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TEACHER SHADOWS: GIVING VOICE TO HIDDEN SELVES

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Abstract

This study examines reasons why successful and dedicated women classroom teachers become disillusioned with teaching. The four women teachers who participated in this study embody the "good and ideal" woman teacher. Yet, over a three year period of time during which we engaged in a written correspondence, they disclosed personal stories about teaching that showed their anger, pain and disillusionment. The purpose of drawing on the narratives of these women was two-fold. First, I wanted their stories to better inform my practice as a teacher educator. I reasoned that if it is successful and dedicated women teachers who become disillusioned with teaching, then it follows that their stories are worth listening to. For pre-service teachers who enter teaching for any number of reasons, these stories help us to better understand the entirety of what it means "to be a teacher". Second, I wanted to situate their stories throughout the body of literature on women teachers that challenges age-old stereotypes and the notion of teaching as "women's work". Of particular interest to the study was their silence, their unwillingness to give voice to these feelings. As such, I named this essence I was seeking to better understand, "teacher shadows": those stories that dedicated and successful women teachers are reluctant to tell, but highlight their feelings of being devalued by a society that doubts their abilities, and a structure of schooling that has little room for shared authority.

Résumé

L'objet de cette étude est d'examiner les raisons pour lesquelles des enseignantes consciencieuses et qui ont eu du succès dans leur carrière perdent leur passion pour l'enseignement. Les quatre enseignantes qui ont participé à cette étude incarnent la "bonne enseignante" ainsi que celle qui représente "l'enseignante idéale". Cependant, au cours de notre correspondance écrite, d'une durée de trois ans, elles ont dévoilé des histoires personnelles qui ont mis à jour leur colère, leur peine et leur désenchantement. Cette correspondance avait deux objectifs. Premièrement, je voulais m'en informer davantage en tant qu'enseignante-éducatrice. Dans mon raisonnement, je me suis dit que si des enseignantes consciencieuses et jouissant d'un succès évident perdent leur ardeur pour l'enseignement, il s'ensuit qu'il faut être à l'écoute de leurs préoccupations. Pour les enseignantes qui se préparent à cette carrière pour deverses raisons, ces histoires nous aident à mieux comprendre la totalité de ce que signifie "être une enseignante". Deuxièmement, je voulais situer leurs histoires dans le contexte des écrits qui réfutent les vieux stéréotypes et la perception que l'enseignement n'est qu'un "travail pour les femmes". D'un intérêt tout à fait particulier était leur refus de vocaliser ces sentiments. Ainsi, j'ai nommé cette essance qui j'essayais de mieux comprendre, "l'ombre d'une enseignante". Ce sont des histoires que des femmes consciencieuses et qui réussissent sont réticentes à raconter, mais qui soulignent leur sentiment de dévalorisation face à une sociéte qui doute de leur capacité de faire leur tâche et à la structure d'un système scolaire où la possibilité de partager l'autorité est à peine présente.

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There are a host of friends I wish to thank. Leila Aitkin read and re-read initial drafts of this thesis forcing me to clarify and shape my ideas so as to meet the needs of an outside reader. Barbara Elliot also read initial drafts and asked pointed questions that I had not otherwise considered. I am grateful to Linda Anderson for our conversations in which we were able to discuss and question one another's research. Dr. Terry Gandell has encouraged and supported my growth as both a teacher and researcher.

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always seemed to be able to watch our daughter while I met with my supervisors, went to class or did research in the library.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my two grandmothers, Lydia Ornatsky Rumin and Julia Supruniuk Demianiuk. I wish I had paid more attention to their silent struggles. Their remarkable stories of survival have become an anchor in my life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

"Don't go into teaching".

–From a conversation with a former high school teacher.

Once there was a little girl who wanted to grow up to be a teacher. School was easy for her; it all made such perfect sense, and she felt like she belonged. She had her own little desk and she knew what was expected of her. She loved her teachers and when she came home after school, she would turn her room into a makeshift classroom. The closet door became the blackboard; her desk became the teacher's desk, covered in purposeful piles of books and sheets that she would mark and comment. She practised making big red stars at the top of sheets and writing notes like, "Mark, have your mother call me please". When she was in high school, she silently watched and learned from those teachers who in her eyes were "the best". Over the years she thought of other careers including acting and directing, but always came back to her childhood dream of becoming a teacher. When she began teacher education, she rediscovered the happiness she had felt as a child playing teacher: everything made sense. One day, on her way to class, she met an old friend. He asked if she had pursued her theatre interests, and she replied that she had chosen teaching instead. He laughed, "Ah yes, those who can, do; those who can't, teach". As he laughed, she searched for something to say, and as they parted she felt hurt and betrayed.

–From my own journal

I am just realizing today that it is not only my colleagues that don't sustain me professionally, but also my school board, which has no curiosity about me as a teacher, as an innovator, or as a passionate professional. How sad for them. How sad for me. I guess I am reaching a point in my career where I want to be recognized for the quality of my work. My students recognize that in me all the time, and I think the parents do as well, in their own quiet ways. That's what bothers me. It is all done quietly. I don't want flashing neon lights...I guess I want something much bigger: I want society to stop hating its teachers - because of our summer holidays, because we don't "work". That is what it all comes down to in the eyes of society: teachers have it made, they have their summers off, they have long holidays...I get weary of such ill considered comments.

–Grace, a grade six teacher

In one way or another, I have always been a teacher. As a child, I constructed worksheets for my Russian-speaking grandparents convinced that they could learn English under my tutelage, and spent hours in my room creating and marking math sheets for imaginary students. In some ways, I began my career as a teacher long before I officially entered teacher's college. Looking back, it seems that in elementary school, it was the order and predictability of the classroom that attracted me to a career as a teacher more than the teachers themselves. At any rate, I could see myself as a teacher. In high school and later in university, I met a few outstanding women who inspired me to be a teacher. While it seems that I always knew I wanted to be a teacher, I kept this desire largely to myself. Somehow, I knew that teaching was "not enough".

Although I flirted with other career opportunities, I did eventually go into teaching. Later, family members, friends and former teachers exclaimed horror at my career choice. In fact, when I look back to the year I publicly announced my desire to be a teacher and entered teacher's college, it seems to me that the only people who were excited about teaching were those educators who were teaching me how to teach. How odd that those who had left the classroom were so much more enthusiastic than the teachers who had remained. Many of my former teachers, including those whom I admired and who had inspired me to teach, tried to dissuade me from becoming a teacher. It was as if they were sending out a warning, and I knew in the recess of my heart that the

myth I held about what it meant to be a teacher was far more complicated than marking math sheets and sending notes home to parents. What was this myth to which I was clinging? What was the reality?

In our society, which has declared basic education compulsory, we are all familiar with teachers. We share a cultural perception, a myth about the nature and role of the teacher. Indeed, one might argue that the image of the classroom teacher, invariably female, has changed little from its origins in the public schools that sprang up across North America in the nineteenth century. In the early eighteen hundreds, in schools across the land, the young female teacher was faced with impossible demands. Often fresh out of high school or one year in a normal school, she had to be smart, to have a mastery of a wide range of subjects. She had to be tough: handle classroom bullies, chop wood and draw water for the one-room schoolhouse, and fend off hostile parents. She had to be morally superior to ordinary mortals: not smoke or drink or stay out late. And if she should marry, she had to give up teaching immediately. She had to be humble, not demand more money than the community could (or would) pay, and accept whatever lodgings were offered to her as a part of that pay - not unlike modern domestic workers imported from under-developed countries to provide us with cheap child care. She had to be maternal, nurture her students, put their welfare before her own, set a positive example in matters both academic and non-academic.

Out of these nearly-impossible demands have arisen two simplified stereotypes: the dedicated teacher and the dried-up old schoolmarm. The dedicated teacher has love in her heart. She is smart, selfless, sweet-natured, and inspirational. The dried up old schoolmarm wears her hair in a tight bun, and stalks the classroom aisles with a ruler in her hand. Years of poor pay and unruly students have stiffened her spine and poisoned her spirit.

Flat, one-dimensional caricatures like these would be humorous if they did not ring so true in so many people's minds. If they did not, indeed, represent an elemental struggle faced by all young people who dream of a career in teaching. What young person preparing to teach does not dream of loving, inspiring, and enlightening young children? What young person preparing to teach does not worry about disciplining the unruly and burning out in the face of impossible demands? There may no longer be wood to be chopped or water to be drawn for the little red schoolhouse, but young teachers-to-be know that today's classrooms have their own demands and dangers.

The modern myth of the classroom teacher, then, is a complicated one based on the contradictory stereotypes just outlined. The "good teacher" is a woman who loves children. She is vibrant, smart and passionate about what she teaches. She never complains. Because she finds validation though her students, she is internally satisfied and does not seek financial gain. She is a "natural teacher" for teaching is akin to mothering.

She is dedicated to her students' welfare, and as long as she is around children, she is always happy.

However, scratch the surface just a bit and you'll find that most of us also see classroom teaching as a poor job choice, one that does not call for extraordinary intelligence. We know that people with real brains and ambition do not become teachers. After all, teachers have neither status nor money. Situated at the bottom of a bureaucratic, educational hierarchy of government officials and local administrators, they have little power, except over defenceless children, whom they are in danger of abusing. People who become teachers do so by default, because they could not achieve more prestigious positions, or because their liberal arts degrees gave them no other valuable skills. Poor teaching is to blame for our children's poor school performance, for our nation's low scores in reading and math. Teachers are more interested in their long summer vacations than they are in the children in their care. Women go into teaching for the easy hours and plentiful vacations and because they are not willing or able to achieve in the world of business. The woman classroom teacher is one of thousands; she is easily and cheaply replaced. Given such popular beliefs, is it any wonder that many parents do not want their daughters to become teachers?

Both of these belief systems exist side by side, and both contain elements of truth as well as gross exaggerations. The following study seeks to unravel the thread of truth that runs through both myths by listening to the voices of women who, by any objective

measure, have been found to be "good, successful and dedicated" classroom teachers. This study began in my own search for the ideal teacher, the one I subscribed to as a child, the one in whom my heart still believes.

This study is about Grace, Marie, Sarah, and Julia - four women teachers who represent the myth that I created when I was a child: that of the "ideal" teacher, one who was both good and heroic. They are successful: dedicated, accomplished and highly articulate about the pedagogical and philosophical reasoning behind their teaching. They appear contented and happy in what they do. Indeed they are recognized by their colleagues, administrators, parents, students and associate universities as "model" teachers not only for their practice but also for their attitude. Yet, over a two-and-a-half year period, I became privy to the feelings that these women turned inward, fearing that giving voice to anger and disillusionment about teaching would slot them into a stereotype they had fought so strongly against. This study gives voice to their silences, to their pain, and to their frustrations. As a result we can better understand some of the struggles that these women have had to endure because of a myth. This study aims to investigate the dark shadows behind the myth of the "good" woman school teacher.

I have chosen to focus on women teachers for various reasons. Since the majority of Western teachers are female, women teachers have played some role, be it positive or negative, in almost everyone's life. The tradition of teaching makes it suspect as to its standards and expectations because it has been and continues to be a feminized profession.

Madelaine Grumet (1988) tells us that teaching is considered "women's work" and as with most other work that is "women's work", teaching is not valued. She urges women teachers to reclaim teaching and make it "the work of women". Grumet's point is rooted in the history of women as teachers. The growing body of literature on the history of women and teaching in North America helps us to better understand the impact a myth shaped over one hundred years ago still has on the lives of teachers. Finally, the myth I created in my own mind had everything to do with being an "ideal" woman, hence my focus here on women teachers.

The emphasis in the literature on teacher narrative has largely been on positive and "enlightening" stories. There is a lack of research dealing with teachers who are disillusioned in their career choice. That lack of research indicated to me that this path I had begun to follow was one worth exploring. As I read, I learned that one of the gravest effects of teacher disillusionment is attrition. Research on teacher attrition explores the concerns , problems and anxieties of teachers, which in some cases have made them change their philosophies and attitudes towards their career choice and even leave teaching altogether. Kathleen Casey (1992) concludes her study of thirty-three female teachers who left teaching by saying that "the inclusion of women teachers' own assessments of their experiences significantly enlarges our understanding of the complex phenomenon of teacher attrition" (p. 205). She says, "because they present alternative definitions of the very fundamentals of the schooling system, these narratives ultimately stand to challenge dominant interpretations of teacher attrition" (p. 206). If it is successful

and dedicated women teachers who are telling stories of disillusionment, we had better listen.

The purpose of this research was to better understand the "shadowed" part of being a teacher, especially the phenomenon of disillusionment. My research was shaped by three guiding questions:

1. What is it like to become disillusioned in teaching?
2. What are the thematic elements of this experience?
3. How can this knowledge inform and improve teacher education?

The first chapter of this dissertation lays the background for the research I carried out over a two-and-a- half year period with four women teachers who were disillusioned with teaching. This research arose out of the work I do as a teacher educator. At one point, I was a classroom teacher. Now as a teacher educator my practice is informed by my professional reading, dialogue with other teacher educators, student teachers, first-year teachers and experienced teachers, and my own experiences as a teacher and student. I am constantly overwhelmed at the work I am supposed to do: to prepare excellent teachers for our children is no easy task. It was my interaction and correspondence through the dialogue journals that a group of teachers were required to keep in a course I was teaching that gave rise to the questions that I will explore in this study.

Of particular interest to this research was the fact that the four women teachers' disillusionment in no way interfered with their success or dedication. The disillusionment experienced by these women was private; they chose not to publicly voice their concerns. They are women who on the outside resemble "workaholics"; they are consistently involved in professional development, sit on university committees, and are well respected by their boards, colleagues, parents and students. In some ways they represent the myth that I believed as a child, perhaps the myth that others also believe. However, it is this very myth that embodies the silent disillusionment and anger experienced by the four teacher participants. My struggle with naming the "it" of my exploration, this "condition" was not an easy one. In the first chapter I will show how and why I moved from naming this condition "the darker side of teaching" to the "dark shadows" of teaching.

The second chapter might be read as a companion piece to the first in that my intention is to show how the modern myth of the classroom teacher might be located in a historical context. Thus, I review the growing body of literature on women teachers from both a historical and contemporary point of view. Like the silenced voices of Grace, Marie, Sarah and Julia, the voices of women teachers have largely been absent from the research literature on education, an ironic situation, given that it was and continues to be women who for the most part teach children. My examination of the feminization of teaching during the period when the contradictory myth of what it means to be a teacher was born and shaped made me ask whether or not the dark shadows of the four women participants in this study were largely the result of this period in time when teaching

became "women's work". Then I turn to contemporary research on women teachers in order to examine the shadows other women teachers experience.

The third chapter of the dissertation describes and clarifies the methods I used to answer my questions. It is said that things happen for a reason. Halfway through the study I gave birth to my daughter, the participants all became bogged down with work, and, as a result, the correspondence with my participants lasted longer than I had planned. However, the extra time allowed me to see the cyclical nature of their disillusionment, to know them better as women and as colleagues. I also had more time to consider how I could best represent their lives, their words and their ideas on paper.

At the end of two years, when I asked the participants for "closing comments", I was taken aback by the bulging piles of correspondence I had collected. That these women had spent such a great deal of time reflecting and interpreting the stories they had to tell was an indication to me that not only were they committed to their practice, but that the task of representing them on paper would be an enormous one. Grace, Marie, Sarah and Julia wrote with such intensity, richness and insight that I was often reluctant to step in and offer my own interpretations. However, it was my task and contribution to draw the themes from their stories to better understand their situation. I set out to create profiles that stayed true to the teacher's voice while offering some outside thoughts to shed light on what they were saying. Thus, the fourth chapter of the dissertation is shaped by the four profiles of the teachers who participate in this study.

In the fifth and final chapter, I consider the implications of what I learned over the two and a half years I corresponded with these teachers. In this study I attempted the dual goals of describing lived experience and interpreting the stories of lived experience. I wanted to show what it was like to have a shadowed professional life; to appear content and satisfied, to be successful and dedicated, while experiencing and turning inward feelings of anger, disillusionment and sometimes despair. My aim was to draw attention to the dark shadows of these lives so that we might better understand the notion of the "ideal teacher". Not surprisingly, I learned a great deal about myself in the process. In the end, these narratives have made me question in a deeper way what it is that I do when I teach pre-service teachers.

CHAPTER ONE

SHADOWS AND MYTHS

Illusion : A false, misleading, or overly optimistic idea; misconception; delusion: to outgrow one's youthful illusions.

Disillusion : To free from illusion ; disenchant. (Funk and Wagnalls Standard College Dictionary)

As a teacher educator, my biggest challenge is how to inspire the idealism of "what could be" in light of "what is" with regards to the reality of school life. This challenge is shaped by the memory of my own teacher educators whose enthusiasm about teaching always seemed to outweigh the disillusionment expressed by what seemed like everyone else. In many ways, teacher's college felt more like the imaginary classroom in which I played at being a teacher than the classrooms I actually inhabited as a student. I was, as an imaginary teacher, completely autonomous; and as a student teacher, encouraged to believe in my own autonomy. I was also, as an imaginary teacher, quite silent about my desire to be a teacher. While internally I felt that teaching was what I did best, what I would be most content doing, I also knew that it was a career with little glamour and little respect. Both of these factors proved true when I publicly announced my desire to be a teacher. Now, as a teacher educator I am moved to investigate further my silence with regards to publicly acknowledging my desire to be a teacher in order to better understand

why I left classroom teaching for university teaching. Silence plays a key role in all of the stories that come out of this research.

I was in many ways a disastrous first-year teacher. I was certified for high school but landed a job teaching a split grade five/six class. Halfway through the year, I seriously considered leaving teaching, feeling I had little control over my students. While the staff of the school was supportive and helped me find solutions to various problems, I nevertheless felt I was on my own. At the end of the year, I was determined to have a successful second year as a teacher; and, indeed, my second year is still one of the highlights of my teaching career. I remember with great fondness and pride that grade five class who taught me more about teaching and learning than any books I had read.

It was really by chance that I left classroom teaching for university teaching, but it behooves me to consider why I did leave. What message do I send my student teachers when I tell them that what they have chosen is a fulfilling and enriching career, but that I chose to leave classroom teaching? Why do I not share with them the negativity and disillusionment that I faced when I decided to become a teacher and continue to recognize from the stories my teacher friends tell me? Why do I remain silent about this very real part of becoming a teacher? In a one-year graduate program, I rationalize that it is my place to teach "what might be" and "what could be", but I am forever in conflict with whether or not I am in reality contributing to an illusion, much like the one I created when I was a child teacher. Am I in fact perpetuating a myth from my youth?

These feelings became more pronounced one fall when I taught a writing course to a group of high school and elementary teachers. The fundamental philosophy that supported the course was that if we want to teach our students how to write, we must write ourselves (Atwell, 1987, Rief, 1992, Graves, 1983). Thus, one of the main components of the course was a personal journal in which teachers wrote on a daily basis. I encouraged the teachers to write about their classrooms, given that one of the assignments for the course asked them to do classroom research. Some chose to do this; others did not. The journals opened many new windows to my understanding of what it means to be a teacher. As Clandinin and Connelly (1988) suggest, there are many dimensions to teaching, and "it is no more possible to understand a child as only a student than it is to understand each of ourselves as only a teacher" (p. 27). I found it impossible not to incorporate what I was learning from these teachers into how and what I was teaching our student teachers.

During the course I had asked several of the teachers if they would share parts of their journals with our student teachers. I was specifically drawn to unique stories that best showed what teaching and learning "was really like". To my mind, these stories offered excellent insights into the complexities of what it means to be a teacher. Certainly, for student teachers who thought that teaching has a recipe or formula, these stories would provide evocative insights into the professional thinking of classroom teachers engaged in furthering their academic knowledge. Finally, I wanted to impress on students

how teacher education can inform its practice through teachers' personal and practical knowledge (Clandinin and Connelly, 1988). The journals were fine examples of what I understood teacher research to be: "systemic, intentional inquiry by teachers, makes accessible some of the expertise of teachers and provides both university and school communities with unique perspectives on teaching and learning" (Lytle and Cochran Smith, 1990, p. 85).

Some of the stories were bitter and angry and suggested that teachers were quite simply not valued. While I recognized the therapeutic nature of journal writing, and recognized the safe space a journal provides for all kinds of venting, I was nevertheless taken aback by the depth of disillusionment about teaching. Furthermore, the entries that most stand out in my mind came from teachers who we might call "model teachers", those teachers who teacher educators want to pair up with student teachers because of their outstanding classroom practice and reputations. It occurred to me that some of these teachers were using the journals to vent because they did not have a safe public forum in which they could express their concerns, anger, and disillusionment regarding what they wanted to do as teachers and what they were required to do within the structures of their schools.

Grace, a grade six teacher who later became a part of this study, is a successful teacher: she has been recognized in her school board as an outstanding language arts teacher and has been asked by the faculty of education at a neighbouring university to sit

on several committees. Her former students heap praise on her as do parents and colleagues who often say things like, "I can't wait to get my children in her class". Furthermore, her writing has been published in teacher journals and texts. I knew of Grace's reputation before I began teaching the course and wondered what I could possibly provide for this outstanding educator. Grace pursued intellectual questions throughout her journal, and her knowledge of books, authors, poets and philosophers obviously played a large role in who she was as a woman and teacher. Her commitment to reflective practice was constant. While her journal was magnificent in its collection of poetry, essays, vignettes and memories of special moments in her teaching career, it was also fraught with the frustration she was experiencing as a teacher.

Early in the course she wrote,

> Anna, you ask me why I get so nervous in class. I don't know if I have already told you this or not. I guess it is my own insecurities coming out, fear of failure and all that. I also tend to believe that teachers are pretty tough customers. I find that they (we) are in general, an insecure bunch. Perhaps society creates that condition in us by always accusing us of not doing enough to educate the young, or complaining about our short hours, long holidays, etc. Teachers are watchful, waiting for someone to spring...Do you ever get that feeling? Society loves to hate its teachers, unfortunately.

I had a difficult time responding to entries such as Grace's because very often I wasn't sure what kind of response would be effective. I did not consider sharing these entries with student teachers, thinking the negativity and disillusionment expressed in the journals would only serve to discourage them. How, I asked myself, could I lead productive

discussions on why teachers might feel they are not valued? I could not help asking myself why I was teaching student teachers about ideal language arts classrooms, and encouraging them through their own professional growth journals to become reflective practitioners, but not sharing with them real teacher journals that spoke of isolation, anger and resentment. I began to realize that we need to examine teachers who are disillusioned in their career and learn how this knowledge could inform others. Moreover, I was curious about the conditions that teachers found themselves in that left them "waiting for someone to spring". I was moved by this phrase to consider whether the disillusionment I was beginning to investigate was perhaps like a shadow, always there but not necessarily acknowledged.

As a teacher educator, I began to realize the importance of studying teachers' lives. The teachers' journals and the stories within them revealed aspects of teaching that could not be found in methodology books or in professional journals. The teachers who explored why they did what they did were engaging in reflective practice and thus documenting their lived experiences through autobiographies. Can teacher education be informed through autobiographies? Studying teacher's lives through autobiography, biography, or case study gives voice to an "occupational group that has been historically marginalized" (Goodson, 1992, p. 15). Weber (1993) reminds us that when we consider how much power teachers have over children, it seems odd that the literature on teachers hasn't always been filled with the "narratives of their experience". When teachers use their own stories as springboards for examining why they do what they do, their

connection between who they are as people and who they are as teachers can only become stronger. Weber (1993) says, "It (narrative inquiry) is often dialectical. It uses the particular to understand the general but also relies on the general to illuminate the particular; it incorporates the social within the personal, but can maintain that the social constructs the personal as the personal constructs the social" (p. 72). In essence, examining teacher narrative can give shape and focus to the knowledge of our professional practice.

At the end of the course, I received a letter from Grace who was interested in continuing our written dialogue. I responded and asked if she was interested in investigating the sources of the disillusionment I had read about and whether or not she saw a place for this knowledge in teacher education. Her answer was straightforward:

> To answer your question Anna, YES! What can I tell you about the darker side of teaching I am yet unsure, but I would be honoured, thrilled and totally curious about such self exploration, and what better audience than someone who genuinely wants to know... This comes at an interesting time in my career. Although I love what I do, I have been going through a bit of a depression because I am feeling terribly isolated as a teacher.

Her response was significant in so many ways. First, Grace spoke of isolation, a theme that will emerge often in all of the stories that will be explored in this study. Next, Grace's suggestion that an ideal audience would be someone "who genuinely wants to know" suggested that she had not yet found this audience. This in itself points to isolation; if we

do not feel others care about what we do, we not only feel devalued, but also isolated. Third, it was because Grace "loves" teaching that she wanted to engage in such self-exploration. Fourth, and most importantly, implicit in this response was Grace's silence about the disillusionment she was facing. Perhaps this reading is made easier for me because I had grown to know Grace very well and knew how well regarded she was by parents, students and her administration. She was by all accounts a "model teacher"; yet, as is hinted in this response, and as I learned later, she did not voice her concerns, her anger, and her disillusionment. It was as if these feelings were not a part of who she had worked at becoming in the eyes of others. It troubled me that someone as clearly successful and dedicated as Grace did not feel that she could voice her anger, and I had to ask myself why. What were the conditions that were holding her back? Finally, that Grace acknowledged the term "the darker side of teaching" suggested to me her implicit understanding of what it was she and I would be investigating. This was the beginning of my struggle with naming an unvoiced, invisible condition.

Naming Unvoiced Anger

> *We must follow our "airy voices", follow them through bitter suffering and discouragement and darkness, through doubt and disbelief, through valleys of humiliation and over delectable hills where sweet things would lure us from our quest, ever and always must we follow, if we would reach the "far-off divine event" and look out thence to the aerial spires of our City of Fulfilment.*
>
> L.M. Montgomery : The Alpine Path: The Story of My Career

My correspondence with Grace gave me the impetus to talk more openly about the study I was conducting. While teachers were positive about the topic, most non-teachers I spoke with saw little reason to investigate why successful teachers were disillusioned. They suggested that either the answer was obvious, so "Why bother?" or that the teachers were simply suffering from "burnout". In my mind there was a grave difference: burnout was something you could see, whereas what I was beginning to question and investigate was a condition that we could not see and one that the owner was not willing to publicly discuss. I named this condition, this "it", the "darker side of teaching", a term I originally borrowed from Weber and Mitchell (1995).

Thus, it was teacher interest that kept me investigating, and soon two other women teachers hinted that I should interview them, always with the condition that no-one ever know they participated in such a study. It was as if they feared I would "blow their cover". I also wanted to interview a successful teacher who had left teaching, so I decided to approach a woman who had recently moved into the Faculty of Education at her university. For the next two years, I carried out a correspondence that took the form of letter writing, self-taped interviews, phone calls, and visits with Grace, a grade-six teacher; Marie, a high school teacher; Sarah, a former consultant turned resource room teacher; and Julia, a teacher educator. The length of the correspondence allowed me to see the cyclical nature of their disillusionment, a factor in determining the difference between burnout and this much more subtle condition, this "dark side" I was investigating.

Over the past few years, I frequently discussed my topic with anyone who was interested. This was a valuable process for me as I was forced to clarify my questions and my rationale, and question my assumptions. One of those assumptions was the use of the phrase "the darker side of teaching". It is important that I pause to address the negative reception I received for using this term. In numerous heated discussions, I was warned that readers would misinterpret "dark" for "evil". I realized that the term "darkness" has evil connotations, and certainly any dictionary definition of "dark" both as an adjective and as a noun will include "evil". I had been warned that "the darker side of teaching" could be misinterpreted for so much of the bad rap that teaching has been getting in the media, specifically with regards to teachers' misuse of authority and power. Finally, I was warned that teachers of colour may be offended by the use of the word "dark". I began to reconsider my choice in using this descriptive phrase as I looked for a better way of identifying what it was specifically that was under investigation.

Van Manen (1990) considers the problem with the fact that often the words we use to describe a phenomenon have lost some of their original meaning. "Words that once could reverberate with lived meaning and reveal a living world now have become lame, limp, mute, emptied, and forgetful of their past power" (p. 59). It was through the act of writing and rewriting the stories that my teacher participants had told me that the phenomena of "the darker side of teaching" became clear. Interestingly enough, none of my teacher participants questioned this phrase. In the excerpt from Grace's first letter

(shown earlier in chapter) she alluded to understanding and knowing what this darker side was, but was unsure of what she would be able to tell me about it. That she inherently recognized this terminology, but at the same time was confused about how she would access it, suggested that perhaps this dark side is like a cupboard into which we keep stuffing away things that we don't want to deal with at the present moment. At some point, the doors of the closet cannot close any more, and we are forced to deal with, to unpack the closet. This notion became more clear for me, when ironically, I received a "call for papers" that read:

> Everyone in education has contended with the shadow or dark side of human nature. The shadow contains aspects of an individual or a system hidden from self awareness and often from the awareness of others. As long as the shadow remains hidden, it is activated and exerts negative power over our lives. It can create fear, doubt, stress, anxiety, a sense of futility, and feelings of failure—the opposite energies of those engendering creativity and confidence in one's own abilities. But facing the shadow strengthens all individuals within a given system and paradoxically generates the energies that can empower them.

As a teacher educator and former classroom teacher, I hear burnout stories all the time. I hear able student-teachers lamenting the fact that the schools are filled with teachers who do not want to be there; the teachers are listless, uncaring, cynical and see no future for the student teachers who would give tooth and limb for their own classroom. It is important to ask if this malaise known as burnout is a contemporary phenomenon. It is also important to question the difference between burn out and the term "the darker side of teaching". "Teacher burnout" is a term so well known and so implicitly understood,

that to seek a clear definition seems almost redundant. We all know, or have met, or have heard of teachers who suffer from burnout. What is the difference then, between burnout and what I am investigating? Why was it so clear in my mind that Grace in fact had not burnt out but was disillusioned when she asked me, "Anna, do you think I went through a burnout? Is that what happened to me last year?"

Myriad images come to mind when I think of the term burnout. I think of the charred remains of a house incinerated in a fire, or a blackened light bulb in the garbage, or a melted candle stub that is burning out. In each of these examples that which is burnt out is ultimately of no use and discarded. The ashes of the house will be cleaned up and a new one built in its place; the light bulb will simply be replaced; and the candle may not even have remains that need to be thrown out. If we apply these images to teachers whom we describe or describe themselves as being burnt out, the message is a startling one. The term "burnt out" suggests that the responsibility of being burnt out lies entirely out of the hands of the participant. Like the house, the light bulb, and the candle stub, the teacher once served a purpose but she can do nothing to revive herself. When we think of burnout we think of teachers who have given up, who do the minimum, who cannot wait to leave. Freedman, Jackson and Boles (1987) question the use of this term in that "it does not acknowledge the reservoirs of strength and the varied sources of that strength from which teachers draw in the continuous challenge to help children in their common day-to-day work" (p. 3).

The teacher participants in this study underwent a serious reflective process in which they recounted the stories that marked their growing disillusionment with teaching. However, none of them gave up, did the minimum, or couldn't wait to leave. Quite the contrary. In fact, what impressed and amazed me was their continued fierce dedication to their profession regardless of the disillusionment they were facing. For example, all four participants are published writers, work in conjunction with teaching universities, and have given workshops in their areas of expertise. For lack of a better word, I would call them "workaholic", and it is that which perhaps best differentiates them from those teachers who suffer from burnout. Marie best expresses what I mean by "workaholic" when she tells me why teachers need what she calls "survival tactics".

> Teaching requires a lot of energy, emotional energy, psychological energy, intellectual energy; it takes away from your real life and you need tactics to keep that energy alive because as the year moves on that energy saps and drains you...it's hard to balance your personal life and your work when you are a teacher. Your personal life suffers when you're a teacher, your family sees the back of your head more often than not, especially when you're an English teacher. If your job is going to take up a good part of your waking day, 8-10-12 hours, plus nights, and many weekends, then I want to be doing the best I can at that job. It requires a lot of energy, a lot of thinking, a great deal of investment of time and sacrifice in other areas. As an English teacher I feel like I'm sacrificing a lot of my personal time throughout the year; I go to bed early, I don't have the energy to go out, Friday night rolls around and I fall asleep on the couch, my husband goes out without me. I don't mind that because that is his survival tactic; he is social and needs to go out. I need survival tactics because I need to show myself that all of this sacrifice is worth something, that it is worth my image of myself as a teacher and a person. When I began teaching I met many ex-teachers who couldn't invest the time, I don't know how long I am going to last. It makes me wonder if teaching is worth it.

Halfway through the study, Grace, Marie, and Sarah were all dealing with professional challenges. Like the conflict I face between what I should be teaching and what I do teach, these three women were faced with the conflict between what they thought and felt and knew they *should* be doing, and what they *could* do within the structure of the schools in which they worked. At the peak of our correspondence I had to ask myself if their condition was like packing a closet to its limit and then having to face the contents. Certainly some of their letters suggested this, as we shall see in later chapters. I returned to the use of the term the "darker side", convinced that at the very least it conveyed the urgency of locating that bursting closet. As one classroom teacher wrote, "I have come to the conclusion that, by this term, you mean the often unnamed or intangible causes of disillusionment experienced by some women teachers. I agree with you that this disillusionment is very different from burnout".

From dark to shadowed

Still, I was not convincing many of my readers and friends that the "darker side of teaching" was indeed what was under investigation. So, I did what I always ended up doing when something was not clear: I turned to my participants well after we had stopped corresponding and asked them to reconsider this term. Marie was the first to write:

I have tried to imagine how I would respond to the idea of the darker side of teaching had I not been asked it before. Would my response be different than it was when you first asked me about it? You will have to be the judge.

At the present point, the darker side of teaching comes in a few different shades. A colleague recently discovered that one of his junior students had been raped over the summer. As a man and as a father of daughters, he felt ashamed, helpless to change anything, a variety of emotions. I wrote the following to him:

I am sorry to hear about your student, truly sorry and saddened. What a frightening life turning for her. As a teacher, it is so difficult to concentrate on day to day details when our hearts ache for something we cannot change...

I have had my share of wounded students reach out to me for help and I help them as best I can. I never feel that I have done enough for them, and that must be because I can never change what has happened to them. This is one of the darker sides of teaching, at least for those teachers, like myself, who make themselves accessible to students in this way. Not all teachers do, and some quite openly reject any intimate involvement in their students' lives. I feel myself withdrawing from this role this year, only because I have expended so much energy on wounded students over the last two or three years, and had to take care of my own wounds as well. I know I will be watching for the wounded always, and will pick up the pieces when I have to. That is just who I am.

Another dark side to teaching continues to be the politics, or the things that involve the running of the school and the people who work in it. Our school continues to face changes and upheavals. As a result of these changes in our school and staff, and the new structures that are developing, staff unhappiness is more recognisable than ever. It is difficult to understand, when our school, is such a success. Nevertheless, it is a constant struggle to shield myself from the unhappiness of others. While I share some of their views and feelings, I also feel that I can function quite well as things are now. Again, there are some things or people I cannot change, so I must concentrate on manoeuvring around the problems and the problem people that have little impact on my work, but when someone or something impacts me, I have had to learn to handle the person or situation honestly and promptly. I don't want to become bitter. I just want to teach and enjoy my colleagues and students.

Third, one of the darker sides of teaching that I initially wrote about is less of a problem. I wrote about how teaching takes an emotional and personal toll on me. I remember you showing me the quote, and my astonishment that I had said these

things before my separation from my husband. I now believe that the toll teaching takes on my personal and emotional life is something I can regulate. I can even say that it does not take such a heavy toll as it did then. This could be because my personal life is less demanding in some ways. However, I know that it takes less of a toll I have worked to contain it. I now stay after school to complete my work, sometimes not leaving until 5:30. But then, when I get home, my evening and my life is completely my own. This has worked remarkably well and I intend to try and discipline myself to work this way. I have more energy to be with people and to do things for myself and with others. I have taken up my own writing again and truly enjoy planning my evenings and weekends, knowing I am free. I cannot do everything that I want to do because of this type of schedule, but knowing that I get the overtime back in the summer is worth the effort and the compromises, at least it is at this point in my life.

I suppose the last area is that of changes in teaching. My experience in trying to change the way my subject is taught has been a positive one. I had had support from my school (more or less) and the teaching community. Nevertheless, I continue to fear that what I have accomplished as an innovator could be taken away from me, either by a new administration, by parents, or by the government. I remind myself that I must be ready to change for the better, meaning investigating new philosophies and methods. But I fear having to return to old methods that I cannot believe in. Change worked for me, but it does not work for everyone. Implementing change is hard work.

These four themes, the troubled students, the politics of teaching, the balancing of my personal life, and changes in teaching my subject area have been the darker side of teaching for me from the beginning. Is that because of me? Or the way I choose to work and see the teaching world and the people in it? Maybe, but I am satisfied with what I accomplish. When or if these darker shadows become too oppressive, I shall have to be brave enough to change. But, it looks as though I can handle the darker side if I maintain my sense of accomplishment as a teacher.

Marie had gone beyond the term "the darker side" and had shaped it to meet her need when she referred to "the darker shadows". Marie in fact pinpointed what it was that I was investigating: namely teacher shadows, specifically the "darker" ones. Perhaps it was because my participants so implicitly understood the shadowed nature of teaching that

they never questioned the term "the darker side of teaching". Again, it was necessary for me to question more deeply what it was that I meant by "shadowed".

It has only been since the birth of my daughter that I have rediscovered the power of shadows. When she was a baby we played finger shadows on the walls of her room. We laughed as she focused in and stared at these liquid shapes that came alive in the evening. She still enjoys these shows but now she has learned how to make dogs dance and worms squiggle by finding the right light on the right spot on the white wall. When she first discovered her own shadow, she took great delight in trying to catch it or follow it. Again she learned that she could manipulate what her shadow did and this recognition seemed at once to frighten and delight her. Her fascination with shadows, all children's fascination with shadows, is perhaps their first lesson on the power of light and dark.

Playing with shadows, with light and dark, became an even greater source of fear, excitement and pure delight when she discovered the power of a flashlight in a dark space. Her eyes bulged as she watched her father create grotesque contortions of his face by simply shining the light at a certain angle. Similarly she laughed hysterically when in a dark room he blew into a lit flashlight looking like a crazed jack-o'- lantern. Perhaps what stands out most in my mind is the night of the full moon when we went out for a sleigh ride pulled by two enormous horses and accompanied by a clan of horseback riders. The snow was fresh and thus bright in the glow of the moon. We were galloping fast when, all of a sudden, I looked down to see my daughter staring up at the forest of tall pines. When

I looked up I watched with her, in utter silence, the enormous shadows of the horses that were appearing on the dark wall of trees. It was magnificent and terrifying. Over those shadows, we had no control.

It is the betraying nature of shadows that makes them so compelling. They at once distort shapes and at the same time represent shapes. Shadows grow, fade and shift according to light. They betray our presence because they give us away. Without light, there can be no shadows, and it is the light that renders the shadows dark. It is the nature of shadows that helps us better understand and make more visible one part of the myth of the "ideal and good" teacher. It is because she stands in light that she has dark shadows. The dark shadows of the "good teacher" are thus very different from what it means to be burnt out, to have no light left. Hence, it is the dark side of the shadowed life of the "good" teacher that I examine in this study.

I include here a letter Grace wrote to me at the end of our long correspondence. In it we get a hint of the themes that shape her shadows, but mostly we see how the "dark side" for Grace stems from not being recognized in an intellectual capacity. When Grace left her school and began work in a small independent all-girl's school, she wrote the following:

> What does the darker side of teaching mean to me?? ? When I am thinking of that I am thinking of the pettier side of this profession - the insecurities and the meanness where the well being of the child plays the secondary role. Right now I don't feel that so much here. In fact, I have had a record three "YES" days in a

row even though I have heard some things about my teaching from my students that doesn't necessarily make me feel good. You know, the usual complaints, but for some reason, I am taking them less personally. If anything, it is sparking a greater enthusiasm in me. It is bringing out my very strong "I'll show you" side. This job is much more challenging than my former one was. I am really starting to feel that, and it is invigorating. It is starting to inspire me. It is a job that acknowledges my intelligence.

The darker side of teaching doesn't really happen here. I think I have more respect for most of the professionals here. There are some great teachers here whom I admire and I can't remember the last time I was thinking like that on a regular basis. Don't get me wrong. I had moments at my old school where I appreciated a lesson that someone taught but I don't think I ever admired their approach to their students. There is at least one teacher here who has my admiration. Yes, HE. I was thinking about him on my walk to work this morning. He is scary to the girls but he has a PASSION for history so they love his classes. Sometimes they come back to class with stories about him and the lesson they just had. I wish I had had at least one high school teacher whose class I left tingling with excitement.

I also respect my bosses and I feel that they respect me as a professional. They are very reachable and I have regular contact with them (almost unheard of at my old school. I always felt I was a bother or that I was being ushered gently out of the office while I was speaking.) Now I feel invited to stay and talk. I am being validated, but not always the way I want, but Anna, this is a good thing. I am learning to think about myself as a serious educator and I don't need those crumbs of reassurance that used to get thrown my way occasionally. I think I am a good teacher. I really like the way I communicate with young people and I feel I do it better than most educators I have met, including those who work here. I have nothing to apologise for. I think my successes at my old school always embarrassed me because they drew attention to me and reminded other less confident teachers of their own insecurities. The teachers here don't spend time validating me but I am feeling their growing respect (?) or acceptance. What a great feeling.

Grace ends her letter highlighting the community she has finally found with those who share her passion for teaching. The next letter, from Julia, sheds further light on this feeling of isolation from and within a community.

> The darker side of teaching....it really has to be a gut reaction at this point as responding to your questions seems to have been a century ago and I really and truly have forgotten what I said before. You must also remember that most of my responses were related to my experiences in a school classroom and I have been away from that for a while now and so perhaps the darker side will now take a different slant and refer to my experiences with University students...but here goes...the darker side of teaching for me is trying to do your best by your students and not being appreciated especially by the people in authority...trying to get things done and change things and bring in a breath of fresh air and being faced by the big wall of the powers that be...of being told that you should not do these things but to abide by conventionality and to get by on the least that you can do... the darker side of teaching for me is being ostracized by your colleagues for doing things differently and by realizing that colleagues are not professionals but simply there to get their salaries at the end of the month...the darker side of teaching is the constant power struggle which goes on to maintain the status quo and keep people in their class or gender...the darker side of trying to do your best and being slapped back in the face for doing so...the darker side of teaching is the disillusionment, the knowledge that however much you try, you are never going to change things.

Julia alludes to the power structure in which she finds herself, a structure that appears to thwart attempts she makes as a dedicated teacher. Sarah was the final participant to write, and her letter came in three single spaced pages. I cannot include all of it especially because many of its details are too specific. I have chosen those parts that best show her anger, an anger that, after two and a half years, has not changed and is directly aimed at the structure in which she works. Her first two themes, not being recognized on an intellectual level and not being a part of a community, really rise out of this final theme.

The darker side of teaching - what are the issues today, a year, two years after beginning my correspondence with you? Nothing has changed, it has just gotten worse. The surface issues are still there: budget cut backs; oversize classes; double, and now triple, split classes; kids with emotional and behavioural problems, many shifting back and forth weekly, even daily, between divorced parents (my sister used to say you wouldn't move a fridge, let alone a kid, every other day and expect it to work); unavailable or uninvolved families; few volunteers; and dwindling student and teacher support services. The press and stress of classroom life. (I can't remember who coined that phrase - Lortie, I think.) But beneath it all there are the deeper, darker issues of teacher isolation and career flatness that make living life at the surface more and more impossible.

First the isolation. Stay in your little box and do your job. Don't bother anyone with your problems, they've got enough of their own. If you cry out, or even speak up, you lose credibility. As a profession, we don't have a history of culture or shared problem solving and decision making to draw on when times are rough. Our classroom isolation seems to pit us one against the other: teacher vs. Teacher, administrator, parents, school board. The last one, the school board, is a big bone of contention right now.

Now for career flatness I referred to in my first e-mail. Right now that, more than the classroom isolation, is reason for my disillusionment as a teacher, although in some ways the two are interconnected. To all intents and purposes teaching is a job, not a career. We're unionised workers. We're meant to do the same job in our classrooms, our little boxes, year after year. For a while we can challenge ourselves through the implementation of instructional innovations at the grade level we've been assigned. We may be assigned a new school or grade level, or a request to change grade levels or schools may be granted and we can start the process of instructional innovations all over again. Basically all we can hope for is horizontal change, not vertical growth. In no other field do "professionals" with our levels of education have the same "little or no" opportunity to climb up a career ladder...

But I am determined not to turn it inward this time. This is not my fault; it's the fault of the system; it's the dark side of the profession that you refer to and we live with. Teaching is a job only, not a career; we're simply cogs in the wheel, and any cog will keep the wheel moving. Individual needs, abilities, life stages etc. are neither considered nor planned for. If one cog falls out, you simply fish around for another to replace it.

Turning inward was what initially characterised my understanding of the "darker side of teaching". However, I have since moved away from this term in favour of the "shadowed side of teaching" which suggests that my investigation lends itself to cycles and to varying or shifting degrees of darkness. While many of us have "put on a happy face" when in fact happy was the opposite of what we were feeling, my interest was in the professional nature of turning inward. Grace, Marie, Sarah and Julia were all dedicated, successful and seemingly content. Their stories forced me to question how and why they did not feel valued, and how they dealt with their shadows especially in light of the fact that they represent the "ideal teachers" who shaped the myth that I believed in as a little girl, and later tried and perhaps even continue to try to live up to.

Looking back to that time when thousands of young women became teachers might be one way of better understanding, and even locating, the origins of the myth of the "typical" teacher and the "good and ideal" teacher. In the next chapter I do two things. First, I acknowledge a body of literature that dedicates itself to filling the missing space in educational research with regards to the stories and voices of women teachers. Second, in doing so, I am able to increase my understanding of the origins of the myths of the classroom teacher.

CHAPTER TWO

WOMEN AND TEACHING: THE MAKING OF A MYTH

> Women have always been the first teachers of children, and this may explain their invisibility. They are there and they are not there. For, disconcertingly, the story of women as teachers has always shifted between home and school, between mothers and not mothers, between the private and the public, between the unpaid and the paid...Whatever it is that women do when they teach children could be better done by men, the story seems to go, if only people were prepared to pay men the going rate to do it. (Miller, 1996, xi)

In making such a statement Jane Miller is pointing out that because most classroom teachers are women, teachers are not valued. I do not want to suggest that some of the themes that come out of the stories of successful women teachers who become disillusioned with teaching would not be shared by male teachers. It is important that we examine the themes that emerge from the lives of *all* teachers who meet this description, because ultimately if these teachers leave our schools, it is no cause for celebration. However, as a starting point for such investigation, it was not unconsciously that I chose to work with four women. The very fact that I am a woman and a teacher is certainly a key ingredient in my choice. It would be naive of me not to acknowledge the fact that I chose a career that has traditionally been regarded as "women's work", and now work as a teacher educator with mostly women student teachers. Thanks to a well established body of research on women and teaching, I am able to situate this decision theoretically and consider implications for future research on women and teaching.

In School Work: Gender and the Cultural Construction of Teaching, Sari Knopp Biklen (1995) says that, "the data drawn from participant observation suggests that particularly with elementary school teaching, the cultural constructions of teaching are so gendered, so connected to teaching defined as women's activity, that it is nearly impossible to reform teaching without examining and confronting the gender question" (p. 7). Furthermore, in Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching, Madelaine Grumet argues that:

> An analysis of teaching cannot ignore teaching's association with femininity. And the influence of femininity cannot be limited to the imposition of sexism, as a study of the restrictions placed upon teachers who are women would illustrate. A gender analysis of teaching must strive to depict how women who are teachers experience our femininity in schools and how our sense of gender, in turn, influences our pedagogy and the curriculum in our classrooms. (p. 46)

The body of research on women and teaching is one branch of feminist research whose aim has been to uncover voices that have been omitted, forgotten and misrepresented in the literature of education. What does this body of literature have to do with the questions I am asking about the myths of the classroom teacher? Thus, I turn to the literature and read it in three ways. First, I want to show that the myths of the classroom teacher that I have referred to, the "typical" teacher and the "good and ideal" teacher and what those images imply are rooted in the period of time when teaching became a feminized profession, thus becoming "women's work". My understanding of the myth I held onto as a child can only be illuminated through an examination of those who possibly first shaped and perpetuated this myth. Next I want to show that the contradictions

implicit in what it meant and means to be a teacher are engraved in a political structure that has changed little in over one hundred and fifty years. Finally, I want to turn to the stories of contemporary teachers who challenged the typical myth of what it meant to be a teacher, and read them for silences and shadows.

The "Typical Teacher"

To illustrate that gender is implicitly and explicitly connected with teaching, I turn to the work of Mitchell and Weber (1995), whose research suggests that, more often than not, when children are asked to draw a picture of a teacher, those pictures will depict a woman in a teacher-centred situation. This is not surprising given that most teachers at the elementary school are women. However, it is the analysis of the difference between the boys' drawings and the girls' drawings that is of particular interest with regards to gender and teaching. First, the authors found that after going through only two class sets of drawings they were able to accurately guess which drawings were done by boys and which were done by girls. The girls were far more likely to spend a great deal of time on the details of the drawings, including hearts, eyelashes, clothing, perhaps because the teacher was a powerful female figure in their lives and someone with whom they could identify. The boys were less likely to spend as much time on the drawings, and the authors quote one teacher who suggested that although one of the boys was a "terrific artist", his drawing suggested he did not take the task as seriously as he might have had he been

asked to draw snakes or monsters. The authors suggest that, in fact, the boys were quite simply ambivalent towards the drawing of their teacher.

Weber and Mitchell point out that because the overwhelming number of elementary classroom teachers are women, in essence they were asking the girls to draw someone of the same sex and the boys someone of the opposite sex. For the girls, drawing a teacher meant drawing someone with whom they could potentially identify with; for the boys, drawing a teacher meant drawing a woman who had power over them. Weber and Mitchell say, "women with power may be perceived as threatening by some men, who throughout history have devised certain methods of deflecting this power. One such method is mockery" (p. 41). Could it be that the stereotypical image of the teacher is one that has been handed down through generations of students and parents who have felt threatened by the power the classroom teacher appears to have?

By the time children leave elementary school, it only makes sense that they have assimilated the image of the classroom teacher as being a woman. For boys, the teacher is "what they are not", and while boys may have access to more male teachers at the secondary level, they are also at a period in their lives when they are most likely to rebel against any authority figure thus not having much opportunity to identify positively with teachers. However, for girls that image, the illusion of the autonomous woman teacher is just that: an illusion. While she may be perceived as holding power inside the classroom,

the classroom teacher is given little validity or power outside of the classroom. Miller (1996) says,

> The relation of women teachers (even those who are married and have children) to the women children know outside school, is surely seen by children to be unequal and ambiguous. For women who do paid work are required to split themselves, for fear that mothering be tainted by contamination from any potential monetary value that may be put on it. So that if girls learn from teachers that they too might be teachers, the lesson they learn is not unequivocal. (pp. 62-63)

Why is it that the image of the traditional woman teacher in a teacher-centred classroom reappeared over and over in the drawings that Weber and Mitchell collected? Do these images accurately portray what children experience in their classrooms? When I asked student teachers to do the same exercise, they were taken aback at their results. Most of my students, who are women, drew women in teacher-centred classrooms. However, only a handful out of thirty-five drew themselves. Even worse, in our post-drawing discussion, the student teachers described their drawings as negative stereotypes. In other words, they could not identify with their own drawings. None of them regarded herself as fitting the teacher stereotype in the drawing: bun, pointer carrying, centre of attention. This dichotomy raises two questions. First, where is this powerful stereotype rooted, and, more importantly, why is the stereotype so negative? What does this say about how contemporary culture values teachers?

Not all teachers are easy targets for criticism, not all are devalued, not all are silenced. Miller (1996) argues that the teachers who grace the halls of our universities arguably do not share the negativity that is associated with classroom teachers. Quite the opposite, in fact. The university teacher is a scholar by virtue of "his" position. His intellect is not questioned and pedagogy is not even an issue. Because he is a university professor it is presumed that he can teach. The extreme is the classroom teacher whose life Grumet (1988) compares to a housewife who sneaks into the kitchen at naptime to make a phone call. Miller says, "there is never the hope or the expectation that young women going into teaching might be, and need to be, intelligent, intellectually alert, and critical or, indeed, interested in anything in particular, except, in some wholly unspecifiably way, children" (p. 77). And, Miller points out, it is of particular interest that at both extremes, neither the university teacher nor the classroom teacher is perceived to require any more than little training. The classroom teacher, most often associated with being a woman, is the topic of interest in this study and it is to her stories that I turn in order to better locate the contradictions and conflict between what she is perceived to be, what it is she does, and what she envisions herself as having the potential to do.

Looking Back

> Women teachers are figures of such impossible familiarity that it can seem inappropriate to train any sort of searchlight on them. They have not, as workers, been inclined to court celebrity or seek public vindication. Most of them have become used to regular doses of obloquy and unthinking condescension from many quarters. Yes, it is necessary to try to understand their history. It is necessary to

> for the women themselves and for their thousands and thousands of predecessors, and it is essential for education, for schools and for children going through the schooling system, some of whom may well become teachers themselves. We may learn a good deal in the process about the values of society which is prepared to hand over the education of most people's children to a group of adults whose powers of mind and character and whose qualifications for the job are so consistently distrusted and traduced. (Miller, 1995, xii)

The voices of women teachers have been absent from the literature on education. While libraries are filled with books on every possible aspect of education, there are very few texts on the women who have run our classrooms and on the subject of women teachers. Miller (1996) says that there are so few available accounts of nineteenth-century teachers because, by and large, they were in social limbo, isolated from their families and not really a part of any visible class. She continues that if they were remembered at all by their students it was often an inaccurate memory. They were seen through the softening lens of nostalgia or as simple caricatures rather than as women who chose to teach in elementary schools. While their choices were limited to getting married and having families, or teaching, she suggests that their choice to become teachers was one filled with contradiction which might tell us a great deal about women's lives in those times.

The texts that have been influential in this study begin with Nancy Hoffman's Womans' "True" Profession (1981) a volume of narratives on early women teachers in the United States. Hoffman focuses on the feminization of teaching that occurred in the mid-nineteenth century by profiling those women teachers who most influenced teaching and teachers. Alison Prentice and Marjorie R. Theobald's text Women Who Taught (1991) focuses on early women teachers who taught in the private and public spheres, and

in higher education in Canada, England, Australia and in the United States. Madelyn Holmes and Beverly J. Weiss's text Lives of Women Public Schoolteachers (1995) focuses on American women teachers whom the authors introduce as forgotten historical figures who left positive impressions on thousands of Americans. Sandra Acker's Gendered Education (1994) considers a feminist approach to the sociology of education and Sari Knopp Biklen examines the question of gender and teaching in School Work: Gender and the Cultural Construction of Teaching (1994). Finally, three texts were of particular value in this study. First, Kathleen Casey's text I Answer With My Life (1993), an examination of three sets of women teachers working for social change, forced me to consider how the "calling" of women to teach might be interpreted as a political and social act. Second, Madeleine Grumet's text Bitter Milk (1988) explored and challenged the contradictory image of the teacher as a nurturer. And, in School for Women (1996), Jane Miller weaves her own autobiography into her account of women and teaching reminding us of the importance of situating our own autobiography in the questions we ask and attempt to answer.

The work of Nancy Hoffman is useful in examining, from a chronological point of view, some early women teachers in North America and how their stories might help me trace the cause of my participants' voicelessness about their own disillusionment. My contention is that the history of the patriarchal structure of schooling foreshadows the silent anger that arose out of the disillusionment experienced by the four women teachers who participated in this study.

Both Hoffman (1981) and Miller (1996) ask what it was that drew thousands of young girls into teaching in the mid-nineteenth century. While Miller's research is largely situated in Britain, she nevertheless looks to the early North American teachers for insight into her topic. She reminds us that "women teachers are figures of such impossible familiarity that it can seem inappropriate to train any sort of searchlight on them" (xii), and that this impossible familiarity lends itself to condescension from all corners. Hoffman suggests that if we look to the early American teachers, we meet women who chose teaching for a variety of reasons. Some chose teaching out of political and philosophical convictions, thus making teaching a career; some chose teaching as a part-time career until they were married; and some chose teaching to escape the mundane life that marriage inevitably brought. The reasons women chose teaching pose a conflict in terms of our understanding of what it meant to be a teacher. How was it that a profession could be, on the one hand, politically and philosophically satisfying, and, on the other hand, an alternative to, or worse, preparation for marriage? Could it be that the conflict implicit in the reasons why women chose teaching, and very possibly why they still choose teaching, is a conflict, that is at the root of the disillusionment experienced by the four participants in this study? The role of the teacher is a difficult one to define because it appears, at the very least from a historical sense, to have "something for everyone".

Hoffman says that in North America, industrialization, immigration, and urbanization were the three reasons that gave rise to the number of women in education,

and the number of women in teaching . While women and girls had traditionally played important roles in the working of farms, new machinery left room for them to attend school and even strike out on their own as school teachers. It is not surprising then that the structure of schooling resembles an industrial structure which is hierarchical: the principal at the top, the working teachers at the bottom. The wave of immigrants meant not only increased urban centres, but more children to teach. Prior to these changes, school classrooms were often headed by a man, very often in flux between careers. However, between 1849 and 1880, the number of elementary teachers in the United States tripled to make women 80% of the teaching force. Women filled the schoolrooms across the country, and the feminization of teaching occurred almost over night. Hoffman points out that while the image of the teacher changed from that of a semi-dedicated mediocre man to a dedicated exemplary young woman, two things occurred. First, instead of trying to prepare these masses of women for teaching, it was assumed that their sex gave them the "natural" qualities of a good teacher. Therefore, the emphasis shifted from preparing teachers to teachers instilling correct values in their charges. Second, as teaching became women's work, its attractiveness as a male career choice diminished. More than ever, males saw themselves as administrators, not teachers.

In their scholarship, Miller, Hoffman, and Grumet all highlight the contribution of Catharine Beecher, an outspoken educator whose goal was to fill the thousands of teaching positions that were cropping up all over the United States with women. Beecher encouraged women to become teachers for two reasons. First, she suggested that

teaching gave women the opportunity to seek intellectual challenge and some degree of independence outside their inevitable role of wife and mother. Her second reason, however, undercuts the notion that teaching could lead to independence. According to Beecher "The great purpose in a woman's life - the happy superintendence of a family – is accomplished all the better and easier by preliminary teaching in school. All the power she may develop here will come in use there" (in Grumet, 1988, p. 37). What message were women and men receiving when, on the one hand, a career was intellectually stimulating and promoted independence and, on the other, it was the ideal way to train for managing the household of a husband and future children? While the two are not necessarily mutually incompatible, what Beecher ensured was that teaching was a calling for women. What man would choose a profession that would prepare him for managing the responsibilities of marriage and children? Furthermore, in her drive to enlist women, Beecher not only argued that the classroom was an extension of the home, but that women were more suited to teaching than men because of their "benevolent nature". In one public address, she reassured her audience that

> The female teacher remained truly feminine; she had no desire for notoriety, but like the ideal mother worked not for money nor for influence, nor for honour, nor for ease, but with the simple, single purpose of doing good. (as cited in Hoffman, 1981 p.11)

Grumet (1988) points out that Beecher's words not only set the tone for the feminization of teaching, but also mirror her definition of femininity. While on the one hand she urged women to seek intellectual stimulation, on the other she appealed to them

as missionary workers whose payment came from a warm heart, from a sense of "having done good". Grumet also asserts that not only did females influence the character of teaching, but that teaching in these schools at these times might have influenced femininity. Why was it that the first of my participants, Grace, felt she was saying something "awful" when she suggested that teachers deserve more remuneration? Could it be that she felt that because teaching was her "calling", because she wanted to "do good" that the sacrifice would be a small salary? A profession that appealed ultimately to the "natural" qualities of women could not possibly begin to shape for itself the same kind of grounded respect as those professions traditionally associated with men, professions that did not in any way require a "benevolent nature" but rather a keenness of mind and a sound education. Ironically, the normal schools set up to prepare female teachers for the classrooms may have produced a situation in which more women had a higher education than did men.

We are told that Catharine Beecher fought to get women out of the sweatshops and into the classrooms. In the sweatshops the settings were dismal as was the pay. Interestingly though, the structure of the sweat shops was and arguably still is similar to the structure of schooling; that is, in both cases there is a top-down power structure where those at the bottom are, for the most part, women. As Beecher spoke out to women who moved into teaching and took jobs away from "second rate men", teaching became known as women's work, and as long as it wasn't men's work, it was subordinate to all that was male. The classroom as "home away from home" became the site of conflict for the

teacher in charge. What indeed was her chief purpose? To engage her students in intellectual pursuits or to attend to their needs as growing individuals all the while maintaining orderly housekeeping rules? Perhaps a more important question is, what was the image of the teacher perceived by society at large and how did this image influence the treatment of teachers? In Hoffman's words, teachers were less than equal in status to male professionals. but teaching was "a source of satisfaction and power for women. Teaching was still special, but it had become shadowed" (1981, p. 16).

In the mid-nineteenth century in North America, while the teacher as extension of the mother was deemed best suited to teach children, she certainly was not deemed suitable for the administrative duties of running the schools. I turn to the work of Holmes and Weiss in which the narrative of Electa Lincoln Walton (1824-1908) serves as an early example of the gender inequalities women teachers faced. Walton was chosen by Cyprus Pierce to be his assistant in the normal school that he ran and in which Walton taught. When Pierce became ill, he asked Walton to fill in for him and run the school, a responsibility he knew she could fulfil. Pierce, Horace Mann, and the board were satisfied. However, when Pierce was forced to resign due to continued illness and he suggested that Walton officially take his place, the board was not ready to appoint a woman to head one of the normal schools. They were willing to allow Walton to remain as acting principal only until a suitable man could be found. Walton hoped for two things: first to satisfy the needs of those working in the school, and second, to receive the pay Pierce had been receiving. Not surprisingly, it was only the first of her desires that she

realized. In later years Electa Walton was to collaborate on arithmetic texts with her husband only to have the publishers refuse to print her name on the covers, asserting that texts written by women would not sell. While later texts did print her name, the early ones only printed the name of her husband. The authors show that this final example of sexual discrimination only served to radicalise Electa Walton, to make her an outspoken supporter for women's rights and suffrage.

Hoffman also profiles Emma Willard Hart (1787-1870), a woman who dedicated herself to the education of women. Hart began teaching at the age of seventeen in a time when no specific requirements were necessary and there was no such thing as school taxes. In 1814, Willard Hart began her own boarding school to relieve her husband of financial duties. However, she devoted her life to improving education for girls and eventually her passion became educating women. Hoffman calls on Hart's autobiographical writing in order to give us some idea of her philosophy of teaching. For example, she carefully shows how her practice changed from one in which she did all the talking, to the students "reciting" so that they might remember, and finally a practice in which she encouraged her students to concentrate on communicating ideas. Her reputation as an educator grew rapidly although the plan she proposed for the improvement of female education was not shown to anyone until a year after it was finished because she knew that she would be regarded as a " 'visionary', almost to insanity, should I utter the expectations which I secretly entertained in connection with it"

(as cited in Hoffman, 1981, p. 23). Clearly Hart recognized that teaching was not valued by the "male" world when she said:

> But it was not merely on the strength of my arguments that I relied. I determined to inform myself, and increase my personal influence and fame as a teacher; calculating that in this way I might be sought for in other places, where influential men would carry my project before some legislature, for the sake of obtaining a good school. (as cited in Hoffman, 1981, p. 23)

As thousands of young women flocked into teaching positions, the structure of schooling became more controlled and controlling. Schools were run by men. Women who were able to put distance between themselves and male administrators were able to develop their potential. One such teacher Hoffman (1981) cites was Laura Towne, a woman who travelled to the Southern United States and wrote about being a clerk for a board of trustees, having to give accounts of funds used and funds needed, and about the numerous people she met including an old African woman whom she described as a "spiritual mother" or prophetess. Not only is there a celebration of teaching evident in her letters, but also a celebration of womanhood. Furthermore, she used her reputation as an anti-slave worker to champion rights for the black population in the South. She wrote, "I want to agitate, even as I am agitated" (p.106). It appears that the further teachers were away from the structure of schooling imposed by those administrators who made the rules and supervised their outcomes, the more personal authority they had, and the more they were able to fulfil their own vision of teaching.

In Women Who Taught , Danylewycz and Prentice (1991) turn to teacher contracts as a point of entry for examining the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when women made up the teaching force in Quebec and Ontario. The authors find that poverty compelled many men to seek employment on the frontier leaving teaching positions open for women in the province of Quebec. Furthermore, from Quebec's earliest days Catholic nuns set up and operated schools for girls. At this time, administrative forces expected all these women teachers to tighten control of their students, just as those administrators tightened their own control over their teachers. The demands on teachers, mostly women working for low wages, grew. They were expected to handle a growing amount of paper work. Daily registers and monthly lists of absentees paled in comparison with the Toronto rule (1881) that the teacher had to keep a written record of all homework assignments, and at the end of the year, the teacher was to produce a mind map of each student with written suggestions as to promotion for the student. The centralization of examinations became a further bureaucratic nightmare for teachers when provincial examinations were introduced in Quebec in 1891. Danylewycz and Prentice show that teachers then, as many do now, felt that not only were exams poorly worded and poorly proof-read, but also that it was the teachers who were being examined, not the students. Rural teachers felt it was impossible for them to fulfil all the expectations set for them by their superiors. Teachers were responsible for the behaviour of students inside and outside of their classrooms which suggested not only supervision but the organization of games. Teachers were instructed on the tone of their voice, the

management of the classroom with regards to cleanliness, and how many times to ring the bell. They could be assured of many supervised visits. Furthermore, many teachers worked in overcrowded, poorly lit and ill equipped classrooms. If faced with a negative report, it was their responsibility and not their employers' to find alternate locations. Many teachers experienced poor health and fatigue as a result of the conditions in which they worked.

As a result of the increasing demands placed on teachers, they began demanding changes in the pension funds and made their cases publicly known whenever the opportunity presented itself. Of importance to this discussion, is that while teacher's work was supposed to be intellectually situated, the enormous extraneous expectations suggested that teachers were in fact being treated like the children who were in their charge. Furthermore, it appears that the structure of schooling, one rooted in industrialization, where power was situated in top positions, was firmly in place, and, as a result, ensured a conflicting role for teachers. Teachers' demands were rightly met in the form of unions who represented their best interests. However, at the same time union membership relegated them to the status of "worker", thus creating a conflict with the professional image they wanted to project.

Indeed, while women teachers were supposed to be promoting intellectual growth, their classroom duties often interfered with these objectives. J. Donald Wilson's 1991 essay, " 'I am ready to be of assistance when I can': Lottie Bowron and Rural Women

Teachers in British Columbia," provides us with stories of Canadian women teachers who travelled out West. The hardships young women teachers faced had to do with living in isolated rural areas amongst families who did not always support the presence of the school teacher. After one young teacher was found dead not far from her home (she had insisted on taking her Sunday walks despite warnings that there were questionable persons in the area) and after another committed suicide leaving a note indicating that she did not feel wanted, Lottie Bowron was hired to visit the locales of young teachers who were experiencing difficulties. Thus, her diaries are filled with stories of only those teachers who were having difficulty coping in their designated areas. Bowron, less an educator than a socialite, appeared to embrace these young women and their difficulties. She visited, supervised, and made reports suggesting ways their conditions could be bettered. Often her suggestions included not sending young women teachers to isolated areas.

In summary, Catharine Beecher, Emma Willard Hart, Electa Lincoln Walton, and Laura Towne are four examples of early women teachers who shaped our historical teaching community. All four are examples of women whose lives were dedicated to teaching. Beecher and Willard Hart both dedicated their lives exclusively to the education of women. While we are not privy to their shadowed stories, we can read the silences in their stories. Hart was silent about her plans for the improvement of education for girls fearing she would be seen as a "visionary" or worse as "insane". She did not give voice to her plans until she felt she was perfectly prepared so that she could stand her ground. Walton's hopes for position and remuneration were private, and when she temporarily

received the former, the latter was ignored as if by position alone she received merit. Perhaps the most blatant silencing was the omission of her name from the texts she co-authored with her husband, in fear that they would not sell. It was only much later as a supporter of women's rights that Walton's voice became a tool for her ideas. And lastly, Towne was far away from the structure under which most teachers were working, and as such, was arguably not as silenced and able to fulfil the very political act of teaching in which she believed. It is important that we read their stories not only to discover the successes but also the hardships that women teachers endured.

The Impact of the Feminization of Teaching

Catharine Beecher, Emma Willard Hart, Electa Lincoln Walton, and Laura Towne were dedicated women who appeared to acknowledge and work around the shadows that they experienced. However, what of those who left and what of those who continue to leave because they find the conflict in their role a silencing one? An excellent example is drawn from Sari Knopp Biklen's text School Work: Gender and the Cultural Construction of Teaching (1995). Biklen profiles the diary of an early school teacher named Charlotte Foren who loved and felt intellectually stimulated at the normal school, but was less certain about the classroom. Biklen also profiles Lucy Stone and Susan B. Anthony, both pioneers of women's rights who left teaching. Biklen claims that "even as they rejected it, teaching expanded their futures" (p.17). While Biklen appears to shed a positive light on what these women learned from teaching, they nevertheless left the

classroom, indicating dissatisfaction or disillusionment. Why could they not have remained in the classroom and still fought for women's rights? Why were the two mutually exclusive? The answer might very well be found in a top-down power structure that does not encourage dissent of any kind. The point, however, is that there is no cause for celebration when strong politically minded teachers leave the classroom.

That so many women became teachers in a structure similar to that of workers in industry suggests that teaching as a career was not only given little value because it was "women's work", but perhaps also because it became synonymous with the notion of "workers" and again was full of contradiction. While earlier teachers might have experienced downward mobility in terms of class consciousness, in the nineteenth century many of the women who joined the teaching ranks experienced upward mobility. In an essay called "Daughters into Teachers: Educational and Demographic Influences on the Transformation of Teaching into 'Women's Work' in America", Geraldine Jocich Clifford (1991) cites Bessie Parkes who wrote in 1865 that the profession of teaching was a place where two classes met, "the one struggling up and the other drifting down" (p.119). Nevertheless, the woman teacher remained one of the few models of a working woman with whom school girls had direct experience. Presumably then, many of these girls entered teaching in the footsteps of those who had come before them. Clifford (1991) reminds us that after 1910, the majority of women college graduates chose marriage and career over spinsterhood and a traditional male-dominated profession (physician, lawyer, professor). "And teaching presented them the smoothest path, the way having been

cleared and made straighter by the hundreds of thousands who went bravely or timidly out before them" (p.131).

The teachers of the early twentieth century "tolerated a hierarchy which rewarded not initiative and creativity but obedience to authority" (Hoffman, 1981, p.203). In large urban areas women rarely held jobs higher in status than a principalship, and women teachers were not taken seriously because they were seen as women working in a field that basically prepared them for motherhood. The feminization of teaching had a permanent shadow for this very reason. How could a profession, really "women's work", be taken seriously as long as it selected its participants on the qualities that they were deemed to have naturally and gave them a salary 40 to 50 percent less than that of a male (in Clifford, 1991). Does this suggest that women are willing to remain content with intangible compensation in the form of positive relationships, rather than demand financial security? Furthermore, teacher candidates had to meet only minimal requirements and then were trained in low-cost normal schools instead of being given the solid education and specialized preparation accorded to other professions. This second-class treatment made sense if the women entering teaching would leave to become home-makers. As Grumet (1988) suggests:

> The elementary teacher is a traitor and the low status of the teaching profession may derive from the contempt her betrayal draws from both sexes. Mothers relinquish their children to her, and she hands them over to men who respect the gift but not the giver. (p. 25)

Looking back at the women who are the roots of the feminization of teaching, it is impossible not to see the irony behind some of the success stories examined in this discussion. Danylewycz and Prentice (1991) make reference to a Quebec teacher whose life was spent teaching children in rural communities and who considered herself to have done more for her country than some politicians. She suggested that:

> our government provide a workhouse for superannuated female teachers, taxing highly-salaried teachers and school inspectors for its support. Another suggestion I beg leave is that women be eligible for the office of the school inspector. It would be a comfortable berth for some of us that have been too long on starvation salaries." (p. 152, in Prentice and Theobald, footnote 50)

To conclude, teachers who embraced teaching as passionately and with as much dedication as these women did serve as examples of the complexities of being a teacher in the early twentieth century. As women in droves became teachers, set up schools, and continued their own learning, teaching became stigmatized as women's work. The result, as stated earlier, was that the preparation of teachers was not rigorous; many poorly educated young women left teaching to get married; teaching, as women's work, was not paid well, not valued. When women teachers formed unions to fight for better working conditions, they were relegated to the status of "workers" as opposed to being recognized as professionals. Perhaps most unfortunately, teaching was women's work that was

administered by men, for men. Teaching as women's work became veiled in its own shadow.

Moving into a contemporary context

Why did the women who joined the first wave of teachers choose this difficult profession? We know that for some, teaching was one way they could prepare for marriage and managing a family. We know that for others, the money, as little as it was, was the attraction. For still others, the possibility of higher education, however "weak", was appealing at a time when universities were largely shut to women. Teaching provided an avenue for intellectual growth. Finally, there were the political implications associated with teaching. Teaching enabled some women to live out their political, philosophical and social beliefs. Some chose to teach in order to resist the myth of the "typical teacher" and instead create a new vision of the ideal teacher. Their struggle, seen in a contemporary context, goes on.

I turn now to the work of Kathleen Casey who introduces her book I Answer With My Life : Life Histories of Women Teachers Working for Social Change (1993) by inviting the reader to imagine that through some sophisticated technological system every word ever spoken on the topic of education could be heard. Casey suggests that that the reader would hear the voices of scientists, researchers, philosophers and politicians – and they would all be men. She then suggests that if the reader were to listen more carefully

she might hear from the background the voices of children. One might expect Casey to suggest that these voices are playful happy ones, but instead, she suggests that the reader would hear children singing songs mocking school and teachers. We have all heard them before, the one that springs to mind is : "My eyes have seen the glory of the burning of the school, we have conquered every teacher and we've broken every rule". Casey then suggests that the very faintest murmur would be coming from teachers discussing the work they do in schools, the students they teach and their political ideas. From the quotations that she uses in the introduction, it becomes clear that the women with whom she spoke are dedicated teachers who are driven by their political ideologies and their care for the students in their charge. However, they are disillusioned with a structure that impedes what school could be:

> And the reason I left was that I didn't agree with a lot of the philosophy of the school. I really believe that a school is a place where people come together, and form some kind of community, and it's not a prison, and if it's likened to anything, it's likened to a family rather than a prison. And my experience in that school was that it was much closer to a prison. (p. 2)

Casey's book brings to the surface that faint murmur that has been traditionally left out of the body of literature on education. Casey's work is a tribute to the growing body of literature on women teachers, the anonymous silent voices we rarely hear. She asks three sets of women teachers to "tell her the story of their life". They are Catholic women religious teachers, secular Jewish women teachers, and black women teachers. Casey says that such a question was first met with silence, but in the end, stacks of unruly

manuscripts littered her desk, manuscripts that she read and reread for thematic essences in the narratives of these women. While the book is a tribute to these women as examples of what is not chaotic and meaningless in education, I was struck by the similarities between the concerns of my participants and the women Casey interviewed. In short, both sets of women were faced with the conflict of what it was they wanted to do, and believed in doing, and what they were expected and forced to do within a very rigid "patriarchal" structure.

The first set of narratives come from the Catholic women religious teachers. Casey addresses the theme of "identity" by examining it from many points of view. Beginning with "Defining the Self: The Nun", it is under "Identities: Institutions" in which the feelings of disillusionment are pronounced. The Catholic women religious teachers Casey interviewed all saw the institutional church as a "regressive organization dominated by a privileged male hierarchy who exacerbate tensions by exerting authoritarian control" (p. 41). It is not surprising then that it is within the structure of the school, also arguably an organisation dominated by a male hierarchy who exert control and leave the teachers powerless as far as decision makers, that Casey features the voice of a woman disillusioned with the school in which she has worked seventeen years. The teacher, after working twenty years and becoming a skilled practitioner, began to feel as though she had lost her sense of purpose. Then, to make matters worse, the death of a colleague was treated as a problem that needed to be solved as opposed to the loss of a valuable life. The

woman, already questioning her own value, felt further devalued upon hearing the shocking interpretation of this loss by the administration of her school:

> I remember when this Brother who was a very nice man died and the principal stood up and said, "Well, we had a problem. I was away in Europe this summer and when I got back, I found out that he had died. Brother died, and we didn't have anybody to take his place, but fortunately, we were able to fill the gap." I was just appalled, you know. Like I finally said, that's all the administration want, you know, someone to fill the hole. (p. 44)

After teaching seventeen years in the same school, the nun left "without even a plastic plaque with my name on it" (p. 43) and turned to painting to redefine her identity as part of the community she was serving. Within her words we find a second set of themes: isolation and disorientation. Casey concludes this section by saying:

> Teaching for these women is much more than employment in a school. When they find themselves unable to construct social meaning within the narrow confines of parochial schools, they abandon that environment. Working outside that established system, and, supported by persons of conscience, these women are able to address the particular material and moral needs of those around them. (p. 66)

Clearly, these women, whose identity is shaped by being a nun, have a prior commitment to "teaching" as a service to a given community. As one nun says, if people cannot tell that she is a sister by her attitude and commitment, then "forget it" (p. 63). However, that the words quoted here are clearly located within the structure of a contemporary school system forces us to ask the question, "what about regular classroom teachers"? If being a dedicated, socially minded teacher, is at the forefront of a woman's

identity, then what happens to that identity when she becomes disillusioned with the structure in which she works and, moreover, does not voice her disillusionment?

What is of particular interest in the section devoted to secular Jewish women teachers is Casey's opening comment and subsequent description. "Listening to these women's initial remarks on the teaching profession, it is wholly amazing to find that any of them ever became teachers" (p. 84). This comment in and of itself suggests that the women Casey profiles did not initially value teaching as a career. In fact, their narratives suggest that they were encouraged to be teachers because they were women and because teaching and being a mother were a wonderful mix, and in resistance to this kind of stereotyping they rejected teaching as a career. Comments like "over my dead body" and "the last thing I would ever do is teach children" (p. 85) permeated their narratives. While these women did become teachers and suggested it was often for economic reasons, at the forefront of their teacher identities were their political convictions. However, in the face of "reality" their home and school lives left little room for political activity that they may have once engaged in.

Casey is careful to show the internal contradictions in the lives of these women. Many came from professional backgrounds, had elite educations, and were political activists. Their belief in their potential as teachers came into conflict with the rigid patriarchal structures they experienced. Casey cites the words of protest spoken by one teacher when she remembered her initiation into teaching:

> I had never in my life liked this school system, where I have been treated so much like a child. And there certainly was from the very start an enormous rage in my heart, strictly personal rage at how I was treated. From the first time that I went to get certified and was shouted by matrons and, you know, you had to carry your urine sample, and I meant the whole thing, the impersonal debasing way in which you were treated. It enraged me. (p. 92)

The contradictions these women experienced reinforced their own stereotypes and prejudices. For example, teaching in public schools served only to reinforce the judgements they had held for so many years about children living in poverty. Furthermore, while they clearly labelled themselves as "workers" they demanded the autonomy of higher status jobs. While Casey's work is a constant reminder of the fierce dedication and personal philosophies of all three groups of women, we can learn from their narratives possible reasons why dedicated teachers become disillusioned with teaching. The observations of one teacher who worked in an inner city school point to her exasperation with working in a system that appears to provide little support for both its teachers and students:

> I got a sense of what wasn't happening in schools. A large number of the classes that I subbed in were classes that had nothing but subs. There were a few classes in every school that had no regular, full-time teacher. And they had no materials, and no supplies and no program whatsoever. (p. 94)

At the same time, Casey cites projects on which many of these women worked, particularly ones that included progressive and alternative methods of education. At the forefront of their teaching identity was a political awareness that appeared to have guided them notwithstanding the disillusionment.

In the last set of narratives, those of black women teachers, we again encounter disillusionment with the "system", the structure under which classroom education is controlled. The women profiled in this section speak to having to work in a system, predominantly white, that does not recognize the needs of the black children. In the face of disillusionment, the women gather strength from their communities. The following quotation shows one particular teacher's feelings about teaching being a devalued profession.

> I wouldn't encourage my child. I wouldn't do it again myself. There are so many negative things. The harder you work, the less you are appreciated, by some people. I don't tell people I am a teacher. Maybe society has something to do with it. And too much politics. I don't dislike the kids, even the worse ones. I dislike the system. (p. 148)

The hierarchical structure of school plays a strong role in how the image of the school teacher was determined over a hundred and fifty years ago, and how that image has managed to, in many ways, stay alive. Thus, while approaches to teaching and learning have changed, while teachers have fought for more responsibility in terms of curriculum planning, the top-down structure of schooling has not changed and perhaps thus perpetuates the stereotypical image of the pointer carrying lone woman teacher seen over

and over in the work of Weber and Mitchell (1995). Certainly then, the patriarchal structure of schooling pushes teachers into the shadows, those shadows that are ever present but rarely questioned, even purposely ignored. Since the traditional structure of schooling is not likely to change, it is important to recognize how it shapes those shadows that its "ideal" teachers attempt to hide. Women teachers might better examine the "myth" of the ideal teacher and the struggles she is faced with, than make naive attempts to change a deeply rooted structure. As Grumet (1988) says:

> We can clean out the male curriculum, banking education, the process/product paradigm, the myth of objectivity. We can give the old furniture away to Goodwill or domesticate it, turning old school desks into planters and telephone tables. We can silence the clanging lockers, period bells, "now hear this" loudspeakers. We can make it a demilitarized zone. But still we are not in an empty space. (p.186)

Reflection

The contradictory demands placed on teachers occurred when women were called to the teaching profession on the merit of their socially constructed qualities. This enormous flood of women to teaching is what we refer to as the "feminization of teaching" because, as a result, teaching became known as teacher's work. What teachers were expected to do and the structures they worked within were often in conflict with each other. Women were considered "natural" teachers because of their nurturing and caring qualities. What better option to marriage, and what better way to prepare for

marriage than by teaching children? Surely "running" a classroom, keeping up with the "housekeeping" was what women needed to do in order to prepare for "running" a home with all of its "housekeeping". These qualities came naturally to women. Yet, teachers were/are supposed to engage our children in intellectual pursuits. Does this also come naturally to teachers? If they already had "what comes naturally", then the preparation would be mediocre at best. Thus, the profession, already devalued because it did not call upon intellectual qualities, became further devalued because of the obvious lack of preparation.

When under-prepared young women teachers entered their own classrooms, they found that they had little autonomy, little authority. While the teacher ran a schoolroom by herself, she was, along with all other "schoolmarms," under the jurisdiction of one, usually male, superior. Hall magnifies this point when she says, "In some ways, the school principal resembles, not so much the administrator in the world of business and industry, as the patriarch residing over the harem. The duties differ, but the structure is the similar" (1966, in Biklen, p. 7). Grumet (1988) pointedly compares the school and patriarchal structure of the family. She accurately likens the elementary classroom to the kitchen and compares breaks to telephone conversations sneaked in during nap times. Just as children learn that their mothers might exert authority within their homes but that this authority is extinguished outside their homes, they learn the same rules apply for teachers.

Perhaps the largest contradiction facing teachers is the question of personal authority, their lack of power to make decisions about curriculum, discipline, teaching methods, or any other aspect of classroom management. If their call to teaching can be interpreted as one that is social and political, then clearly those women we encounter in the body of literature on historical women teachers and contemporary women teachers were and are motivated by action. However, given the rigid structure of the system and the position they were relegated to on the bottom, they found they could only re-act. Of interest to this study is whether or not any of these conditions have changed.

Not all teachers fit the category of "successful and dedicated". Indeed some do go into teaching because of the holidays, because they see it as a career for which they need little training, and in this way there is a large body of teachers who "perpetuate the stereotype". Furthermore, those of us who were students under a traditional structure of teaching have years of expertise about schooling. Our experiences of school shape our understanding of what we assume teachers do. Perhaps misconceptions about teachers arise out of the fact that we assume their lives are spent like those of their students' in school for only five hours a day, free for long holidays and three month summer vacations. The conflict between illusion and reality is so vague because, sadly, the structure of schooling, one that has not changed in over one hundred and fifty years, appears ready to accept both those teachers who "fit the stereotype" and those who struggle to make teaching their work. What is it that teachers do, "run classrooms" or engage children in

intellectual pursuits? Clearly they do both. Sadly, the latter is easily criticized because the former appears to receive the most attention.

I turned to the early women teachers, those who first "feminized" teaching and recognized quickly that when teaching became women's work organized under traditional patriarchal structures, the first shadows were cast. The most blatant example of silence was the omission of those early women teachers from literature on education. It has only been in the past twelve to fifteen years that their voices and stories have been recorded and stored in what is now a well established body of literature. The stories of Grace, Marie, Sarah and Julia will become a part of that body of literature, one that allows us to to examine more carefully the myth of the "good and ideal" teacher.

Before listening to their voices, I want to show how it is that they became a part of my life as a teacher educator, and how their stories formed the research I undertook in this study on why successful and dedicated women teachers become disillusioned with teaching, and why they remain silent about their disillusionment. I want to show the process by which I became privy to the darker shadows of their lives as teachers.

CHAPTER THREE

DOING THE RESEARCH

Finding a way in

> I would ask you to remember only this one thing....The stories people tell have a way of taking care of them. If stories come to you, care for them. And learn to give them away where they are needed. Sometimes a person needs a story more than food to stay alive. That is why we put these stories in each other's memory. This is how people care for themselves. One day you will be good storytellers. Never forget these obligations. (Crow and Weasel, Lopez, 1990, p. 49)

> And yet even telling a story to a friend, is a risky business, the better the friend, the riskier the business. How many of you would like to get your own story back from a certain person? Do you remember how her eyes were glazed, how she didn't really listen, only waited for you to finish so her own turn to tell would come? Do you remember how she asked the wrong questions, appropriating only those parts of the story she could use, ignoring the part that really mattered to you? Do you remember how she blamed him even when you forgave him and would not forget what he did, reminding you years after you had decided to forget if only she had let you? Do you remember how she finished the story when you tried to tell it again, forgetting whose it was in the first place, or the time she collapsed your story of the hurricane into her sister's account of being snowed in at O'Hare, revealing the disaster file that conflated both accounts and printed out only generic, if hyperbolic distress? (Grumet, 1987, p. 321)

The quotations that begin this chapter are important in that they remind us first of the importance of story, and second, that stories cannot be treated carelessly. In the previous chapter, I used the stories of early women teachers as a way of situating and beginning my research. Furthermore, I wanted to make a connection between the feminization of teaching and the shadowed side of teaching. Of importance to this study is what happens to successful and dedicated teachers who become disillusioned. If

successful and dedicated teachers become disillusioned with teaching, it follows that we pay heed to their reasons and stories. In this chapter I will recount how I collected stories over a two-year correspondence with the four teacher participants: Grace, Marie, Sarah and Maria.

"Finding a way in" is an appropriate heading as I recall the struggle I had naming what it was that I did over that two and a half year period. While I am aware that it is what we do that is more important that what we name what we do, my methods are situated in the work of other researchers mindful of the delicate nature of collecting sensitive lived experiences. Thus, this first section is devoted to showing how my work is situated in the work of other qualitative researchers. I will begin with a short discussion of "teacher knowledge" which will lead into an overview of the place of "story" both as a phenomenon and as a method. Before moving into a discussion of how I collected their stories, I will describe how it was that Grace, Marie, Sarah and Julia became a part of this study. It was my hope that this study would be useful to my participants and as such I wanted them to feel that they were, in some way, a part of the research process. This was not always as successful as I had hoped. I will share the process I went through as a way of considering the question of the participant as "co-researcher". While writing their stories may well have been a therapeutic process, it was also a difficult one. Similarly, I often found myself depressed with what I was reading and needed constantly to remind myself of the importance of what I was learning. Thus, I spend some time discussing the

nature of researching sensitive topics. Finally, I describe how it was that I interpreted their stories.

Teacher Knowledge

Why study teacher's lives ? This is a question that is posed by Ivor Goodson (1992) in the opening chapter of Studying Teachers' Lives. Goodson offers four reasons. First, he suggests that "studying teacher's lives will provide a valuable range of insights into the new moves to restructure and reform schooling, into new policy concerns and directives" (p. 11). I would add that studying teachers' lives can inform teacher education practice. If we are to listen to teachers and look at how they make connections between "school life" and "whole life", Goodson's second reason, then we need to use this knowledge as a way to better prepare student teachers for what "it is like to be a teacher". Goodson's third reason suggests that in studying teachers' lives we are better able to examine teaching as a gendered profession. Finally, Goodson says that in studying teachers' lives we will learn the origins of a teacher's personal, practical, and professional knowledge. I would suggest that the overriding question that forces us to examine teachers' lives is "what do we need to know when we teach?". In order to answer this question we need to examine the three areas that Goodson includes in teacher knowledge.

Personal Knowledge

Personal knowledge is perhaps the most difficult to define as it means different things to different people and even to different groups of people. Feiman-Nemser and Floden (in Connelly and Clandinin, 1988) say that personal knowledge is what is inside teachers' heads that describes their knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and values. For example, my personal knowledge is largely constructed around my upbringing, that of white middle class privilege. However, that statement in itself can lead to stereotypical beliefs. Thus, to clarify any assumptions, my personal knowledge is also constructed by my cultural background. That my mother's family were peasants in pre-Revolutionary Russia and my father's family were professionals and priests has given me a great deal of fodder in trying to understand contemporary political issues. Furthermore, while I grew up in a white upper-middle-class neighbourhood, the school that I attended was also the school for the neighbouring Greek population, who were discriminated against by students and teachers alike. I was in constant fear of how I would be mocked if it was found out that I was born in the Greek neighbourhood and still visited my grandparents who lived there. Ironically, I never really fit in with either crowd. In grade six I identified strongly with a very popular little blue-eyed, blond-haired girl. Then one morning it was discovered that she had been hiding the fact that she was Jewish. I understood her fear because, like her, I saw discrimination all around me. Thus, the construction of personal knowledge begins as soon as we are cognizant of how we are located with regards to others. This is knowledge that I generally keep to myself; however, it plays a role in what I do and who I

am as an educator. For example, when the student teachers, who are for the most part Anglo-Saxon and Christian, make assumptions that clearly reflect their own culture and upbringing (everyone celebrates Christmas), I recognize the importance of challenging these assumptions and thus inviting the students to consider the needs of students whose cultures are different from their own.

Practical Knowledge

We then must ask ourselves how personal knowledge is connected to practical knowledge, which Johnston (1992) defines as "the knowledge teachers use in classroom situations, with an emphasis on the complexities of interactive teaching and thinking-in-action" (p. 124). Practical knowledge is what I would probably share with others (Grumet, 1987) and can be recognized on a simplistic level as problem solving. My reactions to events that occur in my classrooms are a part of my practical knowledge. For example, if one student in the class is consistently talking out of turn, how I deal with that situation is a part of my practical knowledge.

Professional Knowledge

Finally, professional knowledge refers to the knowledge that teachers have regarding the theory and practice of teaching and learning. Quite simply, what I read and the discussions I have with colleagues about our practice form a part of my professional

knowledge. Likewise, the material that student teachers cover in their university classrooms, as well as outside readings and discussions with colleagues, become a part of the construct of professional knowledge.

What then can we learn by examining these three areas of knowledge in order to better understand the phenomena of what is it like to be a teacher? Examining personal, professional, and practical knowledge can become an exercise in narcissism unless we also look at the social context in which we act. Indeed, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) caution us that one of the most frequent criticisms of narrative is that it stresses the individual over the social context. The stories I collected are unique in detail but have shared themes that help us better understand the lived experiences of the "good and ideal" teacher. Perhaps they serve best as a reminder of the importance of acknowledging and facing the illusions we may hold about teaching, in order to better prepare us for how we may become disillusioned.

Stories : Phenomenon and Method

> Research on teaching, then, in so far as it tells stories about teaching, is inevitably oriented toward changing how teachers think and act because it contributes to changes in the languages that constitute teachers' practices. (McEwan, 1995, p. 181).

Sparkes (1994) tells us that "stories, then, can provide powerful insights into the lived experiences of others in ways that can inform, awaken, and disturb readers by

illustrating their involvement in social processes about which they may not be consciously aware" (p.178). While our individual stories reflect the unique moments of our lived experiences, their themes might be ones shared by others. If individuals who are moved and awakened by these stories seek change, then the potential for collective storytelling is enormous in its implications. Walker and Goodson (1991) contend that, " useful though generalisation often is, we believe that there is also a need for knowledge of immediate experience" (p.70). Stories then are one way of accessing the lived experiences, the unique moments of teachers, and in this case the experiences that fall under the "darker side of teaching".

Narrative inquiry is the study of those texts that influence or help us better understand how we experience the world. In an educational setting, narrative inquiry is ideally made up of the stories of all the people who shape what we understand and know as education. Because we play a role in our own stories and in the stories of others, narrative inquiry is both phenomenon and method (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). Thus, the stories that shape this study are both real, in that they are a part of the lives of the participants, and living, in that they constitute the body of knowledge that I will attempt to interpret. As a researcher and as a colleague, I wanted my participants to feel they were giving voice to what had previously been silenced on a professional level. It was important for me that they felt they were gaining validity and authority through retelling their stories. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) remind us that in narrative inquiry it is important that the participants begin with their own stories.

"Only if we deal with stories as the starting point for collaboration, as the beginning of a process of coming to know, will we come to understand their meaning, to see them as social constructions which allow us to locate and interrogate the social world in which they are embedded" (Goodson, 1995, p.98). The research on teacher narrative, both as phenomenon and as methodology, is extensive. Specifically, autobiography (Graham, 1991, Gorrel, 1992, Schubert, W.H. & Ayers, W.C., 1992, Cole, 1994), collaborative autobiography (Butt, Raymond, McCue, and Yamagishi, 1992), biography (Goodson, 1991, 1992, 1995), personal histories, (Knowles and Cole, 1994), and case studies (Casey, 1990, Connelly and Clandinin, 1990) have been used to better understand the life histories of teachers.

In order to understand teacher knowledge, we need to understand the unique stories of individual teachers. Goodson (1992) says that "the study of teachers' lives depends for its viability and desirability upon teachers themselves. We need to listen closely to their views on the relationship between 'school life' and 'whole life' for in that dialectic crucial tales about careers and commitments will be told" (p.16). How is it best then to "listen to their views", to use this knowledge to better inform the practice of teachers at all levels? In order to determine the methodology for any study, it is necessary to first re-examine the research questions as they govern the chosen methodology. Two questions are of interest to this study:

1. What is it like to become disillusioned in teaching?
2. What are the thematic elements of this experience?

The questions posed in this study can be better examined using the tools of human science research, in this case, phenomenological inquiry. Phenomenology in education seeks to represent both the lived experiences of the participants, and to recover those lived experiences through the phenomena themselves. McEwan (1995) reminds us that "where this makes a difference is that in addition to coming to understand teaching as a narrative, we must come to practice it as informed by narrative and so come to see our own pedagogic values and purposes as contingent and revisable" (p. 180). Thus, in this study stories are used in two different ways. First, they form the basis of my methodology. That is, my primary goal is to collect stories from the teacher participants. Second, the stories themselves illuminate the thematic elements of what it is like to be a successful teacher who is disillusioned with teaching.

While phenomenological inquiry was the dominant technique used to interpret and discuss the data, teacher-participants participated in narrative inquiry and collaborative autobiography, as it was their own lifeworlds they were examining. For the purposes of this study, the definition given by Butt, Raymond, McCue and Yamagishi (1992) was used to define autobiography. "The term 'autobiography' reflects how we think a teacher's knowledge is held, formed, and how it can be studied and understood" (p. 61). Autobiographical inquiry naturally lends itself to the retelling of stories that mark important events in the life of the inquirer. These stories then shape what is named

narrative inquiry. As Pendlebury (1995) suggests, the importance of being engaged in narrative is that it is "in the context of human stories that we are best able to see the salient features of different human conditions" (p.62).

The Participants

Grace, Marie, Sarah and Julia are all successful teachers. As I look for a definition of "successful teacher" I am drawn to Miller's (1996) comment on what it is a "good teacher" does :

> So what sort of work is teaching? Whatever the answer to that question, there has been a long history of evasion in most descriptions of the processes that teachers set going in classrooms with children over time in the interests of learning and development. Instead, there has been a focus on all the other things that go on. In fact, most accounts of the good teacher exceed the notion of professionalism at both ends of the spectrum: the scholar, because his calling is based on his own gifts and passion for his subject; the mother/teacher, because in her own way she is doing what comes naturally...It is also remarkable, I think, that both extremes of the 'good teacher' make any sort of training appear unnecessary. (p. 107)

For the purposes of this study, the teachers were deemed successful and dedicated because of three factors. First, all four teachers have been recognized by professional organisations and or faculties of education for their practice and as a result have been asked either to give workshops to their colleagues or to represent their colleagues on committees. Second, Grace, Marie and Sarah are consistently praised by their colleagues whom I meet while supervising student teachers, at teacher conferences, and university

institutes. Julia lives in another country, so I do not have the same access to her colleagues. However, she was invited by the faculty of education in her university to seek a career in teacher education. We can assume that this is indicative of her success and dedication. Finally these teachers are able to show their own successes through their accounts and stories for, as Grace once told me, her letters were the "safest" place for her to talk about what she did as a teacher.

It is important to state that in no way do I want to suggest that other teachers who do not fit these descriptors are not "successful" and would not find a place in a study such as this one. Surely many teachers who have left purposeful and positive impressions are not necessarily ever recognized by universities or teaching organisations. This question of "silent success" comes up several times in the stories that were related to me by Grace. Here I am reminded of the movie "Mr Holland's Opus". In the movie, Mr Holland makes music come alive for even the tin-eared, including a former student who was once a self-conscious miserable clarinet player, and was moved to play with passion and confidence because of the faith Mr Holland had in her. At the end of the movie, it is she, with a line up of former musical students, who gather in a reception room full of people to celebrate the opus that he wrote and never conducted. Clearly the message in that scene is that while Mr Holland never made a lot of money, his impact on students was tremendous. While we can find room for critiquing the teaching methods used by Mr Holland, in the eyes of his students and in the eyes of some of his colleagues, he was a successful teacher. Perhaps description then is a better way to paint the portraits of these successful and

dedicated teacher participants. The place of description in qualitative research is clearly expressed by Zellers (1995) :

> Often there are sounds, smells, and most importantly, sights that will help the reader understand the research setting and give the reader a sense of being there. Descriptive passages within the research report will enrich its texture and contribute generally to a better understanding of the case. (p. 76)

Grace

Grace was the first of my participants. I met many of her ex-students who sang her praises and parents who told me they could not wait for their children to get into her class. In one of her letters, Grace asks why it is that teachers do not have more room to celebrate their successes. The participants' stories reveal dedication and success. Interestingly, the teachers never come out and say, "I am a successful teacher", but their stories clearly show that they think themselves successful. As Grace says,

> I have made my whole adult life my teaching career and it has just stopped being enough. I get along well with the teachers in this board but I still feel isolated. I hope in saying isolated that doesn't read superior. Do I think that I am better than the professionals I work with? I just know that I think differently than the others, and that makes for loneliness. I realise that my principal recognizes this too. She phoned me the other night to welcome me back to school Friday (she always does this personally, a nice touch). I told her very briefly about my summer university experience and do you know what her reaction was? "I hope we are not going to lose you Grace, that you aren't going to go away and teach at a higher level because I can see that happening." My answer, "Not right away." I think she recognizes my restlessness but doesn't want me to go. This is the safest place to say this Anna: I have been a drawing card for that school and I have brought the enrolment up a lot. When I started there, all the classes were split level. None of them are now. Of course it doesn't have everything to do with me at all, but I think I am the glue. I am the organiser. You know how Maureen used me in her classroom to pull the group together...well, I just recognized that I do the same in

> this school. I am also the chief decorator of hallways, and often if I don't do it doesn't get done. I am the secretary's proof-reader, the peacekeeper, the one in charge of the library, in charge of a computer reading program for every grade and the one the teachers come to if there is a problem, even if I am teaching. My class learns to be patient as I run down the hallway to solve a problem. I am the trouble shooter I guess. The year hasn't even started yet and I am making myself tired just talking like this! My head is going to be so big I won't be able to get through the door so I will go on to something else...

Grace shows her confidence in her abilities, but also clearly indicates that admitting one's success and dedication can only be done in a private, safe place. It is interesting that she chooses to say she is the drawing card, but then talks about her many different roles, as opposed to why she is the drawing card. While the rest of her letters clearly show the intoxicating nature of her teaching and attitude towards learning, she does not call on this in her attestation of being a "drawing card". Finally, Grace is enrolled in an advanced teaching program, and has been recently asked by a teaching university to sit on various committees as a representative of her board. She was asked because of her excellent teaching reputation.

Marie

Marie is the second of my teacher participants. In her second year of teaching she implemented a new program and since then has been working on improving and polishing what she does. Because Marie and I had participated in a longitudinal classroom-based research project, I watched her progress both in and outside of the classroom with the

greatest of interest. The year we did classroom based research, I was able to interview one class of her students who certainly gave me the impression that not only did they respect Marie as a teacher, but they were also grateful to her for making their classroom experience more meaningful than it had been in the past. Marie talked about the positive feedback she receives from parents, and when parents question why she is doing what she is doing, Marie is careful to communicate her curriculum in detail. Finally, Marie has begun to be recognized as an expert in her area and is frequently asked to give workshops by school boards, private schools, professional organizations and teaching universities. Currently, she is completing a master's degree. In terms of recognizing her own success and dedication, Marie says, :

> If I think of myself as a teacher, I did something that most teachers of language arts didn't do. I broke with the program, broke from tradition, and despite myself broke some new ground. I did not intend to break new ground, I was simply pursuing what I was interested in. Also, I guess boredom had something to do with it. I don't know how to explain being bored with the teaching in my first year, there was hardly time to have adjusted to this job. But the thought of teaching in the style that I had been taught, in the style that had bored me as a student seemed wrong. If I was bored as a student, then it was easy for me to see how bored my students were. If I was bored as their teacher, then what was I doing?

Sarah

Sarah, the third of my participants, was a "teacher specialist" on loan to her board as a "language arts consultant". The position was cut and she was moved back into the resource room. I had gotten to know "Sarah the consultant" quite well through the journals that teachers were required to keep in a graduate writing course I gave in her

board three years ago. Indeed, Sarah was a consultant whose dedication to the job was outstanding. At the end of a week-long conference held at a university and entirely orchestrated by Sarah and two other consultants, one teacher gave a heart wrenching speech in which she highlighted what Sarah had brought to the board. Sarah received a standing ovation in front of the man who was not only responsible for cutting her job, but who stood up at the conference as one of three men to take credit for her success. An early memory of Sarah's shows us the beginnings of her success and dedication as a teacher :

> There was no diagnosis for any of the kids I was working with, no records, no plan, nothing. Not even any current materials. I'll never forget the principal opening the door to a little store room junk-piled with stuff: Sullivan phonics readers, Michigan programmed spellers, Distar kits. I had no formal special ed. Training at that point (I went back to McGill for that while teaching at p. elementary), but I was fresh out of a Master's programme and I knew a lot about teaching kids to read and write, about things like developmental stages and instructional strategies, through the work of Frank Smith, Ken Goodman, Donald Graves, etc. etc. Programmed readers didn't cut it for any kid, and they certainly weren't going to motivate the special ones. SO I carted in books from the Point Claire library, ordered big books, began journals and writing folders, and yes, I still taught phonics and spelling but without the workbooks. I was convinced that "different" instruction wasn't what these kids needed, but <u>good</u> instruction. Slowly I worked to move them, and me, into regular classrooms. I was excited about teaching, graduate school had been a shot in the arm, and I <u>passionately believed I could make a difference.</u>

Julia

Julia the fourth participant, is a colleague with whom I have been in contact with since we completed our masters degrees together. When she came to Canada she was

taking a sabbatical from teaching science in an all-girl's high school. Julia is no longer a classroom teacher. She now lectures, supervises, and does research in the teacher education faculty in her university. She says this about herself as a classroom teacher :

> Well as you know I had only two years teaching experience before I came to Canada. I did look at myself as a good teacher, and I knew that I had a very good relationship with my students, that the students enjoyed my lessons, that they could talk to me about anything, and that in the end they managed to learn something. I did at times go against the grain by not following the syllabus to the letter, but trying to do things which really interested the girls (remember, I always taught in an all girl's school). I also knew that I prepared well, that I prepared a lot of resources for my students, and that although I got very tired and exhausted teaching, I enjoyed it and got a great deal of satisfaction out of it. I did have obstacles like a headteacher who thought I wanted to miss out on lessons by taking the students on day trips and who came to my laboratory before my confirmation, couldn't find anything to comment on and ended up saying that I had dust on my windows and should do something about it.

I have been privileged to have worked with such dedicated and successful teachers, ones who surely would have influenced my own learning and teaching. On a final note, it is important to highlight that in choosing to participate in a study as in-depth as this one, these teachers show their commitment to reflective practice. The stories that the teachers recalled were often unhappy ones, perhaps making this task especially arduous. In the next section I will describe and show how I collected the stories with a focus on exchange; that is, my aim was to invite the teacher participants not just to share their stories, but also see themselves as co-researchers.

Collecting the Stories

The participant as co-researcher: Defining the roles

> If my work permits the teachers I work with to examine their own work with a seeing that is more inclusive, that surveys an ever widening surround, that is a search I would gladly join in. But if my work certifies me, as an agent of the state to peer into what is hidden from public view, if it is my look that discovers and appraises, then I might as well approach the classroom with bloodhound as well as briefcase, and they ought to demand to see my warrant, before they let me in. (Grumet, 1987, p. 324)

It was of prime importance to me that the teacher participants felt that their contributions to this study would not only be valuable for a larger audience, but that the process of such professional reflection would be of personal value. That these women were my colleagues was a constant reminder to me that their own experiences and wisdom could help shape this study.

Drawing on the work of Weber and Mitchell (1995) whose research suggested that when children leave elementary school they have unconsciously identified teaching as a female activity, I wanted to know if girls' insights about their teachers might lead me to ask the teacher participants questions I might otherwise not have considered. My interviews with Lara, a grade-six girl whom I had interviewed three years earlier, were crucial in looking at this for several reasons. First, her stories prompted me to ask my teacher participants new questions. Second, as the text that follows will show, Lara

taught me about the importance of including the participant in the research process far beyond the interview stage.

I know Lara quite well. She baby-sat my daughter and I saw her almost daily. I was interested in her feelings about leaving grade six for high school While she spoke a great deal about this topic, she also talked at length about being a girl in grade six. The interview was fascinating, and the paper I wrote subsequently almost wrote itself. I framed Lara's knowledge and words in the work of Barbieri (1995), Brown & Gilligan (1992), Grumet (1988), Pipher (1995), and Walkerdine (1990). Of importance to the discussion was that women teachers could better understand themselves and their girl students by reflecting on their own girlhoods. I gave the paper to Lara, asking her to read it and respond to any misconceptions I may have had. Lara read the paper and told her mother that some of what I wrote "was not what she had meant". While her mother encouraged her to talk to me, the start of the new school year for both Lara and me left the paper waiting for revision.

The purpose of the above story is to illustrate not only how I misinterpreted what I thought were very clear insights and statements but also that I did not leave room for the narrator of the insights to participate in my own interpretations. While the paper is still waiting for revision, I would have been much better advised to have given a draft to Lara in its initial stages and then sat down and gone over it with her in an effort to ensure that what she had said and what I was saying were mutually compatible. I am here reminded

of Katherine Borland (1991) whose research and interpretations of stories from her grandmother's life forced her to re-examine her practice as a feminist interviewer. Her essay, aptly titled " 'That's not what I said': Interpretative Conflict in Oral Narrative Research", recounts what happened when Borland sent her grandmother the text she had written and the grandmother felt misrepresented as she was not accustomed to having her stories read against feminist theory. Borland felt that not only had she misread her grandmother, but that her grandmother had misread her own text. She concluded that sharing her ideas with her grandmother before committing them to paper, as well as sharing initial drafts, might have prevented this miscommunication. In the end, the two women met and discussed the misconceptions of the theoretical text. Borland writes that it was at this point a true exchange occurred and that a mutual understanding was arrived at "through the process of interpretative conflict and discussion, emerging as each of us granted the other interpretative space and stretched to understand the other's perspective" (p. 74).

Certainly one of my goals in collecting the stories from my teacher participants was that they felt as though they were a part of the research process, not only through their narration, but through an exchange in which together we sought to clarify what it was they were saying. While I felt confident that this was possible through a written dialogue in the form of letters, I was consistently nagged by the notion that it was only through the oral interview that this kind of exchange could happen.

I was constantly reminded of my grandmother, who told me stories while making apple pies on the linoleum table in her kitchen. She could not write, so it was only if I listened carefully that I would hear tales of growing up in " the old country". I was constantly reminded of feminists who were attracted to women like my grandmother because their voices were one way of recovering the voices of groups that had been traditionally oppressed. I was constantly reminded of the series of powerful and moving interviews I had had with my mother during which tears were shed over stories that had not been told in many years. I was constantly reminded of Lara. Finally I was reminded by Anderson and Jack (1991) that, " For the narrator, the interview provides the opportunity to tell her own story in her own terms. For researchers, taped interviews preserve a living interchange for present and future use; we can rummage through interviews as we do through an old attic" (p. 11). Finally, I know the power of the conversation that can so frequently occur after the official interview, that feeling when two people are intimately entwined in a verbal exchange that touches on some many delicate issues.

It was this very issue of what happens after the interview that forced me to reconsider how I would include my teacher participants in what I hoped would be an exchange of ideas. I became more convinced that a letter exchange would give the teacher participants more room and flexibility in their story telling. I wanted the teacher participants to feel that they could talk when they were ready, and not before. Still, I was

nagged by the advantages of the oral interview. I was then reminded of Weber (1986) who worries about "betrayal" in interviewing and says "an interview can never be simply conversation by the very fact that it is usually recorded and transcribed, and invariably written down" (p. 70). She adds that while our thoughts sometimes become clearer as we talk (just as we "make meaning" when we write, Murray, 1980) oral discourse is riskier than written because in the latter we have the choice of going back and changing our words as opposed to the former in which we can only clarify our words. Thus while the advantages of the oral interview were many in number, the disadvantages were as telling. While I knew that the ideal interview transpired as a private conversation, as long as the tape was rolling there would be ambiguity in the roles of the interviewer and interviewee. Although it is the knowledge of the interviewee that is sought, the ultimate use of the interview is public and shaped by the interviewer. The audience is thus never quite defined for the narrator.

Interviewing: A question of voice

My first experience with the open-ended interview occurred when I was collecting data for my master's research. Marie, now a participant in this study, was the focus of most of my interviews, although I also interviewed her students. Because Marie and I have become friends as well as colleagues, I was worried that interviewing her would elicit an unnatural response, the kind that Weber (1986) describes when all of a sudden a friend and colleague was on her best behaviour for an interview. Weber says that "the interview

is a special instance of human dialogue" (p. 68) and that ideally it is the participant who does most of the talking while the interviewer listens and nods, and communicates through gestures. However, having followed the advice of Minister (1991) who says that when women interview women, they must take time to know the other person, that they must engage in mutual self-disclosure, and that feminist interviewers should expect that the narrators' stories will be unfinished and incomplete, I felt that I was in a solid position to interview Marie, that in fact, we were on equal ground.

When I found myself transcribing the first of my interviews with Marie, I was shocked at how much I interrupted her and changed the focus of the conversation. I wished that I had turned earlier to Meeting at the Crossroads (1992), in which Brown and Gilligan provide a "listening guide" for women interviewing women. The authors stress the importance of listening to stories at least four times so that the different voices can be sorted out. The first listening is for the plot and story. In addition the authors suggest that at this point the interviewer must reflect on her position of privilege in terms of having the "power" over the interpretation of the story. Next, the authors suggest listening for the teller's own voice, for the "I". The third and fourth listenings are reserved for what the teller reveals about relationships. The authors call this "resistant listening" and remind us of the need to find new ways of listening to women's voices. I was more interested in the oral history in which the interview "demands a shift in methodology from information gathering, where the focus is on the right questions, to interaction, where the focus is on process, on the dynamic unfolding of the subject's viewpoint" (Anderson &

Jack, 1991, p. 23). However, I recognized that, in fact, what I was doing was information gathering; I was doing what the textbooks had taught me. The focus of the interview became what I wanted to know and to hear as opposed to what Marie had to tell and might have shared with a more genuine listener. Finally, I was treating the interview as an end to a means, as if once the tape ran out, I would have all that I need to know.

In an essay called, "Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms" (1981) Anne Oakley critiques the impossibility of a positivist textbook interview in which the hierarchy of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee is a "rationalisation for inequality; what is good for the interviewers is not necessarily good for the interviewees" (p. 238). Oakley's research on "becoming a mother" in which she interviewed hundreds of women while they were pregnant, while they were giving birth, and in the postpartum period, forced her to recognize that the success of such sensitive sociological research depends entirely on the non-hierarchical relationship formed between the interviewer and interviewee. Oakley suggests that when this happens, the interviewees accept the goals of the project and potentially feel as though they are co-researchers.

In light of my aim to include the teacher participant as co-researcher, I turned to Anderson and Jack (1991) who suggest the following nine ways to sharpen the interviewer's attentiveness to the potentially interactive process of the interview.

A. Listen to the narrator

1. If the narrator is to have the chance to tell her own story, the interviewer's first question needs to be very open ended. It needs to convey the message that in this situation, the narrator's interpretation of her experience guides the interview.
2. If she doesn't answer the interviewer's question, what and whose questions does the woman answer?
3. What are her feelings about the facts or events she is describing?
4. How does she understand what happened to her? What meaning does she make of events? Does she think about it in more than one way? How does she evaluate what she is describing?
5. What is being left out, what are the absences?

B. Listening to ourselves

1. Try not to cut the narrator off to steer her to what our concerns are.
2. Trust our own hunches, feelings, responses that arise through listening to others.
3. Notice our own areas of confusion, or of too great a certainty about what the woman is saying-these are areas to probe further.
4. Notice our personal discomfort; it can become a personal alarm bell altering us to a discrepancy between what is being said and what the woman is feeling.

The nine points were an excellent reminder of how the interviewer should learn to listen. While I was still leaning towards letter writing as a way of exchange, I wanted to propose an alternative to the teacher participants, an alternative that would not require as much time, but one in which they would have the same kind of control. The alternative was the self-taped interview. Given my history with Marie, I contacted and spoke to her about my concerns and asked her if she would consider interviewing herself. We both giggled at the thought of her talking out loud in her little office at the back of her apartment, but she agreed to try out this method of eliciting stories.

Asking Questions: Whose Questions?

One way that I tried to include the teacher participants as co-researchers was by asking them to pose their own questions. At the end of my first interview, Marie suggested that I ask participants "what they do to stay alive". This question was the springboard for her first self-taped interview. While she did not speak for as long as she did when I interviewed her, she spoke with far more conviction. While Marie found the experience somewhat strange (but interesting), I recognized how much more control she had over the interview because she had access to the stop button! Thus, while she was not writing her ideas, she frequently stopped the recorder to compose her thoughts. Marie was the only teacher participant who chose to experiment with self-taped interviews.

The other teacher participants chose letter writing over self-taped interviews, and I never stopped to ask them why. While this may appear to have been an oversight in terms of better informing my way of collecting their stories, I felt that whatever way suited my teacher participants suited me. Thus, I did not question their needs in terms of "ways" or in terms of time. Quite often months would go by without a letter and then a thick package of reflections would arrive at my mail box. Instead I was more interested in the questions they were asking, questions that I hoped my questions had prompted. While Marie was quite direct right from the start in terms of posing her own questions, Sarah, Grace, and Julia were less direct. In rereading their letters, the teachers chose different

ways of answering and fielding their own questions. Sarah, for example, in her first letter wrote:

> How long can you keep working at a job when your heart isn't in it? I keep telling myself I just have to sit to get through this year, then I can take next year off for a doctoral programme and get recharged. Or am I kidding myself? And after that, where do I go? A year ago my long term goal was to work with pre-service teachers. Now I feel like a fake. What would I be preparing new teachers for in the long run, knowing what I do know about how the system works? Even the terms pre-service and in-service trouble me - they conjure up an image of indentured service. How's that for a thematic element?

Sarah's stories almost exclusively centred on this very question that she posed in her first letter: the issue of the structure of schooling was key in her disillusionment. Certainly this was similar for all the teachers, but that Sarah posed this scenario and question from the start, appeared to have been a springboard for the stories that she was later to tell. In her second letter, Sarah posed a question that made me reconsider what I was asking my participants to do. The following is typical of the kinds of comments my teacher participants made that made me sit back and carefully reflect on what it was that I was doing. Sometimes, I felt they knew what I was doing better than I did. As Sarah wrote:

> As a little aside, I've just recently discovered the journals of May Sarton and I'm fascinated by them as examples of a genre, and on how they speak to and about me on so many different issues and levels. In The House By The Sea, Sarton looks at the difference between autobiography ("summoned back") and journal ("what I am now, at this instant"). She feels you can sometimes successfully intertwine the two. She writes, "Often a present experience brings back something out of the past which is suddenly seen in a new light. That, I think, works." But that's not what you're asking me to do is it? You want me to simply summon back.

Grace was continually asking important questions and forcing me to consider the serious implications of such in-depth professional reflection. In one letter she posed the question, "I have wondered if you have any fear that you are somehow responsible for this confusion in me". This discussion will end with a focus on researching sensitive subjects, but it is important here to show how Grace, as a co-researcher was at the forefront of my "methodological conscience". Throughout our correspondence, one of the main themes that kept coming up was that of Grace's identity. Was she a writer first, or a teacher? She struggled with this question, and in her final letter posed a critical question that I will be forced to reflect on as a teacher educator. As co-researchers, my participants were constantly reminding me how their experiences forced me to examine my own practice. For example, Grace asked:

> Question: How do <u>your</u> students perceive themselves? What are their other identities? The reason I ask is we both know that my alter ego is that of a writer. Do your students do battle with their other potentials? I wonder how these struggles will influence their teaching. I can't ever remember not wanting to be a teacher, and the writing dream followed close behind.

In fact, one of the most exciting parts of doing this kind of research, corresponding with such eloquent writers and exciting teachers, was that not only were they helping me guide my own research, but they were also challenging what I did as a teacher educator. Looking back on our correspondences, all four teacher participants wrote and talked to me about the books they were reading and how they were influencing what they were

doing. In one letter, Julia took a question I had asked and reshaped it according to her own teaching philosophy.

> What in my mind is the ideal teaching situation..? I do not think that in my mind there is an ideal teaching situation...but only an ideal learning situation...What do I think of my responsibilities as a teacher...but I do not see myself as one who teaches but rather as one who learns together with my students, and one who helps students bring out the best potential and the best in each and every one....(she continues to describe an ideal setting) Well, dreaming apart, my main philosophy of teaching is based on something which Paolo Friere says in his Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Not to get too intellectual, but it is a saying which guides my whole outlook towards teaching:
>
> Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teaches. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. (Friere, 1990, p. 67)

My ultimate goal as a researcher was to answer my three initial questions using the stories of my participants and trying to maintain their voices and insights. The task was not an easy one. I found myself growing more and dependent on what my participants thought about the interpretations I was lending to their stories. For example, while I was drafting their profiles, I called them constantly so that they might hear and respond to what I was writing. While I was writing a draft of this dissertation, I presented my findings in a ninety-minute workshop at a national conference. Prior to the conference I spoke with three participants (Julia was away and I was not able to contact her) in order to go over what it was that I wanted to present. Marie gave me excellent insight into how I could shape the presentation so that it would be useful for the participants; Grace

listened and commented on what I would say about her; and Sarah patiently let me walk her through the presentation prior to the conference. Furthermore she sat in the audience and reflected on what was said after the presentation. My teacher participants worked every step of the way with me while I was writing and lending interpretations to their stories.

Ultimately I will present their stories using techniques drawn from ethnographic and phenomenological methods. First, my own questions about disillusionment and teaching, about illusion and reality, about "what is and what might be", about being removed from daily classroom experience, forced me to turn to four teachers and listen to the stories they had to tell. I wanted to isolate the themes that came out of their stories. I wanted to show what it was like to be a successful and dedicated woman teacher who is disillusioned with teaching. I wanted to show what it is like to be each of these women so that others reading their stories might say, "Yes, I understand". Thus, I would be their interpreter, paying close attention first to the interpretations they had of their own stories.

I have tried to show how my participants were an integral part of the actual research process and as such I name them "co-researchers". That is, their role in autobiographical writing that led to isolating stories about disillusionment, their role in interpreting their own stories, in reflecting and commenting on my interpretations, and in their continued role as participants in this study suggested that I was not the only "researcher". While I specifically asked my teacher participants to field their own

questions, in hindsight, I wish I had been more straightforward with them about this notion of participant as co-researcher. Furthermore, I did not always follow through on their suggestions. For example, in one of her letters Sarah suggested that I share with her the readings I was engaged in so that we could respond to the same literature. However, this request went by the wayside and was forgotten. It is essential that in such in-depth longitudinal research that the primary researcher attends to the question of co-participation, co-research, so that a mutual understanding is clear from the start. I cannot help but wonder how the stories I collected might have been different had I paid closer attention to this part of the research process.

Letter Writing

I live in a small rural town where any telephone call outside of the town, until a year ago, was long distance. Three of the four teachers live in the vicinity of a major city, one lives in another country. It is impossible not to take into account the nature of a relationship when one is collecting data in the form of personal stories. Technically it would have been useful to tape interviews with all of the participants. However, because of the very different ways that I got to know these teachers, because of the distances involved, and because of the difficulties I encountered with taped interviews, alternatives had to be found. Thus, I considered establishing a written correspondence (Anderson, 1995, Brooks & Kelly, 1989, Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), and inviting the participants to engage in self-taped interviews.

Written correspondence was the predominant method that I used to collect life stories and create an ongoing dialogue with my participants. I have fond memories of these correspondences, particularly walking to the post office in anticipation of replies. Grace often sent postcards and impromptu notes of what she was doing and where she was visiting. She called the letters that she wrote for this research her "homework" and often a letter would begin in reference to this term. Both she and Sarah are eloquent writers and I was moved by the ways in which they were able to recount their stories and feelings. I was often humbled by these letters which spoke in such depth of the despair that accompanied their dedication. I was continually amazed at the rich accounts that covered page after page, that surely took hours to write. Sarah wrote me one stream of accounts from her summer holiday at her cottage, and Julia wrote pages of stories despite her own heavy schedule of research, teaching, and supervision duties. That these women spent so much time in reflective practice outside of their arduous teaching schedules reinforced over and over their dedication and pointed to their success. Thus, my own role in the research became far more challenging than I thought it would be. Mostly, I cared deeply about these women and what happened to them. I am reminded of Ely (1991) who confirms how powerful this kind of reflective research can be as I remember sitting in front of the computer for hours searching for the most effective way to respond to their letters.

There are many accounts in educational research that have been shaped by letter writing. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) use letter writing as a means of encouraging prospective and current teachers to participate in reflective practice. The teacher writers write about ongoing classroom practice, and instead of keeping it in the private forum of a journal, they exchange their thoughts and ideas with another teacher so that a written dialogue is established. The teachers thus have control over topic, length and where and what they want to reflect on. Brookes and Kelly (1989) provide an evocative example of the idea-exchange between two university teachers regarding their pedagogical practices. Their letters clearly show their understanding of the relationship between their own work and the work of Paolo Friere and Ira Shore. What is evident in the letters is that because the dialogue was a written one, the two participants had time to read and construct their own answers. Furthermore the therapeutic value of writing and exchanging experiences in letters is evident as the ideas in the letters become more pronounced. Finally, Knowles and Cole (1994) began their investigation into the lives of first-year tenure track teacher educators as a result of a letter exchange in which they began to isolate similar themes that came out of their personal stories.

The advantage of written correspondence is that the participant can become a co-researcher if the researcher shares her reflections in the ongoing written dialogue. I have very few, almost no, private notes. Instead, in my correspondence, I shared with the participants my observations, feelings, and interpretations of what they were writing. This

naturally occurred after I sent out and received the first letter. My first letter was framed by nine open ended questions that were the springboard for the letters that followed:

1. How is it that you became a teacher?
2. Do you remember the image you had of yourself when you became a teacher?
3. What significant teaching episodes stand out for you with regards to your classroom practice, your role as part of a staff, situations with administration...
4. Do you remember when you first began to question your career choice? Was there a significant episode that made you question why you were doing what you were doing, or was it a combination of things?
5. Do you share your feelings with anyone? How does it feel?
6. Has your teacher image changed since you began teaching? How? What is it?
7. What do you think teaching should be like? What would be your ideal image? What would it take to realize this image?
8. Do you think that many teachers feel this way?
9. What is preventing you from leaving? Why did you leave?

Each of the participants treated these questions differently. Sarah and Julia answered all the questions in one sitting, and from then on wrote letters in which they shared stories that were specific dealing with disillusionment. Grace answered the questions, but at all different stages as did Marie. Furthermore, during the correspondence other questions arose, sometimes from the participants themselves, sometimes out of my own readings. For example, after I interviewed Lara and heard what she had to say about being a twelve-year-old girl, I was curious to know what these women teachers were like as school-girls, what their memories were and whether they thought there was any connection between who they were as women teachers and who they were as school-girls. While I wanted this dialogue to be in the spirit of a real

correspondence, much like an oral conversation, I felt it was important to field questions because, after all, at some point I would have to exit this dialogue.

At the end of two years, I wrote each participant a final letter in which I reflected on many of the stories they had told me. Finally, I asked each one what she had to say as I was completing my study. Marie forwarded me a letter three weeks later that showed me what it meant to be a co-researcher. The following letter is written to a colleague of Marie's who expressed interest in this study, but who kept putting off getting in touch with me. She finally sat down with her questions and wrote a response that she first shared with Marie. Marie's response is telling in so many ways. First, she confirms Laurie's feelings by showing her how they affected her own thinking. Next, she shares her own thinking with Laurie. Finally, as a co-researcher, in this response she sheds light on what all four teachers were reflecting on in their stories.

> Dear Laurie,
>
> I read your response and was quite moved. I was especially sad to be reminded of those times when so many of the women in our school suffered disappointments. That was truly a difficult time.
>
> I was struck by the idea that what makes teachers unhappy (or disillusioned) is often not related to their teaching. That is, we feel more or less satisfied with what goes on in our classrooms, and between the students and ourselves. What makes us unhappy is what goes on politically as you pointed out.
>
> I think one of the reasons I like being a teacher is because I can go into a classroom and close the door and not have to deal with "a boss" so to speak. No one will tell me what I have to do, provided I am doing a good job. I realize this is not always true of course, but so far it works for me.

Another thing that struck me was your withdrawal from extracurricular activities. You were always such a busy person, yet you still made time to participate in many school events and activities. How sad that time has made you feel as you do and I think of how much the school and the students have been deprived of. You are so energetic and positive! At least when it comes to having fun with the kids! I agree that teaching is more enjoyable when the focus is on the classroom and less on the other obligations.

So, all of this to say that I think Anna will probably enjoy your point of view and I am very glad to hear that you are enjoying your classes. I too had a bad spell the last year or so, but what I learned from you is that it will pass and that I have to focus on what is truly relevant, and that is the teaching.

Let's have lunch after reports. Do you have a cycle-day where you have more than one spare for lunch? If not, were can always run down to souvlaki and gulp!

Thanks,
Marie

Some Thoughts at the End of the Process : On Researching Sensitive Subjects

> It is probably possible for any topic, depending on the context, to be a sensitive one. Experience suggests, however, that there are a number of areas in which research is more likely to be threatening than others. These include (a) where research intrudes into the private sphere or delves into some deeply personal experience, (b) where the study is concerned with deviance and social control, where impinges on the vested interests of powerful persons or the exercise of coercion or domination, and (d) where it deals with things sacred to those being studied that they do not wish profaned. (Renzetti & Lee, 1993, p. 6)

Teri Friedman (1995), a psychologist whose doctoral work involved exploring the life worlds of police officers, suggests that qualitative researchers must be willing to acknowledge and recognize the feelings that arise out of exploring the lived experiences of participants with whom the research invariably creates a close bond based on trust. It is only now, at the end of this process that I am truly able to recognize the wealth of

feelings that I underwent over a two-year letter exchange with four accomplished women teachers who were disillusioned with teaching. In this final section of chapter three, I wish to address six areas defined by Friedman : facing fears, emotional connections, exiting the research, self-awareness, making the familiar unfamiliar, and making the unfamiliar familiar.

Friedman reassures us that it is typical for the researcher to experience an onslaught of unexpected emotions during the course of the research. I was accepted into the doctoral programme and found out I was pregnant all in the same month. I was on an emotional high; two enormous events were about to happen in my life. I began corresponding with my participants while I was pregnant, and in my ninth month I had collected and had begun interpreting the letters from Grace and Marie. A professor friend advised me that I was taking on a very depressing topic and asked if I was prepared as a new mother to deal with such sensitive, painful material. However, I was consumed with energy and with drive. My daughter Tamara was an easy baby and in those first quiet months of nursing I had ample time to read and reflect on my readings. During that time two things happened: the stories from my participants became more intense, and the readings I was engaging in were difficult in a multitude of ways. For example, I remember reading and rereading sections of Bitter Milk by Madelaine Grumet and feeling scared. I realized that my own background, that of upper middle class privilege, was full of assumptions I had not really stopped to consider.

I had become quite close to Grace, Marie, Sarah and Julia. At one point Grace stopped writing altogether. For a period of about five months I only received cards and phone calls. She was having a terrible year; there were episodes of her breaking down in tears with the school counsellor, in of all places, the supplies cupboard because there was nowhere else to go. Marie was going through a personal crisis of great magnitude, and Sarah's job and all the work she had done over the years was being discarded. I remember my husband often saying to me that I was "down" on teachers, and I knew clearly that it was the stories of my participants that were eating at me. I wanted to scream and shake those persons who I considered to be at the forefront of these women's painful experiences. Instead, all I could do was listen and respond with what I hoped was empathy.

I often wondered if I was adding to their disillusionment simply because they were spending so much time reflecting on their profession. In May of 1995, Grace wrote, "sitting down at the computer has opened the floodgates again," and then at the beginning of that school year, she wrote the following :

> Your letter and my possible responses have been spinning in my head all week. That night we spoke I was kept awake by my fantasies of a dream teaching environment. I will fill you in and thus purge myself of these wandering thoughts. As you know, this week has been a difficult one for me for reasons that I am unsure of, but perhaps in my dialogue with you some of the reasons will resurface. I went to see my doctor and she has asked me to seek the help of a professional and she has given me some anti depressants. I am shocked to be writing this,

> shocked that that is where I am right now. I am reassuring myself that this is just a process and I need to pull myself out of the hole before I can look squarely at what put me there. Oddly, I feel okay these last two days, a little melancholy perhaps, but past the near hysteria of mid week. Maybe I am calmer now that I know there is someone taking my pulse, keeping an eye on me, or at the very least, aware of what I am going through. You are certainly getting your work's worth with me Anna. I have wondered if you have any fear that you are somehow responsible for this confusion in me. I want to reassure you that I was pivoting on this edge when I started class with you, and my writings to you attest to that as well.

I distinctly remember feeling scared and guilty reading this letter. While Grace tried to reassure me, as an instructor of many writing courses, I knew the therapeutic nature of writing (Metzger, 1992, Goldber, 1990, Fulwiler, 1987). I knew what happened when people began writing for themselves but really engaging in a written dialogue. As Grace said, the "floodgates opened". Naturally the writer has to be ready for those gates to open; nonetheless, I was scared about what was happening to this former student who had become a dear friend. Grace received professional help over the next few months and did not write for the study again until five months later. During those five months we kept in close touch, but I never asked her to write about what she was experiencing. I was scared for my teacher participant.

I never stopped questioning the ethical considerations of doing such sensitive research. While all the participants had read my proposal and signed consent forms, did they ever realize the extent to which they would be engaged in professional reflection? On the question of ethics and politics of sensitive research, Seiber (1993) reminded me that issues can arise in all phases of the research process. And I could not ignore what was

happening to me. It was as if I had taken on the painful stories of my participants and was living through them. This was unhealthy both as a new mother and as a teacher educator. My professor friend had been wise in her advice that I consider the implications of doing such sensitive research.

My greatest concern was how to end the correspondence, or at least end the questions. Ironically this occurred quite naturally, and I am forever grateful that I was able to exit from this study in such a natural way. I am convinced that the longitudinal nature of this study was important for several reasons. First, given the sensitive nature of the topic, I could not see myself conducting formal interviews over a given period of time, especially knowing how the participants were struggling with their professional lives. I wanted them to talk when they were ready and the correspondence allowed for this to happen. Second, this length of time allowed me to see the cycles of their professional lives, the cyclical nature of their disillusionment. It would be easy and perhaps even glib of me to say that at the end of the two years Grace loved teaching again, Marie on reading over her letters said, "I am in such a different frame of mind, I have such a handle on things now", and Julia was pregnant and well into her own doctoral studies. Sadly, Sarah was not only not reinstated as a "teacher specialist", but her administration did not even bother telling her; she found out from a fellow consultant. Thus, my goal is not to suggest that the cycle that I was privy to ends with a happy ending. Rather, I would suggest that there is an urgency to unpack the stories that successful teachers who are disillusioned with teaching have to tell. As Marie's letter to her colleague so poignantly

shows, the unpacking of those stories can certainly lead to a common dialogue, a starting point for professional discussion, something that all the participants said was sadly lacking in their lives.

Facing the Correspondence : Interpreting the Stories

Yes, I think of leaving teaching, or this sort of teaching... (Grace)

Casey's (1993) work asserts that the most critical act of the qualitative researcher is interpreting the life material of her participants. Faced with hundreds of pages of correspondence in the shape of formal letters, notes written at conferences where we sat together behaving like school girls furiously passing scraps of paper back and forth on what was being said, email letters and responses to my ongoing interpretations, I wondered how I could ever maintain the integrity, energy, and the voices of my participants. After two years of corresponding and getting to know my participants on quite a personal level, I felt the only way to show their life stories effectively was by including almost all of their letters. In my mind everything they wrote was important. However, it is the responsibility of the researcher to sift through such documentation and choose what it is she thinks will best represent the voices of her participants, and what it is she best thinks will answer the questions she is seeking. As Weber (1990) says, "The researcher's task is rather to recognize and test the most "telling" bits of data and to write about them in a manner that faithfully conveys the essence of what was seen, experienced

or discovered" (p. 144). She suggests that the authentic story is one way of reporting and is well suited to this task.

My task is to consider the use of story as a way to describe and interpret the experiences of my participants. I am trying to explain why successful and dedicated women teachers become disillusioned with teaching. I am using the stories told to me by the participants to describe and interpret the experience if disillusionment. The common experience shared by all of my participants was the struggle between who they envisioned themselves to be as teachers, and the restrictive structure of schooling under which they worked. Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) suggest that teachers are people who make up their own minds; they are pro- rather than re-active and choose a particular course of action or strategy because it seems to them to serve their purpose. The teachers I interviewed all fit this description, and yet they often felt that they did not have a choice – they had to "re-act". Thus, their disillusionment manifested itself in a struggle.

The four teacher participants – Grace, Marie, Sarah and Julia – had shared many of their stories with me before I approached them about participating in this study. Their responses were enthusiastic and immediate, so I began interpreting their stories as soon as I heard them. I could not help but do this particularly because of the written dialogue we had established. Thus, my interpretation occurred in two phases: while I was reading and responding to their stories and after I had collected their stories. It was not long before I

recognized that while their stories were particular to their unique experiences, there were shared general themes. Van Manen summarizes four meanings of theme:

1. Theme is the experience of focus, of meaning, of point. As I read over an anecdote I ask, what is its meaning, its point?
2. Theme formulation is at best a simplification. We come up with a theme formulation but immediately feel that it somehow falls short, that it is an inadequate summary of the notion.
3. Themes are not objects one encounters at certain points or moments in a text. A theme is not a thing; themes are intransitive.
4. Theme is the form of capturing the phenomenon one tries to understand. Theme describes an aspect of the lived experience.

My challenge as investigator was a dual one. First, I wanted to isolate those stories that best showed the thematic elements of each teacher's experiences. Ideally the reader will read these individual stories and say, "yes, I know just what she means!". Finally, my challenge was to compare and contrast these stories and to show those common elements that the teacher participants share. Van Manen (1992) suggests that there are six research activities involved in human science research:

1. turning to the phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world
2. investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it
3. reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon
4. describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting
5. maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon
6. balancing the research context by considering parts and whole (p. 30).

Van Manen says, "this then is that task of phenomenological research and writing: to construct a possible interpretation of the nature of a certain human experience" (p. 42).

Although each teacher's experience is different, there are commonalties that allow us to bridge the particular with the general. In examining the themes that govern disillusioned teachers, four in-depth dialogues will represent both unique experiences and collaborative experiences because all four are sharing the same professional concerns. Together, the teacher's individual stories are what Sparkes (1994) would call a "collective story". The response at the individual level to a well-told collective story is: "That's my story. I am not alone" (Sparkes, 1994, p. 177). Finally in Writing a Woman's Life, Heilbrun (1988, p.37) tells us what it is about stories that make them eternal in their importance.

> What matters is that lives do not serve as models; only stories do that. And it is a hard thing to make up stories to live by. We can only retell and live by the stories we have read or heard. We live our lives through texts. They may be read, or chanted, or experienced electronically, or come to us, like the murmurings of our mothers, telling us what conventions demand. Whatever their form or medium, these stories have formed us all; they are what we must use to make new fictions, new narratives.

Drawing on van Manen's (1992) six research activities, I tried to show the themes of a particular experience. Thus, I first turned to the teachers and asked them how it was that they became teachers, how it was that they became committed to teaching. Second, while I asked the teachers to recall specific episodes from their lives (for example, what they were like as girls) they were investigating reasons for their disillusionment because, at the time I approached them, this was their experience. Thus, they were living an experience as opposed to conceptualizing that experience. Third, I was committed to sharing all of my own reflections with the teachers. Thus, my own interpretation began

while I was reading their life material, and they were able, if they chose, to respond to what I had written. During this correspondence in which I was reflecting in writing on what the teachers were writing and saying, I had begun to write and rewrite descriptions of their experiences. At the end of the study, I asked each of my participants to respond to some of my own reflections on what they had said. Faced then with a thick folder of letters from each of my participants, I began to recopy their words and weave in my own interpretation. While I was writing and rewriting, I was committed to maintaining a pedagogical focus on the phenomenon I was exploring. That is, what other research might inform and help me to better describe and interpret the experience I was exploring. Finally, it was my task to balance the research context by considering the parts and the whole. How could I remain faithful to the unique stories these women had told, and at the same time draw on their similarities to better describe and interpret the phenomenon called "the darker side of teaching".

In my analysis, I want first to provide and draw on the themes of the most telling stories of their experiences remembering that theme is not a thing, but rather, a form of capturing the phenomenon I am trying to understand (van Manen, 1992). Second, I want to show how the "shadowed side of teaching" is indeed like a closet that needs to be unpacked. In unpacking the closet, in revealing the shadowed stories, we had better understand the lived experience of what it is like to be a dedicated and successful woman teacher who feels silenced with regards to voicing her disillusion and anger. In essence we will better understand the teacher behind the myth.

CHAPTER FOUR

GOOD TEACHERS: CASTING THEIR SHADOWS

Grace

> One of my friends from Teacher's College phoned me this week. We hadn't spoken in at least six or seven months. He went through the program with me. He teaches in a big city, has "settled down" (an unfortunate expression, isn't it?) and is raising a family. We have a common interest in books and film and have always managed to find the time for each other over the past twelve years. Anyway, his call stunned me. He is going through the EXACT same slump that I am going through. He has been in therapy for a few years. He is getting ready to leave the profession because it offers no challenge to him anymore. He is bored. His staff bores him; it's all gotten too easy for him. What is wrong with us Anna? Are we growing out of our innocence, or idealism? Is it as simple as that? Sammy admitted that teaching was never a calling for him, never something he dreamed about as a child. He was influenced into going into teaching because a friend was applying to the Education Program. (I should add that Sammy is an amazing teacher!) Well, this triggered a lot of thinking in me. I am dealing with the same crisis but mine terrifies me more than Sammy's does. Teaching is/was always a calling and I never doubted that as a child. Ask any of my sisters. I knew as soon as I could start thinking about my future that I wanted to be a teacher. That passion was unshakeable. And maybe I don't want to leave the profession, I just want to change my environment. That, however, remains to be resolved.

I clearly remember the first evening I met Grace, because as I listened to her read a piece of her own writing, and heard about the essay that was just accepted for publication in a national newspaper, I wondered what on earth I could ever "teach" this woman who obviously was a writer and who had just enrolled in a class I was teaching. While Grace read I watched the class grow still, silenced and enriched with her vivid images and chosen words. The teachers in the course were required to keep a journal, and it would be a lie to say that I did not look forward to reading hers because of its rich

contents. Grace wrote poetry, essays, professional reflections, responses to books she was reading, music she had heard, anecdotes about her students and stories from her life. We engaged in a dialogue that was exciting and enriching.

I heard from others that Grace was an outstanding teacher. It was not uncommon for me to hear comments like, "I wish I could get my kids in her class", or "one more year until Shelly is in her class". Grace wrote about the magical qualities of her students, about the little boy who chose to look at a frog as opposed to killing it, about the little girl who "just began her first novel" about dissolving in hysterics with her class over tiny details and then thanking them for letting her laugh with them. In my journal I wrote that she was everything I associated with the "brightness of teaching". In my mind, she embodied the "caring teacher" Nel Noddings (1984) calls for in Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education, a text which will later serve to help me interpret some of Grace's experience. Yet, her journal was also fraught with the voice of disillusionment. Among other things, she confessed that she was often nervous in class, not wanting to speak. I pause to reflect on her words.

> Anna you ask me why I get so nervous in class. I don't know if I have already told you this or not, I guess it is my own insecurities coming out, fear of failure and all that. I also tend to believe that teachers are pretty tough customers. I find that they (we) are in general, an insecure bunch. Perhaps society creates that condition in us by always accusing us of not doing enough to educate the young, or complaining about our short hours, long holidays, etc. Teachers are watchful, waiting for someone to spring...Do you ever get that feeling? Society loves to hate its teachers, unfortunately."

It almost seemed unnatural not to continue my correspondence with Grace when the course was over. In my second letter to Grace I told her about my research interests, and was she interested in participating. Grace was interested, especially since I was someone who "wanted to know". These words chilled me to some degree as I too had often felt that no one really cares about teachers. My interest was in locating those thematic elements that came out of the "shadowed side of teaching", the side of teaching that Grace and my other participants were not willing to give a public voice. In her earliest comments, we can uncover hints of isolation, professional jealousy, a feeling of not being valued and of not being understood. When our "official correspondence" ended, (when I asked Grace for exit comments) I wanted to find the one story that stood out as testimony to what it was like to be a successful woman teacher disillusioned with teaching. However, in her last letter Grace considered the cyclical nature of her disillusion, and indeed, while I read through her letters I could almost graph with peaks and valleys what she had unpacked in two years.

There is no "one" story. It is impossible to document the thematic essences that arose out of the stories she shared with me without considering the entirety of Grace's teaching narrative. This in itself is an impossibility, but without showing how it was that Grace became a teacher and who she considers herself to be as a teacher, it is difficult for us to understand the disillusionment that she felt at the height of this two-year period. The disillusionment is manifested in the conflict she faced when her lifelong calling to teaching came into question. In the end, Grace's disillusionment, the darker side that she was to

unpack, revealed the tension between her image of who she was as a teacher, and what she was expected to do within the confines of the structure she worked in. Of particular importance is the silence that Grace kept, choosing to protect her disillusionment in the privacy of her own self. Speaking out was not something Grace had ever been prone to, except in the confines of her classroom.

Teaching as a Calling

> I was a religious child, all self imposed. My family was not religious at all. I felt that "God" had a job for me to do in this world (sometimes I still feel that way). In fact, I wavered between wanting to be a teacher and a missionary - not for the religious aspect but because I had desire to do some good in the world. (This, too, is still something that I think about and feel strongly about. Sometimes I think I would be ready to work in a third world country for a while...)

Very early in our correspondence Grace wrote about how she always wanted to be a teacher. In fact, Grace named her draw to teaching a calling, as did the Catholic women religious teachers that Casey interviewed. I could not help asking if, by being "called" to teaching, Grace became automatically isolated from other teachers who may not have chosen teaching for the same reasons. In other words, when a nun follows her calling she can be assured a community who has presumably also answered a similar calling. However, the same is not necessarily true in teaching. In Chapter Two I discussed the various reasons women might have chosen teaching, emphasizing that the public "calling" had everything to do with their gender. Presumably, not much has changed. Teaching is still considered "women's work", but women enter teaching for a variety of reasons. I

wanted to know more about what she meant as a calling, especially since none of my other participants had used this term, but were experiencing the same concerns. An early letter gave me the impetus to ask Grace more about who she was as a girl and as a girl student.

As I looked back on what Grace told me about who she was as a little girl, I was stunned by the irony of the connections between Grace the student and Grace the teacher. As a little girl Grace was her mother's helper, the caregiver to her siblings, and in some ways the caregiver to her parents. She was the organized child. She often did lots of housework for her mother, who was sloppy. Interestingly, as a teacher it was Grace who was informally responsible for decorating the walls of the school, and the year she lost the classroom she had been promised and her own was not painted, Grace refused to decorate the walls. She eventually painted the room herself with the help of her principal. Grace would spend entire days cleaning the house so as to please her mother when she got home. Grace writes,

> I remember simply enjoying the thought of her delight. Was I looking for some sort of approval? I don't know. Approval for what?

Grace asks herself why she wanted her mother's approval, why she cleaned and tidied so much. Caplan and Caplan (1994) say that girls are more likely than boys to be taught to seek adults' approval. Did she seek this approval from her teachers? She remembers lovingly those teachers who stood out for her, and is tormented by the memories of her "bad" teachers. That she attaches religious symbolism both to her

description of teachers and to the reason she chose teaching suggests what Noddings might call her ethic of caring that is an integral part of who she is as an educator. Grace's calling was founded in wanting to do something for the world, to emulate those teachers who also seemed to care. In the following description Grace "worshipped her teacher" who was sent to her after a terrible grade-one teacher and recalls that,

> God smiled on me, and said, "let there be Light. Let there be Mrs Linsay." I fell in love with my teacher and worshipped her. She still has that effect on students. It must be her voice. I know this because, although she is retired, I still see her in the grocery store. Imagine, we ended up living in the same town. She has also done some supply work at the school, and she even gave me some of her materials when she retired. This summer she is tutoring some of my weaker students, so I imagine we shall be speaking regularly. Anna, she is a jewel. We talk, we are always touching each other. She is a tiny lady, standing well under five feet, petite, with an odd voice that I can't describe, and yet the gentlest words and a slight drawl. She speaks very clearly and emphasises everything as though life is one big classroom. We held hands and chattered in the grocery store last week. She knows I think she is wonderful because I told her. I think that she is pretty proud of some of her former students. She is a kindred spirit. She made me feel that I was a person of value. That, however, has been one of the most difficult lessons to learn, and it was a process that took me another twenty years to actually believe for reason I can't even explain to myself.

Grace asked her mother what she was like as a little girl. Her mother said she was a "good girl", a comment her sisters and cousin translated as a "goody two shoes". She was a capable student in elementary school and was put ahead in math and language arts. Grace wrote that this may have occasioned some jealousy amongst the girls in the school, and attests to a nightmarish experience in grade six. She says she may have been one of those teacher's pets who makes everyone "gag", but says this was probably because she

was too nervous to do anything wrong or step out of line in any sort of way. She was not rebellious and worked hard in school to earn stickers so that she could play school with her sisters in the basement of their home where her parents had put some old school desks. There was no question as to who would be teacher; she felt she was the only one qualified to do the job, and her sisters still tease her about her bossy teacher attitude.

While Mrs Linsay made Grace feel like she was a person of value, much to her regret now, Grace never spoke a word in class in all her years of schooling. I cannot help but think back to her confession that she felt "nervous" in our class, and was not prone to speaking although she would read what she had written. Yet at the same time Grace was known to have her students stand on their desks to get a new perspective on things; she was known to break spontaneously into opera singing and burst out laughing to the point of tears at the antics of some of her students. How ironic that in our class she resembled the mouse that she describes herself as having been as a girl student. Interestingly, when Grace began sitting on university committees she found she was voicing her opinions firmly and with conviction; she was not afraid to disagree and say what she thought. Why, I kept asking myself, was her voice strong in some contexts and weak or silent in others? Why was she a bossy teacher at home and a "mouse" in school? Why was she quiet among her colleagues in our class but firm and strong on her committee?

That Grace felt both silenced and having a voice within similar structures (home and school) is a cause for further consideration. One reason we are silenced is that we feel

what we have to say is not valid or valued. What then were the conditions that made Grace feel she had a voice, that what she had to say was both valid and valued? In Meeting at the Crossroads (1992) Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan examine the silence that creeps up on young girls as they move from childhood to adolescence. In a moving passage at the end of the book, the authors describe how a group of seventeen-year-olds demand that the researchers thoroughly go through all of the research with the girls before committing the voices of the girls to paper. In a retreat, the girls are given transcripts and encouraged to work with one another before reporting back to the researchers on what they have found. The authors' point is that in order for girls to feel they have a voice, they must be listened to and what they have to say must be taken seriously. In this light it is reasonable to assume that Grace felt she could voice her thoughts and ideas when they were being taken seriously, when she was asked to sit on a committee, when she was "in charge" of her own class. Nevertheless, except to a few chosen adults, Grace never spoke of her disillusionment. The parallel however with not saying anything as a girl student and closeting her disillusionment as an adult woman cannot be ignored.

While Grace wrote that she never said a word in school, her actions made up for her silence. She said that she never felt attractive in high school and stood out because she favoured skirts and dresses over jeans and jackets, and while she got along with everyone but favoured no one, she spent most of her noon hours in the library. Interestingly, the year during which her disillusionment peaked, Grace left her school at

lunch hour choosing to eat in the privacy of her own home. Grace wrote that it often took her an entire period to muster up the courage to say anything in class, sometimes she would only speak a few times a year, but to make up for her lack of voice in an oral arena, "Boy, would I write for my teachers!" Thinking back to our class, not much had changed and indeed we will later see how the conflict between her image as a writer and as a teacher was to play a role in understanding the source of her disillusionment.

While her voice was always a whisper, she wrote that she was always determined. For example in grade nine she decided that she would be the valedictorian and in grade eleven that is exactly what she did. While she did try dropping out, she could not find her teacher and was forced up on stage. Obstinate is another descriptor Grace used for herself. She cites the school bus rides in which the high school boys would smoke at the back and she would open the window wide, even in the winter despite the things they threw at her. When she got home, Grace said she had apple cores, gum and oranges in her hair, but "I had stood my ground and I walked tall when I got off that bus". Another bus episode pays tribute to Grace's sense of responsibility and strong ethic of caring.

> In elementary school there was a little girl named Mary that no one would let sit with them. They would slide over and block their seat when we stopped at her house (it was more like a shack that looked like it would go up in flames if you dropped a match within sixty yards of it) I couldn't stand this. It made me want to cry. I always let her sit with me. She smelled bad and the kids said she had "bugs". They used to have to walk for a mile in the winter because the bus wouldn't go down their road. One bitter windy day, they got on the bus wearing cheap sneakers and plain sweaters. The bus had been late that day and so when we stopped they were sobbing with cold. The dirty ragamuffin children got on board

> and another girl and I grabbed them and warmed them by holding our hands over their ears and blowing on them gently. Anna, it has always hurt me terribly to see anyone in pain, and I know I have felt like that since a very young age.

Grace's memories of her childhood play a strong role in her actions as a woman and teacher. In a letter in which Grace was beginning to question her image of teaching she wrote:

> I think the kind of teacher that I now long to be is the one that does not belong in the real world. I feel I am a better teacher outside the classroom than inside, sometimes. I want to instil children with a sense of wonder, and I feel I am able to do this when they stop by and we play with the magnetic poetry on the fridge, or they talk with me while I am raking leaves. On Friday, I uncovered a toad, and the fourteen year old boy who was talking with me stopped and we bent down and examined him and made sure he was okay, then I gave the toad to Richard and asked him to find a safe place in the yard for him. I felt I had accomplished more in that moment than in a whole day's teaching, particularly for the other three boys who were standing around (one who is in my class and kills everything that moves, because that is the way he was raised I think). I heard this boy's voice raise in pitch when he saw that we had found a toad, and I recognized that heightened and threatening quality from the neighbourhood boy's voices of my youth. I paid no heed and Richard and I enjoyed the wonder of that frightened little creature. It was a very quiet message where no judgement was made. Then I carried on with my raking. Maybe Matthew will remember that not everything should die because we are stronger than it is.

Grace has always taught in a rural setting, and the past eleven years she has taught in a town just a few miles from the one where she grew up. In a later letter she wonders again whether it is the setting that is adding to her disillusionment and points to a friend of hers who tells her that the isolation she feels is geographic. Clearly this feeling of being "isolated" rises out of her stories, and will continue to as the chapter proceeds. The very

fact that Grace felt that there was a limited number of people with whom she could share her successes and concerns suggests in itself a feeling of isolation. The important question to ask is where is this isolation manifested and why does it exist? While Grace appeared willing to accept her feelings of isolation among her colleagues, what she was not able to accept was her inability to follow, as excellently as possible, her calling within the structure of schooling. Finally, that she felt she could not give voice to her concerns suggests that she hid her feelings, a situation which can only last so long.

In one of Grace's final letters to me she wrote,

> It might be interesting for you to ask your teachers if they remember anyone in their elementary classes who didn't belong. You might be surprised to find that some of them are sitting in your class. I would be interested to know.

Grace's question is an excellent one. Are we better able to understand who we are and what we do as teachers by better understanding who we were and what we did as students? Certainly if we have been schooled in a traditional structure and then find ourselves working within a similar structure we bring with us years of personal knowledge based on our experiences within that system. Grace showed how her teachers influenced her, how the fantasy she created with her sisters became a reality when she became a teacher. Later when I asked Grace to describe the "ideal" classroom the one she describes is lodged within this structure. Her description is telling in that she is quite willing to work within a structure as long as her qualities and talents are recognized, as long as she is able to follow through in an excellent way the conditions of her calling. In the following

excerpt, Grace's anger is directed at a structure that does little to understand the needs of teachers and perpetuates what in her mind is mediocrity. However, at the end of the day, she does not need the structure to define what it is she does. Sadly, perhaps, the rewards of her calling appear outside of the structure in which she works.

> My frustration at work is reaching a critical point. I feel that this school is preventing me from being the creative educator that I like to imagine I am. Everything that I find interesting to do gets thwarted. Last week at a staff meeting, I got so angry that I had to leave the room. I just got up out of my seat and walked down the hall to calm myself. I went into the secretaries' office and wove a stream of profanities that would have curled your hair Anna. I felt like going down to my classroom and smashing all of the desks and chairs so that they would know how upset I was. This is my own fault because I haven't let my staff know how frustrated I am. I make oblique references to my disappointment but I don't come right out and say how frustrated I am. I think it is time I did so, and my personal physician encouraged me to do the same. I think what I find most startling is the rage that is building inside me. Do you want specifics? I lost the larger classroom I was promised. I was never connected to ccMail network I was promised and had been using with my class for more than a year. Finally, ---came to my home on Easter weekend and installed it for me there. It doesn't help me in terms of my students but at least I can make a connection with other teachers in the province. I had a backlog of over 200 messages waiting for me since the beginning of September so I spent most of my weekend reading, saving and deleting. Some of these people had been trying to reach me for seven months. Is it any wonder I feel isolated? And finally the last straw came this week when I was told that the room I had reserved for my Poetry Show would be available to me on the evening of our open house, but that I wouldn't have access to it for rehearsals. The reason I reserved it in November was because I don't have the room to host a show in my classroom and this was the deal I made. It now seems like an empty deal if I have no rehearsal time. Another opportunity denied Grace. This is the reason I left the staffroom, and it probably doesn't sound like much, but it is all adding up these days. (You might want to add to that whole list the fact that we don't offer Enrichment classes in our school anymore, which was my favourite thing to teach. More budget restraints. I wonder if parents would be interested in paying for extra activities for their children outside of school time? Hmm.)
>
> I feel that the system is encouraging me to be mediocre. Every time I want to do something more exciting, my access to opportunity gets denied. That means that

> possibly, some day, I will stop trying to do more for students and become complacent like the majority of teachers out there. I will do my job, go home, stop designing extra activities for my class, put in the least amount of time possible and collect my pay until retirement. Personally I can't stand the thought of becoming mediocre, and that is what is making me crazy. I am being pushed in that direction, and I am kicking and screaming all the way. This probably means I will have to leave this profession if I wish to maintain my personal integrity.

When I asked Grace why she had not stood up to her principal and demanded the classroom that had been promised to her, she wrote:

> It would have made my nemesis unbearable to work with but more importantly I was too tired to fight. I think in the back of my mind I was thinking that this would give me one more excuse to leave, that it would somehow make it easier for me to go. It will force me to go elsewhere to get what I want rather than stay here forever-unchallenged. In the end, maybe the other teacher's need is greater, and I am not talking about the need for a larger room. We both know that mine was greater in term's of population. Why didn't I stand up and fight, if not for my students? Anna- they can put me in a barn and I will still manage to tap the richness of most of my students. I believe that.

That Grace feels she could tap the richness from her students even if she is put in a barn is a clear indication of her dedication to her calling, and an indication of the confidence she maintains in responding to her calling. However, again it would appear that remaining silent is also a part of that calling. While she appears to question her calling in a later letter, we will see that it is not teaching itself that she is questioning, rather it is how she feels she must compromise her identity because of outside rules. If Grace chose not to remain silent, what would the ramifications be? Would she feel that her identity was being compromised? Or is remaining silent a part of what she considers to be her "calling"? The following fantasy shows what her ideal teaching situation would be.

My ideal teaching situation would be to teach only Literature, Poetry, Writing, Art and maybe an exploration to Music class! I would have a HUGE room with a centre for reading, with some comfortable couches to sit in, a conference table for discussions, a permanent centre for art with supplies always available for the student to use in their writing interpretations. I would have a class of no more than sixteen. I would have all kinds of books - story books, humour, poetry, novels, everything. I would have some computers for those who wanted to publish their work, I would have a station set up with all the tools of calligraphy for those who wanted to do it the old fashioned way. I would have the freedom to take them to Montreal to a play or a concert, or invite a writer in to talk with them. I would have complete access to a stage for improvisation and mime, for some dance etc. I would have a piano in the class in case someone wanted to put a poem to music or write a song. We would have Authors Evening once a term and the students would do most of the organising. We would serve refreshments and everyone would listen and be proud. The children would be reminded of their worth. I would be very demanding. I would insist on children registering for my classes to be very hard working and curious. I would only teach those subjects. I would have these students al day as many times a week as possible. The classroom would be beautifully decorated and full of everything that a child might dream of working with (with the exception on computer games). I would take my students out on the land for walks or nature studies. Maybe we could go canoeing, picnicking, bicycling. I think in my fantasy they are older than grade six but I can't be more specific than that. I found a building that would be perfect for this purpose. I wish I could open a school around here that indulged all of these ideas. In that school I would want to see a Drama teacher, and Art teacher, a Music/Voice teacher and myself as the English teacher (or one of several). Forget the Sciences. They can get their own building. I wish I didn't have to teach all the subjects I teach now Anna. They pull me away from my real interest and that frustrates me. I would happily give up the Math and the Sciences. Besides, I know I would find a way to include pieces of them in the Language Arts class.

When I considered the story of Mathew and the toad read against the anger she felt toward the system she worked in, I was in some ways startled to find that Grace would describe her ideal classroom within the confines of a school. At the same time, I was struck by Grace's attempt to create a community in which the teachers resemble Grace in terms of her interests. Brown and Gilligan (1992) suggest that it is necessary for

adult women to form communities in which they feel safe to exchange ideas and thoughts, and more importantly communities where they feel safe in agreeing to disagree. It strikes me that this would especially be of benefit to women like Grace who feel isolated in what she describes as her calling.

Kathleen Casey (1992) helps shed light on the situation that Grace found herself in. While Grace is not a nun, she shares the notion of being "called" to a way of life, much like the religious teachers Casey interviewed. While isolation is not in itself a theme that Casey identifies when she writes about the religious women teachers she interviewed, many of their stories suggest that "isolation" became a part of who they were. That is, in not choosing to compromise their identity, they became isolated and in some cases silenced. For example, one nun who committed herself to the gay community recognized how her calling would be best suited to serving this community's needs. However, in so doing, she risked being isolated and even ex-communicated from the Catholic Church under whose structure she was supposed to be working. Like Grace, this nun was dedicated to her calling, but felt limited by its restrictions, unable to do what she truly felt she needed to do.

Pause for Reflection

Grace says that she was a different person at home than she was at school. At home she seemed to come alive, while at school she was a "mouse", a "teacher's pet", a

"goody two shoes". Both Grumet (1988) and Walkerdine (1990) support the claim that because the elementary classroom is structurally so similar to the environment of the home, little girls who identify with their mothers often flourish at school, while little boys resist the elementary classroom in their effort to be everything their mother is not. Walkerdine (1990) writes,

> Good performance combined with docility and helpfulness presents a striking picture not unlike that expected of primary school teachers, who must possess capacities of nurturance to be "amplified", yet must reach the standard of attainment necessary for teacher training. Conversely, girls who are "nice, kind and helpful" are most suited to facilitating nurturance. (p. 51)

and in fact, in her last letter to me Grace wrote:

> Yes! Who we are as a person is very closely tied to who we are as a teacher. I suspect that I am contributing to an independence in young girls, a belief in their own potential, in their ability to travel and experience all sorts of adventures. I like to believe that I am a model of possibilities. My beginnings are not at all different from their own. I speak to them about my love of travel, courses and books. I can see some of their minds working. I know that some of those girls are thinking, "Why not?" The teacher in elementary school that had the biggest impact on me was a single woman who adored her job and was a little odd. She was not necessarily popular with the teachers, but I liked her eccentricities. I am not even sure that the students really appreciated her. You know what? I think I emulated her. Yup. I have perfected Miss Taylor. I have simply added a few more dimensions so that she is well rounded and doesn't intimidate her students.

She does not know why she wanted approval. As in a later letter, she wonders if she went into teaching because she "wanted to be liked". However her sense of duty, her sense of responsibility is unchanging. The child she warmed on the bus and the fact that

she teaches grade six because this was her most difficult year are only two examples to support her "calling". Grace's actions, first as a student and later as a teacher, are a reflection of her belief in nurturing as a way of helping individuals recognize the value she places in them as ethical beings.

> When we attribute the best possible motive consonant with reality to the cared-for, we confirm him; that is, we reveal to him an attainable image of himself that is lovelier than that manifested in his present acts. In an important sense, we embrace him as one with us in devotion to caring. In education, what we reveal to a student about himself as an ethical and intellectual being has the power to nurture the ethical ideal or destroy it. (Noddings, 1982, p. 193)

Throughout our two year correspondence we frequently had discussions about the perils of girls and boys in our classrooms. We both heard Maureen Barbieri speak at a summer institute where she called on middle school teachers to pay heed to the hidden voices of adolescent girls. Half-way through the year, Grace challenged Barbieri saying that it was young boys we needed to be wary of, that what she was seeing in her community was pointing to the fact that young boys were in trouble. At the end of the year Grace went through a file in which she kept the richest, most outstanding pieces of writing from her students. To her shock she found that most of what she kept was from boys. We discussed this and I wondered whether what the boys had written stood out more simply because they were boys. Grace often talked to me about how the girls in her classes "make me crazy because they are so willing to compromise themselves". Was

Grace recognizing in them the qualities she had outwardly exhibited as a shy "wanting to do good" girl student? Walkerdine says,

> In a recent study (Walden and Walkerdine, 1983) many female teachers openly despised the very qualities of helpfulness and careful, neat work which at the same time they constantly demanded from their pupils, often holding up the work books of such girls as examples, or reprimanding the boys for not behaving like the responsible girls. Yet they would simultaneously present such characteristics in girls as a problem. Furthermore, it was common for female teachers to dislike intensely the girls who displayed them. They would describe them as "boring", "wet" and "wishy-washy". Such girls had not "spark" "fire" or "brilliance". Yet it is such girls who had become these teachers. When describing themselves as children or making reference to girls who reminded them of themselves, it was precisely such qualities that they discussed. They made reference to their own "passivity" and "lack of confidence" and getting trampled on. They found it easier to find desirable qualities in boys, the Other of their desire. This suggests that their own identification with the girls in their class was extremely problematic, and also that this helped to produce an elaborate splitting such that the desirable qualities of children were seen as displayed in boys and yet disavowed in girls, and in themselves as teachers. Not surprisingly, then, it is the qualities relating to femininity as nurturance which were posited consciously and obviously as desirable in both teachers and girls alike. (1990, p. 75)

That Grace sees herself as a role model for girls but not for boys cannot be ignored in light of Grace's silence regarding the disillusionment she experienced. Again, we must ask ourselves what kind of modelling we provide for young girls and boys if we are not willing to speak out and to "talk back". While Grace was obstinate and determined in her claim to be able to teach in a barn and "still be able to pull the richness from my students", what message do we give students when we accept the barn without a struggle? What message do we give when we are forever willing to rationalize our losses? On the one hand, Grace provides a model of dedication to caring for a profession that she feels almost

spiritually attached to; on the other hand, it would appear that in Grace's case, one of the outcomes of such extended rationalization is internalized anger. That Grace is unwilling to voice her anger suggests not so much that in her words "it isn't worth it", but that she feels not only will nothing be done but that she will lose the reputation she has worked so hard at shaping.

If Grace is not willing to voice her anger and her disillusionment, will she be able to help the girl students not compromise themselves? Brown and Gilligan (1992) provide a telling anecdote that sheds light on this point. The following quotation comes from a woman who participated in a retreat attended by girls and women who went to or worked at Laurel School.

> It was first with a sense of shock and then a deep, knowing sadness that we listened to the voices of the girls tell us that it was the adult women in their lives that provided the models for silencing themselves and behaving like "good little girls". We wept. Then the adult women in our collective girlhoods came into our room. We could recall the controlling, silencing women with clarity and rage, but we could also gratefully recall the women who had allowed our disagreement and rambunctiousness in their presence and who had made us feel whole. And we recognized what it was we had to do as teachers and mothers and therapists and women in relationship. Unless we, as grown women, were willing to give up all the "good little girl" things we continued to do and give up our expectation that the girls in our charge would be as good as we were, we could not successfully empower young women to act on their own knowledge and feelings. Unless we stopped hiding in expectations of goodness and control, our behaviour would silence any words to girls about speaking in their own voice. Finally, we dared to believe that one could be intelligently disruptive without destroying anything except the myths about the high level of female cooperativeness. (p. 221)

Finally, Walkerdine (1990) reminds us that, " It is overwhelmingly the case that those women who enter school teaching (particularly at the elementary level) were girls who did well at school, but whose success is attributed to hard work, diligence and not brilliance" (p. 79).

Identity Challenged

There are two strands of stories that stand out in Grace's letters: those about the magic of her students and those that are laced with anger directed at the structure of schooling. It is clear from the stories she tells that both are responsible for who she is as a teacher; she finds her reward in her students, but feels stifled by a system over which she has no control, in which she feels like she has no voice. Like the children on the bus who she warmed and protected, Grace the teacher stands up for the children in her class, even "the class from hell" despite the restrictions imposed on her. As a continual reminder of who she is as a teacher, Grace shared many stories with me about her students. The first story arrived in one of her earliest letters, and it was no surprise to me that it was laced with spiritual language, with an ethic of caring. She ended the letter by asking me if I believed in angels, telling me that she did, and that "on the morning of the twenty third to be exact, I made a wish and the doorbell rang and.....

> ...there were two smiling faces greeting me. It is at this point that I must explain my state of mind that day. I was feeling very sad, lonely, isolated. I had literally asked the Great Spirits for a sign, for anything to free me from the sorrow in my

mind no more than ten minutes before the doorbell rang. Even before I reached the door, I had cast my eyes skyward and said thanks, at the very least for the fact that the day would somehow change, somehow free me from myself, if even for only a moment. There on the doorstep stood Amos and Joe, two students from my class of two years ago.

"Hi. We thought we would come by and visit. Can we come in?" I told them their timing was amazing, that they were just what I needed and opened the door. For the next two hours, while I wrapped Christmas presents on the counter, they sat in the dining room and talked, asked, laughed and entertained me. Ainsley disappeared in the living room and returned with my guitar. He sat back down on the wicker couch in the dining room, , long strawberry hair, freckles and cracking voice, and he sang and sang. I joined in and we did a few duets. I had tears in my eyes. He sang the Joe Cocker song, "You are so beautiful to me ...."and he squeezed in the words Miss Oman onto the end of the line and left himself breathless and I laughed and giggled till I cried. I told those boys I loved them. Ainsley chose that moment to confess that he loved me too and that he was going to marry me some day. I laughed and said, "Yes, of course you are Ainsley. Who cares that you have just spent the last hour telling me about all the girls at school that you are wild about." We all laughed. We drank tea. And before they left, their thick duffel coats on, all skinny legs and height, I grabbed them both by the arm and asked them if they believed in angels. They both said yes, without hesitation. Joe went off on a long discourse about angels in his life, the fact that his mothers believe in them and so on. I, told them that an angel sent them to me to save me from myself. Just like that. And they accepted these things from my mouth as though they were ordinary things one talks about every day. I told them they had brought Christmas into my home and my heart that day and I loved them for it. Lots of big hugs. It was one of the highlights of my holidays because it was so perfect. Joe lives in Toronto so I only see him on holidays. Ainsley phones every month or so, just to talk. I love it. They make me feel lucky to do what I do. I love that they feel they can visit me and talk to me, like a friend. This is my reward for what I do Anna.

In a later letter in which Grace had already begun reflecting on how she came to be a teacher, and what the "darker side of teaching" might mean, she broke in the middle of the letter to share with me an anecdote that reflected her belief in who she was as a teacher:

> My oldest friend, Victoria, phoned me from North Bay last month to tell me she had heard some wonderful things about me from a former student. I was stunned! She had been speaking to a friend that teaches at Champlain College in Lennoxville, who I had only met once, but he remembered me. He told her that one of his students was in his office one day talking about a teacher that had had a great impact on his/her life. Apparently this student said this teacher had changed their life. Then gave my name. It was one of my former students where I taught for two years before going to the Great White North. Who that student is, I have no idea but that story had such an impact on me, I cried. I was struck by the effect we have on our students. Imagine a lovely message like that coming to me all the way from North Bay. You are the only one I can get away with this kind of talk with, without sounding boastful or egotistical. Do teachers always have to be modest? We are afraid to appear too sure of ourselves IN FRONT OF OTHER TEACHERS.

Nell Noddings (1984) writes about the place of moral education in schools, about teachers who are able to espouse an ethic of caring in their students through exposure not only to world religions, art and music, but also through their approach and attitude. The hope is that in acquiring such an ethic of caring, students will renounce violence and negativity that pervades our world. Clearly an ethic of caring is an integral part of Grace's teacher identity. The student from the north, Amos and Joe, connected with their teacher through caring. This is Grace's reward. However, Noddings (1994) says:

> Teachers, also, need confirmation in order to nurture their own ethical ideals. We have already discussed the central role played by the cared-for as he responds to the one-caring through both pursuit of his own goals and attribution of caring motives. The response of students remains at the heart of confirmation for teachers. (p. 197).

While Grace recognizes teaching as a "calling" and is fulfilled by those she teaches, the governing structure, in her eyes, does not recognize her value, and does not allow for

the personal growth she seeks in order to be a better educator. She wrote, "my school board is a real disappointment to me because they do not know how to cultivate the best in their teachers, or celebrate the great things that are being done in different schools. I don't know if I am placing the blame in the right place though. Sometimes we teachers operate in isolation from the board and each side is defensive and unwilling to share". Her fulfilment thus comes from the outside, from her students, from parents, from the courses she takes that keep inspiring her pedagogical practice. Her personal fulfilment is further enriched by the fact that Grace is a writer. While she did not have an oral voice as a little girl, "boy, did she write for her teachers" and this practice has continued through her adulthood. Grace examined at length the challenge she was faced with when she called to question which was her priority, teaching or writing. In the following quotation, Grace suggests that writing is her priority, but that it is directly connected to her teaching.

> I guess I am increasingly thinking of myself as a writer first and a teacher second.. I used to put my writing on the back burner and it would be the first sacrifice I mad when I had too much schoolwork to do. I am becoming less willing to do that. I feel I was one of the only if not THE only teacher who went down to the summer writing institute as a writer and not as a teacher. I feel that my classroom runs smoothly so I wasn't desperate for teaching ideas, although I have a lot to learn about teaching writing, but I went there to develop my writing skills, to experiment and to spark new writing approaches for my own work. I also told you that I gained a little from the other teachers compared with what I got from the instructors on a personal level. I also know that I could have been asked to do even more work. Some people laboured over a poem for a week, and I would be writing many of them in the course of my week along with the weekly assignment. As I write, I feel convinced that I must return there next summer again as a writer, and perhaps spend even more time developing my craft. At this point it is purely selfish, I do it for Grace. And whatever I do, I know that my students will benefit, even if my motivation is selfish - so everyone gains anyway.

This excerpt also points to Grace's association with a teaching community even though she says she "presented as a writer". Why had she not chosen to go to a "writer's" institute, choosing instead one aimed at teachers?

Grace explored the issue of whether she saw herself first as a teacher or as a writer in many of her letters. While I asked Grace several times to reflect on what her image was when she began teaching and how that changed, she put this off, choosing instead to explore who she was as a teacher and writer. While Grace wrote freely about the accomplishments of her students and the relationships she developed with them, she also wrote at length about the isolation she felt as a teacher. At a conference we attended together, Grace leaned over to me and said, "I don't feel like one of them" and at a seminar in which she was chosen to lead a group of student teachers and associate teachers through various activities, she told me "that she felt she didn't belong". At the height of her disillusionment, Grace whispered into the phone, "Anna, I don't think I like teachers" and, "I don't think I love my job anymore and it scares the hell out of me". I was fascinated by these comments, especially since another participant had made similar statements and since I also at times felt the same way. In the following reflection Grace shows her insight into why it is that perhaps she does not "like" teachers.

> I have worked with teachers who love to share wonderful and successful teaching ideas, and others who guard them like they are the keepers of the key to successful teaching and it mustn't be shared. I even think as a younger teacher I may have

> been reluctant to share with some teachers, but now I feel differently. I think that is because I have a stronger sense of myself as a teacher, and material sharing does not make me insecure. I know who I am as a teacher, and that the material cannot stand alone. If a disinterested teacher takes material from me to use in class, its success all depends on that person, not on the material, and I have come to realise that that is simply out of my control. So what is professional jealousy? We can horde material forever but if we don't have the passion to transfer good stuff on to our students, then it is all for nothing. What are teachers jealous of then? I don't know. Perhaps they are jealous of the love that some students show teachers. I am spoiled by the affection of my students, future, past and present. For some teachers in my school it must be difficult to be around that much affection directed at their colleague. Some of the teachers are used to it, they never make an issue, and I never do either. Sometimes they will say to me, "the kids all love Miss Oman". And I am convinced that if they have enough confidence in themselves as a person and a teacher it doesn't bother them.

Clearly Grace sets high standards for herself. However, she indicates that her colleagues do not sustain her professionally and that her board has little interest in her. How fitting that a career that is valued so little in society because it is both women's work and defined by children, ultimately reaps its rewards, its reconfirmation from the children themselves. At another conference we attended together, Grace made the comment that the room was almost entirely filled with women English teachers. The comment was followed by a note: "About our female dominated profession – is it like nursing. Is <u>that</u> why we face the most cutbacks? Our voice doesn't carry enough weight"? Again, while Grace sets high standards for herself she is constantly reminded that what devalues her chosen career, her calling, is the fact it is traditionally recognized as women's work. Interestingly, the one time she mentioned male elementary teachers was the only time that she openly worried that her identity be known:

> The next thing I want to say will be offensive to some so if you ever quote me be sure to delete the name. I feel, after having spent a day at a portfolio workshop with all of the Grade Six teachers in my district, that the MEN are holding us back! Would you believe that all of the women there had implemented portfolios to some extent in their classrooms this year, but not one man had, and a lot of men teach Grade Six? It was very discouraging for the workshop co-ordinator. The worst thing was they tried to bullshit their way through the day. It gave her a terrible headache. I am making a generalization (all opinions are generalizations) but I feel that the large proportion of men teaching are very reluctant to try new things in their programs. Maybe they should stick to Maths and Sciences. I can't believe I said that! It's just that they have to be coaxed along. The workshop co-ordinator was very clever though. Before we left that day, she went around the table and had everyone commit to a goal for the end of the year, which she wrote on the blackboard. She made those men commit to starting portfolios in front of everyone, and she did it beautifully! We shall do a follow-up in June. I was laughing inside. She found a way to force them to change, or else face the embarrassment of failure in front of us all when we reassess in June. I guess I have an evil streak Anna. No, what it is a frustration with laziness and with fear of change. As educators we have a responsibility to be innovative.

Final Reflection: Finding Value in the Shadows

When Grace began questioning her "calling" to teaching, her sense of identity became a source of confusion for her. While she recognized her successes and abilities, Grace felt constrained within a structure that appeared to provide little support both for her and her students. While a steady flow of anger is an undercurrent in all of her reflections having to do with disillusionment, Grace describes specific situations which we can name as thematic essences; that of feeling undervalued, that of feeling isolated, that of feeling constrained by professional jealousy.

While Grace did not share with me an image that she had of herself as a teacher, it is obvious that her sense of self is defined by the calling she has never ignored. I have already suggested that in Grace's case, her sense of disillusionment may have begun when she began to question her calling. However, I have also suggested that many of the themes that Grace experienced as a teacher were similar to those she experienced as a girl student. Mari Koerner (1992) who explored the phenomenon of teacher images, says that to "better understand the phenomenon of image, it is helpful to look at every person as an activist who is constantly making constructs in his or her life" (p. 45). Koerner says that the constructs are ways of labelling and ways of integrating what has happened and what is happening.

While Grace claims that teaching is not the whole of her life, it is quite apparent that teaching indeed does spill into her personal life, and perhaps it is in her personal life where the teaching moments are often the most memorable. If teaching is indeed a calling, how can it not spill over into her personal life? However, when she identifies her own family and society at large as not being receptive to or valuing the work she does, she calls into question her calling, her place as a teacher. Koerner says that while teachers think they are important, they also believe the rest of the world sees them as subordinates, as members of a lower class. In her study there was strong agreement on the point, and she adds that this contradiction creates confusion and resentment. She continues to add the two factors involved in why teachers are seen as subordinates. First, their work is

children's work and defined by children, and second they only work nine months of the year. Like Grace, the teachers in her survey talked about lack of recognition in social situations, that the younger the children they taught, the lower was society's regard for what they did, and finally, that they would retreat to their classrooms for the true rewards of their endeavours.

At the end of our two-year correspondence, the letter Grace sent me was calm, almost soothing. When I was writing up the chapter on Grace, I frequently called her to ask if she agreed with my interpretations. One thing was still not clear to me: how was it that the rage she had felt the year before, the disillusionment she had encountered, how had this "darker side" cleared itself up? She had told me that she did not want to be a teacher anymore, that she didn't like teachers. Where had these feelings gone? When I asked Grace if her "class from hell" had anything to do with her feeling reconfirmed as a teacher, she quietly agreed. She said this about them:

> Let me tell you about my class. They were supposed to be a "class from hell". They are a class that no one enjoyed teaching, and Anna, I love them. They are not as strong or bright as last year's group but they are good people, and kind and funny. We laugh often. There is a mood of support that I am able to cultivate in that room this year, and so they are a delight to work with...I am motivated to work with these children because they still have a sense of wonder and they let me enjoy my own sense of wonder with them....

At the end of that year two events occurred that Grace told me entirely reconfirmed and gave value to who she was as a teacher. The first event happened when she was attending

graduation at the local high school where the auditorium was filled with over a thousand people. The valedictorian, who had been a student of Grace's and had sought Grace's help in writing her speech had asked the principal to say that Grace Oman, her grade-six teacher, was one of the most influential people in her life and best teacher she had ever had. Grace told me that the applause rippled and she felt tears stream down her face. A few days earlier, her principal had told her that she was "the best teacher I have ever worked with". Grace was telling her that she had been invited for an interview in a city private school, and while the principal was devastated at the imminent loss, she told Grace she understood.

I wrote earlier that it is tempting to sound glib when concluding these stories, because, in their cyclical nature, some do end, in the moment, on a much happier note than they began. If we look back at who Grace was as a child, at who she is as a teacher, there are similarities. The calling she had to be a teacher is one that she listened to as a teacher and fulfilled as an adult. I caught Grace at a particularly fragile time in her career. She was questioning her calling, who she was as a teacher, and why she did not feel valued. She identified the restrictive structure of schooling as a key player in determining her disillusionment, and she asked if this was burnout.

To shed light on Grace's feelings, I turn to Linda Amspaugh (1993), a teacher educator of thirteen years, who spent her one-year sabbatical in an ordinary grade-one classroom. Her narrative is riddled with many of the same issues that early women

teachers grappled with and that Casey's (1992) teachers speak of, namely, issues having to do with the structure of schooling. Amspaugh begins her discussion by highlighting the differences between herself and her fellow teachers. First, she was in her posting by choice and not interested in tenure. Second, she had had some control over professional issues such as curriculum design and policy making. Her insight is important because she focuses on the reasons many able teachers decide to leave teaching.

Amspaugh's discussion rests entirely on the issue of whether or not teachers are treated as "professionals". After an analysis of her situation, which she claims is not unique, one can conclude that teachers are not treated as professionals. She describes various situations which illustrate this fact. First, she discusses the fact that as a classroom teacher she had little control over her practical and professional decision making. She cites an example in which she had rationalized why students needed to do math in the morning as opposed to reading but was told that she was disregarding district policy. Her point is that no one asked her why she was doing what she was doing. Next, she discusses inservice training and tells of a humiliating situation in which she had to search for the official of a meeting who would sign her registration form as proof that she had attended. Without this signature, she would not receive the credit. Amspaugh says, "I am not sure...that it is possible to demand professionalism of teachers while requiring them to submit to non-professional controls" (p. 716). Amspaugh then shows the number of interruptions in a regular day, and suggests that at times she thought that teaching was considered to be the least important activity in the day. Finally, she discusses the fact that

teachers have no privacy with regards to telephone calls. In her school, all teachers use the office phone, the same phone used by students, in a setting in which no one is allowed privacy. Clearly, as a teacher educator in a university, this was not something she was accustomed to because she was, after all, a professional.

Teachers have lately been the target of the media, of parents, and of politicians. When teachers are undervalued by society and furthermore undervalued in their own school by not being treated as professionals, what happens? In her discussions with former energetic teachers, their reasons for leaving included not being able to tolerate being told "what to do, how to do it, and when to do it" (p. 717). Finally, Amspaugh tells readers of the joys of teaching; when a teacher first realizes a student is reading for the first time, or a parent who comes in to show her pleasure with the progress her daughter or son is making. However, she concludes by saying, "The questions to be asked are, who else considers these events important? And does anybody else care enough to make the changes necessary to keep good teachers in the profession?" (p. 717). Certainly Grace contemplated leaving teaching more than once.

In a final letter to me, Grace reconfirmed who she was, that her ethic of caring was the core of her calling. She wrote:

> Now it is time for me to address your questions. In June I told you that I wasn't sure if I wanted to be a teacher anymore. I think after the year I just had, it was true. This year I feel differently; somehow energised. I think these crises in one's

career are real but they also seem cyclical: a period of disillusionment followed by a period of enthusiasm. I don't know why that happens. Is that what we call burnout? Sometimes I resent the burden that this job puts on personal time with the preparation and corrections. I think it is crucial that I feel challenged and valued as a professional - both by my students and my peers. This year, I feel valued by my students and I am so preoccupied with them that I don't know how my peers feel about me. If I give free reign to my emotions-there is still residual anger about the sloppiness of last year - the small classroom that I continue to work in, the loss of my e-mail communications in my classroom etc. I certainly feel devalued by the board or administration sometimes, but this year thankfully, not also by the students.

I don't like teachers, I told you. HMM. I wish I could call back that entire conversation and put it in context. I think it has everything to do with professional jealousy and I don't think that it is exclusive to the teaching profession. I have said to you before that I think teachers are an insecure bunch. Do we choose a job that has us standing in front of a group of young people so that we feel somehow validated? What do we want to get out of teaching? Do we want to be remembered fondly? Do we want to inspire? DO we want to influence? Do we want a job with summers off? Do we want to be in a position of control in at least one area of our lives? Do we want to change the world? Whatever the answer, and it may be made up of fragments of all of those things, some of it may stem from insecurity and from that comes professional jealousy. It is very hard for teachers to be happy for the recognition of another teacher, I think because they feel slighted in not being recognized themselves. We are a group that is always looking for someone to blame: be it for the weakness of written skills in children or whatever. IF we take that example, when society asks its university teachers why students aren't better writers, they turn and point the finger at the cegep teachers who in their turn point to the high school teachers and finally the elementary school teachers are at the bottom (or top) of the finger pointing list. Of course, it makes for insecure behaviour when the template for your professional skills is the body of students that you send out into the world. I want my legacy to children to be one of compassion and a sense of wonder. I want them to have good lives and be good people. I know that sounds corny when you see it in writing but there it is.

Marie

The first time I told Marie about my research interests, she told me that she had some "good stories to tell". That was the starting point. Marie values reflection and sees it as a way to learn and grow both personally and professionally. As Millies (1992) points out, when we invite discussions of past experiences we have the seeds for increased understanding for the potential of our professional growth. While Marie was not at the point where she wanted to leave teaching, several episodes in her school caused her to question her career choice and ask what teachers and teaching were all about. Thus, our discussion began first with the stories, then moved to reflecting on the stories and on the image of teaching they portrayed.

Teaching : What Image

> When I think of memories, I try to reflect on what they have to do with me being a girl. When we think of girls we tend to think of quiet, well behaved, shy little things who are cute - as opposed to boys who are loud, always moving, aggressive and dirty! Well, that's stereotyping of course, but I guess I fall into that description of the quiet, shy little girl. I was so shy (insecure most probably) that I couldn't even ask my grade one teacher to go to the bathroom, so I peed my pants in front of everyone. After that incident in grade one, I remember very little until grade five when I had a teacher I liked (female).

Marie said that she was always a good student in school, not really outstanding, but she never got in trouble and seemed to do well. Like Grace, she was shy, well behaved and perhaps most interestingly afraid to speak. She began disliking school at the

secondary level, and the dislike had to do with teachers and students. However, in high school she became the first and only girl to take an electronics course, having been swayed by a picture in a magazine of a woman who looked like she was sitting behind the control of an airplane. Marie loved electronics and remembers her teacher as "fabulous" He ordered her a strobe light kit and gave her a couple of speakers to bring home and hook up. She got nineties in the course.

Marie admits that she was "lousy" in math and had it not been for math she may well have leaned towards the sciences. However, math was a prerequisite for CEGEP, and in grade ten she had to give up electronics in order to take math. While she figured she could take up electronics in another way, she never did, although she did join the radio stations at the CEGEP and university she attended. Finally, Marie remembers being bored in high school. She wrote that grade eleven "was like waiting for the prison sentence to end". The only distraction was rushing through the hallways to be on the right stairwell to catch the eye of some cute guy she liked at the time. However she does have fond memories of one English teacher who believed in writing and encouraged Marie to enter a contest, which she did and won. Marie still has writing from that class, and like Grace, has continued to write into her adult years. After reflecting on herself as a female student, Marie wrote:

> I think it is a miracle that I became a teacher. Having had what seems to have been a pretty uninspired experience as a student I believe it must be my own passion and love for the art of writing that teased me to consider teaching. I guess if you feel that you could share your passion with your students that is worth

> something, that and the time in the summer to pursue your passion and recharge it. I think the reflection time in the summer is what keeps me going. It allows me to remember myself and my interests. Maybe I give up too much of myself during the school year. I have to think about this. But in the summer, I give up teaching.

While teaching for Grace was a calling, it was something very different for Marie. Casey's (1993) opening comment regarding the Jewish women teachers she interviewed is more in line with Marie's thinking. "Listening to these women's initial remarks on the teaching profession, it is wholly amazing to find that any of them ever became teachers" (p. 84). Casey cites the words of protest from one teacher's memory of her initiation into teaching:

> I have never in my life liked this school system, where I have been treated so much like a child. And there certainly was from the very start an enormous rage in my heart, strictly personal rage at how I was treated. From the first time that I went to get certified and was shouted at by matrons and, you know, you had to carry your urine sample, and I mean the whole thing, the impersonal, debasing way in which you were treated. It enraged me.

Marie originally chose teaching because she thought it was a career that could support and could go hand-in-hand with her love of writing. She was well aware of the work involved in teaching but cherished the idea of being able to write during the summer months. And indeed she did in her first three years of teaching. Marie would awaken each morning, eat breakfast and sit in front of the computer where she would work for the better part of the day. She began to feel better about her writing; she felt she was growing as a writer. However, at the same time she began to question what it was that she was

doing as a teacher. It was at this point that Marie, like Grace, explored the conflict between her identity as a teacher and as a writer.

Marie often tells student teachers how at the end of her first year of teaching she stood in the hall and watched her students throw out all of their work. She tells the student teachers how she stood in shock as a year's worth of work lay strewn across the floors of the halls. She talks about how she knew students were watching videos instead of reading books about the dull end-of-chapter questions she was using to question their understanding of texts. She knew at the end of that year that she had to find a better way to teach and a better way for the students to learn. She said:

> I didn't know what I was doing to students, I didn't feel like a teacher, I didn't feel like it was a creative experience, in class nothing was happening of any value.

Her concern for the students propelled Marie to read Nancy Atwell's In the Middle during her summer vacation. The following September, inspired by the book, she sought and received the support of her department head to implement writing workshops and portfolio assessment. The year ended successfully although she knew she needed to implement more ideas, more change. The following summer Marie was called in by the head master and the department head who wanted other teachers to follow the same program Marie had implemented. It was at this point when Marie's sense of who she was as a teacher began to change. She told me that given the traditional school she was

teaching in, "all of a sudden I felt like I had better know what I was doing and why I was doing it". The first year Marie had kept a file of questions the students asked and records of all they had done. She named this documentation her "defence" and said that the more she had to defend her curriculum, the more academic reading crept into her life.

That year a teacher was to comment that Marie scared other teachers because she was well read, well spoken, and, in fact, when she talked about what she was doing in class, her words intimidated other teachers. Marie said she was "blown away" by this comment. In fact, in one of our conversations Marie was telling me about her "survival tactics", one of which was trying to maintain a collegial relationship with her colleagues. However, she said that she failed in this.

> Obviously we all like to have colleagues, have support, feel like we belong to a group of people. I feel like I've failed in interesting my colleagues in what I am doing. I found out I was intimidating them, not encouraging them or asking them to join me in what I was doing. I shouldn't give myself such a hard time, some of the teachers in the school were showing an interest in what I was doing, trying all the things I was trying, but I still feel very alone. I still feel like I don't have that close collegial relationship I'd like to have with a colleague or several colleagues or even with my department. Failed survival tactic.

Marie's image of who she was as a teacher changed again when she became a graduate student. Marie wrote that she was still trying to understand how being a graduate student fit in with being a teacher and a person. Interestingly, Marie reflects on the fact that while she was studying in the department of education she did not feel she was learning about teaching.

> I feel like I am studying writing, and that goes back to what I wanted to be, but I'm studying how to share writing...it's not teaching I'm studying, it's confusing, but we're not always studying teachers and teaching, we're studying theories.

While she had initial difficulty with applying theory to her practice, she wrote that "the more I study, the more I give validity to what I do". Her image of who she was as a teacher was modified again as she considered her role as a theoretician now formally being "trained" as a graduate student. Interestingly, she did not consider herself to be a theoretician after spending her summer months doing academic reading. Apparently she felt only the structure of academia could confer such status on her.

Pause for Reflection

It is clear that Marie's image of who she is as a teacher was not really formed until she actually questioned what she was doing at the end of her first year of teaching. Interestingly, it is precisely for the reason she went into teaching in the first place, to have time to write, that she was forced to question why she was doing what she was doing. If she was passionate about writing, if sharing this passion was what had "teased" her to consider teaching as a career, then why were her students throwing out all of their work at the end of the year? Like Grace, it was Marie's students who confirmed and gave validity to her role as a teacher. It was their voices and actions that forced Marie to reconsider her role and her understanding of what it meant to be a teacher.

Marie's personal knowledge, that of who she was and continues to be as a writer, was what she initially used to inform her practice as a teacher. Furthermore, her memories of being a bored high school student who was never really able to do what she wanted to do are a constant in determining what she does in her own classroom. Her practice is continually informed by her self-concept, uncertainties, and biases – what Millies (1992) categorizes as "her pedagogical personality" an "embodiment of a range of qualities related to a teacher's practice" (p. 28). The values, beliefs and principles that inform her practice Millies (1992) categorizes as Marie's "pedagogical assumptions". Finally, Marie's teacher images, experiences, routines and strategies make up what Millies (1992) calls a "pedagogical repertoire" which consists of tactics from which the teacher draws ideas to facilitate learning in the classroom.

While teaching was not a life-long dream for her, Marie quickly accepted the responsibility of her actions and outcomes in the classrooms. Herein lie the contradictions that Marie herself was not aware of. First, while she said she leaves teaching in the summer, at the same time she spends her summer reading books about teaching so that she can defend her teaching practice. Furthermore, she was carrying out the responsibilities of a graduate student. Marie reflected on the difficulty of weaving in who she was as a graduate student with who she was as a teacher, as if the two were not related. Sadly, she only considered herself a theoretician when her reading was validated by a university giving her a grade for her work.

I pause here to reflect on that part of Marie's "pedagogical personality" that has to do with her self concept. While Marie never said what her image of teaching was, she insinuated that "creativity" and a theoretical framework for teaching and learning strategies were certainly issues that she was grappling with in her effort to become who she thought she might be as a teacher. It is important to reflect on Marie's uncertainty about the connection between her teacher self and her graduate-student self because of the following statement.

> I only began seriously thinking and reading about women's issues and realize that I feel like I have discovered a closet of bones, a holocaust that I never considered. I have always been unconventional; I was a long standing member of a punk band in the eighties, always wore my hair cropped short, had an interest in cars and computers and I'll always be someone who isn't typical. Now I am learning to think about who I am as a woman, but I don't think this would have changed who I was anyway. I am more active and less naïve. I have always relied on my intuition, becoming a grad student made me active about giving validity to my intuition about raising my consciousness. Sometimes I feel stupid because I'm doing what others are writing about. I just think I need to intellectualize, that is what theory is all about.

It was Marie's intuition that initially made her reflect on and change her practice. As a result, however, she became isolated from her other colleagues who were intimidated by her. While she felt rewarded by both her students and her administration who supported her practice, that same administration then required other teachers to follow her program because they wanted all the students in one grade "to be doing the same thing". While she felt personally and professionally validated by her administration, other teachers

certainly could not have felt this way and thus they may have isolated themselves from Marie. The irony between Grace's situation and Marie's cannot go unnoticed. Both Marie and Grace were confirmed by their students, but, isolated from their peers. It was because Marie spoke out that she became isolated from her colleagues; they became intimidated and frustrated by being forced to do what she was doing. Grace did not speak out and as a result felt isolated from the administration which she felt was forcing her into "mediocrity". The irony here is implicit in the conflict of the spoken voice and the hidden voice, and perhaps historically situated with regards to women's issues.

Again, Marie's intuition made her reflect on her sense of priorities and consider spending more time on her teaching than her writing. However, this too created conflicts for her. While she initially felt empowered by her own efforts to creating a defence based on practical and professional knowledge, she felt "stupid" when she realized that she was doing what others were writing about. Marie said that she wanted to be in more control of what she was doing, and that theory would provide that control. She felt she could not simply trust her intuition.

Intuition has many meanings, many implications. We talk about a mother's intuition, about hunches, about "just knowing it would happen". We tell children to listen to their intuition when they are in an uncomfortable situation. The sensations are sometimes physical, and we attribute such phrases as "I had a gut reaction" to intuition. Jagla (1992) says that "Intuition is beyond the grasp of systematic rational analysis, and

difficult to define with words" (p. 67). Intuition often includes spontaneity, acting on a feeling as opposed to reacting to the feeling. In a sense, when we listen to our intuition, and our intuition proves us right, as it did with Marie, we build our personal authority. However, because intuition cannot withstand a "systematic rational analysis" it is associated with that which is irrational, illogical, emotional, those qualities that are associated with what is feminine. Nel Noddings and Paul Shore (1984) in Awakening the Inner Eye: Intuition in Education, suggest that intuition is a conscious process in which the will speeds up the analytic process. They offer the following definition: "Intuition is that function that connects objects directly in phenomena. This direct contact yields something we might call 'knowledge'"(p. 57, 1984 in Jagla). Marie listened and learned from her intuition in her beginning practice, but then felt stupid when she was not able to connect it with her academic readings. This was the second time Marie felt isolated. First, she felt isolated when she encountered conflict between knowing she was supported by her administration from a curricular point of view but feeling resented by other teachers, and then her sense of self as a graduate student came into conflict with who she was as a teacher. However, this changing image of who she saw herself to be only strengthened her understanding of the implications of the structure of schooling she was working under.

Schooling Structures and Teacher Images : Locating Disillusionment

Marie had always been encouraged to pursue college teaching by her college teacher friends, and by a teacher friend who left high school for college teaching saying that the work was easier and college life was "more civilized". Marie told me that she wasn't sure what this meant but that she was beginning to feel "fed up" with how other teachers were being treated and felt that it would only be a matter of time before she was feeling the same way. While she had secured her role as a teacher who developed her own curriculum, she was beginning to feel threatened by the very administration that had supported her.

While Marie stayed out of politics as much as she could, she could not help feeling affected by what she was seeing happening around her. For example, her mentor teacher had felt "burnt out" the previous year, but more importantly did not like the way she felt she was being treated as an older woman teacher. Specifically, she had dedicated her life to the school, and felt betrayed when the head master implied that she was too old for the new position as the head of the science department. She knew she was more experienced and better at "people skills" and thought this would have been a wonderful way to recognize her accomplishments as a successful teacher. At the same time, three older women left the school: a librarian and a counsellor were "turfed" and one office manager quit. Marie said that these situations upset the staff and the view was that the administration had simply not liked these women, that these women did not fit into the

picture any more, and thus the administration had found ways of dismissing them. Other teachers began to feel that they too did not matter. Marie demanded,

> Who decides,
> who decides on department heads,
> who decides, how,
> is there a club going on?

Marie reinforced that it was the institution she was fed up with, not what was going on in the classroom. However, she made it quite clear that once she felt the institution was creeping into the classroom, it was time for her to "get out". The question of power plays a key role in her feeling "fed up"; these same people, the same institution that supported her, were also capable of devaluing others, and despite her support, Marie felt she may be "in for it" as well. What follows is an account of the eruption that occurred when teachers did try to answer those very questions Marie had asked herself.

Marie works in a school that has its own union in which she acts as the official negotiator. The union put forth a motion that department heads be appointed on an election basis because the teachers were dissatisfied with how decisions were being made. Recognizing how important it is for teachers to experience an administrative role, they rationalized that the school would benefit from different kinds of leadership. When the union met to negotiate, the department heads became very upset and did not attend the union meeting; they did not voice their disapproval. Instead, the group of department heads and program co-ordinators sent a letter to the board saying that they did not agree

with contract negotiations and that the union was not negotiating on their behalf. The point is that they never told the teachers they were doing this, why they were doing this. They never came to Marie as negotiator. Marie was furious, and when she had the strength, she approached her own department head and wanted to know why the group had not met with the teachers. Did they not think that the teachers would have listened to such dissatisfaction? Marie said the teachers were furious. This move destroyed the trust that the "common" classroom teachers had with administration and in the eyes of the teachers, the department heads became administration, not teachers.

> They froze the teachers' voice, because they were saving their asses, they were not interested in what teacher had to say, not interested in sharing power with teachers, they themselves being teachers...it was all about power. I guess I wasn't surprised, I was upset that they didn't act like adults, have a discussion...I walked around for days not talking even though this was what everyone was talking about, because, I didn't know how to deal with it. Finally, I was ready to explode, and I confronted the one person I respected who signed the letter and told him how angry I was and how they hadn't taken responsibility for what they believed in, they hadn't respected the union, and they had put me as negotiator in the worst possible position...I didn't know where I stood as a teacher with the administration and department heads. People were reeling for the rest of the year. The teacher and I didn't speak for weeks and now we are pretty much back. In the end, they took back the process, but they refused to apologise for the content. They sat in a group at the union, one spoke for everyone, some did apologize for the content, individually saying they felt they had been swept up. It did a lot of damage to the school.
>
> Now every few years there is a kind of evaluation of the department head by the department and the headmaster. When a position becomes open, people are allowed to apply, whereas before the position was filled by administration. It is still up to the headmaster to appoint, he refused to accept the notion that departments would have any say in appointments. Why am I in this political movement? This has left a sour taste in my mouth. We feel alienated. This makes me question power and control. I don't know. And privilege.

In Teacher Talk (1990), a collection of teacher stories Godar collected from across the United States, he says, "It's odd, but the major reason people mentioned to me for getting our of education wasn't the pay – that was always the 'accepted' second reason – as in 'Oh yeah there wasn't much money in it. It seems to me that administrators and not being treated as professionals came in as the number one reason to get out and into the 'adult world' " (p. 96). Next, a "lack of control" appeared to be a major reason for leaving. Casey's (1992) study supports these findings. She states, "Perhaps the most serious omission in the literature on teacher retention is its neglect of the antagonism between teachers and administrators"(p. 207). Certainly Marie's story is a sorry reminder of the urgency of Casey's point; that teachers were treated with such utter disrespect by those whom they thought were their own colleagues begs for a further investigation of a structure that creates such antagonism between its colleagues.

The story that Marie tells is a clear example of the struggle between the concept of "authority with" and "authority over", a form of authority that is not experienced as authoritarian but based in caring and reciprocal relationships (Gore, 1992, p. 72). The story shows the tensions that arose when colleagues formed camps based on their understanding of power. Those who held positions traditionally associated with "power" in terms of their placement on a hierarchical ladder within a patriarchal structure were threatened by the notion that this power would not only not be theirs automatically and eternally, but that it would be shared. Perhaps it is the lack of recognition that teachers get that brings about such behaviour; as if by recognition of a title such as "department

head" the teacher is removed from the "common ranks". The story is telling and demands not only careful consideration of the historical roots of the structure of schooling, but how these roots give rise to a system that is rigid and opposes the notion of democracy, what schooling in the West is arguably all about. Gore (1992) suggests that schooling is so rigid and so entrenched in traditional roots that even feminist pedagogues appear reluctant to intervene within schools. Perhaps, as Grumet (1988) says, no matter what details we change, the structure of schooling is so deeply rooted that it is impossible to treat it as an "empty space". Gore asks,

> Why are schools so rarely posited as a site for the practice of feminist pedagogy? And does this exclusion have anything to do with the power relations of the "regime"? Perhaps teachers within state institutions such as elementary and secondary schools are perceived to have less autonomy. Perhaps schools, with a history of positing teaching as women's work that is regulated by male administrators, are seen to be more patriarchal than universities, thus leaving less space for feminists to intervene. It might that schooling (at the elementary and secondary levels) is viewed as a cruder, coarser form of practical activity, not worthy of the intellectual attention of serious feminist scholars trying to assert themselves in the academy (and/or in the world). Perhaps the feminist premise that the personal is political is interpreted to direct feminists to write and talk about their own experiences and practices in a connected way, which often amounts to their experiences as university teachers - in many cases, long since removed from schools. Perhaps the content of feminist pedagogy (sometimes referred to as the "new scholarship on women") which, one could argue, is what really distinguishes feminist from other forms of pedagogy, is considered more appropriate for women than for girls. Certainly, feminist pedagogy which is based on exposing and transcending women's experiences of sexuality, mothering, the body, denial of opportunities, and so on, is likely to find more sympathisers and less resistance among older females. Young girls simply have fewer experiences to draw upon. Whatever the reasons, it seems odd (to this teacher educator) that a discourse which claims for itself the label "feminist pedagogy" is largely absent from schools. I am not suggesting that schools have a monopoly on pedagogy; but, there is a great deal of pedagogy that takes place in schools, much of which has profound effects on gender relations. I would expect that more feminists who advocate feminist pedagogy would want to intervene more directly in that sphere. (p. 84)

While Madelaine Grumet tells us that women must reclaim teaching and change it from women's work to "the work of women", Gore's words are a strong reminder that while teachers such as Marie and Grace (and later Sarah and Julia) indeed attempt to reclaim teaching, they cannot even count on feminist pedagogy as their support. The roots are so entrenched that after recounting this story to me, Marie suggested that the next question I ask her should be "what do I do to stay alive?". When Marie sat down to answer this question she was saddened by the fact that she had asked such a question. She said,

> I went into teaching because of my love of writing, and somehow I haven't been successful at surviving that part of myself, at maintaining something for myself...I sense that we are not clear as to what we are supposed to be doing, what our roles as teachers are, what goals and objectives of the individual subjects we teach are, there always seems to be a struggle between knowing what to do and why we are doing it.

Four months after Marie wrote this she separated from her husband of eleven years. While she was able to articulate clearly the reasons for her disillusionment that arose out of events in the previous year, she could never have known that her thoughts on "survival" would be a foreshadowing of such a traumatic event in her personal life. The same year that Grace was receiving counselling and working her way through, among other things, the connection between her teacher self and who she was as a woman, Marie too was receiving counselling to work through, among other things, how her approach to

teaching played or did not play a role in her personal crisis. In a closing letter to me, Marie reflected on her earlier thoughts. Much of what Marie has to say mirrors what Grace had to say in her final letter.

> It is haunting to hear these words again in light of what has happened to me and I can hardly write about it. It is so personal. I can write that I feel differently to day about my personal life as well as my teaching life. Since leaving the relationship I have learned to nurture my personal life, to treasure my friends and to make the time I spend with friends and family as important as the time I spend with teaching. In the end, I will always have my friends and family, teaching is after all my job, as dedicated as I feel towards it. I don't mean to sound as though friends and family were never important to me. I think what I mean to say is that I am discovering how to be more selfish.
>
> I feel great about teaching this year. That has to do with the fact that I am working part time to finish my master's and I have the kind of schedule that allows me to juggle time nicely between teaching, writing the thesis and keeping up my personal life. I feel better about teaching because I love the kids that I have this year. As I say things I realise that I love them because I feel good myself and can enjoy them. They do not sap the energy from me. They make me laugh and even cry, and even the tough cases are energising because I see that I have been able to make progress with them. I see that what I do with my students really works, and my work on my thesis reinforces my convictions and deepens my philosophy of teaching.
>
> I guess what I see in the quote that you read to me is that it is about personal sacrifice. I did lose something dear to me, my closest personal relationship. But I cannot blame it on teaching. If anything, I may have turned to working so hard as a teacher because I was unhappy in my personal life and couldn't see that. Of course that is not the only reason I worked so hard! I am a closet perfectionist and I cannot accept things that do not work properly. Had I remained a traditional style teacher that would not have worked for me and I could not have stuck with it. That would have drained me. Instead I have found intellectually energy in changing teaching at least in my classroom.
>
> All of the energy that I spoke of spending in that quote perhaps was less about teaching than it was about my soul. Teaching provides me with the opportunity to focus all kinds of energy, intellectual, emotional, and so on. I think a fundamental difference in me this year is that I finally see that I am an incredibly energetic

person, yet in the quote that you read me I saw quite the opposite, a drained, lifeless workaholic.

Sarah

Dear Anna,

Your letter was very timely. I was only half joking when I asked you in June if you wanted to interview me - I was terribly bitter then, to say nothing of disillusioned, about the cut backs in curriculum support in this board, particularly in terms of my job as a consultant. Today I'm not joking at all. For the first September since I began teaching in 1967, I can't get excited about starting a new year.

During the last weeks of the holiday I realised I was in trouble. Normally at that point my head would be full of plans and ideas for doing a better job, challenges that I'd set up for myself so that I could be more effective working with kids, or, more recently, with teachers. I'd have read several professional books and be all inspired. This year I just didn't care. The books I brought up to the cottage remained unopened. What difference would it have made to read them anyway? I tried walking around a teacher's store - maybe a new plan book and a few bright posters would jump start things but it didn't work. I simply had no interest in even thinking about school, while at the same time I had this diffuse sense of guilt. I remember how frustrated, even angry, I used to get with teachers who didn't seem to care, who put in their minutes and no more, and now I find myself in that same boat. Getting back into the routine hasn't helped. I go through the movements - I don't want anyone to know what I'm thinking - but my heart isn't in my work anymore.

My correspondence with Sarah was an intensive one. While I did not receive the bulk of letters that I received from Grace, nor did I talk to her as much as I did with Marie, the letters I did receive were rich in description, feelings, and ideas. Like Grace and Marie, Sarah had no desire for anyone to know that her feelings about teaching had so dramatically changed; like Grace and Marie she chose to remain silent about this condition

that was not to get better over our two year correspondence. However, unlike Grace and Marie, Sarah held an administrative position in her board even though she was officially only "on loan" to that board. That is, she was a "teacher specialist" who was part of a teacher's union who was temporarily hired as a consultant. It is Sarah's recognition of "knowing how the system works" that was the driving force of her stories. Of all four participants, she was best able to show how her disillusionment manifested itself in a structure in which she felt she had little control and perhaps this was because she had more experience to draw from, that her life story was significantly longer than those of my other participants.

Sarah's participation in this study was of particular interest to me for three reasons. First, as a middle aged woman who had moved from the classroom to consulting, Sarah was part of the top-down power structure that appeared to be an implicit part of schooling. As such I was interested in her understanding of what it meant to be valued; certainly the dismissal from a post suggests a lack of validation. I was interested in Sarah's understanding of "power", her experience of having been a part of an administration only to have that position taken away. How was, or was her disillusionment any different from my other participants? Certainly anger was an undercurrent in all of her letters, as was silence. It appeared to me that regardless of her "position" within the structure, her disillusionment stemmed from the same sources as those of Grace and Marie. Ultimately, her disillusionment had less to do with the dissolution of her position than it did with how she was treated. Finally, I knew that Sarah

engaged in a great deal of personal and professional reading which she used to read against her own stories. In the letters that follow, I often hesitated to offer further interpretation as she had already done so from literature that was meaningful to her. Thus, in this section, I chose to include more substantial portions of letters than in the others, given the writer was involved in constant interpretation of her own professional and personal situation. As Biklen (1995) says, "teachers reveal commitment to teaching and to children when they insist on redefining the analysis of their work. (p. 3)

While I did not officially hear from her for another ten months, Sarah spent her first year as a part-time resource room teacher and part-time consultant trying to meet the full demands of each position. At the end of that year she wrote:

> I've just reread the first of your last two letters to me where you focused on authority or the lack of it, and disillusioned teachers. I don't have a dictionary here, but my computer's thesaurus came up with words like power, control, respect, and influence. The idea of lacking control is very timely. Mark has assigned me to teach kindergarten this year, a level I'm no more interested in than I am in going to the moon. I may have already told you that we have a blip in our population - sixty kindergarten kids where we normally only have about forty - but with the cutbacks we don't get an extra part time teacher to cover the third group (the teacher pupil ratio is 1:20 at this level). The easiest way for Mark to address the problem is by cutting resource teacher services by half. The discouragement I felt returning to the classroom last year understates my feelings this year.

Over the winter Sarah, like Grace and Marie, worked with a counsellor to better understand the "loss" in her life. While she never names "loss" as a feeling that came out of her disillusionment, the fact that she did not feel she was able to voice her discontent,

her disillusion, her bitterness, her anger, suggests a loss of self. When we are silenced, when we choose to remain silent, do we experience a loss of personal authority? Do we then seek the approval of others as if in compensation for guarding our own ideas and thought?. If Brown and Gilligan (1992) are right, if women must meet with girls at the cross-roads of adulthood in order to reclaim the lost voices of childhood, then it is necessary to step back and consider who we were as girl students. The connection between who we were as girls and who we become as women, and in this case teachers, may help us to understand how to reclaim this loss. Sarah wrote that her earliest loss was her "abandonment" to boarding school, and that she is better able to understand the student she was in the context of that loss. The irony that she experienced her first loss within a traditional structure of schooling is one I cannot overlook as I turn to Sarah the girl student whose memories of boarding school life in India may have shaped some of her own teaching narrative.

Forever Amber to Teaching

Sarah, like Grace and Marie, was a self described "good student": hard working, co-operative, obedient, and anxious to please. The school replaced her family for ten months of the year, and Sarah wondered if she saw some of the missionary spinster teachers in her school as replacements for her mother. Sarah complied with all the rules to ensure that she belonged. As an adult, she reflected that without family support, a

teenager's developmental need to belong to a group is even more profound. Considering Gilligan's (1992) words, "an inner connection with others is a central organizing feature of women's development and ... psychological crises in women's lives stem from disconnections," (p. 3) Sarah suggested that, from the age of twelve, she was disconnected from her family in the same way that many even younger children are disconnected from families in our schools today. Sarah contended that only those who are able to reconnect in some way, possibly through a teacher, can survive emotionally and academically. Clearly, as a young girl and even now as a woman, Sarah's respect for some teachers was profound.

At boarding school the girls were kept busy all their waking hours with academics, sports, art, music, and prayer – "Idle hands and minds were known to be the devil's instruments!" The children of missionaries formed the mainstream in her school, girls she described as hardworking, obedient, anxious to please God and the teacher. Sarah came from one of a few secular backgrounds, although she followed the mainstream in order to belong, "peer pressured to be born again and lead a Christian life". Like Grace, books were Sarah's escape from peer pressure and from her loneliness. She says, "Today I still refer to books (education) and hard work (my job) to replace loss and to find connections, and again and again I am disappointed".

Sarah remembers finishing her "reader" by the end of the first week of school and then burying herself in her own choices of literature such as "the then scandalous Forever

Amber ... which I described in lurid detail to my fifth grade classmates at recess". She also remembers carting home every book in her desk for the first three weeks of grade three only to have her father complain about the amount of work she was receiving and find out it was all self-imposed. Like Grace, Sarah reflects, " I wanted and needed teacher recognition even in elementary school while I still lived at home". She also recalls that later in high school she did manage to retain some of her free spirit in "the girl who read letters from a boy by flashlight to her more sheltered roommates, fabricating romantic lines. Nothing is ever clear cut". The structure of the school in which she studied and grew up, and the structure in which she was later to teach were different only on the surface. In the same letter Sarah wrote:

> So here I am twenty-five plus years into my career when I should be "self-actualising", three degrees and all sorts of specialised training in language arts, special ed. and staff development, but with absolutely no more control on who and what I teach than a first year teacher has. Is it like this in other jobs? Is this a systemic problem? a gender issue, or a managerial dysfunction? The educational system is set up in such a way that only a few people, the principals, have power. Even fewer of those, be they male or female, have interest in, or training for, shared decision making strategies that could make a difference in this case. I know there must be other ways to solve our kindergarten problem, ways that possibly offer other teachers, not just me, an opportunity for more challenge or satisfaction in their assignments, but Mark is afraid that asking for staff input would be opening a can of worms. The fewer people he has to involve for this kindergarten restructure, the less he has to worry about tipping the boat.

Sarah wrote that she became a teacher through circumstances, not by design. While she did not set out to be a teacher, she is not surprised that she became one. Like Grace, she loved to play school as a child, teaching dolls and younger siblings. Her aunt was a grade-one teacher for years, then a kindergarten supervisor, an instructor at a major

university, and finally a principal. She loved to visit her classroom and to stock up on leftover stencils, old workbooks, discarded readers, and, best of all, coloured construction paper and art patterns. However, Sarah recalls that the aunt never remarried so she always associated teaching with old maids, "certainly not something I ever intended to be". Sarah originally chose child psychology, saying it was a "daring possibility but not too far removed from what was familiar and secure. Mine was a limited daring". Eventually she became a teacher in times when "all you needed was a warm body to teach". She writes:

> I know when I started teaching I expected the kids to be like my students in play school, well behaved and compliant. (Younger siblings are happy to cooperate when a big sister is entertaining them.) I remembered my own elementary years to be like that - straight rows, quiet kids. I had one teacher who made you stand and watch the clock for three minutes in silence if you dropped a pencil!...My image of teaching was one of pouring knowledge into rows of little empty vessels all open and eager to learn. And I was convinced I could do it well.

Sarah reflected that teacher training at the elementary level did little to change her image of teaching because it focused on the curriculum, not the child. Reality "hit" when she moved from teaching in a school for blind children to a regular school where there were "split classes, second language students, limited books and supplies, working mums, single parent homes, increasing competition from television and computer games, unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, learning disabilities, and behaviour problems". Sarah wrote that she lost the conviction that she could teach well, but she didn't lose the will to keep trying. She quotes Maureen Barbieri from her text Sounds from the Heart:

I keep teaching for the same reason I keep writing; I never quite get it right. But I want to. I want to do it better.

Anger, Silence and a Question of Gender : Sarah's words

Dear Anna,

This is a good day to write to you, particularly in light of your reading course on the feminization of teaching. A perfect example of the "women's work" situation happened to me yesterday, and I am still seething, as much at myself as at the male involved. Let me explain. I met with John Smith (the principal in charge of the language arts portfolio) to discuss where we stood in terms of the four "actions" or objectives that the three (male) principals responsible for language arts in this district are committed to achieve this year. They drew up the initial actions, which included a language arts festival which were thrown back at them because they had not included any indicators of success. I rewrote them, deleting the festival which I felt was not necessary or even possible given the elimination of a full time consultant, and then resubmitted them. I wonder now if they even read them in their rush to get approval. Anyway, they were accepted.

In hindsight, I realise I should have clearly determined who was responsible for each section of the document. And, when I accepted the job of "teacher specialist" for a stipend of $68.00 a paycheque, I should have insisted on a job description. I know you can see what's coming. Yesterday, when we went over what was left to be done and who would do it, John was surprised that I was even asking. Of course it was my job - he and the other two would have no idea how to do it. They were only responsible for the "administration" of the actions!! The "doing" of them was up to me and the language arts committee, a committee of nine teachers, not surprisingly all female, who meet with their male language arts "administrators" once a month for a two hour meeting after school. It's the reading and writing institute luncheon scenario you describe in your letter all over again, an "institute organised and shaped by three women where the entire thanks went to three men who did nothing".

So why am I so angry at myself? Because I let it happen again and again and again. I've come to realise that women themselves are as much responsible for the feminization of teaching as men are. Right now I'm raging at John, but did I show this anger yesterday? No. I checked off the items I would do. I negotiated a shift of responsibility for one small survey, easy to create and report on, to the three musketeers (John volunteered Pete to do it, not himself). John only agreed to set a

few dates and to ensure the money was available for release days (already in the budget, no big deal). I didn't fight to have him share the load. I know he doesn't know anything about language arts; if the job is to be done properly I should do it. But that's not the point. I should have said that if I have to do it myself, I won't do it at all. And if I don't do it, it just won't get done, and he can account to the top for not meeting the objectives.

So why didn't I say that? Why did I shut up and go along with him? There are a lot of reasons, I think. First and foremost, I hate conflict and have always gone to great lengths to avoid it. Another female issue, I realise. Good little girls are compliant, are seen and not heard. Women of my generation were socialised in that way. We were also raised to be someone's wife, and that male-female relationship has served to define all our relationships with men, teacher-principal, teacher-administrator included. I know it, I fight it, and I inevitably fall back into the same trap, just like I did yesterday.

Right now I'm thinking back to what I wrote last summer in response to The Leaving. I'll quote some sections of my response here. At the time, I connected The Leaving to changes I was struggling with in terms of "reclaiming" my life since ceasing to be a wife (her husband died), but I see now it also has connections to this issue of the feminization of teaching.

What rendered Ma immobile? Is Ma trapped in the roots of her socialisation? Women have been taught across time to submit and to serve. We are taught that our worth and identity are to be found in loving and being loved. Perhaps Ma felt that maintaining that illusion of a marriage was better than not being married at all, for without it who would she be and what would be her worth.

Could it be that I didn't get angry at John yesterday because I need to maintain the illusion of being a consultant? If I had "balked", I know he would have reminded me that I was being paid a stipend to do the job, that I had accepted that stipend and therefore stuck with what it entailed. At one point I did say that I had not understood that the four actions were, in fact, my job description, and that I had accepted the teacher specialist position under false pretences. His retort was that he had not pretended anything else, where had I been? I know I could quit, but that would burst the bubble of my illusion. Am I ready for that? So I drink *bitter milk*. I tell myself that I needed the teacher specialist job, impossible as it is, as a way of letting go of the job I really love but can't have, and that next year I will be in graduate school and the problem will solve itself. But what if I am not accepted? Will I still go on pretending I'm a consultant by trying to do the job after a full day's work as a teacher? Seeing my thoughts in print here sure makes them look pretty sick. How long does the infant continue to suck on the nipple coated with crushed merges leaves???

Here's some more of what I wrote about The Leaving.

Ma got angry enough at her fate to leave for three days, but it would seem that she could not sustain that anger. Anger is the fuel that ignites action; without it the flame is distinguished. Yet why couldn't Ma stay angry? Harriet Lerner, in The Dance of Anger, claims that the taboos against anger in our society are so powerful that even knowing when we are angry is not a simple matter. Harriet Lerner also claims that "Nothing, but nothing will block the awareness of anger so effectively as guilt and self doubt. " Ma was certainly a victim of guilt. She blamed herself for raising four boys like they were little men, for creating sons with no soft edges. "All along I bin blamin men fer being men. But now I see that oftentimes it's the women that makes them that way. "

In Lerner's observations, if women feel guilty about not giving enough or doing enough, it is unlikely they will get angry about not getting enough. I remember arguing with my son over his comment that women are the perpetuators of their own destiny. Was I guilty of raising another chauvinistic male? I see how that he had more insight than I did. As women we do perpetuate our destiny, not because we may raise sons without soft edges, but because, like Ma, we allow guilt to block the anger we need, the courage we need, to make real and complete change.

I know I feel guilty about not doing enough. I did, and do still, as a teacher; I did as a consultant; and I do now as a teacher specialist. If I had more energy, or could better organise my time, I wouldn't feel so overwhelmed by what still is left to do on the objectives. But I wonder now if my guilt over my job is not, in fact, my anger at external forces, like the male management of my work, turned inward. I can't, or don't give this anger voice, so it gnaws away at my insides as guilt.

.....

I'm glad you're looking at gender issues in teaching, Anna. After I mailed my last letter to you, I started thinking about the life cycle theories we studied in my principalship programme at McGill, the work of Judy-Arin Krupp as an example, and how they relate to women my age who are teachers. Krupp claims that during mid-life, neglected parts of the self seek fulfilment. Mazlow describes this stage in terms of the need to self actualise. Men who have spent the first half of their life being more assertive than nurturing become more nurturing. Women, who as young wives and mothers tend to nurture, now become more assertive. They want to expand their options, move in new directions, take on new challenges.

Krupp urges principals to provide the challenges mid-life women are looking for, which in turn will bring new vigour and excitement into their schools. But I know that many women at mid-life are looking for more than a chance to perhaps

develop a new programme, or, as I wrote naively in an article for Education Canada, become a resource teacher. They are looking for administrative positions. And where are those positions when they are ready for them? The relative few available in education are filled with the men who got their's in their thirties, the years when female teachers went home after school to make dinner and supervise kids' homework. So women at my age rage at situations like the one I described with John, and become disillusioned in their career choice. They have nowhere to go. It's as simple as that.

You questioned why I didn't write about the reading and writing institute luncheon in my last letter. The pain and disappointment, and even the sense of rejection, that I experienced when my position was abolished cut so deeply that it's difficult to discuss it without calling up anger and bitterness and cynicism, so I try and avoid it. I needed the Artemis goddess to be nourished by my environment, as Hera was when I was young, not destroyed. Cutting my position destroyed it, and flung me into another grieving process. The institute luncheon was just a piece of the larger cut. Any accolades were my swan song. Looking back, though, I can't believe that I stood there and thanked Franko for getting the ball rolling by putting his signature on the grant proposal for the seed funding. I conceived that proposal - he had absolutely nothing to do with it; in fact, he took a good while to really understand what I was trying to do - but the little woman in me graciously acknowledged his authority. Yuk.

I guess what I'm saying throughout this long ramble, Anna, on life cycles and goddesses and the perpetuation of our own destinies, is that I agree with Madelaine Grumet's argument that women teachers need to "reclaim teaching and make it the work of women as opposed to women's work". But not just teaching. They also need to claim an authentic role in the administrative hierarchy. Again, I want you to know I'm glad you're using a gender focus to examine the problem of disillusioned teachers. I think gender is a critical factor.

Reflection

It is important that we remember that Sarah was a language arts consultant on loan to the board; that is, her position was that of "teacher specialist" and as such she was a part of the teacher's union. When she went to work for the board, there had not been another consultant for years, and it became a position that Sarah worked hard at shaping.

Sarah's focus as a consultant was working with classroom teachers, doing classroom workshops and demonstrations, and urging teachers to work towards collective goals such as using portfolios. She, better than Grace, Marie and Julia, understood the rigidity of the structure under which she worked because she was to taste part of the hierarchy that she calls upon other women to claim and make their own. And at the same time, Sarah wrote about shared authority perhaps giving light to how she sees the structure as having the potential for change, as long as those working within in it are willing to change. What is most striking, however, is Sarah's silence that is shaped by the guilt that she suggests hides and misplaces her anger. In the following quotation Sarah gives a clear example of how her silence is framed by guilt, how her anger as a result is capped, and how this issue is a matter of gender.

> Mark's management style may not be gender specific, but my response to his decision may well be. I did not challenge him. I rationalize this in terms of what he has on his plate already this year. A week after the summer institute his wife was diagnosed with cancer and has since been operated on. It has spread and she now faces six months of chemotherapy. They're both being very positive, but the worry and stress are constant. I then move into a nurturing, supportive stance - very female. And I dig out the guilt - I owe Mark, he's always supported me in the various roles I've had - how can I gripe about to or about him now. But I know my behaviour is an example of what I see women doing that "perpetuates our destiny" - we remain silent - and is perhaps also an example of what Gilligan describes as our difficulty with individuation. I doubt that a male would have accepted a kindergarten without a challenge.

Sarah is probably right, unless that male was a first-or second-year teacher without any seniority. Perhaps it is just that Sarah had worked so long and so hard, had earned

three degrees and countless certificates, had earned the respect of her board, colleagues, parents, and neighbouring universities, that to have her position wiped away was akin to saying that it was probably not needed in the first place. Perhaps the biggest insult was not having any choice, just being slotted in where the principal felt he needed her. Mark could rest assured that he could "count on" Sarah to accept her position with little fuss; her rationalization served only to comfort her. This may well be the best place to show what Biklen (1995) says about elementary schoolteaching.

> If elementary schoolteaching is culturally constructed as domestic, or as a job for women, then it can be criticised, controlled and organised as women's work. This criticism can come from both women and men, but it is anchored in a gendered understanding that dismisses, discounts, or takes authority over women's work" (p. 2).

Sarah suggests that women call on their nurturing sides when they cannot voice their concerns, that "we perpetuate our own fate". In her first letter, Sarah clearly called on the system, on the structure of schooling, to answer for her disillusionment, the conflict she faced in wanting to teach preservice teachers but wondering how she could, knowing "the truth". Does this not suggest that teaching has a shadowed side, something that is hiding? However, the larger question is in what conditions are women teachers working that silence their voices, and why are women teachers like Grace, Marie, Julia and Sarah reluctant to speak out? If we consider what Sarah says, then the very nature of a top-down power structure that resists shared authority, leaves little room for the voices of those who find themselves at the bottom, except when they are in their own classrooms,

where ironically, the structure occurs all over again. Even more ironically, if we look at current teaching practices that encourage student centred learning in which students are encouraged to make choices about reading and writing, and to use co-operative methods as opposed to competitive ones, the message is an alarming one. What message do students get if their own teachers cannot experience the same privileges as they are asked to extend to their students? When I asked Sarah if she ever shows her anger to her colleagues, she said:

> You ask if I ever show my anger to my fellow educators. The answer is, very seldom. Saying publicly the words I've just written you privately, for instance, I know would be simply seen as sour grapes: I did not get the position I wanted so badly. I've explored women's way, my way, of dealing with anger for a while now. This week I'm reading a new book, A Voice of her Own: Women and the Journal Writing Journey, and in it is a quote that is very applicable to this discussion on authority:
>
> If one is not permitted to express anger or even to recognize it within oneself, one is, by simple extension, refused both power and control...Forbidden anger, women could find no voice in which publicly to complain; they took refuge in depression or madness. (or as teachers, in disillusionment?)
>
> When I look at authority in terms of influence, however, I feel much more positive. I know I've influenced individual children in my classroom. I'm including a recent piece of evidence from a severely disabled fifth grade boy in my journal writing class last winter. A letter like this one makes teaching worthwhile - how many teachers have you heard say this? I've also been told by colleagues that I've influenced their teaching practices in my role as a consultant, some suggesting that I've even had a district-wide influence on both the language arts and special ed perspective. And, a member of the ministry, in her recommendation to the selection committee at the university where I have applied, referred to my quiet influence at the ministry table. So why isn't this enough? I want to effect classroom change more widely than in my own classroom; I know influence is insufficient without teeth, and that the teeth of authority are power, control, and recognition, whether you're male or female. Might that be why Judy-Arin Krupp turned to principals, the current incumbents of power, not teachers, to advocate for the career challenges mid-life teachers seek?

Sarah's story developed an interesting twist when she did begin to challenge some of what she was asked to do by John the principal in charge of the dossier dealing with language arts. She told me that they did not see eye-to-eye on many things, and when they did not, she challenged what she did not think was working. As an example, Sarah had been working on putting together a booklet showing what the teachers in the board had done with portfolios. When it came to typing up the booklet, John insisted that it be done "on good will". Sarah, who felt that most of what she had already been doing was "good will" and who had already secured as many "good will" jobs from secretaries that she could, resisted this plan. The conversation ended when Sarah, frustrated, hung up on John. In their subsequent meeting, John told Sarah that he would be resigning from this post because he did not like the way she spoke with him and furthermore other people in the board had said the same thing. . At this point Sarah told me, she realized she "was speaking with a little boy" and quickly turned the conversation around insisting that of the three principals he was really the most qualified to do the job and that it was really too bad that this was his decision. She apologized for hanging up and wished they could have professional relationship in which each of them could communicate. Sarah left outraged, outraged that he would say other people had complained about her, outraged that he would threaten to resign because of her; it seemed that giving voice to her concerns only created more problems for her. When she spoke with her own principal and with other people in the board about what John had told her, she was told that the comment came from nowhere. The irony is explicit; Sarah's disillusionment on the one hand stems out of

not giving voice to her disillusionment, but then only grows when she does give voice to her concerns.

At the end of the year Sarah's contract was renewed as a resource teacher, and she assumed that the following year she would once again receive a stipend of $68.00 per pay cheque and twenty-five release days to work as a teacher specialist. She kept reminding herself that she had only been on loan to the board and that she was lucky to have the position of teacher specialist. However, what she did not expect was that the final blow, the final loss, was to occur when she was told by a colleague that her role as teacher specialist would not be reinstated as the consultant from a neighbouring board whose position had been cut to half time, had been picked up by her board. Sarah called me close to tears. She could understand the politics, but she could not by any means understand why it was that the administration had not had the courtesy and respect to call her and tell her the situation. Sarah told me that this was the final loss, and while she knew it was not her fault, that cuts determined positions, she nevertheless felt that "she didn't do enough". Her rationalization, her guilt lasted only momentarily when she truthfully said, "Anna, forget being disillusioned, I am on my way to being burnt out".

Final Reflection

Sarah's stories are filled with the same conflict that Grace and Marie faced. Sarah's approach to teaching, then to being a teacher specialist, then to being a consultant

was a serious, dedicated one in which her practice was continually being informed by professional reading, interaction with other teachers, and committee work. However, within the confines of the system, it seemed that she could never truly realize this goal, that every step of the way was clouded with disrespect from the very people who were supposed to be her colleagues. Sarah talked about "loss" at the end of our correspondence, and indeed, the losses she experienced as an educator were like a death. I once asked her what her greatest disillusionment as a teacher was and she told me it had occurred when she left resource teaching for consulting. She had worked hard against pulling children out of classes, believing they would fare better with support in the classroom. However as she writes:

> No sooner was I out of the building than the teachers reverted back to a pull-out model, not for the whole language arts programme, mind you, but for significant portions of it. Why? Perhaps it was easier for the less experienced resource teacher who replaced me (or maybe she had more sense than I did in terms of emotional survival), but it's easy to blame yourself for having failed to convince your colleagues of the value of integration. In other words, I felt I hadn't been able to make a difference as a resource teacher.

Sarah can't know if she made a difference or not because, as she rightly points out, the teacher replacing her might have been less experienced with a different philosophy. However, I am inclined here to suggest that perhaps Sarah was also feeling that she had been working in isolation from other teachers but that she only recognized this when she left the school. Would the teachers in Marie's school continue using portfolios if she left? Perhaps, but the difference is that having worked together, albeit not necessarily in

agreement, they have a common ground. Sarah did not have the luxury of such a community, even a resentful one. She was on her own. Similarly, as a consultant, she was in the same situation. I want to close this section with Sarah's thoughts on her image of teaching; interestingly, she says it has never changed from the day she began.

> My image of teaching now, as when I began teaching, is a textbook perfect image. In 1967, I saw myself feeding knowledge and skills to quiet rows of eager, hungry minds. I soon found out that most were not quiet, eager, or hungry and I had to work very hard to find ways to engage them. Incidentally, I also had this same image of motherhood. There were days that I wanted to throw something at the perfect television babies I watched as I tried to get my screaming colicky infant to sleep! Almost thirty years later I'm still trying to live up to a textbook image, but today it is one where the teacher is capable of moving students smoothly and effectively through a repertoire of good instructional strategies - writing and reading workshops, co-operative learning, curriculum based assessment etc. etc. etc. - and still finds the time and energy for a life. And I want to throw something at the teacher who seems able to achieve this feat day after day! The question of permission to achieve this image is not part of the equation. There is nothing to prevent me achieving it - not the curriculum, not my principal - except my own limitations in interacting with the children I'm assigned in any given year or day or class period. My struggle is always to forgive my inadequacies and to modify my expectations. Is this not also a women's issue? Or is birth order the bigger factor - the need for achievement in the first born to offset the competition from younger siblings for parental attention. God, this gets complicated. I wonder how many teachers are first borns? (in this study they all are) Enough. I'm going to put this epistle in the mail.

Julia

> I was in a "girls only" private school run by nuns. I remember always getting high marks and being teased by other students, but at least I did not have to compete with the boys. I remember my parents always pushing me to study harder and get better marks, initially with the excuse that they would like me to get a scholarship

> which would help out with the fees, but when this was removed the year prior to the one in which I could apply for scholarship, they still pushed for good grades. So it must have been something intrinsic. I remember learning everything by heart because that was how we were taught...no room for discussion or problem solving...no room for active participation in learning... all learning to me was simple memorisation which I could forget soon after the test or exam. I remember learning whole history and geography books by heart. I do not remember myself as being particularly vocal in the classroom and I think that I always kept my mouth shut not daring to open it in case I said something wrong or stupid...I still feel this sometimes but not to the extent of when I was a child. I remember enjoying the scrap book work which we used to make up with pictures etc....I used to be particularly careful about my work and I suppose that in the end it paid off. I am sorry that I cannot say much more but it is really simple if you can imagine it...simple rote learning, not opportunity for ownership or development of myself as an individual...simply learning to bow my head to the system and always say yes. There was no problem with gender as the nuns were very ambitious women themselves and they encouraged us to make a career for ourselves. The theory is that since the nuns are not married they do not value married life so highly and do not place a special emphasis on that particular way of life. Plus they were very proud of the schools they were running and for them the high grades which their students were getting were an indication of their own high status. So that's about it with regards to my school life.

When I first wrote to Julia about my study, it was still unclear as to how her narrative would fit it in with Grace, Marie's and Sarah's. After all, Julia had left teaching and begun graduate studies and work as a lecturer in the teacher education department at her university. I was interested in Julia's stories for several reasons. First, she was an innovative and dedicated teacher who tirelessly looked for ways to make the learning in her classroom more meaningful for her students. I knew this because of our endless conversations, the excerpts from her journals she shared with me, and because of the research she carried out when she returned to her home. Second, Julia chose to leave classroom teaching, and I was interested in knowing why. Julia remains dedicated and

innovative at the teacher education level, where she experiences a different kind of disillusionment, one that stems from the lack of dedication on the part of her student teachers and annoyance with colleagues whose priorities she does not always agree with. As a classroom teacher her rewards came from her students who were moved and inspired by her ways in the classroom. Certainly, Julia's departure was no cause for celebration.

It came as no surprise when Julia wrote that she did not leave teaching because she was disillusioned, that she had always loved teaching. Rather, the disillusionment set in when she began teaching preservice teachers, many of whom she discovered were disinterested in engaging in dialogue about new approaches to teaching and felt they "knew it all". I realized that the main difference between what she had experienced at the classroom level and what she was experiencing at the university level had everything to do with the students. At the classroom level she appeared to have had far more confirmation from her students; at the university level this was not happening. I would go further to suggest that perhaps while she did not have confirmation from her students at the university level, she was probably receiving the kind of "social confirmation" that she might not have been at the classroom level. Not surprisingly, Julia spoke strongly and openly about the difficulties of working in a traditional structure that had seemingly had not changed in over one hundred and fifty years.

Power Structures: From Schools to University

Dear Anna...

I loved teaching from the first minute I entered a classroom. I loved interacting with my students, I loved being there for them and inventing all sorts of activities which would interest them. Even when I was a student I had problems with the system and other teachers. I used to spend a lot of time preparing and my colleagues used to laugh at me and tell me, "why are you wasting so much time, the kids are stupid and will remain stupid." From then onwards I always wanted to prove them wrong, I always wanted to prove that if I could provide my students with the right opportunities they would learn and most of the time I did manage to get them to learn and I think the greatest satisfaction I have had in teaching is seeing the expression on students' faces when they realised that they could understand and that they were capable of doing something. My greatest satisfaction was also the relationships I was able to build with my students.

My greatest disillusion with teaching came about when trying to fight the system when I came back from Canada. I had so many ideas and such enthusiasm. I wanted to change everything. I did manage with the students and I had some great results. But my fellow teachers and the assistant head and Head teacher did not seem to like what I was doing. They were always grumbling about how "much confidence I gave my students", that students were "on first name basis with me" and that "I was filling their heads with all sorts of ideas". I got no-co-operation and was asked to teach in a traditional manner, to just do my lessons, and nothing extra. All my job was to go in the class and give my lesson and go out of the class if nothing had happened. Plus I was also very frustrated with the narrow mindedness of my colleagues. All they ever talked about was what they cooked and what they washed and what the football game had been like. No professionalism, no discussion about educational topics, no discussion about how to improve the situation of their students. When I tried to discuss things with colleagues or organise team teaching I was accused of flirting with the male teachers. These things above all greatly irritated me about my career. But it seemed that when I was in the classroom with my students I forgot all of this and tired to do the best for my students.

A particular situation which I will always remember is the day I had my students make recycled paper. The kids were so excited, everyone was working at their paper, the noise level was a bit high but that does not bother me once the students are motivated and interested in what they are doing. We were using food colouring and since there was no water in the lab, the students were using the toilets to wash their hands. In the middle of all of this the door opened and the assistant head walked in raving and ranting at the students because they had made

> such a mess in the toilets. The students' enthusiasm was immediately quelled and all interest lost. The assistant head made such a fuss because of what she termed disorderly activity when all we were doing was learning and having a bit of fun. I never felt so disgusted with the administration and all the old ideas of a "good teacher is a silent classroom". I also remember when I wanted to take a class on an educational outing and was told, "oh, you want to go out so that you can miss some lesson." The administration is totally against stirring up the waters and change. So we remain in the same old rut, use the same old fashioned way of teaching and what scares me is that when I try to instil some new ideas in student teachers they look at me with wide eyes "this is too idealistic", "we cannot do these things with the students in our classes", but how did I do these things I say, and they just shrug their shoulders in pure disbelief.

This was the first letter I was to receive from Julia and in it I recognized instantly the echo of the other teacher participants. All four women were committed teachers; all four women loved what they did; they were thus not disillusioned with teaching per se, but with how "teaching" was being defined for them. Julia like Grace, Marie and Sarah looked to her students for "meaning" and measuring her success as a teacher when it seemed that this was the only place where she could hope to get any kind of confirmation for what she was doing in the classroom. What differs in Julia's narrative is her attempt to engage preservice teachers with her experiences and knowledge and being faced with doubt and ambivalence.

Julia's narrative is filled with her insight into the power structures that first attempted to define her work as a classroom teacher and then continued to define her role as a teacher educator. I use the word "attempt" because we cannot know how Julia would have continued teaching as a classroom teacher, or whether she would have had to subscribe to the wishes of her superiors. Perhaps, in her situation, she might not have had

the occasion to "stand alone" as Sylvia Ashton Warner (1963) chose to do even in light of the mediocre teaching evaluations she received. The anecdote that Julia provides is telling in that it reveals the details of how her efforts were thwarted by her "superior" when she attempted to engage her students in what she felt was a relevant and meaningful way. Like Grace and Sarah, Julia's views and beliefs in what she had the potential to do came in conflict with the structure within which she was working. Of all the participants, Julia was the first to point out that the source of her disillusionment lay in the conservative structure of her school.

> Well our schools are very centralized and still very stratified with conscious hierarchies. There is the Head of Schools, the assistant heads, the senior teachers and the junior teachers. Obviously it is a question of power with the Heads and assistant Heads considering themselves to have the most power, and going down the ladder in that way. The system is still very traditional and the students have to call the teachers Miss or Sir, and supposedly have respect for those above them. When I came back and allowed the girls to call me Miss Julia or just Julia, when I used to go out during break and sit and chat with the students about boyfriends, and so on I was breaking the sacrosanct rule of this ladder. I was making myself one of the students. This according to those above me would undermine my power in the classroom and undermine the power of the other teachers in the classroom. It was mainly a question of discipline, which I must say I never had any problems. It was also a question of shaking the status quo. The school had functioned in the way dictated by the Head for years, and I was shaking its foundations by bringing in all these new ideas. It was also a question, that I was actually more qualified than the Headmistress herself, and I suppose this must also have been a treat to her. The funny thing was that when something was done by the men, they were praised for it, and when something was done by me I was trying to be forward and flirty.
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> Basically I wasn't doing anything special. All I was doing was, trying to make the syllabus relevant to the students, and with the older students I talked about growing up, our physical bodies, drugs, smoking, Aids, all in relation to science and specific problems the girls were facing. Then I did a lot of practical activity, which was really exciting but at times a bit messy and noisy. I didn't have a quiet

> bored attentive class, but a class involved in activity. But the cardinal rule which I broke was that I treated the girls as individuals and above all as adults. I talked to them about all sorts of things, listened to them at all times, went out on hikes with them on the weekends and so on. This really irritated some people, because as one assistant head told me, I was there just to teach, and not to be a mother or caregiver in the school. But in all consciousness, when I knew that some of the girls did not have anyone to turn to, I could not turn away from them. Because my philosophy of education is educating the person as a whole and helping them to become the best they can become. It is not just about teaching the content of science.

Julia sheds light on the power structure under which she was working, then succinctly states her philosophy of teaching. Given her philosophy, it is no surprise that, as a teacher educator, she is now disillusioned with student teachers who possibly do not share this philosophy, or who do not engage in considering alternative ways of teaching and learning in light of the possibility of change. However, as Cohn and Kottcamp (1993) suggest, the organizational structure of schooling is almost invisible and those who work in schools are so acculturated to it, they have no reason to question or challenge these structures. As a teacher educator, this is Julia's struggle; to engage and challenge her student teachers to question the structure they are so used to.

Julia wrote a great deal about her students and her student teachers, and in the following excerpt shows a power structure that is truly invisible to the uninitiated. My guess is that it is only teachers who could ever possibly relate to her words.

> What follows here, is something extremely personal and I am sure not felt by most teachers. It is closely linked to who I am as a person, and on my reflections on

> who I am throughout the last two years. When I read your letter and reflected back I still could not see myself in a position of power. Rather in my case it was the students who were in a position of power over me. I don't know how much you can generalize in this case, because this is really dependent on my personality. But I am a person, who through my upbringing and especially the strict character of my father, has grown into a person (hopefully I have gotten out of this by now) who constantly craves approval and wants to please everyone around her. Thus in a sense I suppose this personality was very strongly fed on in my role as a teacher. I wanted to please my students and to give them the very best of myself, and because my character what it was, the likes or dislikes of my students influenced me personally a great deal. Therefore, in a sense the students had a power over me because by showing that they like me they could take me to the greatest heights and by showing their dislike they could throw me into the deepest pits. Luckily most of the time I got on well with the students and this helped to make me vicariously happy - so no I never felt myself in such a position of power. Also, I always try to treat my students with respect and fairness, negotiating grades and coursework with them, so I always felt that there was some form of shared responsibility. I never saw myself at the front of the classroom teaching and so perhaps that is why I never felt such a sense of power in the classroom.

I am here clearly reminded of Grace who also spoke of wanting to please and wanting to be liked. While we tell our student teachers not to worry about being liked, this is perhaps their greatest concern before they go out on their first practicum. I would suggest that many student teachers and first year teachers also feel that, to some degree, the students have power over them, which is why they become so focused on classroom management, on what they are doing "to" the students. However, Julia's vision of the power students have over her has more to do with how she evaluates whether or not she is reaching out to the students effectively and successfully. When the source of teacher confirmation lies so permanently within the confines of the classroom, it is no surprise that Julia feels the way she does. When no one else appeared to be excited, respectful and interested in what she was doing; her only source of confirmation was in her students.

As a former classroom teacher, Julia experienced both empowering situations while she was among her students, and frustrating situations when her practice was called into question by her superiors. Julia's insight into the powerlessness of teachers goes beyond the organizational structure within which they work. She locates the fundamental issue that teaching, as "women's work" almost renders it silent. Given the current research on girls and science, the following quotation about role models for girl students is particularly interesting.

It is funny that you mention class and helplessness, because in my own work I am coming across that very often. The message which I seem to get from teachers is that they feel powerless in the face of the system. They are professionals and yet they are never consulted when it comes to policy making. In the end they seem to just give up and teach the way they have always been taught. Funnily enough in our country it is mainly the men who occupy the key positions in education. Men who are authoritarian and think they know it all, so it is not just a question of just teacher powerlessness but also of gender and class powerlessness. In a recent seminar we had for science teachers, it was the key persons in authority who were the most vocal, with teachers barely making their voices heard, and as Jan Harding a foreign speaker said, I would have hardly known that there were any women in the audience. So there is a double problem here, the powerlessness felt by teachers in general, and the powerlessness felt by more specifically female teachers.

> Now to the biggie...What in your mind is the ideal teaching situation? What are the responsibilities of a teacher? I can still think back to my very first teaching practice...teaching mathematics to Form 1 and Form 2 students. The school was a small school situated in a sleepy village surrounded by countryside all around. There was only one class of each from a very small staff. The students were not very bright but they had a big heart and they greeted me into their midst with all the love and genuiness of village people. I remember preparing charts and all sorts of resources for them, trying out new and creative ways of teaching mathematics. I remember sleepy afternoons with the sun shining in the corridors and sitting down on the steps and talking with the students, dreaming with the students because I was not much more than the girls which they were. We talked about

boys and dancing, fashion and outings, and we all dreamt our dreams of doing something with our future. That for me was I think the most idyllic experience of teaching...A small school where everyone knew each other on a first name basis, where everyone was just like on big family and there was not competition between he teachers to be something big and dominant...A school where I was allowed to experiment with the little repertoire I had of teaching methods...A school where I could build a strong relationship with the students ...where I could share dreams and ideals, where I was an equal with the students - neither superior nor inferior. But that seems like a very, very long time ago and then came my second teaching practice. I was speechless when I heard that I as going to be sent to "b" town. How can I describe this place...it is one of the slum areas in our country. The people who live here are not very educated and it is a haunt for prostitutes, drug addicts, pimps and pushers. The students were known to be undisciplined, rude and ruthless in their relationships with their teachers. I was terrified but had to grin and bear it. Once I got to the school I loved it from the start...the students were unruly and undisciplined, they had many family problems but deep down they had a heart of gold, and once they saw the experiments and activities which I had prepared for them they were willing to cooperate. At times it was a hard battle with the girls, but I always managed to talk them through fits and frenzies, and by trying to find out what interested them and relating science to their own experiences.. namely having loads and loads of lessons about growing up and sex, I managed to win them over. I was happy with the students and I was happy to be doing what I was doing. Yet again, it wasn't all a bed or roses and I remember the many times I went home crying. This time it wasn't because of the students but because of the horrible Headmistress that I have ever had. She tried to undermine everything I wanted to do with the students...she told me that I took them out on outings to avoid doing lessons...that I should dust the window sills in the classroom... and that I was teaching the students filthy things because I prepared a small pamphlet for them about menstruation. But the joy which I felt when interacting with the students superseded all of this and I persisted got my degree and continued teaching in this school even when I graduated from University.

Throughout my teaching years I have always sought to find out ways in which I can involve the students in the lessons, make them happy and for a while take away some of the dreariness of their lives, and at the same time open their minds to real learning. What in my mind is the ideal teaching situation...? I do not think that in my mind there is an ideal teaching situation...but only an ideal learning situation...What do I think of my responsibilities as a teacher...but I do not see myself as one who teaches but rather as one who learns together with my students, and one who helps students bring out the best potential and the best in each and every one. An ideal classroom for me is a comfy room with soft pastel lights, carpets and couches for curling up to read, tables for writing on and all sorts of corners where one can dismantle and construct and do rather than see. A room

with computers and all sorts of books available, if possible shelves running from the floor to the ceiling with books of all kinds just waiting to be opened and discovered. A room with a workshop, a garden and a kitchen. A room filled with the hustle and bustle of working students engaged in different activities and all embarked in the journey of discovery. I know that this might sound impossible, but here I am letting my fantasy run a bit wild with me. If possible there can also be a van outside the class waiting to take the children to all sorts of wonderful places. Well dreaming apart my main philosophy of teaching is based on something which Paolo Friere says in his Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Not to get too intellectual, but it is a saying which guides my whole outlook towards teaching:

> Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teachers, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow (Friere, 1990, p. 67)

So this is what I think of my responsibility as a teacher, a wonderful adventure, with my students where we all together learn something and grow in this discovery. And here I end with a quote from Castenada:

> *For me there is only the travelling on paths that have heart, on any path that may have heart. There I travel, and the only worthwhile challenge is to travel its full length. And there I travel, looking, looking, breathlessly.*

While Julia is no longer a classroom teacher, her insights are nevertheless important. She is able to talk about the structure of schooling now that she is in, arguably, a more "powerful" position, a position that allows her to choose how she teaches and to influence decision making. While Sarah was weary and even questioned her personal integrity for wanting to teach preservice teachers, Julia suggests that her influence in terms of her values and beliefs, largely based on experience, are met with doubtful eyes from a group of students who she feels "know it all". The "truth" that Sarah spoke about is

perhaps the result of far more years of experience and accumulated anger. Her shadows are older and heavier. While Julia recognizes the rigid and silencing walls of a traditional structure, she nevertheless has faith in the teacher's abilities to make change in her own classroom. Perhaps, because Julia has not been in the system as long as Sarah, "the truth" is not as evident to her. However, what ties all of these participants together is their dedication to their students, a dedication that comes out of knowing they are able to make a difference in students' lives regardless of how they feel they are treated as adult women professionals. They are the ideal teachers of the myth I created as a child. Whether working in the elementary or high school classroom, or in the university classroom, they tell stories with similar themes.

To end this section, I draw on the work of Acker and Feuerverger (1996) who explored the stories that women university teachers had to tell about their own life worlds. This is what they say:

> Yet the foremost impression we got from reading the transcripts was of a widespread sense of disappointment and disillusionment. On the basis of these narratives, we argue that women's work in the university is very much like women's work in schools, i.e., tiring work, incorporating caring and service, with responsibilities that are often not regarded as demanding a high level of skill or rewarded as such. Using a phrase from J.B. Miller (1976), we describe the predominant theme in the narratives as 'doing good and feeling bad'. By 'doing good' we mean that the women try to reach exceptionally high standards by working hard, even at personal expense, and that they make efforts to support and care for colleagues and students and to be 'good citizens' in their departments. Instead of feeling fulfilled by their accomplishments and their chances to put caring and service into practice, they 'feel bad', i.e. they have a sense that the academic reward system is out of sync with their preferences, that they are working harder

than they should and that they have a disproportionate share of responsibilities for the mundane service side of university work and for the emotional well-being of the students. (p. 404)

CHAPTER FIVE

LESSONS LEARNED

The stories told by Grace, Marie, Sarah and Julia will forever become a part of my teaching narrative. These are women who seemed initially to embody the myth of the ideal teacher I had created as a child. All four women continue to teach, and all four women continue to reflect on their professional practice when we meet for coffee or correspond through the electronic mail or talk on the phone. I feel privileged to be privy to their ongoing and unfolding narratives that will no doubt take new paths now that the study is officially ended. Their stories inform and update my practice as a teacher educator. For me, their stories have not ended.

The dual emphasis of this text became Grace's, Marie's, Sarah's and Julia's seemingly public vow of silence about their disillusionment and the undercurrent of anger behind this stance. I was interested in and explored more than just the reasons why successful and dedicated women become disillusioned with teaching. It was my contention that if it is dedicated and successful women teachers who were disillusioned with teaching, and who were considering leaving teaching, we had best listen to their stories. I recognized very quickly that what tied their stories together, what bound the themes that emerged from their stories, was the very political nature of schooling that interfered with their notion of what it meant to be valued as professional women

educators. Why were they so unwilling to challenge the politics of their situation? What can teacher educators learn from their silence, from their stories about disillusionment and anger, and ultimately from their dedication to the practice of teaching?

I initially named my search the "darker side of teaching" and then used the image of "shadows" to better qualify what it was I was examining. For Grace, Marie, Sarah, and Julia, the term "the darker side of teaching" never appeared problematic. Perhaps this was because all four women engage in personal written reflection and are used to baring their thoughts and souls to paper. Perhaps it was because they recognized that in order to fulfil their goals, they had to harbour their anger, pain and disillusionment. Whatever the reason, "darkness" was not a term that appeared to threaten them. If anything "darkness" was a way to better understand what they did and who they were as teachers.

The better able I was to describe what it was I was investigating, the more stories I heard not only from teachers but from anyone who happened to ask me about my research. As I described my participants, I watched as the persons listening would nod their heads and then share with me stories of women teachers in their families, or women teachers they had known who would have been "perfect" for my study. I realized, that it is impossible to hide our shadows. Shadows exist because we are lit, and while they shift, recede, contort and flatter our real selves, they cannot disappear unless we retreat into darkness, unless we burn out.

There are no doubt many accounts of women who fit the description of Grace, Marie, Sarah, and Julia, women who are "workaholics", dedicated to being the "ideal" in whatever it is they choose to do. In their own way, they try to create an "ideal" myth. And, there is no doubt that these women also harbour feelings of pain and disillusionment that we can call their "shadows". I want to turn to a well known woman writer in order to show how the term "dark side" has been used with other "mythical" women.

Lucy Maud Montgomery, the internationally acclaimed Canadian children's writer whose public and mythical life was shaped by her characters Anne and Emily, was the subject of a documentary film I happened upon one summer evening in 1997. This film helped me to better understand "the darker side of teaching" as a voiceless condition that has everything to do with myth-making. The themes that came out of Lucy Maud's recently published journals were very similar to those that came out of the stories my participants had to tell: feeling isolated within a professional community, feeling silenced but moved by dedication to a craft or calling, and in the end, wanting the "darker stories" to be known.

"The Darker Side of Lucy Maud Montgomery when Life and Times Returns"
(from a commercial break during the broadcast of L.M. Montgomery)

> "I am done with Anne forever as a dark and deadly vow". (from Life and Times: L.M. Montgomery, the video, as quoted from her journal)

As a child I loved Anne of Green Gables. I felt attached to this outspoken orphan whose solid sense of self , love of words, and unstoppable imagination pulled at my heartstrings. I remember visiting Prince Edward Island and learning all the songs that had been written for a musical version of the book. Perhaps Anne herself inspired me to be a teacher. Lucy Maud Montgomery, the writer who brought Anne to life, was in my mind, and probably in the mind of many others, the "real" Anne. Her home in Prince Edward Island, her own story of being brought up by her grandparents after her mother died and her father moved away, seemed to be the roots of Anne. Everything about Montgomery, about the Island, and about Anne was in my mind beyond romantic. However, in the summer of 1997, by pure chance, I tuned into a CBC television special called "Life and Times: L.M. Montgomery" which completely dispelled the myth I had created in my mind about the author of the Anne series. The first clue was the subtitle: "The Many Mauds".

This documentary became the cornerstone of my understanding of how the term "the darker side" is better understood when used in the context of a myth that has been created and upheld first, by the very person who is at the centre of the myth, and second, by those who "rely" on the myth for any number of personal reasons. The introductory words tell us that:

> For decades, when people thought about Montgomery, they generally thought about Green Gables. They saw the writer through the rose coloured lens of Anne's world. But all that changed in 1985 with the publication of Montgomery's first journals, a detailed memoir of one thousand pages spanning fifty years from which a very different Maud emerges to shatter the public image.

While exposing this myth shattered illusions for many of her fans, it brought forth the very serious nature of what it was really like being a successful woman whose dedication to her "following" silenced her. Likewise, in this study, I challenged the myth of the successful teacher who stands in opposition to the burnt out teacher because in some ways, it is her dedication that silences her.

I watched the documentary several times, reading it each time for different purposes. First, I was interested in how the term "dark" was used and how often it was used. Second, I was interested in how this term was directly linked to Montgomery being a woman. Third, I was interested in comparing what Montgomery divulged in her journals with what my participants divulged in our two and a half year correspondence.

The documentary begins with a short introduction narrated by Gordon Pinsent who suggests that the myth of Lucy Maud Montgomery is about to be shattered because it appears that the only real pleasure she had "seems to have been writing about her characters". While we later learn that she indeed had other pleasures such as the birth of her children and the men who had amorous roles in her life, this introduction nevertheless

sets the tone for what is to come. Megan Follows, the actor who played Anne in the Canadian television series, reflects on Anne as a liberated girl who had voice probably because Lucy Maud had been denied it. She says, " Lucy Maud Montgomery allowed a child to have a voice that was of equal importance to the adults around her". She suggests that while Anne was liberated, she was still the victim of the structure of her time. Lucy Maud Montgomery surely suffered the same fate. We learn that Lucy Maud Montgomery loved writing, could not remember a time when she didn't write, but while she initially wrote from her heart, she ended up trapped by the very success she created. Her desire for success was realised when Anne of Green Gables became a best seller. However, that she was a woman's writer of children's books who gained international success never gained her respect from a largely male academic community. In the film, Elizabeth Waterson, co-editor of the L.M. Montgomery Journals says,

> Lucy Maud Montgomery was a woman writer and that's never very easy, many many women writers have called themselves George Eliot or George Sands or taking a male name. She also wrote books for children and that was a second downer as far as the academic people were concerned, and she was enormously popular, enormous world wide best seller as most academics were not, so jealousy entered into the evaluation of her. And, she was under evaluated for many many years, but adored and bought.

Lucy Maud Montgomery's association with children created a myth that was not respected in the academic world. Perhaps the image of the teacher as child giver is a myth that my participants hold onto. Like teachers who may feel isolated from the "adult world", Montgomery was isolated from the literary world which did not take her writing

seriously. We learn that Lucy Maud felt that she was "always smiling even though she was feeling rotten, bored, angry and repressed" a mask similar to the ones Grace, Marie, Sarah and Julia wore.

The documentary gives an overview of the childhood of Montgomery who grew up in a time and with grandparents whose strict Victorian values had little respect for children. It was perhaps for this very reason that Montgomery felt compelled to invent happy children and happy communities. The audience is told:

> The road to fame did not come easily for Lucy Maud Montgomery. Tragedy followed her throughout her life: her mother's death, her absent father, her childhood closeted with rigid grandparents. But the most painful thing of all was the lack of support for her primary passion: writing.

It is from her journal that we hear, "I believed alone in myself and I struggled alone always alone in secrecy and silence; I listened to the sneer of relatives...and I knew I would arrive... one day". Sadly, even after she realized her success, she proceeded in silence, a silence that shaped her "dark side".

While her journals shattered the public image of the Lucy Maud Montgomery behind the fictional Anne of Green Gables, it was only in this way that she was to receive the academic attention that she had never received as a woman writer of children's stories. We hear the first use of the term "dark" when the following question is posed: "is she the

cheerful spirit behind Anne or the darker spirit painfully recorded in her journals"? The narrator explains:

> The revelations in the journals give scholars something to sink their teeth into: the mystery of unravelling the real L.M. Montgomery. Is she the cheerful spirit behind Anne, or the darker spirit painfully recorded in her journals? They pour over every last line of her writing and examine the hundreds of photos she took throughout her life. The journals are critical, dark and personal and yet she said she'd put a hex on her family if they didn't publish them. Perhaps Maud wanted the world to know this darker side she'd hidden all her life. Perhaps she wanted to shatter her own well crafted image of the cheerful heroine behind the children's stories.

The same could be said for Grace, Marie, Sarah and Julia: are they the cheerful spirits behind the teacher image they have created, or the darker spirits recorded in their letters to me? Like the academics who poured over Montgomery's journals, I poured over every last line of their letters to better understand the source of their silence. Like the silenced Lucy Maud, Grace, Marie, Julia and Sarah were vigilant about not exposing their concerns publicly. Further in the film we learn that "it was not in her nature to give into despair. She did what she always did: write", and the same can be said for Grace, Marie, Julia and Sarah: none of them gave up.

The nagging question however, is why did Montgomery choose to remain silent? Was it perhaps her overwhelming dedication to her audience and her aim to continue providing for those who appeared to value her, that silenced her? If she was to reveal that "darker side" while she was still alive, perhaps she might have felt that she would have lost all she had worked for: success as a writer as determined by those millions of readers who

bought her books and sustained the myth of Anne and Lucy Maud Montgomery. She had, in some ways, created her own myth. However, as Roberta Buchanan, who is interviewed in the documentary, tells us, the passages in the journals were very much from the heart and "express her bitterness and rage; that rage, that pus, that goes into journals that takes guts to write and takes guts to leave".

While her vibrant sexuality and apparent love for flirting was cause for surprise for many readers, I was taken aback mostly with the revelation that she reached a point where she simply did not want to write Anne books any more. She wanted to be "done with Anne" and claimed this as a "dark and deadly vow". To name this confession as a "dark and deadly vow" suggests that she realized the implications of giving public voice to such a confession, that this in itself would shatter everything she had worked for as a woman writer. We are reminded that Montgomery was "not a happy woman but was able to convince those around her she was happy". Buchanan tells us that "she wanted to keep the shadows of her life out of her work". And in the introduction to her journals, Rubio and Waterson suggest that her silence was largely the product of her gender training. They say:

> Montgomery took pride in never inflicting her woes on others; in the light of Ewan's melancholy, this seems heroic. She believed that it was the duty of a woman- and especially of a woman who was a minister's wife - to be ever cheerful and uncomplaining. Her irritation was silenced by cultural expectations as to proper womanly behaviour. Montgomery's gender training is firmly inscribed in the journals; yet the journals themselves are in part an anguished cry against the imposed silence, and the forces that insisted she maintain the role of "angel in the

> house" – serene, uncomplaining, always ready with dignity and grace to cheer and encourage those in her domestic sphere. She did of course express her woes, she did of course complain consistently and eloquently of those exhausting, inexorable demands on her sympathy, but only in her journal. The journals are acts of protest against an ideology that she believes with one part of herself and rejects with another. She writes not as an angel but as an anxious, angry, frustrated woman.

When her husband became sick in 1919, Montgomery's life changed, as she learned to cope with his bouts of religious melancholia in which he believed he was being plagued by evil demons. We are told that these last years were "violently unhappy"; however, it is Montgomery who reminds us from her journals that "I tasted happiness in writing, perfect happiness is not something the gods allow us mortals", and perhaps this was the way she rationalized her "darker side" that she kept hidden. However, in the end, she wanted to world to know the truth about Lucy Maud Montgomery:

> This journal is a faithful record of one human's life and so should have a certain literary value. My heirs might publish an *abridged volume* after my death, if I do not do it before...I *desire that these journals never be destroyed by kept as long as the leaves hold together*. I leave this to my descendants or my literary heirs as a sacred charge and invoke a Shakespearean curse on them if they disregard it. There is so much of myself in these volumes that I cannot bear the thought of their ever being destroyed. It would seem to me like a sort of murder...(p. 51)

The film helped to confirm my use of the term "darker side". I was able to make comparisons between Lucy Maud Montgomery and the teachers who participated in this study, all women who had achieved success as professionals, but whose silence was marked by dedication and perhaps the fear of dispelling a myth they had created about themselves. Like Lucy Maud, they convinced those around them they were content and

happy; voicing their "darker sides" was simply out of the question. In both cases, however, their shadows help us to better understand the struggles they endured as women working in a "children's world".

Lessons on Silence and Anger

Interestingly, none of my participants really blamed anyone for their silence. My immediate interest was how silenced anger could wear them down. In Grace's case, she began questioning her calling when she began feeling disillusioned. When she began to write about why she was disillusioned, anger that had been stored up began to leak out, and in her letters she provided evocative accounts of both her dedication to teaching and her disillusionment with it. Her choice to remain silent was driven by her dedication. Grace appealed over and over to "society" to stop blaming teachers. Grace didn't want neon lights, but recognition in eyes other than those of her students. The contradiction is clear because Grace fit the description of "successful and dedicated" because she received so much recognition. Perhaps though this wasn't enough. Perhaps it was not only the recognition, but the ability to have the space and trust to achieve what it was she wanted to achieve. Or perhaps it was recognition from society as a whole, recognition that what Grace did, not just anyone could do.

At the end of the year when Grace announced she would be leaving for a sabbatical in another school, she began to receive the social recognition that she had been looking for. No doubt, the school in which she chose to work was giving her more in terms of decision making. At the end of her last year, Grace received the following letter from one of her parents:

Dear Grace,

Thank you Grace for giving Sarah confidence in herself in bringing out the sensitivity in her through "poetry". I really think that the "journal" idea you have with your class was the "catalyst" for bringing this love of writing out. You encouraged her through your remarks but first of all, you listened to her and was a true friend and you gave her good feedback. I thank you for your efforts, because I know it must not be easy to go through and read twenty journals or more every night and respond to each one of them personally. Your devotion, I think Grace, will someday pay you back in the life of many of your students. This, I think, will be your reward, to know you were truly appreciated and remembered for what you taught them; the love of beauty in life, kindness, sensitivity...and as far as I'm concerned, this is a mark of a true and really devoted and sensitive "teacher". Do not feel bad about leaving our school for a year. Your students that are repeating will learn that they must let go and let you grow and explore too- otherwise you cannot be the teacher you are and want to be. You must fill your own cup in order to fill theirs.

With love and best wishes to you Grace for the future whatever your heart is seeking. We wish you well always. Good luck and God bless.

Ps. Enclosed are copies of Sarah's poems from her notebook and journal. I cherish them so that I selfishly could not let you have the originals but I thought you might also like to have copies of them if only to remember Sarah by. After all, - many of these poems were written for you. I hope you don't think I'm overestimating Sarah's ability. I know there are a lot of mistakes in them, especially the spelling but they moved me so, I never had any interest in poetry until I read Sarah's- (maybe it's because I'm her mother)...well I'm proud of them and of her, and very thankful to you for giving her something she really feels good about. Thanks Grace.

The mother's sensitivity to what Grace does and her encouraging words are telling in that they recognize what Grace must do in order to be the teacher she wants to be. I couldn't help but wonder when I read this letter if the parent somehow knew that Grace needed a change, needed to move on in order "to fill her cup" so that she could fill the cups of her students. As Grace had earlier told me, everything she did outside of the classroom eventually leaked its way in. In the end, despite her silence, Grace was dedicated to her calling despite the obstacles that stood in her way. While Grace did not feel she could voice her anger in her present situation, her decision to take a sabbatical and work in a new environment obviously sent out messages to her community. What she was doing was quite simply not enough; she wanted more. While this was always a part of her attitude in being an excellent teacher, she also felt isolated from other teachers. In the end, her reliance on her personal and professional choices made the difference.

At the end of the same year Grace received the following letter from a boy in her class. In the end, what she spoke about with the most joy was the recognition she received from students. However, while teachers find confirmation in their students, it is clear from Grace's words, that this confirmation is not enough.

> Dear mis oman, I think that I'm starting to get the hang of writing again. I really like my expert paper I think you'll like the part "how to let go of a good teacher". Iv almost finished it. I don't know how Im going to let go of you your the best

> teacher I have ever had. I bet Im going to cry my eyes out. you allways give us a great feeling inside of insperatchion and joy. You have great ideas on everything. You can do voices like know one in this world can do for books and you bring us in the Book. Your the best and you are a great teacher dont stop trying to teach us your great the Best!

Marie was not disillusioned in the same way that Grace was although many of the same themes emerged from her stories. She too felt isolated because she was always looking for "more", wanting to do more, wanting to fulfil her own needs as a high school teacher which in turn, she felt would better meet the needs of her students. Working against curricular traditions was on the one hand exhilarating, on the other hand frustrating because of an administration that forced other teachers to do what she was doing even though they did not necessarily want to. Her situation was also paradoxical. She chose to give voice to her needs, but in doing so isolated herself. Like the other participants, much of Marie's anger manifested itself in not feeling like she had a voice in a top down power structure. Her role as the union mediator and the story that peaked her disillusionment with a structure in which shared authority was ignored and even perhaps seen as a threat is an excellent example of what can happen when teachers do try to negotiate for changes within a structure. Perhaps of most importance to her story is that she did eventually speak out and challenge the very person to whom she had looked up, and told him the implications of his actions. Marie's story teaches us that giving voice to our pedagogical needs can create isolating situations. However, Marie's story also teaches us that giving voice to our anger, one created by the structures in which we work

and aimed at those authorities who shape those structures, is necessary if we wish to continue working in a genuine way with those who are our "superiors".

Sarah rationalized her anger at the very moments when she felt she was not being treated properly. Whether she did not want to upset a principal because his wife was sick, or "rock the boat" because she had not requested a clear description of her job, or call a meeting with a professional colleague who had treated her in an unprofessional manner, Sarah over and over chose to closet her anger and professional disappointments. That she did not feel she was in a position to question her "superiors" is worthy of observation in itself, and Sarah points to her upbringing and her "generational status" as the reason for her decision to not challenge authority. Herein lies the greatest difference between say, Sarah and Marie. When Sarah did speak out about all the work she was asked to perform, she was told that she was difficult to work with. Sarah's story reconfirms Jane Miller's (1996) claim that studying the stories women teachers have to tell might give us some insight into a culture which is willing to have their children educated by people for whom they have little faith or respect . Sarah's story is a reminder that perhaps an intergenerational study of women is needed. I am still moved to ask whether Sarah acted according to how she was brought up in her generation, or whether women entering teaching are apt to stay silent in the face of authority as this characteristic of teachers is one that they have learned from their earlier role as student and student teacher. In light of the possibility that this theme might be "generational", I include here a letter from

Diane, a high school teacher whose interest in this study came late, but whose one and only story sheds light on some of the same issues Sarah faced.

Dear Anna,

I finally had a chance to look over your proposal. When the package arrived in December, I shoved it into my bag to take to the cottage to look at later. Later didn't arrive until this weekend.

I think the proposal sounds great and I would be very interested to participate. Perhaps this is about three years too late for me, however. I don't feel particularly disillusioned these days, but I was terribly upset a few years ago. In hindsight I'm not sure it was because of teaching or because I had to face the fact that I was over 50 and had just been turned down for a promotion as head of a dept. The one who was chosen had been doing the job- or not doing it, really- for many years and I knew I was really more qualified in terms of experience and people skills. When the headmaster told me I wasn't getting the job, he intimated I was "too old". I had thought it would be nice to finish my career with that token recognition that I had been a successful teacher.

At the same time the Guidance counsellor had been fired, the Science head had been relieved of her duties, the assistant librarian had been forced into retirement - all of these women over 50. I suppose in a way this does fit into your study and the issue of being treated as a professional.

My way of dealing with the hurt was to withdraw my services from the extra things I had done at the school. I no longer serve as the newspaper advisor; I don't offer to sit on committees or even to serve on the union executive. Done that, been there has become my motto. Instead my teaching is classroom focused, and I find that quite rewarding, most of the time. Students usually learn in my classroom, but I don't feel indispensable or special, as I used to.

Last year at a special workshop in the spring, the college associated with this school decided to focus on the Fine Arts program as a way of attracting students and keeping the college open. My eldest son teaches Fine Arts there and was keen to implement the decision. Instead the Board has decided to close the Fine Arts and Science departments in the college. This decision has just reinforced my attitude to stay out of the politics since the decisions of our administrators seem stupid and illogical.

> My husband retired last year and we bought a cottage. There is some pressure on me to retire, but I'm staying in teaching for at least another year, partly because of the money - unlike others who left "because of the money"! When I get up in the morning I'm still happy to be coming to school, most days, although it would have been nice to have had an even longer March break! I do enjoy having something specific to do and being with other people.
>
> All of this is to introduce to you my ambivalence about my teaching. If you still think my reflections would be of relevance to your study, then I'd be happy to participate. I think the best way would be through e-mail; I don't keep a journal and have a busy out-of-school life, so interviews might be difficult to schedule.

There will be in the next few years many teachers retiring, accepting early retirement packages and leaving space for new graduates. Diane and Sarah will be among those teachers, and as I reflect on the years they have spent in our educational systems I am prone to consider the importance of their stories in the lives of those teachers who will be replacing them. While Diane and Sarah experienced a tremendous amount of pleasure and personal confirmation as teachers, that they ended their professional lives on notes of such disheartened and silenced disillusion cannot be ignored. Given that the educational system has structurally remained stagnant in over one hundred and fifty years (Grumet, 1988), I cannot help but wonder whether our new graduates will experience the same kind of disillusionment that Sarah and Diane did.

While Grace and Julia both made active choices to leave the situations in which they found themselves, it was only Marie who gave voice to her disillusionment. The former gave voice to their silence through action; the latter gave voice to her silence through words. It is not my place to decide which decision making process is the more

empowering one. However, in light of Sarah and Diane, it is my place to consider ways of using their stories to show how unvoiced anger can lead to a career ending without the soul with which it began.

In many ways it was the most difficult and the easiest to correspond with Julia because, like me, she had left classroom teaching for university teaching. Julia, like Grace, Marie, and Sarah experienced disillusion not with teaching itself, but with the authoritative structure surrounding schooling. As a teacher educator, she now is disillusioned with students who she describes as thinking they know everything and not willing to take risks. Her insights and stories often propelled me into thinking how this study could better inform and prepare student teachers who would be working within traditional school structures. However, my concern is more specific. Like Julia I often want to tear my hair out when student teachers approach teaching as being formulaic. "Tell us what works", "give us the recipe" are pleas for hints on how to manage within a structure at which every level is defined by authority, and suggestions that perhaps teaching is just that, a formula. Perhaps for many of these student teachers, disillusionment will not manifest itself to the same way that it manifested itself in the teachers who participated in this study. While I encourage reflective practice and engage student teachers in activities that ask them to consider why they are doing what they are doing, often Julia brings this philosophy in check:

> I did not leave teaching because I was disillusioned with teaching. I love teaching and would not have left it. Simply the opportunity arose for me to enter university and since it was a move upwards career wise I simply took it. The disillusion came later while working with student teachers. I was very excited about working with student teachers because I wanted to share with them my own experiences. However, I found a group of students who were in teaching because "they couldn't get into another course", because "it was a good job with which you could raise a family", because "of the children - I love kids". The students want everything ready made and whenever I ask them to reflect or write in journals, I come up against a wall of resistance and end up with normal theoretical essay but nothing personal or reflective. So at times I shudder to think about the kind of teachers who are graduating...

I cannot help but consider that a serious implication of this study is the disillusionment that teacher educators may face. Like Julia I also often shudder to think about the kinds of teachers who are graduating. I have had the privilege of working with outstanding student teachers whose ideals, philosophies and classroom approaches inspired and confirmed my own decision to remain in teacher education. At the same time, I have struggled with not knowing what to say or what to do with those teachers who do not display the same characteristics or dedication. There are times when I pat myself on the shoulder for my "tolerance" of views that are so foreign to my own, and there are times when I drive home furious that I did not step in and challenge views that in my mind were narrow and rigid. While their role is a dual one, so is mine; at the beginning of the year they are both my students, and nine months away from being my colleagues. The balance that I try to create in terms of being responsible for my role as a teacher educator and at the same time creating a collegial learning experience is a difficult one.

Furthermore, the very nature of the structure of schooling creates what often feels like an impossible teaching and learning situation. While I am far removed from the activities of a regular classroom, I am supposed to be preparing students for this very practice. In what other profession does such a situation exist, in which the "teachers" are removed from the "clients"? In my attempt to become recognized as an "academic" and thus secure some kind of position at the university level, it appears that my connection to the school classroom becomes more and more distant. And yet, given the structure of the university under which I work, there appears to be little choice. We cannot be classroom teachers and teacher educators at once. Weber's (1990) research on the perceptions and experiences of teacher educators revealed this duality of commitment that involves:

> a commitment to the learning and well-being of one's education students;
>
> a commitment to preserving and advancing one's own knowledge and professional culture, which in turn involves a certain way of viewing education. (p. 153)

It was for this very reason that I began turning to the stories teachers and students had to tell so that my practice would be better informed. The conflict between illusion and reality is constant; do I teach what should be, could be and might be, or do I teach what is? The answer of course is both. The challenge I face as a teacher educator lies in inviting student teachers to consider the duality of their roles in learning how to teach, and what it means to be a teacher.

Lessons for a Teacher Educator

> Teachers' caring activities, then, have from one perspective been seen as derived from their teacher identities; from another, as part of 'women's ways'; and from a third, as a consequence of the social expectations that women's caring work should blur the distinction between labour and love. The institutional contexts in which these caring activities take place are not as often explored. We need to consider the material conditions under which teachers' preferences, ideologies and cultures arise, as well as the interpretations they are given. This exercise requires looking at real life situations (Acker, 1995, p. 24)

None of my participants ever provided me with long litanies of isolated complaints. Instead, their grievances, and concerns were read against their personal and professional philosophies. This was and perhaps continues to be their hardest struggle; *working in a structure that does not apparently have room for shared authority and that treats them like the children in their care*. However, regardless of this struggle, regardless of the fact that these women remained largely silent about their feelings, when they were asked to create the "ideal classroom", they created it within the existing structure. While this surprised me at first, I recognized the importance of this thinking in terms of what I do as a teacher educator. Inviting student teachers to consider ways of overthrowing the existing structure is quite simply naive; instead, what I have learned from this study is that I need to find ways to ensure that student teachers feel prepared for the implications of working within the existing traditional structure of schooling.

My responsibilities as a teacher educator continue to daunt me at my most fragile moments. What is it that pre-service teachers most need to know? I find myself asking

both our graduates and our undergraduates what was most "useful" in their preparation for becoming a classroom teacher. Often I expect "classroom management techniques" to be the stock answer, but this is not true. Not surprisingly, their needs are individual and largely reflect their assumptions, reasoning, and expectations about what it is that a teacher "does". Thus, the beginning of a list of my responsibilities as a teacher educator might include:

- Ensure that students have time to explore contemporary methods in teaching subject areas and the theories and theorists that provide the underpinnings of those methods;
- Expose and engage student teachers with texts having to do with child development.
- Provide student teachers with the room to discuss and analyze their practicum and the progress they make as preservice teachers and as university students.
- Provide student teachers the time and space to engage in both written and oral reflection on who they are as teachers and what informs their teacher knowledge.
- Provide students with opportunities to explore the political and historical context of schooling and its implications on who they are and what they do as teachers.

The role of student teachers within the university is a dual one; they are academic learners engaged in the texts that provide the groundwork for their secondary role, that of becoming a practising classroom teacher. It is the duality of this role, shaped in a short period, that creates conflict for me in terms of my own role, conflict that is determined by

my wanting to ensure that I am providing student teachers with equal doses of what might be, could be and perhaps even should be, and what is. That is, my role, and perhaps their role, is shaped by the fine line between illusion and reality, between theory and practice.

It is also my role to provide space for student teachers to read the texts of their practice against their personal schooling texts, those texts that have been stored away in pockets of memory that ultimately will play a role in who they become as teachers. These texts are what Knowles and Cole (1994) call "personal histories" and can aid pre-service teachers in recognizing why they do what they do in their professional practice as teachers. I know about some of those texts, but more importantly I know about the genres that fill those texts from fantasy to fairy tale to political. If we acknowledge the fact that most teachers end up teaching the way they were taught, then we must acknowledge the importance of the place of personal schooling histories in teacher education. That is, providing space for student teachers to examine their personal schooling histories can be an entry point for understanding their current practice and the philosophical underpinnings of it. This suggestion implies that teacher preparation cannot be built solely on the research of theorists and experienced teachers, but must also be founded on the experiences of student teachers themselves.

One of my greatest concerns is that student teachers leave a teacher education program thinking that although they learned some interesting things, they could have become teachers without the program. I had never given voice to this concern until I

approached a second-year teacher about her interest in beginning a post-program dialogue with me. I explained my interest in following up our student teachers once they became teachers in the hopes of knowing what it was that best prepared them, what was of no use, and what we had not provided. In our discussion she told me that while she had liked the program, she did wonder whether or not she really needed it to be teaching. While I am not yet at the point of asking her to clarify this observation, I did ask her to briefly tell me what she meant. In essence, Susanna said that what was most worthwhile were small group and large group discussions. Situations when she could have been given a text and asked to study for an exam and instead had to attend class, she considered a waste of time in a teacher education program. I remembered Lara telling me that her favourite teachers had always been those who were willing to let go of the "plan" and talk about "things" and all of a sudden I had fast tracking images of spontaneous discussions and debates in our own class. Perhaps what Susanna and Lara were pointing to was the need for a space in order to voice concerns, questions, and insights in all classrooms.

We are, however, tied to a curriculum, and this is reality. We engage our students in inquiry methods to address curricular needs in more meaningful ways, and at all levels, this may be one way of providing much needed space for student's voices. Given the stories of my participants and their feelings of wanting to remain silent about their disillusionment, I am forced to consider their silenced voices. For each participant, the vow of silence sends a false message to students, parents, administrators and society in general about what it means to be a successful, dedicated and seemingly content teacher.

However, all my participants warned me that silence can only last so long. Grace left her school; Marie confronted her department head and began working as a private consultant; Sarah told me she is on the way to "burn out"; and Julia eventually left the classroom. The goal of creating a space in a teacher education program for student teacher voices is probably less challenging than creating a safe one in a "regular classroom". And yet, as a supervisor assigned to mark "teacher performance" I know that this trusted space is an illusion.

McWilliam (1989) asserts that the student teacher operates within a system that almost demands silence, silence with regards to demanding that the student teacher hide her true feelings, beliefs and personality. On an academic level I am constantly struggling with how to handle a class where the majority of students are women who often appear silenced by any number of things. I try to provide ample room for reflective writing in which I am able to address some of their concerns; my concern is helping them by creating a space where they can speak out. At the same time, I am well aware of how quickly student teachers are labelled when they do speak out and challenge the existing structures. Thus, a further point for consideration is that student teachers be invited to consider schooling as a political act, as a system shaped by authority and top-down view of pedagogy so that they might begin to better understand the "place" of a teacher within such a system. If we agree with what McWilliam says, then we need to provide a safe forum for such an exploration, a place where anger, resentment and frustration are encouraged in such a way as to help students better identify their professional concerns

without feeling they will be labelled as "complainers". Like McWilliam, my responsibility lies in trying to create situations where they can learn to work around the power structures that would oppress them. She says,

> While I must now acknowledge all the problems in the conceptualising of pre-service courses, my overwhelming concern is now helping my students to understand the power relations in which teachers work without being defeated by them. I am concerned that those who do not experience teaching as political (i.e., having to do with power relations) may suffer the "reality shock" that is understood to be experienced by first-year teachers. This often makes them abandon declared ideals and innovative possibilities in favour of "grim realism" and pupil-control ideology. These beginning teachers often have a strong moral commitment to helping others, but may be distracted from planning rigorous and meaningful sequences of learnings by a form of romantic individualism that ignores power relations and their effects. They may as a result end up the victim, despite their genuine desire to save student "victims". They may also blame themselves for failure , or crusade for change in ways that are well intentioned yet naïve. This will often be quickly pointed out by "experienced" staff members. They may feel that the answer is to work harder when they are already doing too much, and "burn out" very quickly. Or they may blame university courses in retrospect for giving them an impossible vision of teaching excellence. (p. 134)

In Through Preservice Teachers' Eyes, Knowles and Cole (1994) provide both teacher educators and preservice teachers with a variety of research activities that better prepare them for the life of a teacher. The activities are based on preservice teacher narratives they collected over a five-year period, and are arranged according to the areas and themes that come out of the concerns of preservice teachers. The authors deal with preservice teachers' disillusionment and say that often the hopes, images and expectations are shattered by their exposure to the reality of the school structure.

The authors' conclusions are certainly supported by my experiences working with preservice teachers, and I am again reminded of McWilliam's (1994) claim that student teachers are silenced within a structure that almost demands that they keep their views, ideals, and beliefs to themselves. She says that the chances of never feeling powerless are slim "given what counts as legitimate schooling" (p.134). It is only in facing the structure of schooling head on, understanding the way it works, that student teachers can be better prepared for their work as teachers. The hopes, ideals, and beliefs of preservice teachers can perhaps be saved if they are invited to consider all the implications of the work of a teacher.

We are told and we tell our student teachers that most teachers end up teaching the way they were taught. While this is not necessarily bad, it is imperative that student teachers examine their life histories as students so as to better appreciate the assumptions they carry with them when they enter teacher education programs. I am here reminded of Sally, a student teacher whose answer to "why do you want to be a teacher" was, "ever since I was little I have had this fantasy of standing on the steps of the school and looking out at the lines of school children waiting to come into their classrooms". The imagery in this is vivid and telling of the traditional structure that Sally was accustomed to. I can only wonder now if her fantasy was realized in the same genre of teaching.

It is interesting that Sally's image of being a teacher is very much like the image of teaching depicted in the drawings collected by Mitchell and Weber (1995) in that it is void of any other adults. Grace, Marie, Sarah and Julia all described what feeling isolated was like in their cases, and while "isolation" is a part of teaching that needs better exploration, certainly one conclusion we can draw is that teachers need more than hurried cups of coffee over lunch hours to develop the kinds of communities that the Grace, Marie and Julia all hinted at. Every year, during the first few weeks of class, I watch our student teachers form close knit groups. They work together, complain together, rely on one another to get them through seemingly impossible times; it is as if they form bonds that will never be broken. Having been through a similar one year intensive program, I remember well the friendships I formed, the study groups where we shared poetry over late night beers, and the parties where we philosophized about ideal systems of education. Yet, that year of intellectual probing did not carry over to my actual teaching. My first year teaching was very much like what student teachers describe: I was obsessed with what I was doing to the students, I wondered how I could deal with them. I never really considered what the students were doing to themselves. Besides, I had become separated from the group of individuals who were going through the exact same process as was I.

Perhaps it is unrealistic to think that when student teachers complete "teacher's college" they are truly prepared for teaching. Can we ever really know our dedication and drive to do or be any one thing until we have had a chance to practise in "the thick of it"? I am not in a position to say that the experiences of all successful and dedicated teachers

are similar to those of my teacher participants. However, that Grace, Marie, Sarah and Julia had a very clear notion of what it was that they wanted to be doing as teachers, and that this image came into conflict with the administrative structure, is surely a situation shared by many other teachers. I often wonder if I am being dramatic when I suggest that in some ways we abandon our student teachers when they leave our institutions. Perhaps it would be less dramatic to suggest that we may abandon a very crucial part of our own role in preparing teachers to teach in traditional structures of schooling, by not following up on our teachers who graduate. Surely they, at every level, can help inform our work so that they do not become silenced about their disillusionment.

Thus, I am struck most strongly with the notion that we must invite our students to consider the importance of the incoming images and metaphors they have of themselves as teachers. If nothing else, images and metaphors (Knowles & Cole, 1994, Johnston, 1992, Bullough, 1992, Calderhead, 1991) are one way of accessing the reasons why they may have chosen to teach and the assumptions that go along with that reasoning. When we ask student teachers to identify images and metaphors with which they associate teaching, we are asking them to consider the different experiences of their lives, their different "ways of knowing" and connecting them with who they are becoming and who they will become as teachers. It is no surprise that often when I ask student teachers to engage in this kind of activity most of the women students include "mothering" as one metaphor, which in itself is a start for reflection on the gendered notion of teaching. However it is not the initial metaphor that is of particular use to the pre-service teacher. It

is rather the continued use of this metaphor to understand and shape the work of a teacher. In the following example, Mallory, an experienced violinist, chose to talk about teaching in light of learning to play the violin.

> Well, my first stage is over. I must admit I learned a lot from the beginning to the end and I am positive I could have learned a lot more if I had stayed longer. Looking back at my three weeks I have been learning pretty much the "techniques" of teaching. It was kind of like learning the violin or how to play a piece on the violin. You jut need to get all the techniques down pat such as fingering and bowing. In teaching I think objectives, classroom management, teaching to the student's level, instruction techniques are all the "techniques" of teaching. In music you need the techniques of a piece down cold before you can really be expressive and creative. I think the same applies for teaching. Once you understand how your class works and how to address your class, you can become more creative in lesson planning. I feel that I wasn't able to be as free and creative with this class because I had not got a grasp of the technique. During the stage my technique improved, I was able to become more creative with the lessons. If I had had a couple more weeks I think I would have been able to do a lot more. I think it will be fun to start my own class so that I will be able to improve my teaching technique so I can become more creative in lesson planning.

Of equal importance is that somehow we maintain a dialogue with our student teachers when they become our colleagues. Mallory's concerns are different from those of Grace, Marie, Sarah and Julia. Indeed the notion of sharing their stories with preservice teachers is a challenging one given the extremes of their concerns. I am forced then to ask how the concerns of these four teachers differ from the concerns of student teachers and, for example, beginning teachers.

In the spring of 1997 I presented some of these narratives at the National Council of Teachers of English. Sitting in the audience were experienced teachers, teacher

educators, and two third-year teachers. At one point in the presentation these two women admitted that the workshop was somewhat disappointing for them because none of their concerns was being addressed. They both said that they had chosen teaching because they loved their subject matter but were not prepared for the classroom management that they were expected to carry out. These concerns were never raised by my teacher participants. Quite possibly, these two teachers had not considered the different roles teachers were required to play, considering only pedagogic practice of a teacher. Or perhaps the point is that each "stage" of teaching presumably has its own concerns. It seems appropriate then to include an excerpt of a letter written by a daughter to her mother, both of whom are teachers. The letter opens Cohn and Kottcamp's (1993) book Teachers : The Missing Voice in Education . "Karen" is an English teacher who, after nine years in the classroom is thinking of quitting. She tells her mother that this is hard for her to admit as she has always thought of herself as a teacher. However:

> *The money also bothers me; it just isn't commensurate with the effort I put in. My aspirations were never to be a millionaire, but this is ridiculous. To add insult to injury, when Mark and I go to parties, the response I get from others when they find out what I do is really depressing. Teaching just isn't respected anymore. And when I'm working so hard and not being appreciated it hurts! I've come home and cried because I've put so damn much of myself into a lesson and then one of the kids isn't in a good mood and gets the class going, and that's it - all that preparation down the tubes.*
>
> *I know what you're thinking, Mom. All teachers have bad days where plans go down the drain; that's part of teaching. I agree, but kids are not the same as they were when you taught. I can even see a difference since I began. I see complete apathy, lack of interest, lack of motivation! I give an assignment and the next day maybe five students have done it, always the same five.. The average kid is not like I used to be - loving school and doing all my homework. In fact, kids who are like that are laughed at.*

Getting kids to work is only part of the problem. The other part is to keep war from breaking out. With the combination of students I have, it's like walking into the United Nations, only no one gets along. To be the only peacemaker among 30 warring nations is not easy task. I actually have fist fights break out among redneck whites who hate blacks, blacks who know whites hate them, and Mexicans from migrant camps. Add to the racial and ethnic tensions, the usual adolescent skirmishes within groups, and you have the potentially explosive powderkeg I sit on each day. The first month I don't know if I taught my students anything but to respect the person sitting next to them. So much for the Dade County objectives 1-6 for English Composition! But how can they learn if they're afraid of being ridiculed or attacked?

Unfortunately, time devoted to developing tolerance and self-esteem is not understood or valued by my principal. All he cares about is good test scores so he wants every minute spent on drill and practice of basic skills by going page by page through the workbook. He also expects me to write detailed lesson plans, specifying behavioural objectives, procedures, and materials. I wrote them at first, then I rebelled. One reason – and I don't mean to sound arrogant – was that after nine years, I usually know what I am doing without writing everything down. Another was that I didn't want them to see that I wasn't always following the prescribed curriculum. But the greatest frustration was that I never got any feedback. They didn't check for content; they just checked to see if they were done. I'm already drowning in paperwork. I don't need any more secretarial tasks to take time from the substance of teaching.

What I'm agonizing over now is whether to try something else. I have considered going to law school and becoming an accountant. One of my best friends down here is an accountant and she makes twice what I do and gives, at the most, half the time. But would I really ant to work with facts and figures all day? All of this is complicated by my desire to have a baby soon. If I can't take time to clean the house, how will I ever have time to take care of a child properly? Right now, the thought of teaching for the next 20 years scares me. How did you do it? Love, Karen. (p. 6)

This letter is remarkably telling in terms of the layers of disillusionment Karen is experiencing. Karen compares on her own experience as a student to what she experiences as a teacher. What she wanted to do is not what she is now expected to do. Furthermore, what she does is not respected or valued by society at large and I am here

reminded of Grace's plea that society give teachers more recognition and less criticism. At the heart of Karen's letter is the same struggle Grace experienced.

Karen's letter is followed by a reply from her mother, who gives Karen suggestions based on her experience. Karen's reply, although grateful, points to the fact that her mothers' experiences and her own are so very different, particularly in light of how students and the traditional family have changed. However, Karen is grateful to her mother for reminding Karen to remember the good days, the good parts of teaching. Cohn and Kottcamp's analysis of this exchange of letters focuses mostly on the structural aspects of education that have remained entirely stagnant. While Karen "exemplifies much of what our nation desires from its teachers – intelligence, energy, caring, creativity, a sense of mission" (p. 11) - she is nevertheless frustrated and angry and on the verge of quitting. She questions her identity and the structure she is forced to work under. However, what the author's point out is Karen and her mother's acceptance of a structure that has not changed in the light of other changes in society. Again, my concern must be rooted in finding ways to help student teachers find ways of not being defeated by this structure.

A Call to Male Teachers

Not all teachers are female, and certainly not all student teachers are female. My focus on the myth of the ideal and good woman classroom teacher certainly allowed me to

indulge in a self-study of sorts. However what of the myths of male teachers? Do the "good and ideal" male teachers experience the same kinds of shadows as did the women participants in this study? I cannot help but wonder what those shadows are, given that those men who enter school teaching, and in particular elementary school teaching, enter a profession that was feminized over a hundred and fifty years ago. In 1947 Kaplan (in Robinson, 1981, p. 27) stated that, "men should not be asked to play nursemaid to young children". Has this thinking changed? Do male elementary teachers experience identity crises because they have chosen a profession that is associated with women? Or do they feel special? Are they treated differently by parents, administrators and students? Do successful male teachers feel disillusioned with teaching? Are they silent about their pain, frustration, anger and disillusionment? Do they feel restricted within the traditional structures of schooling in the same ways Grace, Marie, Sarah, and Julia did? While I cannot generalize about the themes that came out of this study, I hope that other women teachers like my participants might be able to read this study and say "yes, this is a story I understand". Would male teachers be able to say the same thing? Thus, one other implication of this study is the call for similar research with male teachers.

Revisiting the Myth of the Ideal Teacher

This text began with questions about reality and illusion, and on a more implicit level, it began with an examination of my role and understanding of what it means to be a

teacher educator. I turned to my childhood to locate the myth of the ideal teacher that I had always upheld, and wondered whether or not this was a myth I perpetuated, without challenge, as a teacher educator. Turning to four women who in my mind embodied this "ideal teacher" made me recognize the sacrifices that they made in order to create this illusion. They sacrificed their voices in the political arena of schooling, and largely kept their anger, disappointments and disillusionment bottled up inside. It was not surprising that another myth that I upheld as a child, that of Lucy Maud Montgomery, was to help me better understand why they may have maintained their silences, and how indeed those silences formed their shadows. What is their true self? What we see on the exterior? Or the words they have allowed me to use in this study? The answer is both. However, that such successful and dedicated women could only feel safe telling these stories on paper, certainly raises important questions about women teacher's lives.

The second part of this text highlighted two things. First it acknowledged a body of literature that has only begun to surface in the last twelve years which gives voice to women teachers who have traditionally been left out of the texts on education. I was interested in showing that the history of the feminization of teaching and those women who were key players in this overnight movement that made teaching "women's work" cast the first seemingly eternal shadow on all women teachers. Women were called to teaching based on their "natural nurturing qualities". They were supposed to engage students in rigorous intellectual pursuits, and yet benefit from teaching as it was excellent preparation for marriage. While the notion existed, and continues to exist, that teaching is

for those who "cannot", and "anyone can teach", many women did make teaching their life long work. It was to these women that I turned in the hope of better informing my practice as a teacher educator.

My task as a teacher educator requires that I acknowledge the real work of teachers, and in this there is no illusion. How can we ever truly prepare student teachers for the real work of teachers when teaching is a process? As a little girl who wanted to be a teacher, I never considered the work of a teacher outside her own classroom. My illusion was shaped by the only contact I had with my teacher, and that was usually at the side of her desk, or listening to her read from a story book. The preparation for the arduous work of a teacher is a challenging one given that the work load is not necessarily always apparent. And it is not only the workload that is not apparent. Teaching is a political act - a fact rarely admitted or appreciated.

As I concluded my study and began considering the new year and the new crop of student teachers I would be meeting, I was overwhelmed with the implications of this study for my own teaching. While I had worked out in my own mind how these narratives and their emerging themes could play a role in teacher education, bringing this knowledge to our very eager and in many cases idealistic student teachers scared me. Yet, I paused to consider that, like them, I too remain eager and idealistic about what it means to be a teacher educator. While this may perhaps be one of the privileges of this role, my own

contact with teachers and schools reminds me of the dual nature of my work, and that of our student teachers. While I grapple with illusion and reality, so do they.

As a part-time lecturer I teach methods courses in language arts. I often begin the year by telling the students that in essence we are all teachers of the language arts, and in doing so, I begin by inviting student teachers to reflect on how it was that they became "literate" and what it in fact means to be "literate". This year, however, I also shared with the students my research interests. In previous years, this conversation would come up in "by the way" interactions, and I was always met with a great deal of interest from the student teachers. While I was reluctant to share some of the personal anecdotes, I began recognizing the general interest student teachers had in this "shadowed side of teaching". Student teachers, without necessarily saying so, were telling me they recognize of the duality of their role; on the one hand, they needed to analyze, synthesize and contextualize their professional reading and their experiences as students, on the other they needed to know what it was like to be a teacher, and what it was to work in a traditional educational setting.

Just as I tell my student teachers we are all teachers of the language arts despite our subject discipline, so too am I responsible to challenge student teachers to consider the entirety of the role of the teacher. Just as I invite them to consider what it means to be literate, I must invite them to consider the question what it means to be a teacher. Through my own investigation and experience, I am able to suggest that there are a

number of ways of getting at this answer. First, we must examine the assumptions we bring with us when we decide to become teachers. Second, we must consider the place and explore the stories of those teachers who helped shape the contemporary image of the teacher. Third, we must look for the themes that come out of those stories and learn and connect them to the themes that come out of our own stories. Fourth, we must challenge ourselves to consider teaching as a political act in which change is largely governed by a hierarchical structure. In so doing, we may gain a better understanding of how to help student teachers not to become defeated or give up on their notions of what it means to be a teacher. Fifth, we must create safe spaces in which student teachers feel they can give voice to their anger, frustrations, and concerns with regards to what it means to be a teacher. Finally, in reaching out to experienced teachers and in forging links between universities and schools, perhaps we can help our student teachers find the supportive, challenging, open, and intellectual communities Grace, Marie, Sarah and Julia so desperately wanted.

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