Under the first branch of healing, stories revealed healing properties in the expulsion of emotions into the written word. The transfer of emotions into writing validates its existence and provides written record of a person's experience. Writing can capture the pain, sorrow, and anger before the voice may be ready to speak of it. The written text keeps these emotions safe until its author is ready to share its story.

Participants in the study revealed their own relief of emotions into writing and further comment on the connective effect of sharing story. Three participants saw value in sharing story with others to give them voice, bond with others through recognition of experience or express what they were not able to say in person. Relationship is formed through text where voice is absent. In turn, the word is the voice that allows the speaker to be heard. Recognition of Self must first be gained through healing if we are to recognize humanity in others. Story is the commonality between reader and writer where the reader's interpretations meet the writer's intentions. The value in this story is familiarity of emotion, experience, and sentiment that allows both writer and reader to know each other. Through story, we come to know each other, and it is difficult "to hate someone whose story you know" (Wheatley, 2001, p. 2). The story between author and reader also allows for each to transform and gain new perspectives with each new reading in time. We come back to a text differently each time we read it and we become transformed in its "new" reading. The ability to see differently is a sign one has healed and can now present possibility of the alternate.

The second branch of thought, recognition, contains protocols aimed at examining narrative spaces within schools for marginalized students. Studies from Schonert-Reichl (2000) and Kim (2011) describe labels and conditions marginalized students face, including: low family and cultural connectedness, low-income, abuse, disability, traumatic life events, and teen pregnancy. Alternate programs in Kim's (2011) studies include labels such as dumping grounds and juvenile detention centres. These markers of deficit work to further the oppression marginalized students feel within the school system and work against their true pursuit of humanity. They cease to be authentic Subjects of their

(Levinson cited Meyer & Fels, 2013, p. 308).
schooling and grow to internalize objective labels of deficit, failure, outcast, or delinquent.

In school, participants in the study felt disconnected from the mainstream school setting due to low social connectedness, difficulty with academics, or personal familial struggles. They were not reflected in mainstream school achievements, such as: extra-curricular activities, sports, arts, student council, clubs, or academics. If well-rounded involvement in school is a marker of success, they are students outside this defined space. They spoke of not wanting to attend, with three participants admitting they had dropped out before grade 10 or were on the verge of dropping out. Other participants described feeling disinterested, disconnected or just lost in the mainstream school setting. Participants recollected few or no spaces at all within the mainstream setting where their personal narratives could be told within and between curricula. They floated in the space between and would either eventually settle invisibly within the mainstream or sink.

Upon entering the alternate space, all participants expressed thoughts on the alternate program as their last resort to succeed within school. For some, this meant simply graduating high school or achieving better academic marks. For others, this meant having consistent attachment to another individual during their path to self-discovery. The alternate space grows out of the margin, but recognizes for its inhabitants the necessity of border crossing between the margin and mainstream. Within this space, both teacher and student slow down to a pace that allows the knowing of each other as “who” we are, rather than “what” we are. Labels of “teacher” and “student” become indistinct. Students become teachers and teachers become students at the level intersection of stories where we greet the humanity within one another. Through story we become connected and organically transformed, no longer our old Selves before the hearing of story. Students confront these stories and relationships within the alternate space and begin to recognize the power of their own stories as empowerment, not as burden or deficit. They begin to have a sense of Self. They begin to name their story and their place within the world, and so, they begin to name the world and act upon it.
Transformation, the third branch of inquiry, is requisite in the practice of critical pedagogy. The methodology has been described as too idealistic and abstract, unable to truly prepare students for the “real” world (McClellan & Johnson, 2014). To avoid the vanity of only self-reflection, “critical pedagogy has a responsibility to move critical thought beyond the classroom” (p. 7).

Participants in the study expressed a desire to extend their personal and academic accomplishments within the alternate space with others in the form of writing workshops, poetry collections, volunteering at homeless shelters, becoming “ambassadors” for the program, or simply passing on their story of healing and self-discovery to others. Within the time frame of the study, I discussed the beginnings of these various written projects with each participant, but we were unable to fully act upon these projects due to the limited time we had together. Much of the time the study organically moved around participants’ stories of past and journey through the alternate space. Their personal transformations were felt and discussed as revelations of natality recorded by the written word. An emerging sense of praxis was beginning to take shape with participants in their readiness to act upon the world, but much more time must be dedicated to authentically actualize these projects into the world. This study mainly allowed participants to openly discuss their healing through story, (re-)discovery and transformations of Self. The course of healing for marginalized students, we must remember, is arduous and non-linear, sometimes involving cycles of repeated storied experiences before recognition of Self and work towards healing can occur. This period of discovering the Self may be protracted, as it was in the discussions of the study.

To continue the practice of critical pedagogy and narrative inquiry of the alternate space, sequential work with participants should see their written narrative projects extended to reach the Other and the world. Participants’ task, including my own, is to extend the alternate space to others, whether through writing workshops for marginalized students, organizing poetry anthologies or poetry nights. The union of margin and mainstream in action necessitates the recording of such

Each human being, however ordinary and limited, is—all the same—a product of a vast network and lineage of interdependence and interpénétration of people, culture, history, and geography.


projects as evidence that the third space must be nurtured if we are to sustain our ability to imagine the alternate.

A Beginning for Beginnings

The depth of effect story can reach resists quantification. Its ability to transform must be recorded patiently as much as it is felt and experienced to honour the humanity of its participants. The diligent commitment to narrative inquiry requires viewing participants as Subjects, not objects of study, and so the participants’ stories before the study are as necessary as their stories during in painting a portrait of who they are. In this way, the margin becomes a space of familiar faces to others, and not a protrusion off the mainstream of deficient objects.

“You can’t deny,” Giroux directs, “students have experiences and you can’t deny that these experiences are relevant to the learning process even though you might say these experiences are limited, raw, unfruitful” (cited in hooks, 1994b, p. 88). To acknowledge this is also to know that students’ sense of belatedness—their contextual histories of family, culture, language, feelings, and memories—give them a distinct voice we cannot ignore in school. The alternate space captures these voices, otherwise fleeting within the rush of mainstream schooling, to truly form a democratic platform of representation and reminding the mainstream of alternate identities.

The work of critical pedagogy and narrative inquiry within the alternate space allows students to cross borders and obtain freedom from residing in the third space of the alternate between margin and mainstream. This space is able to imagine possibility without relinquishing the struggle capable of authentic transformation in the margin. Students of the margin have been weighted by their sense of belatedness, often becoming stagnant in their humanization in school. Teachers must see their students. They must see the “weightedness” of their students and provide spaces for student stories to come forth and confront their belated histories. In this way, students may first whisper stories of the margin and move forward in amplifying their story through the written word. When they are ready, the written word shared
within the world is the story of the margin amplified through the megaphone of the alternative.

The movement within and between the margin and mainstream does not end. It may be frustrating for some to know that there is no product to achieve or accomplishment to finalize the process. The struggle in “reclaiming one’s voice, history, and future,” Giroux (1988) addresses, “is not to be free” because freedom is not a goal to accomplish; “it is to be present and active in the struggle” (p. 65). To be “present” and “active” is to authentically practice Freire’s dialogue. The openness between oppressor and oppressed, mainstream and margin, is not one of antagonism, but continual co-operation. Within the greater dialogue of power relations, hooks (1990) rhetorically asks, “Where do we position ourselves?” The response shapes how we envision our relationships with one another and with the social whole. It also informs us of our sense of “home,” negotiating the margin and mainstream. Our sense of home and living, hooks (1990) asserts, “depends on our ability to conceptualize alternatives, often improvised” (p. 149). The margin’s oppositional view, she continues, “sustained us, aided us in our struggle to transcend poverty and despair, strengthened our sense of self and our solidarity” (p. 149). The organic formation of this third space between margin and mainstream, which is the dialogue, is also dependent on how we endure our struggles to move towards the healing of Self, the awareness of Self with Other and world, and the action of Self within the world.

Enter that space.
Students of the margin enter the alternate program every year with their idiosyncratic histories and experiences of the mainstream. Some wish to rejoin the mainstream, some wish to never leave the margin. All experience some form of negotiating both spaces that enables them to reflect upon their own story to move forward. Participants in the study found their form of mainstream success. Taize lives with her partner, engaging poetically in writing together and has financial stability. Kaileen attends post-secondary and continues her investigative writing, becoming more comfortable with her written and spoken voice. John is in the process of completing his apprenticeship schooling in the trades. Xavier works consistently and travels, speaking of his experiences across Canada. Jeavon works a stable job and continually reconciles his pain in accepting his family’s story.

My former students have achieved a stability in their lives that is characteristic of the norms identified with the mainstream. They do not, however, dismiss the story they carry from the margin. It continues to shape their view of the world and their position within it. After their transformation within the alternate space, the margin allows them to see differently without the confining belatedness that may have been the predecessor for their struggles. The alternate space is not only necessary to live; it is vital for our ability to imagine forward movement.

Critical pedagogues understand the unending commitment towards dialogue and action. As such, projects from the margin cannot cease to exist if the alternate possibilities critical thinkers speak of are to be realized. The alternate is dependent on our ability to begin again. Our work in the third space between margin and mainstream is in continual beginnings. To this end, I encourage continual beginnings.
We are the voices because we are living it.

(peer researcher in Meyer & Fels, 2013, p. 313).


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APPENDIX

Protocols

First Branch: Healing

3. How do stories heal?
4. What is the relationship between storyteller and story-receiver? What is the impact of narrative for both storyteller and story-receiver?
5. What values do narrative inquiry and stories hold?

Second Branch: Recognition

5. Where do venues for narrative inquiry and writing exist in school?
6. Who are the students in the margin?
7. What existing conditions in schools contribute to the marginalization of these students?
8. What spaces exist in schools for students of marginalization to express their voices? Where can their narratives be heard?

Third Branch: Transformation

5. How do stories shape a platform for marginalized students' voices?
6. How can marginalized students be reflected in schooling through narrative and stories?
7. In what ways do stories and writing create a democratic platform for the equal expression of student voices?
8. In what ways do stories and writing overcome barriers of marginalization in schools?
Alternate Program Textbooks

Within our alternate program, we understand the need for attachment, creativity, achievement, consistency, and optimism for students of the margin. As such, these values are embedded within our daily living together in the classroom, as well as in our academic philosophy. Within the alternate program, students create personalized textbooks for each academic subject. Students author written assignments or projects and then edit every item with a teacher through the Writer’s Workshop.

The philosophy behind the Writer’s Workshop allows teachers to immediately edit with students after an assignment is written, engaging in proofreading and editing. Proofreading includes technical aspects of proper grammar, sentence structure, choice of diction, and tenses. Editing encompasses a qualitative process of organizing depth of thought and synthesizing content with personal experiences and stories. Students and teacher may engage in the proofreading and editing process several times for a piece of work before the “final” copy is created in a professional manner for students’ textbooks. The “final” copy, of course, is the copy best produced for the allotted time frame. There have been occasions where students have chosen to re-do assignments afterwards given time is available. Significantly, the immediacy of the editing and proofreading enables students to reflect upon their work while the ideas and structures are still “fresh” in their minds for change.

For their textbooks, students use print and coloured paper to build an entire unit before the unit is taught. Titles for each page within the unit book are given so students know the topics to be discussed within the unit. A page represents one lesson, which may take one to a few days to complete. Once assignments for the page undergo the Writer’s Workshop, students may create the “final” version of the assignment for their page in their own unique way. They choose the layout, design, and format (essay, chart, memoir, etc) for their page. For each subject, they may have eight to twelve unit books, representing the units covered within the curriculum. At the end of the semester, students’ unit books are bound into a textbook the student has authored. This is also the text they use to study for provincial exams and tests.

Textbooks exercise aesthetic values that allow beauty to touch the heart and our students to find pride in their creative and unique production. The creation of the personalized textbooks also necessitates movement within the classroom, giving students a reason to move around their classroom space like a workshop rather than a traditional seated classroom. Students must also negotiate the space on the page, often challenging to balance the assortment of assignments for each individual page. Students must be thoughtful and patient to imagine a cohesive page to present
the artifacts of their learning for that page. As the units are compiled into one book, it is the first book students author, but also an article of their emerging story and self-confidence.

Unit structure created at the beginning of every unit.

Sample Writer's Workshop process.