

BECOMING THROUGH COMPOSING:  
THE ROLE OF STORYTELLING IN LEARNING TO TEACH

by

MAKENZIE KATHRYN SELLAND

B.A., Northern Arizona University, 2000

M.Ed., The George Washington University, 2003

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This dissertation entitled:  
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written by Makenzie Kathryn Selland  
has been approved for the School of Education

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Bill McGinley, Chair  
Ph.D.

---

Andy Cowell,  
Ph.D.

---

Elizabeth Dutro,  
Ph.D.

---

Kris Gutierrez,  
Ph.D.

---

Jennie Whitcomb,  
Ph.D.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

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## ABSTRACT

Selland, Makenzie Kathryn (Ph.D., School of Education)

Becoming Through Composing: The Role of Storytelling in Learning to Teach

Dissertation directed by Associate Professor William McGinley

This study examines the role of storytelling in learning to teach, exploring the stories one student teacher composed and used to make sense of daily experiences in the classroom and the ways they contributed to developing understandings of teaching. In it, I analyze how learning to teach involves storytelling, and the ways story modes and forms help create teaching lives rife with particular commitments. I asked: What stories of teaching, learning, and students emerge as student teachers make sense of daily events in a variety of discursive settings? What, and who, influences the construction of student teacher stories? And what consequences do novice teachers' constructions of teaching stories have for their work and interactions with students, especially with regard to stories of culturally and linguistically diverse students?

Drawing on narrative theory and post structural, feminist theories, I conducted a case study using narrative inquiry and ethnographic methods to examine the moment-to-moment storytelling of one student teacher across a range of informal and formal teaching and learning contexts. Data included participant observation, audio-video recording of seminars, teaching observations, teaching debriefs, triad meetings, the focal student teacher's written blog, and artifacts collected from the student teaching classroom and university coursework. Using an analytic framework that looked at story themes; discourse styles; storytelling moves; and the role of co-authors, analysis focused on narrative themes and contradictions across time and settings.

For the focal student teacher, initial story themes of agency, a desire to be open to learning in the experience, and a tendency to trouble success/failure binaries made way for conversational sense-making that often linked difficulties to a variety of possible solutions early in the semester, and a teaching story focused on instructional adaptation by mid-semester, which continued to evolve. The conceptual and practical tools available in the setting and the ways she positioned herself and was positioned by her mentors influenced the student teacher's stories. Findings also include the ways common stories and storytelling moves influenced teaching decisions and perceptions of students. Implications for teacher education are discussed.

## DEDICATION

for my parents, who made sure all my stories start with love.

for stacy, my co-author of the future.

and for the teachers who, everyday, tell stories of connection,  
meaning, and joy together with their students.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

*“Narrative is radical, creating us at the very moment it is being created.”*

-Toni Morrison

*“... narratives are shaped and re-shaped turn by turn in the course of conversation.”*

-Elinor Ochs & Lisa Capps

*“People create stories create people; or rather stories create people create stories.”*

-Chinua Achebe

Six weeks into her tenure as a student teacher, Kathleen<sup>1</sup>, the focus of this dissertation, wrote the following words in a blog she had created as a part of her participation in this study. After saying for many weeks that her students were “frustrating” due to their lack of participation in her class, she picked up her computer, and through the words she wrote, worked to make sense of some of her experiences teaching a senior literature elective in a diverse high school.

I have also been thinking about "inviting students to learn everyday". It is something that a teacher said a few weeks ago about disengaged students who won't do anything, but I have been thinking about it more in relation to the emotional reality of seeing kids in tough situations all the time. While obviously part of being a teacher is making sure our students are safe, there are many things that fall outside of that category, particularly when it is stuff that has already been documented. I'm thinking of my kids who are homeless, or who are responsible for children, or who have lost relatives to gang

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<sup>1</sup> All names in this dissertation have been changed, except my own.

violence, etc. It can definitely feel overwhelming when listed, *but I am trying to think of it* in terms of inviting them to learn... everyday. That *that* is what I have to offer, and that it is important. I think this has helped me take all the stuff that seems overwhelming in stride. Like Bill McGinley says, "I am an English teacher, and I save lives"... cheesy, but true...at least I hope so. I hope that the stuff we invite them to learn everyday can help in dealing with all the unbelievable realities of their lives—even when they seem to refuse. And that is what matters.

Multiple voices, some recent, as in the case of the teacher who mentioned “inviting students to learn everyday,” and others from the past, as in the case of her former methods course instructor who described how “English teachers save lives,” peppered Kathleen’s sense-making about this group of students, the vast majority of whom did not appear to be participating in her carefully constructed lesson plans. Weaving these voices together with her own, she composed a role for herself and her instruction in the face of circumstances that had seemed previously overwhelming and immutable. In Bakhtinian (1981) terms, her voice was “double-voiced,” using “another’s speech in another’s language” to express her own “authorial intent” (p. 324). In “trying to think of it in terms of inviting them to learn,” she carved out an agenda for her curriculum where it had previously felt obsolete, creating a narrative of action. And, perhaps most importantly, she created the possibility that her students’ “seeming refusal” might be indicative of a more complex story than she had originally considered. This small, storytelling moment, one of hundreds scattered across her student teaching experience, was not the whole story for Kathleen and her sense-making around teaching. Rather, it was one tiny piece of a sense-making constellation that, told across multiple settings and audiences, combined to make an always-evolving whole. And it is the stringing together of these moments—some large,

coherent compositions, others quick sentences asking a question—that I attempt to bring to light in this dissertation. It is the patterns, the revisions, the expansions, and the contradictions that I seek to understand more clearly, shedding light on the way one's sense of teaching, like life, is influenced, and, in many ways, made real through the narratives we weave about it.

### Narrowing the National Story of Teacher Preparation: What Do We Miss?

The national dialogue surrounding the need to improve student learning, especially for culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students, is focused on teacher quality and teacher preparation (Duncan, 2009; Obama, 2009). And as more studies confirm the deep importance of the teacher in student outcomes (e.g. Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Cochran-Smith, 2004), some noting that teachers are the most important in-school factor in student achievement, solutions abound for ways to ensure that quality teachers are standing in front of our nation's classrooms. Some seek to deregulate the process of becoming a teacher, describing university teacher preparation as a barrier to quality candidates entering the field (Podgursky, 2007) while others seek to strengthen the professional base of teacher education, developing more ways to ensure that teachers are practiced in the skills, knowledge, and beliefs that will serve them well in teaching all students effectively (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010; Cochran-Smith and Fries, 2001). I align myself with this second approach and hope, through this study, to build the body of literature that examines the learning possibilities of the student teaching experience by exploring storytelling and narrative as an important process in composing a teaching life, one that has deep implications for the process of becoming a teacher.

In addition to the call to deregulate teacher education, other reformers have focused on the importance of testing, accountability and market-based reforms to raise teacher quality and student performance, arguing that, to improve teacher performance, we must hold teachers accountable for student performance on high-stakes measures. However, these trends, like the deregulation agenda, have often come at the expense of noticing the ways that learning to teach is a complex endeavor, one that involves many social, intellectual, and political factors that test scores alone cannot fully capture (e.g. Milner, 2013; Dutton & Selland, 2012). They can also narrow the scope of school curriculums, resulting in a laser-like focus on math and reading and more time spent drilling students in practice exams, outcomes that disproportionately affect poor children (Berliner, 2007). Further, recent studies have revealed that such reforms often serve to undermine teacher professionalism (Milner, 2013) by pressuring teachers to define their value based on the ability to mechanically teach to tests, while devaluing broader yet fundamental elements of teaching. These elements include what Linda Darling-Hammond (2010) describes as the need for novices to compliment new skill sets and teacher-based knowledge with critical examinations of beliefs about students, goals of education, and the roles of teachers. Because such beliefs, developed through years immersed in classrooms and made manifest through the stories teachers tell themselves and others, continue to influence new teachers' conceptions of what counts in teaching and learning (Sleeter, 2008; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Rodgers & Sullivan, 2008), they will, consequently, also affect what teachers do in classrooms. In other words, when it comes to students' lives and academic success in schools, teachers' stories, words, and beliefs matter, and they work in tandem with the technical skills new teachers develop over time.

Further, a narrow focus on testing and accountability in the standardization of teaching is concerning because it has the potential to not only narrow measures by which teachers can be deemed proficient, but also the lenses through which teacher educators, administrators, and teachers themselves, can understand the work of education and its outcomes. As the lenses through which we can evaluate “success” grow smaller, there become fewer avenues through which to engage novices in considering their practice and its effects on students. In response to this narrowing, this dissertation sets out to travel deeply through one student teacher’s experience, focusing on her stories as an important window into how she made sense of events and made decisions about future actions (Schultz and Ravitch, 2013). Through difficulties and triumphs, small wounds and the flashes of a new idea, struggles to connect and moments of inspiration, collaborative decisions and newfound strength in a personal decision, I chronicle many of Kathleen’s daily experiences, and her stories about those experiences, through student teaching as a window into this common, yet understudied, practice and its import for our understanding of teacher growth. By delving deeply into one student teacher’s stories, I strive to tell a larger story about the narrative makeup of teacher learning, and the ways teachers are composing their “ways of being” in the classroom in conversations with us, and themselves, across a myriad of moments. Although it is only one story of thousands, through its pages, I hope to shed light on the complexity inherent in composing a teaching life, a becoming that new teachers describe in pieces—the moments between class, the debriefs with a university supervisor, the desperate moments wondering “why?” with a cooperating teacher—which then become a shifting whole on which to grow. I argue that it is here, in addition to methods classes, praxis scores, observations, and past stories of a favorite teacher, that new teachers memorialize the stories that become, influence, and create much of their reality.

## Guiding Questions

In light of these considerations, this study draws on theoretical work in narrative studies (Bruner, 1986, 1990, 2002; Nussbaum, 1995; Kearney, 2002; McAdams, 1993; Greene, 1995; Witherell & Noddings, 1991; Ochs and Capps, 2001) and feminist post-structural work (e.g. Davies, 2000; Lather, 1991, 1992) to explore the ways that learning to teach is, in part, narrative in character and to make a case for the importance of noticing how the stories teachers tell influence and shape the teachers they are continually becoming. In this, I do not seek to chronicle neatly contained teaching philosophies, although those are present and contributing factors, but rather to consider the less coherent, more informal, and often more conversational bits of stories that occur over time in a new teacher's daily work—those stories interspersed across days and weeks that take shape slowly and contribute to one's sense of purpose in the classroom. For although much has been studied regarding the use of more contained narrative constructions in the preparation of teachers, through assignments such as school history autobiographies or teaching reflections (Alsup, 2006), little has been done to consider how stories get told in brief moments during the on-the-ground work of student teaching. Thus, as I set out to begin this study, I asked the following research questions about a group of three student teachers who I supervised during their field placements:

1. What stories of teaching, learning, and students emerge as student teachers make sense of daily events in a variety of discursive settings?
2. What influences the construction of student teacher stories?
3. What consequences do novice teachers' constructions of teaching stories have for their work and interactions with students, especially with regard to stories of culturally and linguistically diverse students?

In working to answer these questions over time, my focus narrowed to one student teacher, Kathleen, whose stories tended most often toward growth and change when her classroom instruction did not go according to plan. My attention was drawn to Kathleen's emerging focus on adapting classroom instruction to meet the needs of her students, especially as this sometimes seemed to contrast with the ways other student teachers tended to focus on how students' perceived deficits reduced their ability to be instructionally creative in the classroom. In light of this, Kathleen's storytelling often seemed, to me, like the beginnings of a teaching story that represented much of the literature that describes the complex interaction of skills, beliefs, and relationships that accompanies effective teaching of all students, and specifically, culturally and linguistically diverse students. I highlight some of this literature below.

Villegas (2007) describes teachers who are effective with diverse populations of students as those who, in addition to a variety of pedagogical, diagnostic, and assessment skills, also "believe all students are capable learners who bring to school a wealth of knowledge and experiences on which to build instruction" and must "understand the connections between and among teacher beliefs about students, teacher actions in classrooms, and student outcomes" (p. 375). In other words, one characteristic of teachers who are often effective with diverse groups of students is that they make sense of their students through stories that focus on strengths rather than perceived deficiencies. Zeichner and Flessner (2009) describe such teachers as those who perceive that reality is "influenced by one's location in the social order" (p. 26), see themselves as capable of and responsible for improving students' learning and life chances, and use knowledge of students' lives in order to help them construct new learning in the classroom. Thus, effective teaching for culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students is usually defined as complex, varied, and reliant on a strategically distributed understanding of

one's own positionality and beliefs, historical context, community affiliation, as well as a deep knowledge of adolescent development and inquiry-producing teaching strategies. Such teachers believe that their students are capable, and organize instruction that allows this to be true in the classroom. They tend, also, to focus on diagnostic rather than prescriptive approaches to creating instruction (Darling-Hammonds, 2006). In other words, this way of understanding students challenges us as teacher storytellers to compose far more complex and contingent stories about ourselves and our students.

In my daily work with Kathleen, I noticed that a spirit of hope, persistence, and complexity tended to pervade many of Kathleen's stories about what happened in her classroom and what she wanted to do the next day. Further, she often focused on finding and capitalizing on students' strengths, even when frustrated by very real roadblocks. As this became clearer as the semester proceeded, my dissertation started to become a way to not only understand generally how stories influence who teachers become, but, more specifically, how Kathleen's "ways of telling" about experiences engendered slow, positive change over time, a classroom community of rigor and respect, and, eventually, increased academic success for her students. Thus, in these pages, I consider Kathleen's stories of daily experiences in student teaching, and the ways they provided shape and form to her teaching life. I examine the ways they grew and changed in response to events, and the ways she worked together with her cooperating teacher, Cayla, to bring her teaching life into being through story. Further, I analyze some of the ways her stories manifested in classroom decisions, and the links between her telling about something, and then acting from that space. Below, I share some background that sets this local story in a larger context.

## Navigating the Storied World of Teaching, and Telling Different Stories

As noted earlier, this study is partly a response to a political climate that often seeks to compose teaching in overly simplistic, technical terms, often seeking the one packaged curriculum, the one test, or the one formula that will ensure that all students learn the same things in the same way. Through it, I respond to the rush to develop prescriptions to improve teachers' practice and increase student outcomes by taking time to dwell on the ways that teaching is, in many ways, a narrative creation (Greene, 1995; Witherell & Noddings, 1991), whether or not we explicitly acknowledge it as such. Narratives instruct (Kearney, 2002), identities shape practice (Jones, 2010), and stories provide "advice on what we might do" (Witherell & Noddings, 1991, p. 1) and thus, they are critical tools for engaging social change and reflective and effective teaching practice (Greene, 1995). But this is not only important because of the current political climate that seeks to simplify teachers' stories; it is especially important because new teachers also enter a profession in which almost all members of society have had experiences and almost all have a stake. Thus, the practice of teaching is populated with myriad stories—some new, many historical—about what teachers and schools should be and do. These stories are relevant because they have the power to both transform and constrain the ways teachers are able to imagine themselves and their profession.

Further, novices have had their own extended experiences in schools, often called the "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975), by the time they meet with two new ways of composing the profession, that of their teacher education program and that of the practicing teachers who they come in contact with through field experiences. Thus, many voices provide ready-made narratives to new teachers making sense of a new role. These voices can expand notions of what it means to teach, rendering the story of teaching more complex than new

teachers' original conceptions might have been. These voices can also simplify the complexity of the profession and gloss over deeply dilemmatic aspects of decision-making involved in both the day-to-day and overarching work of teaching (Rosaen & Florio-Ruane, 2008). Thus, it is important to consider stories new teachers tell, as well as stories that make up the canon of what is available to them as they tell.

Deborah Britzman (1991) describes simplistic voices as “cultural myths,” stories about what teachers should be and do that render the work of teaching straightforward in the face of ever-growing complexity. Schools exist within a world that includes rapidly changing technologies, global capitalism, and the constant presence of media, the Internet, and advertising. Today's schools are also “struggling to contend with cultural and linguistic diversity . . . shifting family shapes, mobile communities and new, for many teachers unrecognizable, forms of identity” (Luke, 2004, p. 1425). With all of these complications, cultural myths surrounding teachers help to uphold a larger cultural myth about schools, that they can “unit[e] the nation through a common curriculum made safe from any controversy” (p. 200). Britzman (1991) notes that it is not surprising that these social norms and cultural myths persist as they provide “... a semblance of order, control, and certainty in the face of the uncertainty and vulnerability of the teacher's world” (p. 222). In the face of public scrutiny and political pressure, traditional ideals of teachers and teaching can be comforting for teachers and other interested parties. It is soothing to think of the “teacher as expert” (p. 228) or of learning as a transmission that can pass from teacher to student in a fluid progression. Such stories, cultivated through a societal-wide familiarity with schools and the public work of teachers, can be comforting, but this does not diminish their ability to hinder the creation of stories about teaching that can effectively handle the complexity inherent in the endeavor of teaching (Britzman, 1991). How can teachers have

“control” of the classroom and also inspire autonomy and creativity in their students? How do they incorporate attention to standardized curricula, tests, and benchmarks while also tailoring instruction to the unique students in their classes? Questions such as these are difficult to answer and demand complex thinking, deep reflective skills, and a propensity toward imagination, or in other words, the ability to create “what if” spaces from the spaces of “what already is” (Bruner, 1986).

These simplified constructions of teaching lives are accomplished in language. For instance, as Rosaen and Florio-Ruane (2008) note, language practices that seem innocuous, naming a reader “struggling,” for instance, in order to provide him or her extra assistance, can construct an image of deficit rather than difference for such a student. Binaries such as this one—readers “struggle” or they do not, students are “at risk” or they are not—can work to simplify and make a teacher’s work more conceptually manageable; however, such language practices can also hide the complexity of how people learn or the stories of real students and teachers in actual classrooms; thus, precluding the development of tailored solutions that might be more applicable in a variety of situations. Careful attention to how language and story shape practice in teaching is important work for teacher educators who guide those newest to the profession in talking about schools, students, teaching, and learning (Rosaen & Florio-Ruane, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010).

### Field Experiences: A Crucial Role in Telling Stories

However, different storylines have been notoriously difficult to bring to fruition, which demonstrates the power of the canonical in stories that populate the profession. Field experiences have long been considered a crucial part of the process of developing teachers’ professional

identities (Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010), testing the utility of practices learned in coursework, exploring the changing and more complex nature of teaching in our world today, and engaging in meaningful experiences to interact, share, and learn about students who are different from themselves (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Howard & Aleman, 2008). However, as teacher educators, we continue to lament the ways such field experiences are often characterized by a divide from the university coursework they are created to embody (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985; Zeichner, 2010). In these placements, novices can be socialized by underprepared cooperating teachers who may not hold high expectations or create robust instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse students (Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010; Sleeter, 2008). If new teachers do not see effective teachers of diverse students in action, they can dismiss what they've learned in their coursework as inapplicable in the "real-world" of teaching (Floden & Meniketti, 2005; Wilson et al., 2001; Kennedy, 1999).

Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann (1985) describe the state of this disconnect as the "two-worlds pitfall," a situation where "doing well at the university" may bring "rewards that may not have much to do with success in teaching" (p. 59). Couple this with the "pressure to adapt to the way things are in schools," a way that often resonates with candidates personal notions of how school and learning should look due to their own experiences as students, and we can see how "academic learning is liable to evaporate, regardless of its worth" (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985, p. 59). They go on to describe the need for teacher educators to guide the connections novice teachers make when experiencing insights from each "world" and "considering the uses of knowledge in teaching" (p. 59). Without help making explicit connections between these two worlds, novices can be left believing that school classrooms are where they learn "practical information" while university courses dwell in social justice and

transformative notions that are great in theory, but difficult to implement. By allowing these connections to go unmade, university instructors can undermine their own powerful and important aims.

In response, many creative solutions have been offered to bridge this persistent divide. Concepts such as residency models and teaching fellows programs have been designed to develop more coherence between the multiple sites of learning to teach and make the shift to new teaching practices more possible for the novices who participate in them (Solomon, 2009; Bryk et al., 2010). However, these programs are still not where the vast majority of our nation's teachers are prepared (Labaree, 2008). Thus, if we want teachers to become better teachers of diverse groups of students and to design new forms of classroom practice in response to a changing world, we need to consider how we can not only fill their toolboxes and imaginations, but also how they make sense of their efforts to implement those ideas on the ground in field experiences. For instance, how do new understandings of race and culture “hold up” when a new teacher is faced with the complexity of classroom life in the student teaching experience? How do new teachers make meaning of the frustrations and joys of designing daily instruction for real students? And how are such frustrations and joys taken up in the conversational, informal storytelling of their experiences to different audiences? In essence, we need to consider the stories that are available in the space of student teaching and the calls to action embedded in those stories. It is this that I attempt in this dissertation, with the hopes that by examining daily storytelling of one new teacher and the ways it influenced classroom life, I can shed light on tools we can provide to new teachers, in the spaces where we have influence, to encourage them to keep the meaning-making that they do through daily storytelling a space where powerful and meaningful scripts of teaching and learning are made possible.

## Organization of Dissertation

To explore these ideas, my dissertation is organized in the following ways. In Chapter Two, I describe the conceptual framework that animated my study, showing the ways narrative, poststructural, and feminist theoretical traditions provided useful conceptual tools to explore the themes, contradictions, and consequences of Kathleen's storytelling across the semester. Chapter Three situates the study in the context of field experiences writ large in teacher education, examining the ways that attention to narrative inquiry and pedagogies not only highlights traditional disconnects between the field and university in teacher education, but also offers lenses to connect those experiences productively as new teachers learn and grow in multiple contexts. Chapter Four outlines my method of inquiry, including my major methodological tools, my research design, and the ways they align with my conceptual framework. I share my findings in Chapters Five and Six, exploring, first, many of the stories Kathleen entered student teaching telling, and describing the setting of her student teaching and the influential relationship she developed with her cooperating teacher, Cayla (Chapter Five), and then telling a chronological story of Kathleen's experiences, and her stories about those experiences with one class in particular, a senior elective called Young Adult Novels (YAN), across the semester. In this, I map Kathleen's stories onto some of the changes that occurred in that class over time (Chapter Six). Finally, in Chapter Seven, I consider the implications of Kathleen's story for larger questions regarding the design of teacher education spaces, and discuss limitations and concluding questions of my study.

### Autobiographical Note

Finally, I'd like to share a few pieces of my own teaching background that animate my desire to tell the stories I describe in this dissertation. Fresh from a year-long intensive teaching Masters program in Washington, D.C., my first teaching job was as a 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher at a publically-funded, college-preparatory, charter boarding school. Our stated mission was to prepare traditionally underserved students for college success, and to do that, the school boarded its mostly African-American students during the week as part of a life-skills curriculum. Armed with transformative ideas of social justice from my Masters program as well as the Americorps-type volunteer experience I had completed after college, I set out to change the world in my classroom. Fellow teachers and I, along with parents and administrators, were on a mission to make sure our students went to college, and we worked hard to make it happen. The majority of my students came from low socioeconomic status homes, but they also came from homes where parents were actively engaged in seeking out an excellent education for their children. Teachers, in turn, were willing to work long hours, fill multiple roles, become teacher researchers, collaborate with each other, and honor student identities in order to support the mission. Our school had truly good intentions from both students and staff, and yet, when I was there, it was failing to retain the majority of its students after junior high. Though almost all who stayed through graduation went on to college, I continue to wonder about those who left us before the end. To this day, I wonder about the ways we enacted our sense of mission through a set of sometimes prescriptive stories, and the very real students and teachers who lived in our classrooms that were sometimes left out of the institutional stories from which we worked.

In my classroom, I was struggling to meld the best practices I had learned in graduate school with the very real students in front of me. I had read and embraced Lisa Delpit (1988), but

now I was personally faced with my own inadequacies as a white teacher of African-American students. For instance, many of my students had attended schools where direct instruction and strict classroom management had been the norm, and thus, my desire to enact practices such as “writing workshops” without addressing the experiences my students came to the table with was problematic. Finding the balance between teaching “the basics” and all that those words imply about classroom management, and teaching creative, inquiry-based lessons was a continual challenge in that first year. Needless to say, I had many difficult moments and made many mistakes, and I know that I created difficult moments for some of my students. I remember the very real desire, in those moments, to blame some students for their perceived shortcomings rather than turning a lens back on myself to consider how I could, and should, change my curriculum and instructional practices. The collaborative teaching environment at my school was designed to help me stay in the story of teaching I had originally intended to write, and thus, I was more often than not prompted to consider my own part to play in making the classroom a safe and enjoyable community in which everyone could learn. However, there were students who I continued to compose in more negative ways. These were the students I sent out of the room too often for behavior, or was uncomfortably happy when they didn’t show up to class. And I remember that no one ever questioned *my* classroom behavior when those students were sent to the principal’s office, only theirs. My narrative of those students was seldom questioned, seldom complicated.

Consequently, I am left, all these years later, considering the very real consequences for students when we tell stories about them in school environments rife with power differentials between adults and students. As I can attest from personal experience, teachers’ stories matter, and I want to know more about, and, in some ways, remind my former self, how to influence the

telling of stories that describe students in complex ways. I want to tell stories that keep them in class, stories that work to build relationships with their unique beings, and stories that help teachers teach from places of connection. I want to know how we can stay, more often, in the realm of stories that create change and positive experiences and outcomes for all students.

I share these experiences to describe some of the ways my own memories influence my telling of Kathleen's experiences with certain emphases and, certainly, with a sense of urgency. In this, I have most likely missed things that are important, and I have dwelt in some spaces longer than she might were she writing these words. In essence, I have told her story in light of my own, and, in some ways, in light of the changes I wish I could make to it.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: Narrative Meaning-Making, Interactional Positioning, and The Power of Language as a Constituting Force

The conceptual framework of this study combines narrative and post-structural feminist theories in order to better understand the ways stories function for new teachers. I use narrative theory to examine the storytelling spaces of learning to teach where meaning is made as experiences are sifted through words (Bruner, 1986, 1990, 2002; Nussbaum, 1995; Kearney, 2002; McAdams, 1993; Greene, 1995; Witherell & Noddings, 1991; Ochs and Capps, 2001). I employ post-structural theory, including positioning theory, to analyze the ways storytelling is influenced and partially constructed through enmeshment in socially constructed categories, and norms, roles, and positions that often rest on binary modes of thought (Davies, 2000; Lather, 1991; Foucault, 1983). Finally, I utilize feminist theories to consider how to use the research platform to design and study instances of social organization that seek to create more equity amongst social groups (Reinharz, 1992; Weiler, 2001; Coffey & Delamont, 2000; Lather, 1991; Davies, 2000; Conklin, 2008).

In the following chapter, I begin by describing characteristics of narratives, illuminated by narrative theory, that have import for my analysis of Kathleen's storytelling: first, the power of narratives to help us make sense of our lives; next, the ways personal narratives are influenced by our situatedness in societal and cultural locations; and, finally, the range of narrative forms, from linear stories that cohere around one meaning to contingent stories that dwell in alternative

possibilities. Finally, I highlight pieces of post-structural theories, positioning theory, and feminist theory that compliment and deepen these theoretical understandings of narrative, and assist in providing robust theoretical tools for analyzing Kathleen's stories of student teaching.

### Narrative Theoretical Traditions

Theorists across disciplines, including cultural psychology (Bruner, 1986, 1990), psychology (McAdams, 1993, 2006, 2008; Bauer et al., 2008), philosophy (Kearney, 2002), linguistic anthropology (Ochs & Capps, 1997, 2001; Wortham, 2001), education (Witherell & Noddings, 1991; Greene, 1995), English (Eakin, 1999, 2008), and law (Nussbaum, 1995, Bruner, 2002), cohere around the idea that narrative is an essential process through which people construct meaning and make sense of their experiences in the world. Narrative plays a central role in the formation of a self and in the “construction, transmission, and transformations of cultures” (Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Human beings are storytellers, and Bruner (2004) argues that we seem to have, “No other way of describing 'lived time' save in the form of narrative” (p. 692). We often make sense of our lives through telling about them, and we use this capacity of storytelling to turn contradictory experiences into cohesive, although evolving, narratives. Our ability, and often, our need, to tell stories helps us make both our own lives and the actions of others comprehensible, and renders our stories useful in deciding upon future actions (Bruner, 1986).

However, narrative compositions of life events are not constructed without tension. Ochs and Capps (2001) describe the conflict narrators feel between telling coherent narratives that sum up life experiences neatly and paying homage to the multiple perspectives, reasons, and meanings that an event could signify. They describe how these two tendencies in narrating

experience, “to display a coherent logic of events and ... to probe alternative logics,” have consequences for the way we consider and study narrative. Further, the way we tell the story of an event has import for the way we encounter the world and the terms by which we evaluate our experience of it. For example, the ways people describe “their own actions and others’ actions, how they attribute responsibility for events, how they describe their own and others’ decision-making processes” (Ahearn, 2012, p. 284) can affect how they make sense of agency in general and their own agency in the world. Bruner (2004) describes the importance of “telling” life narratives in this way, saying,

eventually the culturally shaped cognitive and linguistic processes that guide the self-telling of life narratives achieve the power to structure perceptual experience, to organize memory, to segment and purpose-build the very ‘events’ of a life. In the end, we *become* the autobiographical narratives by which we ‘tell about’ our lives. And given the cultural shaping to which I referred, we also become variants of the culture's canonical forms. I cannot imagine a more important psychological research project than one that addresses itself to the ‘development of autobiography’—how our way of telling about ourselves changes, and how these accounts come to take control of our ways of life. (pp. 694-5)

While I acknowledge that “perhaps it is idealism; perhaps a manifestation of ethnocentric biases, or an advantaged viewpoint of a privileged social class” (Ochs & Capps, 1997), it is striking that so many traditions describe the capacity to narrate as one that helps human beings construct an organized “self.” Through narrative means, we can weave together the “inside,” such as our memories and feelings, and the “outside,” such as the models of self available through cultural expectations (Bruner, 2002). Further, by knitting life narratives together, we engage in a process of connecting past, present, and future events as we draw from a variety of

possibilities to shape our worlds. Thus, guided in their construction by societal norms, cultural practices, historical context, and personal circumstance, narratives help us situate our daily experiences against a backdrop of human intention. Through the process, we can assess ourselves and others, justify actions and events, and make sense of what happens in light of communal ideas. Pushing against, revising, and/or fitting within those cultural expectations through daily storytelling makes way for larger life philosophies, though always malleable, to emerge (Ochs & Capps, 1997; Eakin, 2008). And although narrative processes do not entail an uncovering of an “essential” self, through their constant construction and reconstruction in daily use, narrative compositions help us meet the needs of the situations we encounter (Bruner, 2002), take ideological stances, and importantly, aid in “dealing with surprising, disturbing, and unexpected events” (Razfar, 2012). The stories we tell, and the forms our stories take, matter for the way we see, evaluate, and interact with the world.

New events interact with our ever-evolving narrative in novel ways, encouraging us to revise our stories either subtly or drastically, continue them in kind, or perhaps expand them in new directions (Bruner, 2000). Thus, narrative constructions of selves happen in use and are not static depictions. We tell stories, we act, and we revise our stories to enmesh new experiences within larger stories. In this way, our daily lives are accompanied by an ongoing set of meaning-making devices. The ways we tell, which often vacillate between the desire to create one coherent storyline and the drive to consider the diverse meanings of our stories (Ochs & Capps, 1997), have significance for what we do in the future.

## Telling “Within” and Telling “To”

Storytelling does not happen in a vacuum. We weave stories based on our cultural, societal, and personal positions, and we use cultural canons of previous stories as the raw material for narratives we tell about ourselves. Further, people tell stories with a perceived or real audience in mind, and are positioned and position themselves while telling narratives. In essence, we tell *to* other people and/or *in light of* a backdrop of societal and personal expectations. This “audience,” as well as historic and societal voices, exerts influence over the space of telling (Wortham, 2001; Razfar, 2012).

Bakhtin (1981) describes the ways our language is never completely new because we live amidst a cacophony of diverse and contradictory voices from which our own ideas and language take shape. Each utterance that “lives and takes shape...is dialogized heteroglossia” (p. 272), meaning that what we say is always a new compilation of what has been said before. Through this process, we undergo an “ideological becoming” through “the medium of the surrounding ideological environment” (Bakhtin, 1978, in Ball and Freedman, 2004, p. 6). Kristeva calls this idea “intertextuality,” where “texts and ways of talking refer to and build on other texts and discourses” that are available to the speaker (Johnstone, 2008, p. 164). In this process, Bakhtin (1981) sees the “role of the other” as “critical to our development,” for “the more choice we have of words to assimilate, the more opportunity we have to learn” (p. 6). He further states that “with whom, in what ways, and in what contexts we interact will determine what we stand to learn” (p. 6). It is through the struggle with discourses of others that we find our own places to stand, and create the ideological grounding that guides our view of self and the world. Accordingly, new teachers cannot create possibilities and weave narratives of a teaching self that are completely new. Rather, they piece together teaching stories from their enmeshment in available narratives.

As student teachers begin to establish their “own place to stand” during student teaching, Bakhtin’s notion of authoritative and internally persuasive discourses can inform this “becoming” if we see cultural myths and scripts that circulate in society about teaching as one example of an authoritative discourse. For Bakhtin (1981), authoritative discourses “demand that we acknowledge [them], that we make [them] our own . . . we encounter [them] with [their] ‘authority already fused to [them]’” (p. 342). Authoritative discourses come to us as “prior” discourses; already acknowledged in the past, ready to be transmitted. For instance, teachers are often constructed as “experts” and students as vessels, (Britzman, 1991), whereas some students are named as “gifted” while others are called “at risk,” (Rosaen & Florio-Ruane, 2008). Thus, cultural myths about who teachers and students should be are often one type of authoritative discourse that invites teachers to assimilate binary conceptions of a teaching life. In the creation of a teaching self, the authoritative voices available for assimilation are often those that dichotomize complex issues that educators face.

Internally persuasive discourses, on the other hand, are discourses that are “affirmed through assimilation” and “tightly interwoven with ‘one’s own word’” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 345). The structure of this kind of discourse is not “finite,” but rather, “open,” offering “ever newer ways to mean” in each new context that “dialogize it” (p. 346). Hence, we tell our stories not only “within” a framework of societal and cultural norms, but also “to” real and perceived audiences who engage with our stories in unique ways. *How*, and in what context, authoritative discourses are met and internally persuasive discourses are formed is of utmost importance. The context of the encounters can allow for “the free and creative development of another’s word” through dialogue with the other, or it can lose this sense of openness. And even though “language itself is inherently and potently dialogic, social situations are frequently not”

(Greenleaf and Katz, in Ball and Freedman, 1998, p. 174). Indeed, the expectations, norms, and rules that accompany even casual conversations in student teaching can limit or expand the way student teachers interact with ideas and tell stories about what happened in the classroom.

Similarly, Wortham (2001) describes how “narrative discourse positions narrators and their audiences interactionally,” and that “any given utterance can position speakers in various ways depending on the particulars of the context it appears in” (p. 17). Razfar (2012) describes that narratives “should be viewed as situated and mediated by the interactional positioning of ‘narrators’ and ‘hearers’” (p. 65). The social situations in which we tell our stories, and the positions afforded us in those settings, affect the ways stories develop. For instance, they can allow questioning and offer multiple reasons for experiences, they can demand and force one particular narrative above all others, and/or they can range between these dialogic and authoritative forms. Thus, teacher educators should consider the context of storytelling and the forms of discourse that student teaching situations afford, as these storytelling tools *can be*, but are not always, organized to help bring multiple perspectives to bear on the force of authoritative discourses and provide a more pliable context with which to encounter cultural “myths” of teaching.

### Polished Narratives and Rough Drafts

Not only do we only tell stories “within” cultural settings and “to” local and perceived audiences, we also engage in a variety of narrative compositions, ranging from quick conversations with a trusted peer to more formal, larger stories that “sum up” a series of events into more coherent verbal performances. Razfar (2012) describes the range as one from “performative” to “emergent” narrative constructions, and Ochs (2004) describe this range through the following practices:

Narrative Practice 1 typically has one active co-teller, relates a highly tellable experience, is relatively detached, contains a linear plot line, and has a certain moral stance.

Narrative Practice 2 commonly employs multiple active co-tellers, relates a moderately tellable experience, is embedded in ongoing activity, has an indeterminate plot line, and contains an uncertain, shifting moral stance. (p. 276)

Although both forms of narrative provide meaning and sense-making opportunities, Ochs and Capps (2001) describe how a desire to understand narrative should compel us to go beyond the types of stories that narrative scholarship has traditionally studied: those Type 1 practices that share a “temporal progression of events” and include “a plot line that encompasses a beginning, a middle, and an end, convey a particular perspective, and are designed for a particular audience who apprehend and shape its meaning” (p. 57). They argue that it is in daily conversations—the Type 2 practices that are often less coherent, less polished, and often cross narrative boundaries to intersect with other discourse forms—that narrators grapple with unresolved life events and conversations that take unexpected turns. These types of narratives, although less discernible by a recognizable structure, can more readily allow narrators to collaboratively explore multiple and contradictory meanings (McAdams, 1993). And although there is always the possibility that collaborative tellings might facilitate “status quo” interpretations of narrated experiences, everyday conversational narratives remain spaces where narrators are often introduced to and can take new positions.

Although research has traditionally privileged Type 1 narratives over Type 2 narratives (Ochs & Capps, 2001; Ochs, 2004), *both* are important theoretical tools in this study. For instance, I explored the ways conversational, everyday narratives existed together with more formal narrative constructions, and often influenced them, focusing on the ways different

narrative forms interacted to influence teacher growth and knowledge in student teaching. When we focus solely on the finished products new teachers create as evidence of a teacher's viewpoints, beliefs, and possible actions in the classroom, we can miss out on the sense-making that occurs in less formal spaces long before ideas are memorialized in written form. In this dissertation, I push on divides in the literature between formal and conversational narratives by exploring the links between them and the ways they inform each other.

### Storytelling That Opens Possibilities

At this point, I have explored the ways that narrative compositions tie together past, present, and future actions into meaningful stories that help us make sense of our lives; the ways that narrative constructions are influenced by our cultural, societal, and personal locations; the ways that narratives position us interactionally as we tell stories to real and perceived audiences; and the ways narratives do not all “look” the same, running the gamut between unfinished rough drafts told in conversation to larger narrative performances that sum up multiple experiences. In this last section considering narrative theory, I highlight the ways storytelling has the potential to help us “see” new possibilities from what once seemed normalized, and engage multiple perspectives—some, perhaps, different from our first inclination.

Bruner (1986) posits two general modes of thought that dominate human thinking and meaning making: the paradigmatic mode and the narrative mode. In contrast to the paradigmatic mode, which uses facts and objectivity to seek logical answers to complex questions of existence, the narrative mode encourages us make meaning by using our capacity to be reflexive and to “traffic in human possibilities rather than in settled certainties” (p. 26). Considering the ways language not only transmits information, but constitutes knowledge and affects what we

see as possible as we construct our “selves,” the ability to understand which mode we are using has a direct impact on our awareness of the possible number of stances available through which we can act. Narrative can help us to re-see that which we think we know, and provide a mechanism to cut open “reality” and examine it from different perspectives, rethinking our prior convictions. In this way, the narrative mode can work to engender possibility (Bruner, 2002), leading us into the “might be, could be” realm of action rather than remaining in the “what is” (Bruner, 1986) of our daily reality.

When we make meaning in the narrative mode, we consider events through multiple lenses, working to create multiple meanings from complex events. This type of sense-making is useful in considering how to design teacher education spaces that encourage effective teaching for linguistically, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse youth. If educators seek to alter current systems of education (Villegas, 2007), and make them more equitable for often-underserved students, it is important to use language that invites new possibilities. Bruner (1986) notes,

The language of education, if it is to be an invitation to reflection and culture creating, cannot be the so-called uncontaminated language of fact and ‘objectivity.’ It must express stance and must invite counter-stance and in the process leave place for reflection, for metacognition. It is this that permits one to reach higher ground, this process of objectifying in language or image what one has thought and then turning around on it and reconsidering it. (p. 129)

And yet, only certain manifestations of narrative modes become critical tools that help us examine what appears “natural” through a variety of perspectives and rethink prior convictions. In what manifestations does the narrative mode work to engender new possibilities (Bruner,

2002)? Narrative's formal form, the novel, provides some insight. Although many novels tend to develop a linear plot line from what might have been a multiplicity of meanings, there are other literary and historical narratives that cast events as "ambiguous, conflictual, unstable, subject to constant revision, [and] perhaps even unknowable" (Ochs & Capps, 2001, p. 5). In particular, Russian novelists, such as Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Musil, radically changed literary narrative by capturing the indeterminacy of human lives, and through their writing, strived to more closely resemble the "contingent quality of human experience" (p. 6). Bruner (1986) describes novels such as these as concerned with "finding" problems rather than "solving" problems, and with "plight," rather than success (p. 20). Thus, they engage readers in considering distant dilemmas that yet have some resonance with their own experiences. Within these plights, literary texts "subjunctivize reality" (p. 26), leaving enough room in the text for the reader's imagination to fill in gaps with personal understandings. These texts invite us to fuse our own subjective reality with the rendering of reality in the text, making new possibilities and perspectives available. This can enable a deep sense of the complexities that are possible when we consider all of human action, and can help render others' actions, which might at first seem strange, more comprehensible. It works because it uses the "stuff" of the world that we are immersed in, yet creates new possibilities from it (Bruner, 2002). Ochs and Capps (2001) argue that informal, conversational narratives have similar potential.

Therefore, certain types of novels, just like certain types of narrative conversations, are tools that help readers *create* meanings rather than *holding* meanings within their pages and words. For instance, Nussbaum (1995) tells us that "literary thinking is subversive," and allows us "to imagine nonexistent possibilities, to see one thing as another and one thing in another, to endow a perceived form with a complex life" (p. 4). She describes how novels have the ability to

help us to empathize and become a more moral citizenry who are capable of relating to each other with more kindness and justice. Novels, and novelistic thinking of this sort, can invite a tangible emotional response and attentiveness that calls us to act in response to injustice through the use of imagination. A novelistic sensibility in reading the world can help us to empathize with others, to re-make them in us, and can also engage the imaginative muscle toward the constant reconfiguration of a world that has become normalized. Kearney (2002) describes how our sensibilities are enhanced when we return to the real world from the story world. The story world can be a vibrant tool of critical transformation, enhancing our ability to see problems where normative discourses had previously hidden them from view, and become practiced in the ability to fill in the gaps with new possibilities. Witherell and Noddings (1991) describe the power of narratives to be a “springboard for ethical action” (p. 8) in education as they provide the opportunity to reflect on experiences in ways that illuminate the “contextual dimensions of human actors” and lead to new insights about teachers’ professional practice. Maxine Greene (1995) refers to this capability as the power of imaginative thought or “the realm of pure possibility” (p. 38). Imagination, spurred by encounters with the arts, has the power to “disclose the ordinarily unseen, unheard, and unexpected,” rendering it available for us consider. In doing this, we “see our givens as contingencies,” and have the opportunity to “posit alternative ways of living and valuing and ... [making] choices” (p. 23). For her, the task of teaching is to devise situations where students move from their habitual ways of thinking in order to “consciously undertake a search” (p. 24) that might move them beyond previous notions. I argue that attending to the form our stories take in daily conversation is one avenue to realize that goal.

In these forms of narratives, we leave behind the need to prescribe our stories to the confines of a pre-defined, linear arc, and become open to improvising our stories and lives to

meet the challenges of new situations. Although more formal drafts of stories do arise, they are not set in stone, rather becoming useful meaning-making devices as we move through situations. Bateson (1989) describes this as a process of composing stories “by improvisation, discovering the shape of our creation along the way, rather than pursuing a vision already defined” (p. 1). She argues that human beings are often “stuck” in the idea that lives must take an orderly path free of problems to be defined as successful. This idea of neat, predefined lives has been handed down through cultural and societal norms. However, ascribing to these types of narratives can keep us from improvising in generative ways, especially in the face of an increasingly complex world. Instead, Bateson argues, stories that explore the “creative potential of interrupted and conflicted lives,” can help us compose lives that have central commitments that are continually redefined and more appropriate to a world that is changing. For new teachers, especially, this form of storytelling seems a powerful way to combat pervasive “myths of teaching” that keep new teachers from exploring new ways of being in the classroom as they strive to meld their teaching lives to societal narratives of who they should be.

I highlight these narrative forms, not only because they provide robust tools for my analysis of Kathleen’s compositions throughout student teaching, but also because they highlight ways to compose teaching lives that could serve to challenge scripts of teaching and learning that have not always served diverse groups of students well (Sykes, 2010). I now describe ways post-structural and feminist theories compliment narrative theory in my analysis.

## Post-Structural Theories

There are many elements of post-structural and feminist theory that compliment narrative theories' conceptions of stories as told within and against a backdrop of cultural and societal norms and ways of being. For instance, Deborah Britzman (1991) describes how

The story of learning to teach begins actually much earlier than the time one first decides to become a teacher. The mass experience of public education has made teaching one of the most familiar professions in this culture. Implicitly, schooling fashions the meanings, realities, and experiences of students' thus those learning to teach draw from their subjective experiences constructed from actually being there. They bring to teacher education their educational biography and some well-worn and commonsensical images of the teacher's work. In part, this accounts for the persistency of particular worldviews, orientations, dispositions, and cultural myths that dominate our thinking and, in unintended ways, select the practices that are available in educational life. (p. 27)

Thus, the work of becoming a teacher involves navigating these worldviews, and rendering them "not normal" in order to assess their utility. The post-structural tradition focuses on de-normalizing and deconstructing the ideas we take for granted (Davies, 2000; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000; Lather, 1991). Accordingly, it provides a strong lens with which to understand the ways language constitutes reality and the way that dominant discourses, when left unexamined, shape what and who we see as "normal," often reifying systems which concentrate power within historically dominant groups. This is often done through the imposition of "binary forms of thought" (Davies, 2000, p. 134) that concentrate essential traits in dualist opposites such as student/teacher, masculine/feminine, or strong/weak. Such binary constructions concentrate power in the half of the binary that holds the most social capital (Bourdieu, 1989), and provide

little room for constructions that embrace multiple and contradictory selves, ideas, or understandings of social worlds. They serve to keep institutions running in traditional ways as people grow to understand their “place” in the hierarchy of things, and act accordingly, while power becomes continually concentrated in certain roles and becomes less and less examined. Thus, we forget that people “choose”—although deeply influenced by societal pressures and material concerns—to comply with these roles. Although this choosing does not always have negative effects, by forgetting that current social norms are only one way to construct the world rather than the “natural” way the world is constructed, we can preclude other possibilities for designing the contexts of our lives. These redesigns could help to create more equitable relationships between members of society, and in the case of teaching and schools, could enhance student learning. Yet reified worldviews are often left unexamined and unproblematized in teacher learning, leaving new teachers, even those who might wish to change systems, relying on culturally engrained stories when making sense and learning from their experiences in schools.

In this tradition, language is understood as “the most powerful constitutive force shaping what we understand as possible and what we desire within those possibilities” (Davies, 2000, p. 134). Therefore, personal agency lies “in the reflective awareness of the constitutive power of language” (p. 134). Accordingly, this tradition makes way for the critical examination of binaries in language and offers new teachers a powerful tool toward equity. Such a tool has the potential to make visible the ways language constructs reality, and can help new teachers “see the constitutive process,” “read the texts of their ‘selving,’” “look at the contradictions between discourses (and not reject them solely on those grounds),” and “play endlessly with the discursive possibilities that have been made observable through poststructuralist analysis” (p.

137). Analyzing language practices engenders power over them. This is an important tool for a profession replete with powerful guiding stories that prescribe certain ways of being and doing.

Complimenting my focus on the interactional and co-authored nature of conversational stories, positioning theory assumes that identities are made and re-made through ongoing, dynamic social interactions. Davies and Harré (1990) define positioning as

the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced storylines. There can be interactive positioning in which what one person says positions another. And there can be reflexive positioning in which one positions oneself. (p. 91)

They argue further that, “Our own sense of how the world is to be interpreted is from the perspective of who we take ourselves to be” (p. 90). Although one can always revise, accept, or reject the positions offered us in conversational spaces, Davies and Harré note that “once having taken up a particular position as one's own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, storylines, concepts that are made relevant within the particular discursive practices in which they are positioned” (p. 89). In this way, the positions one enacts and/or accepts in conversational narratives help shape the story that is told. Wortham (2001) notes that

...narratives may give meaning and direction to narrators' lives and place them in characteristic relations with other people, not only as narrators represent themselves in characteristic ways but also as they enact characteristic positions while they tell their stories. (p. 9)

Consequently, we tell stories in ways that not only give meaning to experiences, but also position us in certain ways. By engaging in story compositions with others with whom we have

relationships—some more dialogic and cooperative than others—we take on traditional positions while telling stories. In other words, the ways we feel positioned in interactional conversations can influence the ways we position ourselves in the stories we tell (Wortham, 2001). One way to analyze stories and how they construct reality is to notice these positions, and, for example, the agency ascribed to them in talk. Do our co-authors see us as capable and agentic? Do they position us as needy or unwise? Subtle, and sometimes not-so-subtle, hints in language can help us understand these positions and adjust our stories accordingly.

Further, stories are not only affected by positions, but also through the binary logic that often underlies the societal narratives that give shape to our own. In Davies & Harré's (1990) words, "binary logic constitutes the world in hierarchical ways through its privileging of one term or category within the binary," and "being positioned as one who belongs in or is defined in terms of the negative or dependent term can lock people into repeated patterns of powerlessness" (p. 107). Thus, as new teachers compose personal stories of a teaching self, they perform a "complex weaving together of the positions (and the cultural/social/political meanings that are attached to those positions) that are available within any number of discourses" (p. 102), which are often rife with binary constructions of teaching life. The ways one considers a binary idea—for instance, that "the teacher is the expert and the student are the novices"—and uses them in stories affects their larger perpetuation in society. Do new teachers consider binary narratives as authoritative words to which they should conform? Do they actively resist such stories and make meaning through gray areas? Questions such as these are important when considering how binary constructions of teaching lives enact control over the ways individual novice teachers compose their roles in relationship to others in school spheres.

Precisely because we "struggle with the diversity of experience to produce a story of

ourselves that is unitary and consistent,” and, “if we don’t, others demand of us that we do” (Davies and Harré, 1990, p. 103), paying attention to the ways new teachers use binary constructions in teaching stories and offering new forms of telling that dwell in a multiplicity of possibilities is important for teacher educators to consider. A variety of stories can be told, “even of the same event,” making it possible that we “each have many possible coherent selves” (p. 102). In this dissertation, I consider what takes hold as new teachers navigate the positions and narratives available to them in student teaching. This work is paramount in changing grand narratives of teaching that have not often served diverse groups of students well, especially when they have consistently been on the receiving end of negative societal binaries. It is also important as teachers and schools navigate an increasingly complex world (Luke, 2004).

### Feminist Theories

Harnessing narrative modes that re-see traditional ways of being and doing in teaching is an attempt to reorganize inequitable social relationships, creating teachers who are able to denormalize traditional ways of “doing” school and design instructional practices that capitalize on the strengths of all students. In light of these commitments, I describe a few important pieces of the feminist tradition that provide theoretical support and explain some of the deeper purposes of my study, namely the feminist focus on using research to influence change in inequitable social structures.

Feminist research anchors itself in the hope that change can come when we render powerful the voices of those traditionally oppressed in current constructions of social relationships. Although the advent of poststructuralist ideals in feminist ethnography has strengthened feminist aims by encouraging scholars to draw attention to the ways each person’s

unique situatedness, positionality, and hybrid identities (Lal, 1996; Wolf, 1996; Coffey & Delamont, 2000; Weiler, 2001; Davies, 2000) make it impossible and undesirable to “tell” another’s story, feminist scholars have not been deterred from using their research to attempt to create more equitable social relations. As Davies (2000) notes, as a feminist, “I am not willing to forgo the possibility of conceptualizing and bringing about change” (p. 134). In this way, I bring a decidedly feminist lens to this work in that I highlight ways certain forms of storytelling have the potential, however small, to change unjust patterns.

Further, I do not attempt to objectively search for an essential truth about teaching, but rather to use my subjective experience and my experience with real-world inequities to consider how student teacher stories can serve to, in some ways, break down traditionally imposed hierarchies that serve children in schools poorly (Weiler, 2001; Coffey & Delamont, 2000; Lather, 1991; Wolf, 1996). In the feminist tradition, similarly to narrative traditions, it is important to attempt to lay bare researcher biases in order to lend credence to the analysis as the researcher explores the ways her motivations engender certain ways of seeing and sifting data. In this vein, I work to describe my own relationship with teaching and with Kathleen as an important window into the story that is told in these pages; while also acknowledging that it is one story of many that could have been told. In this, I consider my subjective experience an asset in examining the ways teachers tell stories about students, teaching and learning, and classroom experiences, and understanding the ways that stories can limit or expand the possibilities we see in designing for learning. Because part of my goal is to consider ways to diminish binary constructions of social relationships in the classroom, helping new teachers see their students as powerful participants in the learning process, it has been important to find ways to diminish binary constructions in my relationships with new teachers as a teacher educator. Thus, the

feminist tradition provided important guiding principles that made these goals more possible, challenging me to bring a sense of humility, openness, and multiple perspectives to my analysis.

In considering Kathleen's storytelling across the semester, I highlight ways that, when storytelling is enacted in forms that are dialogic and open to dwelling in alternatives and multiple perspectives rather than submissive to the authoritative word, student teachers are more able to enact feminist post-structural tools when encountering societal discourses about what it means to be a teacher and enter into conversation with them. My aim is to provide a detailed account of Kathleen's storytelling as an important starting point to finding ways that we, as teacher educators, can strive to make authoritative words function not as "a voice speaking the Truth, but as a voice speaking one point of view that must be attended to." Just because societal narratives of teaching "cannot be ignored" does not mean that they cannot be "contested, rejected, or modified" (Morson, in Ball and Freedman, 1998, pp. 319-18). We can still work to create spaces where new teachers *interact* with cultural myths of teaching rather than allowing them to define their emerging stories of teaching.

### Summary

In this dissertation, I take as central the idea that stories help create teaching lives. Memorializing experiences through a variety of storytelling forms can lead to new ways of being in the classroom, ways that de-normalize traditional stories of classroom life that often rest on binary compositions of reality. In light of this, paying attention to narrative constructions over the course of a student teaching experience—in all their variety of forms and contexts of telling—becomes extremely important if we want to help shape teachers who see possibilities for

all students and act to make that a reality. Narrative, poststructural, and feminist theories provide tools for analysis that help us do just that.

## CHAPTER THREE

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: University/Field Divides and A Short History of Narrative Inquiry and Pedagogies in Teacher Education

In the conceptual framework preceding this chapter, I highlighted ways that narrative modes *can* have the potential to help new teachers “re-see” that which has become normalized, and how this storytelling mode can impact new teachers’ efforts to re-imagine classroom scripts in the face of increasing complexity in teachers’ worlds. However, this goal is not a new one; many scholars, teachers, administrators, supervisors, and cooperating teachers in the field of teacher education have long held this ambition as their aim (e.g. Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010; Lee, 2007). There are many teacher education programs, individual education courses, and partnerships within larger programs—those more traditional and those that pioneer new models—that succeed in helping new teachers forge scripts, stories, and ways of being in classrooms that create positive change for diverse groups of students (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Solomon, 2009). However, there are also many logistical constraints, historical tensions, weak forms of reflection, and, often, different and conflicting conceptions of effective teaching that can undermine the transformative work many teacher educators, cooperating teachers, professional development professionals, and teacher education institutions set out to do. It is important to note these contextual tensions as they can affect what becomes possible in teacher education, as well as the stories teachers tell.

In this chapter, I will first review the literature on historical tensions in the construction of field experiences in teacher education, highlighting ways the field of teacher education has

sometimes had difficulty creating field experiences that develop effective teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse students and/or change traditional teaching scripts in the face of growing complexity in the modern world (Floden & Meniketti, 2005; Clift & Brady, 2006; Hollins & Guzman, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1999). In this section, I also explore the ongoing dilemma of theory/practice divides that often keep university and field knowledge from overlapping in new teachers' learning experiences (Zeichner, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985). This literature serves not only to provide important background, but to highlight how divides that often exist between university and field experiences can contribute to teacher education's common moniker as a "weak change agent" in the face of growing disparity in educational outcomes. Indeed, the chasm between field experiences and university coursework can serve to perpetuate historical narratives that simplify a teacher's work in the face growing complexity, and offer reductive notions of students.

Next, I highlight studies that demonstrate ways to encourage complexity in compositions of stories about teaching, and how attention to language has the potential to strengthen links between field experiences and university coursework and encourage new teachers to imagine and tell stories about new, more equitable possibilities in classrooms. These sections serve to emphasize how paying more attention to the power of storytelling in new teachers' sense-making—while also considering how simplified stories often serve to perpetuate inequitable school practices—might help us create more alignment between the various contexts of teacher education. In this, I describe a cyclical relationship. Because historical divides often keep stories from the university and stories from the field from interacting with each other, compartmentalized stores of knowledge do little to lend complexity to each other. However, by attending to the stories teachers tell about their teaching lives and creating more spaces where

new teachers are encouraged to make sense of the learning that takes place in each sphere through the lens of the other, this separation has the potential to be diminished through intentional storytelling practices.

I then switch gears to review some of the literature on previous uses of narrative inquiry and narrative pedagogies in teacher education. In other words, I explore some of the ways educational researchers and teacher educators have already strived to use narrative to strengthen the connection between theory and practice and encourage new teachers to examine the teaching stories they bring with them to their formal teacher education. I trace these traditions' roots in focusing on more self-contained, performative compositions of teaching stories as ways to better understand teacher beliefs and actions in the classroom, and then highlight the growing trend in narrative inquiry to focus on more informal, conversational storytelling in analyzing how teachers create their teaching lives and decide on classroom actions. I situate my study within these histories, and describe ways it extends these efforts.

#### Field Experiences in Teacher Education: University/Field Divides

Luke (2004) argues that “the empirical conditions and contexts of schooling, identity, and knowledge formation are changed and changing” (p. 1424) as schools across the nation are “struggling to contend with cultural and linguistic diversity, and now are attempting to deal with the epistemological diversity affiliated with popular media, world youth cultures, and new technologies” (p. 1425). However, as quickly as the world is changing, demographic shifts are occurring, and definitions of literacy and knowledge are broadening dramatically, current reform movements are often narrowing definitions of teaching to the technical delivery of the most basic reading, writing, and reasoning skills (Berliner, 2007, Ravitch, 2011). In response, teacher

education has long been engaged in the work of developing teachers who can enact effective instructional designs for culturally and linguistically diverse students and create meaningful instruction that immerses all students in critical thought, meaningful exploration, and rigorous academic work (McDonald & Zeichner, 2008). Increasingly, it is also concerned with inviting teachers to consider the possibilities of 21<sup>st</sup> century modes of learning that are expanding the range of forms and thinking students can do in classrooms, as “we use web technology to make sense of the world around us through blogs, wikis, mash-ups, podcasts, social software, online worlds, open-source and open-access media, and a whole host of other current and emergent online practices” (Kalantzis & Cope, 2009, p. 12-13).

Thus, as the world and the nature of information change radically, and in the face of increasing demographic shifts, many schools of education are striving to help pre-service teachers consider altered classrooms that reorganize learning with these realities in mind. However, it is not only current reform movements that serve to stifle these efforts. “Heritage” (p. 15) notions of school, that often rely on traditional ideas of teachers standing at the front of the classroom handing out knowledge to students sitting at desks, are deeply engrained in our collaborative social memory (Sykes, 2010; Kalantzis & Cope, 2009). Yet, if our goal is to make education more effective for increasingly diverse populations of students, while also being more responsive to the world changing around school doors, we need to interrogate heritage notions of schooling in addition to current educational reform stories. We need to design learning spaces where new teachers see new possibilities in settings where tradition and power have long held sway. However, the practice of immersing students in transformative ideals while at the university and then sending them into disconnected field experiences where heritage embodiments of schooling are often the norm is not an effective way to design such experiences.

In this, we often reify reductive forms of schooling while setting out to disrupt them.<sup>2</sup> Let me turn now, in more detail, to the question of helping new teachers' create effective instruction for increasingly diverse populations of students.

Due to an increasingly wide demographic disparity between growing populations of students of color and English-language learners (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Hollins & Guzman, 2005) and a teaching force which remains “predominantly female, White, middle-class, and with limited interaction with those from backgrounds different from their own” (Hollins & Guzman, 2005, p. 482), teacher education programs have responded by creating philosophies of social justice and professing commitments to equity (McDonald & Zeichner, 2008). However, these commitments have been slow to materialize into tangible outcomes for students, and educational disparities, such as gaps in “standardized test scores, dropout rates, and . . . disproportionate numbers of youth of color and low-income youth in our justice system” (McDonald et al., 2011) have persisted. Despite the emergence of urban field placements and community-based experiences designed to engender the set of skills, understandings, and beliefs that lead to good teaching practices for diverse students (Floden & Meniketti, 2005; Clift & Brady, 2006; Hollins & Guzman, 2008), teacher education has often remained a weak change agent (Sykes et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Howard & Aleman, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1999). The reasons for this stasis are many; here, I highlight struggles to integrate theory and practice and also a

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<sup>2</sup> In describing “new” ways of being in the classroom, it is not my goal to create a dichotomy between “old,” traditional forms of education and “new,” transformational forms of education; indeed both—and hybrids— can be utilized to meaningful effect. My employment of these terms is more concerned with demonstrating ways that university/field divides can perpetuate “old” ways of being without interrogating them for their effectiveness. Rather, they often occur unconsciously because that is the way education has always “been done.” When we seek, instead, to put more stories about education in conversation with each other, there becomes more possibility that transformative models of education might receive more use; but more importantly, there also becomes the possibility that teachers will intentionally choose the instructional tools they use as they tailor instruction to their students' strengths rather than employing them by default.

reliance on field experiences that, while exposing new teachers to students who are culturally different than them, often do little to interrogate underlying beliefs and stereotypes new teachers have about students.

Zeichner (2010) describes the lack of connection between the two major sites of teacher education—the university campus and the local school classroom—as a “perennial problem in traditional college- and university- sponsored teacher education programs” (p. 91). For instance, it is common for cooperating teachers to know very little about “the specifics of the methods and foundations courses that their student teachers have completed on campus,” while university instructors know little about the “specific practices used in the P-12 systems where their students are placed” (p. 91). Long documented, this disconnect can often make it difficult for new teachers to enact theories and beliefs shared by the university during field experiences, or allow experiences from school classrooms to complicate university coursework (Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010). In 1985, Feiman-Nemser described the historical separation between the university and school districts in teacher preparation as the “two-worlds” pitfall where university coursework often has little to do with success in school environments (p. 59), and ideals from university coursework have little chance of being taken up in school environments. Further, Sykes et al. (2010) note that without intentionally designed and supported experiences that bridge these gaps, it is unlikely that most teacher candidates will be able to enact practices that diverge from traditional scripts of teaching and learning. However, current “scripts” of teaching and learning are often ineffective in achieving emerging goals of K-12 education, one of which includes creating effective classrooms for culturally and linguistically diverse students. Within a system that has almost “no overlap” between the “specific curriculum of the schools and of teacher preparation,” reliance on cultural scripts handed down through experience continues to

remain the norm in teaching and learning (Sykes et al., 2010, p. 466) and “heritage” notions of school dominate the landscape with little interrogation of their utility.

Research demonstrates that without scaffolded and supported field experiences, the application of new theories and practices rarely happens because new teachers are left with very little exposure to tangible embodiments and representations of these theories, ethical commitments, and conceptual models (Floden & Meniketti, 2005; Wilson et al., 2001; Kennedy, 1999). With little chance to try out or even see the effective implementation of the methods and theories discussed in their university courses, which are often designed to address the needs of diverse groups of students, new teachers are left to rely on their own experiences in K-12 schools or the enacted practices of their cooperating teachers when designing instruction. While this can result in meaningful teaching practice, because cooperating teachers are not always chosen, specifically, for their adeptness in teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students, this strategy is often hit-or-miss. Darling-Hammond (2006, 2010) describes how disjointed methods courses and field experiences are ill-equipped to help new teachers develop the qualities and skills that will make them more effective with diverse groups of learners. Such qualities include developing a repertoire of explicit strategies for teaching learners with special needs and developing the mindset that teaching involves a stance toward figuring out what different students might need and then responding to those needs in a diagnostic fashion rather than a prescriptive one. She also notes that without clear assessments that involve buy-in and collaboration from all participants in the field experience process, ensuring that new teacher candidates leave student teaching with a beginning set of effective practices and skilled knowledge remains difficult. In storytelling terms, the separation of field and university spaces,

not to mention other spaces of learning to teach, contribute to the perpetuation of traditional stories of teaching and learning, whether they are effective or not.

If practices and theories taught in the university classroom are seldom taken up in school classrooms, and if there is little mentoring to help new teachers make sense of the experiences they do have in field experiences in connected ways, it remains doubtful that stories of teaching from academic courses will begin to shape classroom experiences (Hammerness, et al., 2005). Further, it remains uncertain that innovative experiences from the field will find their way into university coursework. Darling-Hammond argues that in place of disjointed experiences, novices should be engaged in a constant cycle of observation and reflection designed to support them in gradually incorporating the knowledge they are gaining in coursework into their experiences in classrooms (Darling Hammond, 2006), and vice-versa. In order to actively utilize academic learning in the practice of teaching in schools, and to tell stories where that learning proved useful in a classroom space, new teachers need chances to experience the benefits of designing instruction with course theories in mind as they start to practice teaching in clinical environments.

In addition to the disconnect between the settings of learning to teach, another difficulty has been the way field placements are selected and the lack of long-term, supported efforts to help guide candidates' meaning-making in classrooms with attention to personal histories in schools and unexamined beliefs about others. Field experiences in settings that are culturally different from a candidate's own are often not carefully chosen or well guided (Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1999). And when novices are socialized by underprepared cooperating teachers who do not hold high expectations or create particularly effective instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse students, it is unlikely that they will

change any pervasive deficit beliefs that can perpetuate poor instructional design (Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010; Sleeter, 2008). Additionally, even positive experiences with methods, strategies, and beliefs about teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students are often focused in only one course or one “urban” field experience. Although these kinds of experiences can help novice teachers to become more adept at teaching diverse populations, the long-term impact of short-term experiences is not overwhelmingly positive (Floden & Meniketti, 2005; Clift & Brady, 2006; Hollins & Guzman, 2008). The set of skills, understandings and beliefs that engender good teaching for culturally and linguistically diverse students is not quick to develop for most candidates, and unless we begin to recruit with an eye toward dispositions (Ladson-Billings, 1999), it is important to plan for this kind of development across a teacher preparation program (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

In the face of these difficulties that often hinder educators’ most altruistic and innovative aims, I argue, through the course of this dissertation, that an attention to storytelling as a focal lens for organizing teacher learning both compels us and helps us align university and field voices in teacher preparation. When we pay attention to the ways teachers contribute to classroom reality through the stories they tell about classroom events, it becomes necessary to bring theoretical and practical voices together in the composing of stories about marginalized groups or heritage patterns of school. By paying attention to the ways new teachers memorialize field events in concrete stories, we increase the chances that expansive scripts of teaching and learning become the foundation of teaching lives, rather than stories that appear good in theory, but are impossible within the realities of classroom life.

## Field Experiences: How Can We Use Them to Create New Possibilities in Classrooms?

Precisely because many novice teachers do not enter teacher education with complex stories of traditionally marginalized groups in education, it is important that we find ways to bring deficit beliefs about students and schools to the surface, so that we might question them. For instance, many pre-service teachers do not hold institutional conceptions of racism and lack an understanding of themselves as cultural beings, thereby seeing their own cultural practices as normative (Sleeter, 2008). Nor have many developed knowledge about how students learn languages that might help them effectively teach English Language Learners (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008). Rather than blaming pre-service teachers for their “deficient” belief systems or for not changing their beliefs “fast enough” (Conklin, 2008; Floden & Meniketti, 2005), it is important to make generative beliefs about all students and learning a clear part of the goals of teacher education, planning for the fact that, often, learning to teach involves facilitating the construction of stories about experiences with students, for these stories have import for the teacher’s developing narrative about what it means to teach and can instruct their actions in the classroom. Noticing, and potentially, intervening in stories that rely on binary constructions of cultural groups, for instance, can be as important as introducing students to institutional conceptions of racism. Adapting personal understandings and ideals to institutional realities and new information takes time. And attending to the long-term work of developing professional identities that allow new teachers to author such transformations in the stories they tell about students (Rodgers & Sullivan, 2008) is important work for teacher educators to consider.

In addition to more carefully choosing field placements where pre-service teachers are able to witness and begin to enact effective practice for diverse students, we must also work to productively facilitate the questions that guide the organization of discourse spaces for novice

teachers during these experiences, as it is in these spaces that new teachers have the potential to make the connections between theory and practice and to draw on university coursework within the reality of their daily lives in schools. Without such guidance, a lack of critical language exploration in teacher education can preclude the ability of new teachers to consider how language shapes meaning and practice. Rosaen and Florio-Ruane (2008) note how experiences in teaching are often made sense of through metaphor, and although metaphors can instruct, they also simplify complexity into straightforward answers. For instance, if teachers describe their students' behavior as similar to that of "little kids," this could suggest that they should simplify instruction, rather than tailoring it to students' interests. Thus, these authors suggest that new teachers should receive guidance in making sense of the metaphors—many of them normalized through constant historical and present-day use in schools—that help them to make meaning of their experiences and tell the stories that will guide their future actions.

Doyle and Carter (2003) note the importance of bringing a narrative lens to teacher education when they describe that

Story is a fundamental way of human knowing, and this assertion is especially true in pre-service teacher education, for at least two reasons. First much of the practical knowledge teachers acquire from teaching arises from actions in situations—the essential ingredients of a story. To understand pre-service teachers' development, it is necessary to capture the stories within which this knowledge and understanding are embedded.

Secondly, beginning teachers, as novices in teaching situations, lack the rich conceptual, i.e. narrative, frames that experienced teachers gain from repeated execution of teaching episodes in classroom situations. They lack experientially grounded categories for apprehending and interpreting classroom events, and yet cannot rely on more abstract

disciplinary knowledge to make sense of everyday experiences. They are likely, therefore, to fall back on a cognitive strategy they have been using for most of their lives: they construct stories. (pp. 130-31)

Consequently, these authors posit, teacher educators should be paying attention to stories of teaching lives in addition to students' acquisition of teaching theories or methods. They argue that attention to the importance of story in new teachers' sense-making would necessarily alter the current push to "front-load" information for new teachers before they have gained a wide variety of experiences in the classroom. Instead, a

...narrative perspective suggests that, with respect to the work of teaching, propositions are apprehended—that is storied—as elements of experience. And for the *vast majority of students there is simply no real and rich experience of performance as a teacher that can be brought to bear on their teacher education content.* (p. 134)

Without more "performances" of teaching to "story," students remain in their "student" roles when working to understand teaching practice described in university classrooms. However, if we were to bring a narrative sensibility to teacher education, we might work to infuse more teaching practice together with more attention to how stories are composed after those events take place. If all that comes before student teaching involves "anticipation with little understanding," and all that comes after involves comprehending the work of teaching by storying experiences (p. 135), teacher educators should work to be more active *in the movement from experience to story*, rather than working to influence storylines *before* our students have experiences as teachers. However, because teacher educators are often not as active in the storytelling that novices do during their initial experiences in teaching roles, and because the reflective exercises new teachers are often asked to engage in are not designed to encourage

complexity and multiple alternatives, students are often left telling simplified stories that may not serve them well when they face a variety of complex, unpredictable, and often difficult experiences in the classroom in their future teaching lives.

As noted earlier, Deborah Britzman (1991) describes simplifying voices in teaching as “cultural myths.” These pervasive ideas about teaching such as, “everything depends upon the teacher, teachers are self made, and teachers are ‘experts’” (p. 7) can render the work of teaching straightforward in the face of ever-growing complexity. Their comforting power, however, can hinder the creation of teaching stories that dwell in a multiplicity of meanings, smoothing away tensions while also smoothing away possibilities. In order to encourage new teachers to search for complexity in the face of real and personal daily challenges, experiences in the field should encourage novices to undergo “investigative work” that maintains complexity while seeking to understand phenomena in classrooms. This work can also instill habits of language study that ask exploratory questions such as: How do labels affect how I see and understand children? Guiding the way new teachers tell stories about experiences in field placements is a critical step in helping them to author teaching stories that includes more effective practice for all students (Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010; Sleeter, 2008), rather than being shaped by unexamined language practices that can serve to perpetuate deficit perspectives of diverse students. It is also a way to challenge university/field divides.

In her work with pre-service teachers, Janet Alsup (2006) describes how the process of making new teachers aware of the ways that the multiple discourses in which they engaged—at home, in university classes, with colleagues, with cooperating teachers and university supervisors—affected how they interpreted and acted in their classrooms. Because, as she writes, “students come to teacher education with preconceptions or experiential contexts concerning

what it means to be a teacher,” if students are not asked to “interrogate these existing ideologies and subjectivities, there is an excellent chance they will simply reproduce them” (p. 128). This has the potential to happen even in assignments that are meant to help new teachers integrate new philosophies, methods, and strength-based beliefs about students, such as reflective papers and teaching philosophies. In other words, the institutional storytelling opportunities traditionally provided to novice teachers in the form of reflections and philosophies are often unable to significantly alter preconceived ideals with which they enter teacher education. As a result, when new teachers are undoubtedly met with complex situations as they begin teaching, situations that are not adequately addressed by the sometimes trite philosophies crafted during teacher education, new teachers can revert to the “status quo” in teaching, or perhaps, leave the field altogether.

However, Alsup found that by engaging new teachers in more forms of discourse that analyzed the roots and ideologies behind stories, pre-service teachers, in her study, no longer had to “unconsciously accept the ideologies inherent” in simplified narratives about teaching lives, but were able to “critically examine them, actively choosing the discourses” that would help to guide their practice. She termed this type of storytelling “borderland discourses,” where new teachers described and confronted the tensions they felt between the multiple narratives about teaching that they encountered in society, from their cooperating teachers, from university mentors, from students, from family and friends, and from themselves. New teachers who were more prone to engage in this type of difficult examination of a multiplicity of sense-making stories were also more prone to stay in teaching after graduating and to connect university coursework with practical, field-based knowledge. In other words, when new teachers did the difficult work of bringing multiple stories to bear on their daily teaching experiences, this

affected the variety of ways they could meet experiences and the availability of tools with which they could move forward in their classrooms.

Alsup further describes how this kind of critical reflection is not “something that can be learned through its application to isolated assignments, lesson plans, or class discussions,” but that “it must be applied to the larger, more abstract discourses of teacher” development (p. 125-6). She notes,

Accepting the centrality of borderland discourse to teacher education necessitates the rejection of the theory that either through knowledge of pedagogical or disciplinary content or through isolated and disconnected reflective exercises a young teacher can emerge from a teacher education program ready to begin a satisfying and successful teaching life. It isn't only about learning content, pedagogical technique, or research strategies for reflection on practice; it's also about how to honor personal beliefs, life choices, and experiences that have value and meaning while enacting elements of the professional identity that society demands. It's sometimes about making hard choices that modify personal or professional discourses to facilitate and nurture the creation of a new discourse—a borderland discourse that may represent and affect positive growth and necessary political or systematic change. (p. 126)

The work of teacher educators, for Alsup, is to assist students in engaging in potentially transformative discourses that help to shape their narrative teaching worlds, not solely from archetypal narratives of who teachers should be, but from consciously woven bits of storylines that serve to help them enact pedagogies that both ring true for them and are more effective for all learners. In this way, new stories about teaching and learning become more possible.

## Reform Efforts: Skewed to Target Narrow Measures

Until this point, I have described traditional divides that have often separated university and field experiences, and the ways these divides, as well as more traditional reflective assignments in teacher education coursework, can affect the stories new teachers are able to tell about what it means to be effective teachers. I have further described the ways that attention to language and the using of a narrative lens might interact in these spaces to create more conversation between the sites of learning to teach, and thus, the potential for new stories to be told, especially with regard to culturally and linguistically diverse youth. Now I turn for a moment to more current reform efforts, and the ways they have the potential to narrow teaching stories still further, rather than widening them through the possibilities of using a narrative lens that focuses on a multiplicity of sense-making storylines.

Cochran-Smith and Fries (2005) define the current construction of teacher education as a “policy problem” meaning that researchers and policy makers are currently focused on finding “large-scale or institutional and programmatic policies and practices that are warranted by empirical evidence” to demonstrate “impact on desired outcomes or by economic analyses that weigh costs and benefits” (p. 93). In other words, the trend is to discover how policy makers can invest limited resources to make big changes, and to privilege quantitative evidence. This has increasingly meant that lawmakers are focused more and more heavily on using test scores to promote accountability and make judgments about teacher performance, a shift from major reforms of the 80s and 90s that focused on the “moral purposes” of teacher education, the expansion of a professional knowledge base, and the visualization of clear conceptual frameworks from which to teach. And although many efforts also exist to continue earlier trends to professionalize teaching and teacher education (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001, p. 3), the idea

that “teacher education can be fixed (or dramatically altered) by applying empirical evidence about what works and econometric analyses about costs and benefits to decisions about policy and practice” are becoming more and more prominent. The Obama administration’s wide-sweeping education reform incentive plan, *Race to the Top*, is also helping to increase the overall emphasis on longitudinal test score data as a significant factor in the endeavor of determining effective schooling (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). As states increasingly comply with demands to pass legislation that makes it possible to link teacher and principal evaluation, in part, to students’ performance on high-stakes tests, the consequences of such tests are increasing across the country.

While adding important features to the conversation about teacher quality, these types of measures cannot, by themselves, get at the whole picture of what it means to be an effective teacher. Diane Ravitch (2010) notes that although “the information derived from tests can be extremely valuable, if the tests are valid and reliable,” (p. 150), “psychometricians are less enthusiastic than elected officials about using tests to make consequential judgments because they know that test scores may vary in unpredictable ways” (p. 153). Furthermore, she argues, “when we define what matters in education only by what we can measure, we are in serious trouble” (p. 166). Focusing solely on basic definitions of numeracy and literacy leads us away from other aspects of what most would agree constitutes a “good education,” effectively narrowing what students can gain from school and how teachers are able to define their roles. In addition, current accountability measures have the potential to narrow the stories teachers can compose about who their students are, the strengths they have, and the actions they can take in classrooms. Thus, rather than fostering more connections between the university and field spaces of learning to teach that could inform each other, and widening new teachers’ understanding of

the work of teaching, many “reform” efforts lead to a narrowing of teaching stories that can constrain possibilities in classrooms. As a result, although there is much talk about the importance of having high quality teachers in our schools, national storylines about effective teachers are often composed in ways that smooth away the complexity that might make this more possible (Cochran-Smith, 2006).

These policy trends, and their implications for the storytelling teachers are able to do in classroom spaces makes the timing of this study all the more important. As we have seen, effective teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse students tend to embody a wide range of complex skills, beliefs, and concepts, including knowledge of “student thinking, subject matter, pedagogy . . . identity . . . motivation . . . and ways of using and making sense of language” (Lee, 2007, p. 131) not to mention reflective capabilities regarding “the ethical and moral dimensions of teaching” (p. 128). Further, a changing technological landscape and global economy are shaping students’ lives outside of classrooms in radically new ways. However, the national policy conversation is telling a story that narrows and oversimplifies the definition of quality teaching precisely at a time when the definition of a teacher should be widening in the face of an increasingly diverse population, a globalized economy, and rapidly changing technologies (Luke, 2004). Narrative inquiries that expand storylines beyond teachers’ abilities to produce positive test score results, and narrative pedagogies, which seek to engage new teachers in a critical analysis of the ways they story their teaching lives—which I turn to now—are an important voice in the conversation; a voice that is, unfortunately, becoming more and more marginalized in the current national story.

## Narrative Inquiries; Narrative Pedagogies: Where Do I Fit in?

Narrative inquiry has a rich history as both a tool of methodology and pedagogy in teacher education. Although this dissertation focuses on studying one teacher's narratives as a way to better understand the process of becoming a teacher, it also posits ways that narrative understandings provide a potent tool for designing teacher education spaces. Thus, in the following pages, I focus on the ways researchers have used narrative inquiries in the study of teacher education, and the ways teacher educators have used narrative pedagogies in teacher education. I then situate my study in these two literatures.

### *Notes on the History of Narrative Inquiry in Teacher Education*

Although perhaps little acknowledged in the policy realm, narrative has become a very recognizable force in educational research, especially in literacy studies and teacher development (Schaafsma & Vinz, 2011; Ritchie & Wilson, 2000; Shultz & Ravitch, 2013; Craig, 2006). As educational research began to take an anthropological turn in the early 1980s, and was influenced by feminist theories of knowledge, cultural criticism, critical pedagogies, and postmodern ways of knowing, narrative inquiry—and the idea that stories were a tool for understanding teacher knowledge—became a more frequent means of studying the process of becoming a teacher. Although in its early uses as a method, and still to this day, the process of examining teachers' stories is often dismissed as anecdotal and less rigorous than other ways of knowing, narrative inquiry as a research methodology has gained more credence as a valuable form of understanding teaching over time. Clandinin and Connelly coined the term “narrative inquiry” over twenty years ago, which they described as “way of understanding experience,” and “a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social

interaction with milieus” (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000, p. 20). A researcher enters “this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people’s lives, both individual and social” (p. 20). Simply put, “narrative inquiry is stories lived and told” (p. 20), and an empirical form of research that strives to acknowledge the complexity inherent as people tell stories that give a temporal shape and purpose to their personal and professional lives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Researchers and participants tell stories, and retell stories, making sense of experiences and attempting to give shape to the story through writing, while knowing that a perfectly accurate account might not be possible.

Others describe the importance of narrative forms of inquiry by describing how teacher knowledge is actually “narrative in character” (Craig, 2006, p. 174), as teachers live out experiences, relive and reconstruct them through storytelling and reflection, and then live those stories. This represents a stark difference in policy definitions that describe teacher knowledge in more technical terms. Working with teachers and having experiences together, and then telling and retelling about those events as co-authors, can illuminate people’s “personal thoughts” as well as the ways they situate themselves in response to the world. A narrative stance holds that “education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). Consequently, relating narratives of teacher experience is an important way to better understand how teachers grow, learn, develop, and act in classrooms. Carter (1993) explains how “stories capture, more than scores or mathematical formulae ever can, the richness and indeterminacy of our experiences as teachers and the complexity of our understandings of what teaching is and how others can be prepared to engage in this profession” (p. 5). Because knowledge is “organized” in “explanatory frameworks,” such as stories, researchers can gain

insights into what new teachers know and how their knowledge is organized by “recording what events are storied” (p. 7). Further, this work is especially important when considering how novices learn and grow as teachers because they have yet to accumulate a “rich store of situated or storied knowledge of curriculum content, classroom social processes, academic tasks, and students’ understandings and intentions” (p. 7). When novices, who might lack this personal store of teaching stories, tell initial stories of classroom events, their stories are shaped in fundamental ways through a paucity of alternative explanation. Carter argues that it is through story that “teachers transform knowledge of content into a form that plays itself out in the time and space of classrooms” (p. 7).

Researchers have interpreted narrative inquiry methods through a variety of forms. For instance, Grossman (1990) used the stories of six beginning English teachers to show the complexities of content and pedagogical knowledge in English, and the ways content courses contributed to that knowledge. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) documented how teachers narrated their experiences in reflective journals, and used case studies and anthropological inquiry to reexamine their teaching, their students, and their school context. Clandinin et al. (1993) created a collaborative inquiry group that met throughout a teacher education program, sharing stories as a way to see how others engaged experiences in different ways and through different stories. In this way, they used collaborative storytelling as a means to expand the alternatives and possibilities that new teachers used to construct and reconstruct their professional lives. The power of narrative forms of inquiry in education has also made way for the use of narrative as a pedagogical tool, inviting teachers to tell stories, and then reflect on and interrogate those stories as a way to encourage change and growth in schools (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000). In *Teacher Narrative as Critical Inquiry* (2000), Ritchie and Wilson document the ways

that narratives can become a “means by which teachers can resist and revise the prescribed narratives and roles of their personal and professional lives” (p. 20-21).

Researchers continue to expand the uses and definitions of narrative research. Wortham (2001) describes that it is not only through telling stories that teachers make sense of their experiences and create reality in their classrooms, but also through the positioning they experience as they tell stories within located relationships. This lens provides a method for analyzing not only the stories teachers tell, but also the settings, relationships, and locations in which they tell, and how those forces influence narrative constructions. Razfar (2012) explores the ways that language ideologies are embedded in “emergent narratives,” those narratives that are told in everyday conversation, and how we can “better understand the language ideologies of teachers working with second language learners through narrative analysis” (p. 61). He explores the way that relationships often provide the context for narratives to emerge, and that this type of narrative analysis expands beyond those stories that are more often “elicited” by researchers or teachers. He argues, “There are methodological advantages to probing teachers beliefs through emergent narratives rather than detached elicitation that focuses on internal structures or content of narratives” (p. 78). These conversational narratives can often tell more about the complexities of how teachers live out narrative constructions while navigating difficult issues filled with “tensions, contradictions, and multiple positionalities” (p. 78). In another recent example, Shultz and Ravitch (2013) created and studied a narrative writing group that included teachers from two different preparation experiences—Teach for America and a more traditional university-based teacher education program—in their first years of teaching. They found that professional identities were shaped through membership in a variety of knowledge communities—schools, programs, writing groups, and friends, to name a few—and that, by the end of the year, new

teachers were no longer ambivalent about their identities as teachers. Through this study, they demonstrated the ways that narrative constructions influence, and influence quickly, the teachers novices become. These studies show the ways narrative inquiry continues to grow and shift, both in the ways narratives are defined and the forms narrative analysis can take, to better understand teacher knowledge and growth.

However, narrative research methods are not without problematic aspects. Narrative methods have been criticized for stopping at the point of composing without attending to the problematization of stories or their critique. Critiques of this sort insist that researchers who use narrative in teacher education must include attention to questions such as, “What narratives from other lives might contradict or complicate our own? Who is privileged by these narratives? What positions and relationships do they reinforce?” (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000, p. 21). Without such questions, narratives can become romanticized as good practice without addressing or transforming larger cultural myths and stories that perpetuate inequity in schools. Further, those who criticize narrative research methods and pedagogies describe how narratives are often told “to” an audience, such as a researcher or instructor, who has the power to shape narratives in often unconscious ways. Others critique the ways narratives have the power to repress different viewpoints, support middle-class values, and feed into “teachers’ needs rather than students’ needs” (p. 22). In other words, just as narrative methods have the power to induce societal transformation, they have the power to reify power in traditional forms.

Despite the potential of narrative to be a reductive force in teacher education, many argue that the ubiquity of narrative sense-making in teachers’ lives make it an important force to acknowledge and use toward transformative aims. Naming experiences and telling stories can provide teachers the ability to see contradictions between their own and others’ subjectivities,

and the power of this dissonance can be a catalyst for change through the revision of stories. In this dissertation, I share stories of a student teacher who memorialized stories in ways that encouraged her to interrogate her own beliefs about students in order to create more excitement, engagement, and participation in her curriculum from students who have been traditionally defined by educational narratives as “lacking” academic skills (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). By sharing the themes, influences, revisions, and transformations of her storytelling, I shed light on implications of narrative analysis to design teacher education spaces that collapse field and university divides and encourage these types of stories for more teachers. Furthermore, I address gaps in the literature that separate the relationship between “emergent,” informal narratives, told in conversation and more formal, polished “performative” narratives told in “reflective” spaces. Rather than addressing them as separate forms of narrative that indicate different types of sense-making, I consider their sometimes cyclical relationship.

#### *Notes on Narrative Pedagogies in Teacher Education*

As influenced by narrative research trends in teacher education, the past thirty years have also brought more narrative pedagogies to the design of teacher preparation (e.g. Johnson, 2002, 2007; Gomez, 2000, 2010). In the following section, I highlight a few of these pedagogies, describing their impact on the field as well as potential problems that can arise from their use. I end by describing how the narrative perspective that undergirds my study encourages us to go beyond infusing isolated narrative exercises into discreet moments throughout a teacher education experience, but rather to reconsider the larger curriculum of teacher education altogether, finding ways to help new teachers more explicitly connect a variety of experiences, stories about experiences, and alternative voices as they move through a teacher education

experience. I also consider how to put more stories in conversation with each other as novices begin to use their experiences to compose a coherent narrative of what it means to be a teacher.

*Personal narratives.* Histories, personal narratives, and autobiographies have been used in teacher education to make personal values and ethical stances more visible to new teachers, bringing these often unexamined ideologies to the surface and allowing new teachers to consider their own stances in light of the types of teachers they want to be (Johnson, 2007). By considering any dissonance that occurs between how their past experiences have helped shape the types of teachers they would like to become, new teachers are often more able to re-see their prior convictions in ways that will help them be more effective educators. Autobiographies have also been used to encourage new educators to discover the ways “their lived experiences have influenced their conceptions of race” (Johnson, 2002, p. 126). When juxtaposing these stories with stories from colleagues who have had different experiences or who perceive similar experiences differently, new educators are able to see how theirs is not the *only* way of seeing the world. Consequently, they are able to re-consider potentially problematic beliefs about members of cultural communities with which they are unfamiliar.

However, these uses of narrative have not been unproblematic. Designing ways to ensure that such stories do not “create a sense of sameness or personal empathy that is unconnected to historical and institutional racism” (p. 126) is necessary to make sure that such stories allow new teachers to reconsider their beliefs and act from new beliefs in ways that undermine structural inequality. This does not always occur. Further, without examining the situational contexts of how, where, with whom, and for what purposes such stories are told, it is difficult to know if these stories involve instances of self-censorship or result in an uncritical adherence to larger cultural myths about who teachers should become. Without critical examinations of the context

in which those autobiographies are produced, it is possible that such spaces can lead to self-censorship or the airing of unexamined adherence to larger, societal norms that index binary constructions and inequitable social relationships (Johnson, 2002). Outcomes such as these are not surprising. Teaching, as with any profession, is a heavily storied endeavor. Without strong tools to re-consider this story, the transformative potential of narrative can go unharnessed. Thus, instead of autobiographical forms of narrative that seek to mold a developing teaching story into a prescribed narrative arc, I focus, instead, on the spoken drafts of an emerging story, told in conversation to a specific audience and within a particular setting.

*Case studies.* In addition to the writing of personal narratives as a way to examine underlying belief systems, teacher educators have also innovated teacher education pedagogy through the study of cases. Long used in other professions, such as law and medicine (Merseeth, 1991), the uses of cases in teacher education invites novices to apply burgeoning knowledge to the formation of a decision in a real or imagined scenario. Teaching with cases can have the benefits of engaging students in problem solving, using analytical tools to make decisions in complex situations, and “coping with ambiguities” (Boston University, n.d.). Students can role-play different perspectives in the case, they can actively use readings to help form opinions and decisions, and they can sift alternatives, taking more than one viewpoint into consideration. In this way, students are able to dwell in the “narrative” rather than the “paradigmatic” mode (Bruner, 1986) when making sense of complex events and applying principles of theory. This can train new teachers to employ similar habits of mind when they are faced with real-world cases in their own teaching.

However case-based instruction, like autobiographies and other personal narratives, can also have narrowing effects on new teacher’s learning and growth (Merseeth, 1991). Teacher

educators who use these methods, but do not take an active role in shaping the case, the evidence, and the discussion with knowledge of their students in mind can find that case solutions have the potential to reify traditional scripts of teaching and learning rather than opening new alternatives to novice teachers.

*Reflective activities.* Reflective activities—such as writing reflections after teaching episodes and the creation of larger teaching philosophies—have long been a part of teacher education experiences. Indeed, teacher education often focuses on the products of learning to teach, such as the lesson or unit plan, the final reflection, or the teaching philosophy, as markers of teacher development (Alsup, 2006). Such products can demonstrate important indicators of a teacher’s growth and the ways they have integrated important skills and theories into their practice. However, there is also the possibility that more “traditionally defined statements of philosophy often serve to solidify unexamined positions rather than encourage critical examination of ideologies and personal pedagogies” (p. 189). If these types of assignments become “euphemistic and jargon-filled texts that are forgotten as soon as they are composed” (p. 190), the power of the narrative mode to help new teachers consider new realities in classrooms is not fully explored. Furthermore, there are a variety of other indicators that also demonstrate how teachers make sense and enact their roles that can be overlooked when we focus only on the products and performances of learning to teach.

Although the power of narrative has been acknowledged and used in creating innovative teacher education experiences, little has been done to study how storytelling exists in partial and ongoing forms in the less structured, or non course-related, learning spaces of a teacher’s preparation, and this study attempts to share one glimpse into this type of work. The findings I share prompt me to consider ways we can extend the narrative perspective “beyond pedagogy”

and, even, beyond inquiry, to “examine the assumptions and interpretations that underlie the contents, activities, and arrangements of pre-service teacher education” (Doyle & Carter, 2003, p. 1) on a larger scale. If the storying of real-life experiences, especially those early experiences where new teachers have fewer resources to draw on when making sense of events, contributes in important ways to larger narratives that new teachers begin to tell and the decisions they will make in classrooms (Doyle and Carter, 2003; Alsup, 2006), how might we become more involved in this process over the course of teacher education? How, too, might we shift traditional timelines, such as the common trajectory from theory *to* practice, and traditional divides between the spaces of learning to teach, to more intentionally encourage new teachers to make sense of their experiences through stories that dwell in alternatives, multiple voices, and multiple possibilities?

### Summary

My study uses narrative inquiry to better understand the process of narrative sense-making in student teaching and its effects on teacher learning. I push the field by considering the ways emergent and performative narratives influence and affect each other in a teachers’ developing story. I also consider possibilities for narrative pedagogies in teacher education—beyond isolated assignments—as an organizing force in initial preparation that can help place university, field, and more personal voices in conversation with each other. In this, I strive to redefine the ways we see and use narratives in teacher education, and take them more seriously as a fundamental force in the composition of a teaching life.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### METHODS: A Narrative Case Study using Ethnographic Tools

In this chapter, I describe my methodological approach, including the ways my methods align with my conceptual framework and the shifts in focus I experienced throughout the process of planning, studying, and learning with my participants. The purpose of my study was to better understand the ways storytelling influences and gives shape to teaching lives; and, in my work, methodologies and the methods that emerge from them are more than a set of procedures to check off systematically. Rather, they involve assumptions and values that guide research in ways that affect how we see the world and understand human behaviors and interactions. To design a study that ultimately sought to understand how storytelling affects our attempts to bring about a more equitable educational system meant that I needed to simultaneously strive to create more equitable relationships between researcher and participants; to be open to, and seek out, the ways research stories were co-authored through a multiplicity of voices; and to engage in conversations with participants, mentors, and colleagues to investigate my own assumptions. In addition, this framework demanded that I work to acknowledge how power circulated in sometimes unknowable ways in the research process while still attempting to discover its force upon my conclusions, and, finally, to lay bare my biases in as much detail as I understood them to consider the ways they both hindered and helped my analysis.

In the course of this chapter, I will first describe the ways my conceptual framework gave shape to the methodological commitments that guided my study. Next, I share my research

questions, the setting and participants of my study, the methodological tools I used, and my research design, including my units of analysis; research questions; data sources and reduction techniques; and finally, my strategies for analyzing and representing data.

### Narrative Inquiry and Post-structural Feminist Methodologies

Narrative inquiry, as used in teacher education, holds that stories are essential ingredients in understanding teacher knowledge and behavior. In this tradition, researchers listen to stories teachers tell in order to gain insight into the beliefs, understandings, and knowledge that give shape to their actions in the classroom (Clandinin and Connelly, 1990; Carter, 1993; Razfar, 2012). Clandinin and Connelly (1990) emphasize that teacher stories are not packaged neatly for researchers to pick up and analyze, but emerge in relationships, and through stories lived, told, co-authored, and brought to life in particular social settings. Researchers enter into a “matrix” of living and telling that includes their own stories and experiences that shape and are shaped by others’ stories. Such an orientation demands that researchers strive to understand how their own socialization, their particular societal positions, and their relationships with participants affect the way they see and interpret the stories and actions of participants.

Similarly, a post-structural sensibility takes as central the way language constitutes reality, and the ways the stories we create and appropriate to make sense of our own experience constrain and enable what we view as possible (Foucault, 1983; Davies, 2000; Lather, 1991), thus critiquing “positivist notions that we can find absolute truth and that we can be neutral” (Wolf, 1996, p. 4, Acker et al., 1991; Behar, 1997; Lather, 1991; Reinharz, 1992; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000). Research endeavors, in this tradition, attempt to understand how people compose themselves and act with the “limits and possibilities of the discourses and cultural practices that

are available to them” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 258; Coffey & Delamont, 2000). Feminist researchers attempt to understand the meanings of local participants in situated contexts, in the hopes that a rich description of events can shed light on other, similar endeavors.

Similar to the relational commitments of narrative inquiry, feminist post-structural researchers gain authority by seeking to diminish hierarchies between the researcher and participants and employing reflexivity, a reflective tool that engages them in accounting for their positions and acknowledging that discoveries are situated and partial (Lather, 1991; Richardson, 2000). This position affords the researcher less power to “tell” stories from his or her perspective alone, but more validity as the study includes multiple perspectives and a collaborative research agenda. The transparent nature of the relationships and the collaboration between the researcher and “researched” become sources of ethical “knowing” (Coffey & Delamont, 2000; Wolf, 1996; Lather, 1991; Weiler, 2001; Behar, 1997). This theoretical positioning is also important because my research involves self-study. As the university supervisor, I was an integral participant in the experience, and, as such, my biases, positions, roles, and subjectivities worked to help shape the student teaching experience and the research agenda.

### Research Questions Revisited

My purpose in conducting this study was to better understand the ways learning to teach involves storytelling, and the ways storytelling modes and forms help create teaching lives rife with particular commitments. In order to engage these questions, I set out to trace a few student teachers’ storytelling over time rather than capturing a variety of isolated stories. In this, I attempted to link shifting, revised, and expanded stories together over four months of student

teaching, thereby understanding and describing stories in more contingent and located ways as told within particular settings and relationships.

In order to become more embedded in the experiences that gave way to student teacher storytelling, I took on the role of university supervisor. With this role, I was able to record more conversational moments that were not researcher-elicited, and connect them to stories told in more formal spaces, such as interviews. My role as a university supervisor was a way to become an integral partner in the process of storytelling and to reflect on the co-authoring potential of my role, rather than a way to wield power over storytelling. With these goals, I invited a small group of teacher candidates, those with whom I had developed mutually respectful and equitable relationships long before the data collection period began, to participate in a student teaching experience where I would be the university supervisor. To guide my study, I asked the following research questions:

1. What stories of teaching, learning, and students emerge as student teachers make sense of daily events in a variety of discursive settings?
2. What influences the construction of student teacher stories?
3. What consequences do novice teachers' constructions of teaching stories have for their work and interactions with students, especially with regard to stories of culturally and linguistically diverse students?

During the analysis phase of the research process, my focus narrowed from three initial participants to one student teacher participant, Kathleen. There were three major reasons for this shift. First, I found that the multitude of data sources—and my desire to use the great majority of them in order to relate some of the depth of Kathleen's storytelling—precluded the ability to move beyond initial analysis for all three cases. In addition, as I detailed in the introduction, I

also noticed the ways that Kathleen's stories often focused on growth and change when her classroom instruction did not go according to plan. Finally, Kathleen and I established a professional relationship that was the most informal and least hierarchical of the three. It was in this mentoring relationship that I felt the power attached to my role as a university supervisor was most mitigated by the comfortable tone of our collegial partnership. Kathleen's tendency to position herself as a capable novice diminished much of the felt hierarchy that could have been embedded in our relationship. In the following section, I document the process of inviting participants to my study, and provide more details about my focal participants and the setting of my study.

## Participants and Participant Relationships

### *Student Teachers*

I met Aaron, Janna, and Kathleen, the student teachers who participated in my study, when I was their instructor for an introductory secondary methods course attached to a practicum experience at a local high school in Fall 2010. All three participants were in their first semester of a two-year Masters program in secondary education; Janna and Kathleen were planning to become English teachers, Aaron, a Social Studies teacher. In the course, we studied topics such as sociocultural learning theory, lesson and unit planning, formative and summative assessment techniques, classroom management, and relationship building. By situating our discussions squarely within their experiences in a linked field placement, the course was designed to make effective practices, beliefs, and knowledge for teaching all students, and particularly culturally and linguistically diverse students, more available for new teachers. During the course of the

class, these teacher candidates demonstrated a deep commitment to equity for diverse learners through instructional design.

Although interest in issues of equity was not a criterion for participation in this study, our mutual interest in such issues served to lay the groundwork for our developing relationships across that semester. These teachers and I, through multiple informal conversations, interactions in class around issues of equity, and conversations and debriefs about their teaching practice, developed personal and professional relationships focused on developing excellent instructional practices for all students. When I invited their entire cohort to participate in this study, these three expressed interest in the project, citing deeper support from me, from cooperating teachers, and from each other as reasons for their interest in participating. In short, these student teachers were motivated and engaged to improve their teaching practice for all students through this experience. With this background as context, let me say a few more words about Kathleen, the focal participant.

Kathleen is a white, middle-class woman in her mid 20s from New England. She relocated from New England in order to participate in the Masters program, and was a motivated student in class, taking every opportunity to engage with students and develop her teaching expertise. In my course, her final project focused on fostering social justice in classrooms through differentiation and culturally responsive teaching. We had touched on those issues in class, and she took the opportunity to research and explore them further. Kathleen and I developed a close professional relationship as that initial semester came to a close, often discussing issues of teaching and equity about which we were both passionate. When she was notified about the possibility of participating in my dissertation study by another professor, she contacted me to set up a meeting to discuss it, and expressed interest in working with me further

as a mentor. I was thrilled at the prospect of continuing to work together, and our collaboration during Kathleen's student teaching was, in many ways, an extension of the relationship we had established during that first semester. After student teaching, Kathleen was offered a job at the same high school where the study took place, where she currently teaches.

### *Cooperating Teachers*

Cooperating teachers were selected through my involvement in a school-university partnership early in my doctoral program. As a TA for an English methods course at my university, I worked closely with a professor who established a partnership with an English teacher, Jonathon, at Westview High School, to establish a space where pre-service teachers could practice designing writing curriculum while students at Westview would be supported in a multi-modal, community linked writing project. During the course of this partnership, Jonathon and I found that we had many interests and beliefs about teaching and learning in common. When I shared with him my intentions for designing and implementing this student teaching experience as my dissertation work, he was excited to become a part of the project, stating his desire to find innovative and supportive ways to prepare teachers new for the field and to implement the type of instruction he considered effective for culturally and linguistically diverse learners. With his support and introduction, I shared the project with two other teachers at his school. As they were also attracted to the idea of providing effective mentoring for student teachers, I asked if they would be willing to serve as mentors for incoming student teachers and participate in my study.

During the Spring 2011 semester, Aaron, Janna, and Kathleen completed their second practicum experiences at the same high school where their cooperating teachers taught and my

study took place. They were able to meet and co-teach with their future cooperating teachers. Through these experiences, the student teacher-cooperating teacher pairs formed organically, and when the student teachers began teaching in the Fall 2011 semester, they had already familiarized themselves with the culture of Westview, as well as the philosophies and practices of their cooperating teachers. During this time and presently, Westview was attempting to create and develop innovative, supportive, and rigorous learning experiences for diverse student populations. Certainly Westview, and these cooperating teachers did not “have it all figured out” when it came to serving diverse populations of students, but they did intentionally strive, through a number of intentional programs and professional development experiences, to design more meaningful instruction for their students. In this way, the high school setting of my study provided context for the stories student teachers would begin to tell.

My experiences with the cooperating teachers before the focal semester spoke to their commitment to continually grow and examine their teaching practice in the hopes of improving their effectiveness. Cayla, who became a focal participant of this study when she became Kathleen’s cooperating teacher, is a white, middle-class woman in her late 20s who taught at Westview for five years before Fall 2011. During this time, she developed collaborative relationships with many other teachers in the English department, and hosted faculty lunches in her room daily, with department members often gathering in her classroom to share stories together. Cayla taught the elective course called Young Adult Novels (YAN) many times before Kathleen took over during her student teaching semester. During our initial conversations in Spring 2011, Cayla told me how she had changed the course each semester since she started teaching it, often eliciting feedback from her students on how to improve it. She described her enjoyment of teaching this class, which had long been a reading elective for students with “low”

CSAP comprehension scores, and how enrollment in the elective had grown dramatically since she began teaching it. In short, Cayla, who I will describe in more detail in Chapter Five, was a highly collaborative teacher, one who consistently sought to improve her practice, challenge herself in new roles, and was eager to share her knowledge and grow in her own teaching as a cooperating teacher.

*The University Supervisor: Myself*

The final participant in this study was myself, a doctoral candidate in literacy, who came to this work after five years teaching in culturally and linguistically diverse settings in different areas of the country. As a young, white, middle class, female educator in culturally and racially diverse settings, I sometimes struggled to develop teaching practices that would effectively meet the needs of my African-American students, many of whom experienced poverty. My experiences and lingering questions while working to improve my teaching practice in these settings compelled me to enter this doctoral program and contribute to research that could better prepare teachers to teach in setting similar to the ones I experienced. My successes and struggles in these contexts, as well as my experience as a university supervisor with other student teachers, informed the design of this study.

Because my role was both as researcher and participant, it was important to consider the ways that my own biases, subjectivities, experiences, and the unique intersections of my race, class, and gender affected the design and implementation of the student teaching experience. My own opinions and knowledge regarding “good” educational experiences for often-underserved youth interacted with the ways I analyzed and understood Kathleen’s narratives and actions in the classroom. For instance, Kathleen’s perspectives, philosophies, and teaching ideas—as well

as her desire to challenge reductive notions of students—aligned, in many ways, with my own. In acknowledging this, my research design called for a variety of data sources, multiple voices, and data collection measure that allowed me to analyze students’ experiences in her classroom. In these ways, I worked to mitigate the centrality of my own lens in analyzing Kathleen’s stories by gathering perspectives beyond it, while also acknowledging our relationship as a powerful tool in understanding her stories. In working to diminish the hierarchical nature of my position as university supervisor, I was transparent about the pass/fail nature of the course, and continually reminded student teachers that it was participation in activities, and not adherence to a particular framework of teaching and learning, that was required during the seminar and student teaching semester. I consistently shared the risks of the work we engaged in, and described the ways that critically examining your own practice and your storytelling about practice could be emotionally difficult and vulnerable work. I also took opportunities to tell my own stories and to share difficult moments from my own teaching past in order to appear less an “expert” and more of a fellow teacher on a shared journey. Further, I informed participations that they were able to opt out of data collection measures when they did not wish to share.

Before the study began, I had developed the beginnings of professional and trusting relationships with participants. These relationships and the trust created within them were essential to feminist research (Acker et al., 1991; Wolf, 1996; Reinhartz, 1992), and, I believe, important in the development of teaching narratives that dwell in multiple perspectives and seek complex answers to difficult problems. I was mindful of this trust while conducting the study, especially when considering the tensions inherent in sharing stories that might not show my participants in particularly positive ways. Due to the nature of the relationships between and

across multiple participants, I have attempted to expose how my multiple roles and hybrid identity influenced the analysis (Lal, 1996).

### The Setting: Student Teaching and the Seminar

This student teaching experience was structured similarly to all student teaching experiences typical at our university. Each student teacher was placed with a primary cooperating teacher whose classes they gradually took responsibility for over the course of the semester and then gradually rescinded responsibility for at the end of the semester. Each student teacher was solely responsible for all classes for at least six weeks during the semester. In accordance with teacher certification requirements, each student teacher also completed a performance assessment, a pilot version of the Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA), now edTPA, which asked them to plan and analyze a unit of study for a specific group of students. In addition to teaching and the TPA, student teachers and I met as a group eleven times during the semester to engage in discussion and activities that encouraged them to reflect on, ask questions about, plan for, and support each other in developing their teaching practice.

In addition, this student teaching experience involved the following features:

- Student teachers shared the context of one high school during student teaching.
- Student teachers were encouraged to seek support and ideas from teachers beyond their own cooperating teacher in order to expand available teaching narratives.
- I provided support to, and gained support from, the cooperating teachers. In meetings with cooperating teachers, we discussed the learning we noticed in student teachers, analyzing it through different lenses and perspectives, and considering new forms of support.

## Methodological Tools

### *Case Study*

Case studies allow for “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) of individual cases that can illuminate common problems and possible solutions in the field of teacher development. In using this method, I did not set out to make generalizations, but rather to explore the ways a setting and storytelling interactions within a setting influenced and were influenced by individuals with particular histories, values, beliefs, and cultural practices. Countering trends in education research that tend to over generalize the largely “white, middle-class, female” population of new teachers (Jones & Enriquez, 2009) and, on the other end of the spectrum, case studies that fail to take much of the larger context of a teacher’s development into account (Hollins & Guzman, 2005), this study examined cases in order to explore the consistencies and variations among new teachers’ storytelling. Though case studies are often chosen as an example of a larger phenomenon (Stake, 1994), Kathleen’s stories may be thought of as a unique or ‘telling case.’ As it became clearer that Kathleen’s stories and storytelling moves often enabled her to disrupt deficit narratives of many of her students and help change the trajectory of her class, I became excited about the possibilities of sharing Kathleen’s stories, and the setting they were created in, as a way to consider how to encourage the creation of similar types of teaching stories.

### *Ethnographic Tools*

My primary method involved participant observation, a primary feature of ethnography (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Holy, 1984). My friendly, though professional, relationship with Kathleen, was the basis for our work together. As a university supervisor, I had a specific role to play that involved being an ongoing part of Kathleen's teaching experiences, and as a researcher, I added more involvement in the form of semi-structured, open-ended interviews, increased classroom visits, and artifact collection. In many ways, I "would have been there anyway," which decreased the "formal" nature of my involvement; although in other ways, my research changed the nature of Kathleen's student teaching experience in subtle and overt ways. Although not a traditional ethnography, by using many ethnographic tools, such as open-ended interviews, artifact collection, participant observation, and capturing Kathleen's own thoughts through her blog, I worked to account for Kathleen's storytelling in her "everyday contexts," rather than under conditions mostly created by me, the researcher (p. 3). I now turn to research design of my study.

### Research Design

#### *Units of Analysis*

Within this ethnographic case study, my units of analysis were "stories," and themes within those stories, which helped teachers make sense of their experiences student teaching. Because my first research question focused on the stories new teachers told about learning, teaching, students, and what it means to be a teacher, I focused my analysis on those thematic areas. Over time, this focus on "stories" expanded to include the idea of "storytelling moves," or, in other words, forms and styles of telling stories (e.g. attempting to find multiple reasons for an

occurrence, or creating a role for yourself that included agency). These units of analysis were broad, ranging from “emergent” to “performative” narratives (Razfar, 2012). Further, they were not housed in one particular discourse form—such as a story with a beginning, middle, and end—but were demonstrated through a variety of forms. As noted earlier, Ochs (2004) describes this range through the following list of different narratives practices and their characteristics:

Narrative Practice 1 typically has one active co-teller, relates a highly tellable experience, is relatively detached, contains a linear plot line, and has a certain moral stance.

Narrative Practice 2 commonly employs multiple active co-tellers, relates a moderately tellable experiences, is embedded in ongoing activity, has an indeterminate plot line, and contains an uncertain, shifting moral stance. (p. 276)

With these definitions as a guide, I looked for narrative themes across storytelling forms. For instance, a more “performative narrative” might be recorded in the course of a response to an interview question. For instance, when I asked Kathleen what led her to teaching as a career path, she responded with the following story, replete with a beginning, middle and end:

When I first graduated from college, I wanted to be a PhD in philosophy. I was particularly interested in continental philosophy in college, and so I thought that’s what I wanted to do. So I applied to schools, and didn’t get in anywhere. It was a “who am I really” moment? How did I always see myself vs. who I am really moments. Which was good. In the space between not getting into school and figuring things out—I worked with a lot of kids in experiential education—similar to what I’m doing now, but with late elementary/early middle school in an environmental education camp, it’s all based on experiential moment. And soooo....All of a sudden I had this epiphany where I realized, Wow this is really fun! I really like hanging out with kids and I like lose myself in

these—they called them investigations—where we would take kids out and just explore stuff and talk about stuff and there was like a loose curriculum, but it was very exploratory. And I had so much fun. And so I did that for two seasons, and it took me a while to kind of process that. And then I had one of those moments where I was like I should probably just do what I have a really good time with and what I'm good at.

However, I noticed more “emergent” narratives through data sources such as Cayla and Kathleen's instructional conversations. For instance, below, in response to a question about what would be happening next in YAN, Cayla and Kathleen created the story together, while also leaving the possibility of a different outcome than they expected:

Makenzie: What books are you using for the rest of the semester?

Kathleen: We're doing book clubs, and they have sets in the library and we've ordered some. We have a list. Yeah, I'm excited to see where that goes.

Cayla: Yeah.

Kathleen: Although they're going to self-select, which might be totally...

Cayla: Well then we could not, we could always have them not self-select and then have the project be in parts, and then they get graded on the parts.

Kathleen: Well usually they do, like a trailer, trailer video.

Cayla: If that doesn't work then...

Kathleen: Yeah.

The above dialogue is also an example of a piece of data that could be classified as a particular type of “storytelling move,” considering the ways Kathleen's and Cayla's conversation kept the future of this assignment open as they discussed possible instructional moves.

### *Data Collection*

Below I share details about the specific data I collected with regard to Kathleen. My primary sources of data were semi-structured, open-ended interviews, audio-video recording of seminars, teaching observations, teaching debriefs, triad meetings, Kathleen's written blog, and artifacts collected from Kathleen's teaching experiences and her coursework.

*Interviews with Kathleen.* Before Kathleen started student teaching, I interviewed her in order to better understand her past educational history, the ways she was currently constructing her teaching narrative, and what she felt the student teaching semester would be like (see Appendix A for a complete list of questions). At mid-semester, I conducted a second interview with Kathleen to better understand how her teaching narrative was developing, the influences she was noticing on her storytelling, and the impact she felt she had on student learning (see Appendix B for a complete list of questions). At the end of the semester, I conducted a collaborative interview with both Kathleen and Cayla. I asked them to share the "story" of the semester, how students had learned and grown through participating in Kathleen's classes, and Kathleen's growth as a teacher over time (see Appendix C for a complete list of questions). These interviews served to provide a formal space for Kathleen to share ideas that corresponded with research questions one, two, and three. I conducted these interviews on August 11, October 6, and December 6 respectively, and audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded each interview.

*Interviews with Cayla.* In three interviews before, during, and at the end of student teaching, I asked Cayla questions about her student teaching experience, her opinions about the best ways to mentor new teachers, her past experiences in schools, and the ways she felt Kathleen was growing as a teacher. I conducted these interviews on August 24, October 19, and December 6 (for a full list of questions, see Appendices D, E, and C), and then audio-recorded,

transcribed, and coded each interview. These interviews helped me answer research question two.

*Seminars.* Janna, Aaron, Kathleen and I met eleven times over the course of the student teaching semester. The content of these seminars ranged from telling teaching stories; reviewing classroom management, assessment, and instructional ideas from previous coursework; reviewing and planning for the TPA; and, more generally, supporting and encouraging each other. I audio-recorded each of these meetings on August 9, August 17, August 24, August 31, September 22, September 28, October 19, November 16, November 30, and December 14. I then content logged each of the recordings, coded them, and went back to transcribe storytelling moments that indicated how student teachers were making sense of classroom events with each other. This data helped me to answer research questions one and two.

*Blog Posts.* Kathleen created a blog to document her experiences during student teaching, and provided me access to her posts. She created six entries, on September 14, September 26, October 5, October 13, October 26, November 1, and November 16. I coded each of these blogs for storytelling themes, documenting the events Kathleen chose to memorialize and the ways she made sense of them through stories. This space helped me to answer research question one through data that documented more personal storytelling.

*Triad Meetings.* Cayla, Kathleen and I met together on multiple occasions during the course of student teaching to discuss the student teaching experience, to offer support and additional ideas for the instructional decisions Kathleen was making, and to reflect together on Kathleen's progress and where she might focus her efforts as the semester continued. I audio-recorded these "triad" meetings, which occurred on August 16, September 12, October 11, and November 11. At the October 11 meeting, we also formally completed Kathleen's mid-semester

review. I created content logs of each of these meetings, and coded them for stories and storytelling moves. Again, this data helped me to better understand research questions one and two. In addition, we often discussed classroom events, which provided data to answer research question three.

*Observation Debriefs with University Supervisor.* I created field notes for each of the classroom visits I made to Kathleen's classroom, most often in YAN, which happened twelve times between August 23 and December 6. This allowed me to look back and consider what was happening in the classroom when Kathleen described certain moments as pivotal in her sense-making. I also video-recorded three of those occasions. I was present for two of the major moments that Kathleen referred to as "turning points" in her storytelling about YAN, and video-recorded one of them. Being present during Kathleen's classes and, often, being able to debrief with her immediately after, helped answer research questions one and three.

*Informal Debriefs with Cayla.* As the semester progressed, I realized the continual sense-making that Kathleen did together with Cayla, and the influence Cayla had in the construction of Kathleen's stories, which helped me answer research question two. As this became a central area of focus in my study, I asked them to record some of the debriefing they did together when I wasn't present. Although, unfortunately, I had this idea too late in the semester to collect much data in this way, the recording they did on November 9 was extremely informative, and encouraged me to set up their final interviews of the semester as a group interview. By interviewing them together, I was able to hear more of the sense-making that they did together as they told stories about the semester. I transcribed this debrief and coded it.

*Discussion with Pre-Student Teaching Students.* On November 30, the student teachers were asked to share their experiences with a group of teacher candidates who were entering

student teaching in the spring. I audio-recorded their interactions with these novice teachers, content logged it, and coded it for storytelling moments. This opportunity provided another, different audience with whom to make sense of experiences, and provided another lens to answer research question one.

*Comps Project.* In the final semester of the Masters program, two months after her student teaching experience had ended, Kathleen completed a final project as a requirement for her degree in which she analyzed a dilemma of teaching. I coded it to help me answer research question one.

By the end of data collection, I had documented 30 distinct pieces of data of Kathleen discussing, both formally and informally, her experiences student teaching and telling stories to make sense of them. With over twenty-five hours of content logged and/or transcribed data, ten pages of Kathleen's written blogs, and twenty pages of field notes and observation reports, I was able to answer my research questions through triangulating of a variety of data sources.

### *Data Analysis Procedures*

The process of constructing codes emerged from time spent sifting through the data corpus before formal analysis began, while also keeping my conceptual framework in mind. Qualitative codes do not simply appear or emerge effortlessly from data (Erickson, 2004), but rather from a researcher's analysis of data in ways that align with their conceptual and methodological commitments. The first stage of data analysis involved a chronological exploration of early data sources and an initial analysis of themes, patterns, and contradictions in the data. Using Glaser and Straus's conception of grounded theory (Charmaz, 1983), I analyzed each piece of data, "start[ing] with individual cases, incidents or experiences and develop

progressively more abstract conceptual categories to synthesize, to explain, and to understand [my] data and to identify patterned relationships within it” (p. 83). As I listened to, transcribed, and read Kathleen’s and Cayla’s initial August interviews, and also content logged the first few weeks of seminar and triad meetings, I created notes about the themes and patterns that began to provide insights into my research questions. After the initial analysis, I re-read important pieces of my conceptual framework, specifically Jerome Bruner’s (1989) work on the narrative mode and Bronwyn Davies (2000) work about the constituting power of language, and created six initial broad codes, which I outline below. Thus, my approach was both top-down and bottom-up (Erickson, 2004) as I read through data for emerging patterns, while also revisiting my conceptual framework for insights into the themes I was noticing.

*Code 1: Story Content/Topic/Themes.* With this code, I looked for data that answered questions such as the following:

- What topics do new teachers discuss when they talk about teaching, learning, and students?
- What is the range of themes they discuss, and what themes come up most often?

*Code 2: Story Genre(s) (Sub-code: Breaches).* With this code, I searched for ways that storytelling genres and common story structures enabled and constrained daily storytelling. Breaches were of specific interest within the story genre code, as Bruner (2002) describes how many great thinkers have noted that the “impetus to narrative is expectation gone awry” (p. 28) and that our narrative skills help us to make sense of things when they don’t. I also kept in mind that, as Ochs and Capps (2001) and McAdams (1993) describe, the construction of narrative also happens in ordinary social encounters where less coherent narratives are used to make sense of experiences. I looked for answers to questions such as:

- How does the story indicate a larger story pattern being drawn on? How does the genre help the teller make sense of the experience?
- What archetypes are being drawn on? (e.g. Heroic journey? Moral fable?)
- Are there turning points in the story? How is the setting described?
- Are there breaches and how are they handled?
- How do student teachers portray themselves and others within larger stories?
- What narratives are being told through more conversational and exploratory talk?

*Code 3: Discourse Style.* With this code, I looked for markers of the paradigmatic and narrative modes (Bruner, 1986), and for those places where stories created multiple alternatives and used multiple perspectives to understand experiences. I answered questions such as:

- What types of discourse do the storyteller and co-author use? (e.g. Does it keep meaning open or closed? Do it render reality subjunctive? Does the language evoke multiple perspectives and subjunctive landscapes? Is meaning implicit or explicit?)
- Are possibilities and alternatives made possible in the telling?
- What stances and positions are being indexed in discourse?

*Code 4: Story Tone.* McAdams (1993) discusses how the most pervasive feature of one's "personal myth" in adulthood is its tone. This tone helps inform storytellers of how attainable their hopes and dreams and wishes are, and speaks to authors' underlying faith in the "possibilities of human intention and behavior" (p. 48). With this code, I wondered:

- Are story tones positive? negative? optimistic? pessimistic? curious? hopeful? intellectual? improvisational? agentic? Something else?
- Under what circumstances does tone shift?
- Where are multiple tones in play and how do they work together?

*Code 5: Co-authors.* With this code, I sought to understand how “others” co-authored the construction of narratives. When we converse with each other, our stories evolve based on their reactions and our hearing of their stories (McAdams, 1993; Wortham, 2001; Ochs & Capps, 2001). We also have internalized audiences, and we think about our actions in light of how we think general society would view them, using these perceptions to help construct stories. I answered questions such as:

- Who is helping to tell the story and how? Are they present in the conversation or not?
- How do interlocutors function in conversational narrative?

*Code 6: Societal/Cultural Myths.* With this code, I looked for instances where larger societal stories about teaching and learning, as well as binary constructions, entered student teachers’ narrative constructions and influenced their meaning-making. It was through this code, as well as Code Five, that my study embodied a critical lens, searching for ways and types of talk that indexed larger social narratives that keep power located in traditionally powerful groups. I wondered:

- Are cultural myths about teaching being drawn on? If so, how, and what are they?
- Are binaries used to explain and construct narratives? If so, how and when?

*Using Codes.* After creating these codes, I went back through the data chronologically, using them to consider the narratives under construction in Kathleen’s teaching life. I continually reorganized them as I gathered new information, and then created flexible sub-codes specific to Kathleen under their umbrella (see Appendix F for a complete list of sub-codes). The solidification of these codes, although they remained flexible, allowed me to take a more systematic approach to the data. Interestingly, Code Six, regarding the ways societal and cultural myths, dropped away as it became clear that Kathleen was working hard to keep such stories out

of her sense-making. I started to code this new pattern under code two, as a discourse style—and eventually as a “storytelling move”—documenting the pattern in which she often worked to diminish binary constructions of teaching in her language. I added a new code in its place, which I called “story under construction,” to note the places where Kathleen seemed to be shifting between using the evolving story about teaching she was creating to make sense in-the-moment, and those times when she reflected on her actions and told larger, more polished narratives of what it meant to be a teacher. Finally, my co-author code became increasingly focused on Kathleen and Cayla’s relationship as I noticed the large amount of sense-making they did together.

Using this sub-code list, I coded data chronologically, stopping four times to write detailed memos and vignettes about the themes and patterns I was noticing. I also noted the frequencies with which I noticed prominent patterns emerging, and pulled out representative examples from the data for the most prominent codes. This analysis enabled me to notice patterns in the data, and to identify threaded strands of developing narratives Kathleen composed across discourse spaces of learning to teach. These memos, with their detailed accounts of the frequency with which I noted storytelling patterns and representative sections of data, became the basis for my first findings chapter. As previously noted, narrative theory draws attention to the ways humans make meaning through storytelling, and how those stories are instructive for teacher action. By carefully analyzing transcripts and content logs for the ways stories were distributed across the sites of teacher learning, within particular discourse spaces, and among interactions between participants, I worked to document Kathleen’s narrative arc across the semester.

Importantly, I also searched for confirming and disconfirming evidence as I analyzed the data. This was evident in the multiple sifts I took through the data, looking for ways my original interpretations might lack complexity, and for instances when Kathleen's stories did not fit the larger themes I was documenting. Because of my generally positive view of Kathleen's teaching decisions, it was important to document those places where Kathleen did harbor deficit perspectives at times, and the ways that she was frustrated by students and the work of student teaching, even though her narratives more often focused on more positive themes. In particular, I listened to Kathleen and Cayla's discussion about a group of students they termed "dysfunctional" from their November 9 after-class debrief multiple times, working to better understand how they used this term, what it meant in their story of the class, and how this prompted them to act in ways not necessarily consistent with what the term might suggest. Thus, I deliberately sought disconfirming evidence, which allowed me to engage a richer analysis, and to see patterns in a new light when considering stories that were both typical and atypical.

After linking stories across memos together, it became clear that Kathleen's experiences in YAN were the most frequent in her storytelling about what it meant to be a teacher. I decided to focus on the stories she told about this class as a unifying theme. I then read through all data sources that documented my experiences observing the YAN class, as well as the student work that I had collected from YAN. This allowed me to map Kathleen's stories about YAN onto the data I had collected about what was happening in YAN, and to notice how Kathleen's stories influenced the daily experiences of students in YAN.

In re-reading my initial findings chapter, I collapsed my major codes to more adequately and fluidly share my findings about Kathleen's storytelling and its influences. Focusing on story content, breaches, and the setting of Kathleen's student teaching, which heavily focused on her

relationship with Cayla as a major co-author, I shared major patterns in a more story-like form, while still acknowledging the wide range of codes through which I noticed patterns. After noticing the ways instructional adaptation became an increasingly important storyline in Kathleen's sense-making by the middle of the semester, I revisited initial data—especially from pre-semester interviews, and Kathleen's first weeks “on the job”—to better understand the genesis of Kathleen's instructional adaptation storyline. I analyzed codes for “story genre” from that early data, and saw how the sub-codes I created regarding (1) Kathleen's openness to learning from Cayla's classroom and (2) her desire to subvert binary notions of success and failure before she started teaching, affected the ways she saw early problems in YAN and addressed them with new ideas. This became the genesis of my focus on “storytelling moves,” adding complexity to my narrative inquiry.

Thus, my process of analysis was iterative and involved multiple layers of coding, engaging my conceptual framework, re-coding, writing memos about themes, patterns, and contradictions, and repeating the process as I gained more insight. Having multiple data sources to represent storytelling at each stage of Kathleen's timeline allowed me to analyze the ways Kathleen talked about events in YAN across time and discourse spaces. Further, my classroom visits to YAN provided deeper context regarding the events that populated Kathleen's stories.

### *Representing Data*

I chose to relate my findings about Kathleen's storytelling in, as much as possible, a chronological, story pattern. This decision was made to imbue Kathleen's stories about teaching with a taste of the experiences she was having as she told them (Nussbaum, 1995). However, I foregrounded the storytelling moves with which she entered teaching as well as findings related

to the setting and co-author relationship she established with Cayla. I did this to provide important background for the ways her stories unfolded across the semester. When I used information from transcripts and other data sources, I chose, most often, to provide detailed transcripts of actual talk in order to create the story with more voices than just my own, and to provide the reader with a sense of Kathleen's and Cayla's voices in addition to my analysis of them. Samples were chosen for representativeness of larger thematic patterns in Kathleen's stories, or to show how different patterns emerged through a variety of language patterns. I also used one vignette in place of transcripts in order to convey the broader spirit of a longer stretch of discourse. Understanding that transcription and data representation is always theoretically informed (Ochs, 1979), I came to my decisions about how to present data intentionally, considering both the parity of voices and the flow of the narrative.

## CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS:  
Remaking “Failure” and Agency in the Classroom:  
Initial Stories & The Setting of Student Teaching

*“I think that Cayla and I have created a climate where I am fully supported, and feel like I have a resource there with me, but I am also able to be a full authority in the room.”*

-Kathleen

Storytelling, as I discussed earlier, is a sense-making tool that humans use, almost instinctively, to render life events more understandable. From adolescence, most people begin to “put their lives together into a story by reconstructing the past and imagining the future as an ongoing narrative that depicts who they were, are, and will be—and how the past, present, and future are meaningfully linked” (McAdams, 2008, p. 21). Drawing on these ideas, the following two chapters are an attempt to reveal the ongoing composition of one teaching life, Kathleen’s, as a complex narrative endeavor. It is a story that I have narrated, gathered from Kathleen’s participation in interviews, debriefs, seminars, and a variety of other daily interactions, and interpreted through my eyes. It is a story of Kathleen’s fierce determination to serve students well as she grew as a teacher, even when students’ less-than-enthusiastic responses to her instruction felt hurtful and frustrating. By piecing together the themes apparent in Kathleen’s narrative responses to student teaching—or, in other words, the ways she made sense of the past in conversation as she looked ahead to the future—I hope to tell a story that focuses our attention on the ways new teachers, “make sense” through informal, narrative means. This has the potential to influence who they become and what they will do in classrooms. Further, I highlight

the importance of listening to the stories teachers tell as important windows into how they imagine what is possible for them and their students.

The focus of the following chapter is to analyze some of the early stories Kathleen told before student teaching as a way to make sense of the experiences she was anticipating during her student teaching semester, as well as the setting and people that influenced and populated those events and storytelling. As the story progresses into the next chapter, I describe stories that emerged once she started teaching. In both of these chapters, I focus on Kathleen's experience teaching a senior elective called Young Adult Novels (YAN). This was the class that Kathleen took full responsibility for the earliest, and, as a result, it was the class in which she felt the struggles of setbacks more deeply than others, while also feeling the most autonomy to make changes in the face of those frustrations. In conversations with me, this was the class Kathleen discussed most often, and it was the class she described most consistently at the end of student teaching when articulating what she had learned and how she had grown during the experience. It was in this class that Kathleen most consistently describing needing to adapt her instruction, a storytelling theme which took center stage in her first months of student teaching, with tangible consequences for the students in YAN.

However, although that is where the story is eventually headed (sorry to give away the ending), that is not where I will start the tale. If the beginnings of stories have consequences for a person's reading of the journey contained within them (Clandinin et al., 1993), then, in order to better understand the origins of Kathleen's "story of instructional adaptation," it is important to attend to some of the foundational layers of Kathleen's evolving teaching narrative that complimented and made space for this focus to emerge. Through my privileged perspective of looking back across six months of stories, both big and small, it became evident that there were

storytelling moves with which Kathleen entered student teaching that influenced the early actions she would take and how she described them in daily sense-making, especially during those pivotal first few weeks “on the job”. So although at first glance, Kathleen’s story might most consistently have focused on instructional adaptation as the major work of teaching, after multiple sifts through the data, it became clear that she was telling a larger, more complex story that, both from the beginning and as it evolved over time and through experience, grew from deeper places in important ways. I turn to some of those stories in this chapter.

First, Kathleen entered student teaching with the tendency to remake traditional notions of “failure” by constructing difficulties as necessary features of learning and growth—often naming them “turning points”—as she reflected on the larger teaching life she was composing. In the early interview data I share here, Kathleen had the tendency to describe problematic life events as precursors to positive change, and also indicated that it was those moments when she had let go of a defined vision of what “needed” to happen in her future or how success “needed” to look, that authentic pathways became clear. Like Mary Bateson (1989) describes, Kathleen displayed a willingness, when looking back, to “explore the creative potential of interrupted and conflicted lives ... in which commitments are continually refocused and redefined” (p. 9) and where setbacks did not necessarily indicate failure. Second, Kathleen began student teaching by defining her teaching role and telling stories about herself where she had the capacity to act and author change in the classroom. Envisioning herself both as an active learner and a competent teacher from the beginning, she entered student teaching as an active protagonist in her own story about teaching, one who could affect the storyline that would unfold. I will argue that Kathleen’s eventual focus on instructional adaptation can be seen as an outward manifestation of these two deeper narrative tendencies. In this chapter, I seek to narrate and describe these

patterns of storytelling moves that Kathleen brought to the experience, affecting her developing composition before it began.

Yet, this chapter is not only a story about Kathleen's storytelling. Early on in the analysis process, I quickly found that I couldn't speak with integrity about Kathleen's teaching narrative without also examining the mentoring relationship she developed with her cooperating teacher, Cayla. Kathleen's stories were, in part, co-authored through the rapport she and Cayla built, the routines they established, and the talk in which they engaged. Accordingly, exploring their affiliation helps reveal Kathleen's stories in important ways. So although my focus, in these chapters, is on the storytelling moves Kathleen brought with her and developed to make sense of student teaching, I also share important details about Cayla's interaction with those stories, and the ways she became an important voice in Kathleen's telling.

A note before I outline the chapter below: I chose to narrate the following two findings chapters chronologically in the hopes that readers would better understand Kathleen's developing stories if they could consider the events that became most salient in Kathleen's storytelling in the order she encountered them. In this, I draw loosely on Nussbaum's (1995) ideas about novels and her description of how this genre, in particular, portrays life in ways that "endow a perceived form with a complex life" (p. 4). By following a life through its concrete context, Nussbaum argues, we are invited to "wonder about it, imagining the motives that drive" a character to act in specific ways (p. 28). Realist novels, of the sort on which Nussbaum focuses, provide a qualitatively rich world that thickly surrounds characters and creates "both opportunities and impediments" (p. 28) that affect their lives. Novels of these sorts are committed to

the irreducibility of quality to quantity; [the] sense that what happens to individuals in the world has enormous importance; [and to describing] the events of life not from an external perspective of detachment... but from within, as invested with the complex significances with which human beings invest their own lives. (p. 32)

And although I am not writing a novel, of course, this type of qualitative description and movement through time and space, is my attempt to infuse Kathleen's stories with more glimpses into the concrete daily experience that animated her authorial choices.

With these goals in mind, the following chapter is meant to set the stage for the story that unfolded during Kathleen's student teaching experience. In the first section, I share stories from initial interviews I conducted with Kathleen and Cayla before student teaching began. In the second section, I draw attention to important features of the setting of Kathleen's student teaching: namely, her and Cayla's mentoring relationship and the routines they developed. The integrated nature of Kathleen's and Cayla's work, the continual presence and consistent nature of their teaching conversations, and the practical and conceptual supports and tools that Cayla made available to Kathleen through their partnership were integral to Kathleen's developing story. By analyzing some of the initial stories and setting, I set the stage for stories that would develop across Kathleen's student teaching experience, which I discuss in Chapter Six. Before the chapter begins, I offer for a visual representation of Kathleen's storytelling moves and themes across the semester (See Table 5.1).

Table 5.1. Timeline of Kathleen’s Major Stories, Storytelling Moves, and Turning Points Across Student Teaching Semester

	Before Student Teaching	August	September/October	November/December
	LOOKING AHEAD	DAILY TELLING	LOOKING BACK/ DAILY TELLING	LOOKING BACK
Classroom Events		YAN Not Talking/Engaging	YAN Not Talking/Engaging	Increased Engagement, Participation in YAN  Higher Grades in YAN
Turning Points	Not getting into PhD program led to authentic career	YAN: Silent Discussion yielded more engagement	YAN: Graffiti Wall yielded ability to influence classroom climate	
<b>(1) Remaking Failure As a Storytelling Move</b>	Wanting to Subvert Failure-Success Binary  Being Open to the Experience Unfolding in in Uncertain Ways	Discussing Problems through Possible Solutions (with Cayla*)  Problems Led to Growth  Problems don’t define the situation	Discussing Problems through Possible Solutions  Past Problems Led to Growth	
Teaching Narrative			<b>(3) Instructional Adaptation Storyline</b>	I learned to instructionally adapt.  <b>This also affected student relationships positively.</b>
<b>(2) Agency As a Storytelling Move</b>	I bring skills to this experience.  I am headed into a successful classroom I can learn from.	I am working to figure out solutions by drawing on resources.*	I am figuring out solutions by drawing on resources.  I can figure out solutions on my own as well	
Teaching Narrative			<b>(3) Instructional Adaptation Storyline</b>	I figured out solutions through instructional adaptation.  <b>I made some change in the classroom.</b>
	*Influence of tools available in setting and mentorship relationship			

## Kathleen and Cayla: Stories Before Student Teaching

### *Kathleen: Failure As Necessary to Growth and the Capacity to Act*

Just before the semester began, I talked to Kathleen about her reasons for entering teaching, her experiences in the teacher education program so far, her opinions about societal and film narratives of teaching, and her visions and hopes for student teaching. I wanted to discover ways Kathleen narrated her path to teaching up to this point, and what she hoped would materialize in the upcoming months. Although Kathleen had not taught in traditional high school classrooms before she entered student teaching—beyond isolated lessons during her field experiences—she certainly arrived at student teaching full of stories about teaching nonetheless. Her personal experiences as a student, her time spent working with youth in outdoor experiential summer programs, her previous teacher education experiences, and her reasons for becoming a teacher had provided important background for the story she was beginning to compose that would affect and shape how she narrated future events. During the course of our conversation, Kathleen described her past and present experiences around education in ways that began to show her tendency to tell stories in ways that “remade” failure by turning seemingly problematic experiences into preludes to growth. She also demonstrated the ways she saw herself as an active and adept protagonist; for, even though she constructed herself as a novice who could benefit from new knowledge and mentoring, she also discussed skills she believed she brought to teaching.

Kathleen described her journey to teaching as a process of figuring out who she really was, and what she was really meant to do, saying

... it was kind of a long journey actually. So when I first graduated from college, I thought that I wanted to go and do a PhD in philosophy ... I was particularly interested in continental philosophy in college, and so I thought that's what I wanted to do. So I applied to schools, and did all these things, and didn't get in anywhere. And so, it was kind of one of those "who am I really" moments [or] like "how did I always see myself versus who I am really" moments. Which I think was good. But I, so like, in that space where I didn't get into school, and I was kind of figuring things out, I worked with a lot of kids, particularly in experiential education. It was with late elementary, early middle school kids. It was an environmental ed camp, and it was all based on experiential learning. And so, all of a sudden I had this epiphany where I was like, "Wow, this is really fun!" I really like hanging out with kids, and I like lose myself in these, they called them investigations, where we would take kids out and just explore stuff and talk about stuff and there was like a loose curriculum, but it was very exploratory. And I had so much fun. And so I did that for two seasons, and it took me a while to kind of process that. And then I had one of those moments where I was like wow, I should probably just do what I really have a good time with and do what I'm good at. So then I applied to school to become a teacher, and I was looking back at my Philosophy applications, and I realized that on my personal statement or my statement of purpose or whatever—I had written that I had wanted to be a teacher. It was all about, like I didn't realize at the time when I was writing it, but it was all about how I wanted to teach philosophy.

This story, which Kathleen could have told as a problematic experience—as not getting to do what she initially wanted to do—was instead framed as a journey toward authenticity. Not getting into PhD programs had provided her a chance to consider "who she really was," which

she described as a “good thing,” rather than a problem or setback. In this, Kathleen described a tough experience as a conduit to growth, in many ways diminishing the personal difficulty held within the story. Further, the experience of not getting into school created a “who am I really moment” that led to teaching, remaking what some might consider a failure into a transformative experience. Although, in this case, Kathleen named this particular experience as an epiphany rather than a “turning point,” she would continue to use this narrative move—describing problematic events as experiences that would eventually make way for future growth—as she described difficult experiences with YAN as the semester progressed. In this story, Kathleen’s journey to teaching was one where difficult experiences had provided opportunities to grow and help her find a more authentic career path. Importantly, the “epiphany” she described, when she realized she should become a teacher, came *after* some experience teaching and working with students. In this way, Kathleen described herself as entering student teaching as a proven educator *and* a beginner who was about to learn more about “what [she was] good at” and something she already enjoyed, rather than starting from scratch. She was someone who had the capacity to act in the classroom in positive ways, even as she was simultaneously a novice who had much to learn.

This positive framing, even of troubling experiences, in Kathleen’s story of learning to teach continued as she discussed her experiences in the teacher education program so far. Kathleen regarded her clinical experiences as positive and well-sequenced for her learning, as she described in the following conversation.

Makenzie: When you think about the Masters journey so far, and I know it’s only been one year, but if you could think about it as a book, would there be chapters, titles, sections, or has it just been really flowing into each other?

Kathleen: I think for me, like last fall, was really about like getting to know students. So it was like education—big picture—cause we took society and education and those types of classes and then we also had adolescent psych, and in my practicum, my practicum teacher was really student-oriented, like, I think, looking back on that experience, I think what I learned most from being with her was how much time I got to spend with kids cause they were always in her classroom. So, for me, because of all those things together—it was like “education” and “how to be with students”—the individual.

Makenzie: The big and the little.

Kathleen: Right. You know. Whereas in the spring, I got so much more involved in the department at Westview. I did a lot of teaching, I was so lucky in my placement. I taught 11 or 12 times. Like we taught, all the time. So I think I got a much more like realistic sense of like the teacher’s side of things. So just a different angle. Yes. So maybe like, “Education and the Student” and then, “Teaching.” Because we got a lot more practical stuff last semester which was good.

Kathleen described her practicum teacher from her first semester in the program as “really student-oriented” which allowed Kathleen to spend a lot of time with kids, because “[students] were always in her classroom.” Kathleen felt that this had helped her to understand students on a deeper level, which, in turn, set her up well for her second practicum experience where she “got so much more involved in the department at Westview,” and was “so lucky in [her] placement” because she was able to teach “eleven or twelve times... exponentially more than anybody else.” Kathleen described this experience as “fun” and “good,” because she was able to get “a lot more practical stuff.” Kathleen was eager to spend time with students to learn

more about how to be with them in the classroom space, and she was also happy to teach more than her fellow classmates because she was able to learn through practical experience. She was looking back and composing her journey through teacher preparation as positive for her learning.

As she described her experiences in teacher education, Kathleen also continued to construct herself as a competent teacher who brought useful skills with her to the Masters program, even as she simultaneously focused on her own learning trajectory. For instance, when describing the tools and concepts that she had learned during teacher preparation that she would use during student teaching, she described the tools she brought with her in addition to what she had learned during teacher education.

Makenzie: Were there certain tools and concepts from practicums and classes that you'll use in the semester coming up?

Kathleen: This is how I am thinking about teaching it right now. You've kind of got your relationships aspect and strategies, and in a lot of ways, [that's] stuff that I am bringing, that I've brought with me to the program through other youth experience. But the practical, like how do I plan my day and what is a good, you know, how to most effectively deliver information and how to create that space for students, I think I've definitely got that from the program, and I hope I'll be able to use those things, or at least try.

She first described how she felt she had entered the program with strong skills in the "relationships aspect" of teaching, and that was "stuff that [she was] bringing in." However, through her experiences at the university, she felt she was now clearer about how "to think about educational space in particular," and about how to "most effectively deliver information." Here again, we see how Kathleen was constructing her teacher preparation journey as one where she

brought valuable information and skills, but was able to expand on and hone those skills through well-sequenced experiences at the university. She had learned from her experiences; she saw them as useful, but she brought important skills with her that imbued her with a capacity to act effectively in the classroom from the start.

These themes were reinforced later when Kathleen discussed what she had learned through her practicum experiences. She described, again, how she felt her clinical experiences had been well-sequenced for optimal learning.

Makenzie: I guess you already told me a little bit about your experiences in practicum, so, would you say anything else about those and how they were useful?

Kathleen: Um, Yeah, you know, I, I feel like um, I'm glad that they went the way they did, in the order that they did. Because like I said about my first practicum, um, I was nervous, obviously, and I'd had, um, a lot of experience with teenagers, but in such a different, like relationship dynamic, and so, I just wasn't sure what that was going to look like and how I wanted to be in that, I guess? And so, um, I had this really incredible space with these great kids that knew this teacher and felt really comfortable with this teacher to kind of figure that out, so, and I think that's a really important place to start, cause that's kinda the whole point.

Makenzie: It's those relationships...

Kathleen: Yeah and figuring out, you know, how you are authentically in that role, you know for me, that's really important, especially with teenagers.

Kathleen relayed that she was “glad that [her practicum experiences] went ... in the order that they did” because in her first practicum, she was nervous at the beginning. Although she'd had a lot of experience with teenagers, she “wasn't sure what that was going to look like and

how [she] wanted to be in that space.” But because she was placed in a classroom that was a “really incredible space with these great kids that knew this teacher and felt really comfortable with this teacher,” she was able to figure out “how [*she was*] authentically in that role,” something that she described as “really important, especially with teenagers,” and an important starting point for learning teaching. Importantly, Kathleen didn’t describe her initial nervousness as a problem or a failure on her part. It was just the way things were, so she was glad that she benefitted from the way her practicums had been sequenced. She then described how she was able to take what she had learned about relationships in her first practicum into her second practicum where she had a lot of “really practical experience,” such as getting to be in front of the classroom, and even substituting for the teacher on occasion, “which was great,” according to Kathleen. For Kathleen, there seemed to be few references to the theory-practice divide in teaching, a script often common in new teachers’ talk about their experiences in teacher preparation (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985; Labaree, 2008). Rather, there was a focus on how teacher preparation had helped prepare her for student teaching by expanding the skill-set she brought with her to the experience.

These responses demonstrate the ways Kathleen was composing her teaching life, in this space, as a positive experience where learning how to “be” authentic in her teacher role, and then gaining practical experience, were productive experiences well-timed for her growth. Difficulties both large and small—such as not getting into the PhD program after college or being nervous about being authentic with students in her first practicum—and getting through them with support, led to authenticity, learning, and growth as a teacher. In this way, Kathleen’s early stories framed difficulties as premises for learning. Additionally, Kathleen positioned herself, in the storyline, as already having relevant skills when she entered the program, especially in

regards to developing relationships with students, while also demonstrating that she had learned from the mentorship she had received in the university context. Kathleen, as a protagonist in her teaching story, was both equipped with the skills to act *and* open to learning new ones in her environment. In these responses, Kathleen used narrative moves that would influence her future storytelling about YAN: describing difficulties as necessary to growth rather than something to be feared; and describing herself as a protagonist with the capacity to act in teaching spaces.

*Kathleen: Looking Ahead to Student Teaching*

When our talk turned to envisioning the future of her teaching story and what she hoped would happen in her classroom during student teaching, Kathleen asserted authorship over the storyline by rejecting “either/or” constructions that might narrow what success or growth could look like during student teaching. For instance, when our conversation turned to what student teaching might look like specifically, Kathleen described how she hadn’t “really thought about [setting up routines],” in Cayla’s classroom, and went on to say that she was trying to be okay with not knowing what her teaching routines would look like quite yet. She further described how she didn’t yet have enough information to know what would work, so she was “anticipating that [she would] probably stick really close to Cayla’s routine, and then see how it feels, and then what I want to change.” She ended by saying, “we’ll see.” It seemed as though Kathleen was actively trying *not* to anticipate what her class would look like in order to stay open to the unknown in the experience. She believed she was headed into a successful environment, Cayla’s classroom, and wanted to learn from that environment rather than imposing expectations that may or may not prove to be feasible. Much like her experiences teaching experiential education years before, Kathleen was composing a student teaching experience that would be productive

not because she knew how it would transpire up front, but because she was open to building on a strong base of knowledge and experience.

Further, Kathleen did not seem to want to set terms for success and failure before she started teaching, but was composing a story where success and failure were more complex than their binary pairing often suggests. For instance, when I asked Kathleen, “What would be happening in the space” if teaching was going well, she first responded that the question was “interesting” because she had recently been thinking about how she wanted to start to see the “successes and failures” of student teaching “as more experiences, and not to separate them so much.” Although she went on to describe how success would involve authentic student engagement and solid relationships as a basis for classroom instruction, she first reframed the implicit assumption that a teaching episode could involve *either* success *or* failure, and described how she wanted to think about classroom experiences as always having elements of both. In this brief moment, Kathleen shifted the terms of the storyline and intentionally removed the binary of success and failure from her definition of good teaching. Considering the ways that many student teachers often worry about “failure in the classroom” (Madsen & Kaiser, 1999) it was powerful that Kathleen attempted to shift this paradigm by creating, ahead of time, a situation where success and failure were both integral parts of teaching rather than value judgments to be levied. Earlier, Kathleen had made sense of a difficult experience by naming it as a premise for authentic growth. Now, at the beginning of this new tale about teaching, she created space for a similar type of growth to happen in the future. By not defining success or failure early on, she might be able to interpret potential “failures” through a lens of growth as she moved through student teaching, or, more accurately, to not name them as failures at all.

Kathleen's tendency to defy binary thinking about success and failure in her sense-making also emerged in other discussions that were not related to her own teaching journey. For instance, when Kathleen described how current films portrayals of teachers had influenced her thinking about teaching and learning, she noted,

When I think about Hollywood movies and teaching, my inclination is to say that it's really romanticized, and that there's this sense of the narrative [being] very much about saving things that need to be saved or things that aren't whole, you know, that there's this like aspect of like lifting up, which is, I mean, it's just this kind of romantic ideal ... And then interestingly, I think, in the documentary side, it's very much about failure and how everybody is failing, you know ... and I don't think probably either is fair. I mean, they're both true and not true at the same time and there, you know, maybe most true is maybe all of it together.

Again, Kathleen did not lean toward a simplistic representation of teaching removed from what she saw as probable elements of success and failure inherent in a complex endeavor. For her, the "most true" portrayal of teaching would be "all of it together," similar to her desire to set the stage for her own teaching to be described in a nuanced manner rather than as a set of successes or failures.

Later, when considering the current political climate around teaching, Kathleen described how she had tried to separate her knowledge of recent policy decisions affecting teachers and the ways she was envisioning her future classroom. She noted,

I think I've tried to separate it a little bit...because I find that because I am not really in a place where I can picture [my classroom], ... internalizing it too much makes me feel like

I'm not going to have any space ... so I try not to let that impact the way I'm thinking about how I want my classroom to be.

With this question, Kathleen refuted the influencing powers of the political climate on her vision of good teaching. She, instead, wanted to actively define the parameters of her teaching story in more open ways: beyond success and failure, and beyond political decisions. At this point, she was not sure how the experience would unfold, and she worked to find ways to keep narrow visions from constraining how her ideas of what was possible could take shape. Because of this, when outside forces conflicted with her vision, she reframed them to create larger spaces for what was possible.

These responses, taken together, show a tendency toward complex descriptions of reality and openness to learning. Kathleen was *consciously thinking about her own ways of thinking* about teaching by rejecting the binary of success and failure and actively pushing out influences that could constrain how her vision of teaching and learning would emerge. She was straining to be open to seeing what would happen in the successful environment she was entering, and setting the stage to have space to figure things out before making judgments about herself as a teacher or her experiences in Cayla's classroom. In these initial responses, Kathleen began framing future experiences by using storytelling moves that attempted to leave meaning open and eschew a priori definitions of what success would look like. If student teaching ended up looking differently than she hoped, she was creating space to re-define the meaning of those shifts. Such deliberate storytelling moves set the stage for the creation of stories where she could not let herself down, but rather learn and grow through whatever was to come. No matter the future experience, it could make sense in Kathleen's open narrative of growth through experience and difficulty. In this way, she not only "remade" past stories of failures, but also set the stage of her

student teaching stories in ways that could diminish any future sense of failure. As Kathleen considered societal narratives of teaching, as represented through politics and films, she demonstrated a propensity to make sense of teaching in complex ways rather than simplifications; thus troubling success/failure binaries in descriptions of teaching both outwardly and inwardly.

These responses also shed light on the ways Kathleen was constructing herself as an agentic person in the process of becoming a teacher. Further, as she exerted control over the storyline in the moment of the conversation, she positioned herself interactionally with me in ways that mirrored the storyline she related (Wortham, 2001). Throughout our conversation, Kathleen easily described what she had learned from teacher preparation experiences; however, she also made it clear she believed she brought her own set of relevant skills to the classroom. Kathleen thought she had something to offer in the classroom and trusted herself to make good decisions, even as she was grateful for the learning experiences that she believed had helped her grow over the course of the past year.

Together, these storytelling moves helped Kathleen to subvert success/failure binaries and construct herself as an agentic force in the classroom, working together to lay the foundation for a story where Kathleen could be an active, competent participant in her and her students' learning, and where problematic experiences would not automatically have the ability to define her teaching, but could, instead, lead to important growth. Ahearn (2012) describes how day-to-day narratives often include hints into the ways individuals understand their own agency, and that people often engage in "meta-agentic discourse" as they tell stories. In other words, as they "talk about their own actions and other' actions" (p. 284) listeners can better understand how speakers ascribe responsibility for events happening, and how they see their own role in shaping

daily occurrences. Kathleen's narrative, at the beginning of student teaching, illuminated the ways she understood herself as having the capacity to act in productive ways. She brought a skill set to the table, and pushed against outside notions of what her classroom should look like. Even as she described wanting to mirror Cayla's classroom routines as the semester started, she was making an active choice to "see what works," and make changes from there. In these ways, even before student teaching began, Kathleen was composing a teaching world where she was capable of making change and being competent, even as she also sought to learn and grow. These beginning storytelling themes would have consequences for the instructional choices she made in YAN as the semester progressed.

*Cayla: Framing a Mentoring Relationship*

I also spoke to Cayla early in the semester, hoping to gain insight into the types of teaching stories that might be available to Kathleen as she made sense of classroom events with her closest mentor figure. As I will share in the next section, this glimpse into Cayla's sense-making proved especially important because of the ways Kathleen and Cayla developed a deeply intertwined collaboration early in the semester. In other words, Kathleen talked to Cayla on average *many times a day* about what was happening and ways to move forward, especially in YAN. Furthermore, Cayla and Kathleen co-taught and shared responsibility for planning in many other classes. As noted previously, Kathleen had constructed Cayla's classroom as a "successful" space even before entering it, and was looking forward to using her ideas, routines, and council to help discover and gauge what was working and not working in the classroom. Kathleen articulated this during my second interview with her on October 12, when discussing whose "voices" were influencing her ideas about teaching. She noted,

I think Cayla's obviously the biggest voice, and she's the one I talk to, like, most consistently about what's happening in the classroom. And the way I've been thinking about [student teaching] is that, is really about, like, putting myself in a successful classroom, and putting myself in this successful learning community of teachers, you know? And kind of seeing how it works, and then kind of taking in, choosing what I like and what I don't like and that kind of stuff.

Not only did Kathleen make sense with Cayla often, and construct Cayla's classroom as a flexible model in establishing her own classroom sensibilities, she also trusted Cayla's opinion. For instance, when Kathleen visited a previous professor's class to share teaching stories with other pre-service teachers, one of the students had questioned Kathleen's assessment of a classroom situation. After returning to Westview, Kathleen asked Cayla her opinion, and Cayla agreed with Kathleen's original assessment. Kathleen wrote about the experience in a blog post, saying

It never occurred to me that I might be overreacting, and it was a real shocker to have it spoken in that manner. I really can't believe that [the pre-service teacher] felt like those were okay words to be on the wall of a classroom. While it was good to question my reaction, it was reassuring to feel the backing of Cayla and other teachers in the department that I was correct in my assessment.

Although Kathleen was certainly able to make choices and assessments independent of Cayla, Cayla's voice was nonetheless important to her. In light of this, I share some highlights from my first conversation with Cayla in August. Importantly, many, although not all, of their storytelling moves aligned in interesting ways.

When I talked to Cayla at the beginning of the semester, she had been Kathleen's cooperating teacher for about two weeks, and what became prominent from Cayla's stories were themes of growth and positivity. Cayla felt she had had great teachers in her own school history, an effective teacher education experience that had prepared her well for teaching, and that she had grown as a teacher in her five years at Westview. She made it clear that she was looking forward to her time as a cooperating teacher, her first experience as one, and that she already felt that her experience with Kathleen was going well. In these ways, she mirrored much of the content of Kathleen's story, both in the ways she composed a past that had prepared her well for teaching, in her confidence in her teaching skills, and in her desire to learn and grow through being a cooperating teacher.

When Cayla described what led her to become a teacher, she reached far into the past to remember her "really great fourth grade teacher" and how she "loved school...growing up." In addition, she described how "teaching's also been in [her] family" because her "dad was a professor at the Air Force Academy, [her] grandmother was a teacher, [and her] mom was a teacher." I asked Cayla if there were other teachers from later in her school career that stood out in her memory and she said, "Across the board, I have had teachers throughout the grades that I really enjoyed having." Going on to mention her teacher education program, she said that she remembered "the teachers that really seemed to help me ... prepare myself for what it was going to be like in the classroom," and that she "loved" her teacher preparation program because they "prepared us really well, ... the schools ... were really open and welcoming, and ... my student teaching was great." Even though Cayla was split between "two very different teachers" in her student teaching, she mentioned that she "learned a lot from both of them." Summing up the experience, Cayla said, "Overall, I learned so much, and loved the experience, and I guess they

liked me cause they hired me on at semester, so it was nice.” Cayla’s teacher education experience was not only “great”, but was also topped off by access to her first job, thereby deepening her construction of her preparation as a positive learning experience.

When Cayla described what she had learned since she began her solo teaching career, she noted that she had learned to “work cooperatively,” and that she had become more efficient in “being more standards-based [and] having the kids practice the skills, and then the content being second, opposed to the content being first.” When she discussed how she knew if teaching was “going well,” she described, like Kathleen, that students would be “genuinely... interested,” but added that she would be able to hear students asking questions and making connections between previous and present instruction, and connections between present instruction and their own lives. By hearing students make connections, Cayla felt, she knew that the instruction she was offering had more of a chance to “stay in their brains.” Importantly, for both Cayla and Kathleen, engagement and interest were indicators of effective instruction and factors that made learning possible. Both teachers were on the lookout for these signs as evidence of effective instruction, which would become a major theme in their post-class debriefs as they discussed what had worked, what to improve, and how they should plan for future classes.

Cayla constructed herself as a learner, even in her role as teacher, and when relating why she had wanted to be a cooperating teacher, she continued this theme, saying that

I think knowing that I had a good experience, and feeling comfortable, I want[ed] to kind of share what I’ve learned as well as challenge myself to let go of my class ... I don’t want to be a teacher who, later in life, is uncomfortable with having people in my classroom. And when you’re going through the education process, I was used to having like, you know five, six people in a classroom at a time. And I don’t want to become

someone who isn't. . . . I can learn a lot too from, from Kathleen, and what she's [bringing]. I mean education, the theory and everything like that's constantly changing, so learning from what she brings is, I think, is another selfish advantage.

Here, Cayla described how she felt comfortable in her own teaching, and also confident that her positive experience with student teaching could help her provide Kathleen with a positive experience. However, she also saw the experience as a way to challenge herself as a teacher and to learn more about her craft. She constructed Kathleen as a knowledgeable partner who could help her learn and grow. Again, we see parallels in how Cayla and Kathleen made sense of their upcoming roles in the experience. They both brought a sense of agency and competence to their roles, but also positioned themselves as learners and each other as successful partners in their learning.

Cayla, like Kathleen, tended to share complex descriptions of teaching experiences, although she did not bring Kathleen's focus on troubling binaries of success and failure. For instance, when Cayla talked about how she knew if teaching was *not* going well, she was, at first, very matter-of fact in her response, but then became more provisional at points, saying

I'd say when it's not going well is when kids are off-topic. A lot of times, they'll wait for me as the teacher to come around and then they'll say, 'I don't get it,' because I think that at that point, they—and I mean it's still going well because they are still interested in what is happening. I guess it would totally not be going well if there was just disinterest and they're just kind of looking at me like, counting down the minutes of class. But . . . when I can walk away from a group, and I can tell that, like I am still hearing them talking about what they're supposed to be talking about and they're engaging that's kind of a good indicator that they're getting it and that they see how it applies; whereas when

you walk away, and they're like, okay back to what I was doing last night ... I think that's probably a good indicator. I mean, maybe it's not *not* going well, but it's not going as well as I had planned.

While at first, she described students saying "I don't get it" as an indicator of things not going well, she then changed her mind, describing how that could still indicate that teaching was going well because students were still interested enough to express confusion. When she settled on the description of kids talking about something other than the lesson as an indicator that teaching was not going well, she still finished by describing it as "not *not* going well," but "not going as well as I had planned." In this discussion, Cayla created gray areas in her construction of meaning around experiences in the classroom, and saw positives in occurrences that might not appear good on the surface. She made sense of student engagement by building on previous statements and growing the story to include more complexity.

Earlier, when Cayla had described her own learning process, she talked about how she loved being a teacher because she learned so much, and how she could tell that she had grown as a teacher because her classroom now had better cooperation and interactions than at the beginning of her career. However, embedded in that comment, she also said, "I mean, sometimes it works, and sometimes it doesn't, but that also depends on a lot of other factors." With this reframing, Cayla demonstrated that she was confident about her teaching and her growth as a teacher, but she also understood that sometimes things wouldn't go well, and that was okay. In those instances, she didn't necessarily blame herself or the students, but knew there were other factors that weren't always in her control. In Cayla's composition of her own teaching life, there was a focus on the importance of growth over time, but not on perfection for either her or her students. Throughout our conversation, she contextualized both her own initial statements and

the experiences of her students to arrive at a more nuanced description of what happens in the classroom. This storytelling move was one that she would bring to Kathleen's sense-making as difficult experiences occurred.

In Cayla's tendency to contextualize, she leaned toward nuance and gathering more information in her storytelling; indeed, no judgment ever seemed completely final, even as Cayla made confident statements about what it meant to teach and learn. Similarly to Kathleen, Cayla saw both success and failure as a part of teaching, for, although she felt an imperative to grow and improve as a teacher, in the end, as she noted, "sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't." Although, for Cayla, the onus was on teachers to grow and improve their practice, it was still true that classroom situations deserved contextual framing rather than simplistic value judgments. Interestingly, whereas stories before student teaching demonstrated how Kathleen was *striving* to keep meaning open and to make authorial choices, Cayla demonstrated ways that she had, in many ways, integrated this type of meaning-making into her storytelling about teaching. This opened up the possibility that Kathleen would be in more of a position to tell teaching stories in ways that kept meaning open, as she desired to do. Considering the intimacy of their collaboration and the amount of time Kathleen and Cayla spent talking to each other about classroom events, which I will describe shortly, these types of sense-making tools became even more available to Kathleen as she composed throughout student teaching. Cayla's presence as a co-author would align, in important ways, with how Kathleen strived to keep meaning open for as she made sense of classroom events. Cayla's tendency was to contextualize and offer multiple interpretations, while Kathleen troubled the boundaries of success/failure and saw them as a prelude to learning. They were co-authors who would not easily be devastated by difficult events that might take place in the future.

As our conversation drew to a close, Cayla shared that Kathleen's student teaching was already, after two weeks, "going great," and that Kathleen had "been great with bringing in ideas and everything." At the end, she mentioned, "I'm excited for her, and she's going to be a great teacher." Similar to the way Kathleen had constructed Cayla's classroom as a place where she could learn and grow, Cayla was constructing Kathleen's contributions as positive and her journey toward learning teaching as already successful. Although perhaps overly optimistic at the beginning of the experience, Cayla's and Kathleen's beginning stories seemed bent toward positivity and growth, while also creating spaces for problems and "failures" as well—as necessary parts of growth. Indeed, when Cayla described her own student teaching experience, she said it had been nice to be able to "let mistakes happen and learn from them" when she had another teacher in the room to help out in difficult moments. Kathleen had entered a mentoring relationship where mistakes were constructed as an integral part of a positive learning experience and a story of becoming and being a teacher. This was similar to the way Kathleen had constructed her own journey as she looked back on her past and composed into the future, imagining student teaching.

*Makenzie: My Role as University Supervisor*

Although not as integral to the everyday conversational composing that Kathleen was doing in the classroom, my presence as a voice in her story and the way she affected my own, are important influences to consider when attempting to analyze Kathleen's narrative sense-making. In my roles as her evaluator from the university, the instructor for Kathleen's student teaching "seminar," and a former instructor from Kathleen's first semester in the teacher education program, Kathleen and I had developed a positive relationship based on philosophical

congruence about making school a place where students' academic work was channeled in personally meaningful ways, a commitment to social justice in education, and, quite often, an agreement about best teaching practices. I had known Kathleen for about a year when her student teaching started, as our first encounter had been when she was a beginning Masters student in my class the previous fall. Importantly, from almost the beginning of that semester, Kathleen had struck me as an astute observer of teaching practice, a gifted planner and relationship-builder, and a teacher who prioritized all students' access to the curriculum, especially those traditionally underserved in school systems. I admired Kathleen's views and skills early on, and looked forward to her contributions to class discussion and the insights she would share in her class assignments. Although I did push Kathleen to consider alternative viewpoints and asked her extension follow-up questions in my comments on her assignments, I also offered plenty of positive feedback on her work. My comments often demonstrated admiration for her written work and her practice in field experiences. For instance, my final comments on Kathleen's final paper for my teaching and learning course, entitled, "Fostering Social Justice in the Secondary Classroom through Differentiation and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy," were the following:

Kathleen—you marshal a well-triangulated set of resources to answer your questions and leave room for future experiences to shape your answers further and to create more questions. Your understanding of the layers that go into being a teacher who promotes social justice—issues of access, issues of relationships, issues of representation, issues of the larger social structure, to name a few—is well-articulated and astute. I am impressed by the teacher you already are and the teacher you are continually becoming. It has been a pleasure to engage with your ideas this semester. I am glad that our paths will cross again. Have a restful break and happy New Year!

At this point, Kathleen had already heard about my upcoming dissertation project through a fellow professor, and had already indicated interest in being a part of it. We were excited to continue working together and to continue our collaboration. Our comfortable relationship, mutual respect, and, often, similar teaching philosophies, were a part of the initial framing of Kathleen's student teaching experience. Kathleen was aware of my enthusiastic support of her thinking about teaching as she began her work in Cayla's classroom.

### *Summary*

Kathleen entered student teaching with tendencies to remake failure in the past, naming it as a precursor to personal growth, and to attempt to subvert traditional notions of failure and success in the future as she kept meaning open about what would constitute good teaching in the semester to come. She also constructed herself as having both agency and competence to act in Cayla's classroom—mirrored in the agency she asserted over the storyline itself—which she described as a successful place where she could learn and grow further. Similarly, Cayla described own journey through teaching as one of continued growth and success, often contextualizing her stories of teaching with nuance and multiple meanings, and named Kathleen as a competent teacher very early in the experience. These initial storylines were important to the ways that Kathleen would act in the classroom, and begin to make sense of what it meant to be an effective teacher as the semester progressed.

### Setting of a Story

In the following section, I share details about the setting of Kathleen's storytelling about teaching; namely, her and Cayla's mentoring relationship and the routines they developed.

Together, Kathleen and Cayla developed a close-knit collaboration over the course of the semester that included an integrated work structure, regular teaching conversations, and the sharing of multiple conceptual and practical tools. Such a partnership had implications for Kathleen's daily sense-making in the classroom, and so I provide details to highlight how it contributed to Kathleen's storytelling and actions. I will first describe some of the routines and structures they developed together, and then provide examples of the types of conceptual and practical supports that were made available to Kathleen throughout the course of her and Cayla's mentoring relationship.

### *Habits that Balanced Autonomy and Support*

As Kathleen and Cayla worked collaboratively, they developed certain habits of conversation and routines that lasted throughout the tenure of Kathleen's student teaching, even after Kathleen became solely responsible for all classes. First, Cayla almost never left the classroom, which made it easier for her to offer input, ideas and questions in response to Kathleen's assessments; or in other words, to be a trusted co-author of events. Second, Kathleen and Cayla continued to debrief most classes even after Kathleen had gained more confidence in solo planning and decision-making. Interestingly, their planning conversations did not often take the tone of a mentor offering a mentee advice or "rescue"; rather, they spoke more fluidly and informally, both asking questions and offering suggestions to the other, much like co-teachers. Often, even conversations that were meant to *reflect* on and *assess* Kathleen's teaching, as a mentor might do, often turned into opportunities for Kathleen and Cayla to *discuss* future instructional ideas in a co-teaching fashion. This organic transition from evaluation to planning happened in each of the three triad meetings I attended with Kathleen and Cayla, and even in my

final interview with them in December. For instance, in our mid-semester assessment meeting on October 11, the following excerpt shows how a question I asked Kathleen about how she envisioned the rest of the semester progressing turned into a discussion between Cayla and Kathleen about how to proceed.

Makenzie: What books are you using for the rest of the semester?

Kathleen: We're doing book clubs, and they have sets in the library and we've ordered some. We have a list. Yeah, I'm excited to see where that goes.

Cayla: Yeah.

Kathleen: Although they're going to self-select, which might be totally...

Cayla: Well then we could not, we could always have them not self-select and then have the project be in parts, and then they get graded on the parts.

Kathleen: Well usually they do, like a trailer, trailer video.

Cayla: If that doesn't work then...

Kathleen: Yeah.

Kathleen initiated the response to my question, discussing the plan for book clubs, but also raised a question. In response, Cayla provided an alternative. Kathleen then pushed back on Cayla's offered option; unsure if it would work with the final assessment she had planned. Cayla then deferred to Kathleen's decision, but reminded her that there were other options if her first idea didn't work, which Kathleen acknowledged. In this tiny exchange, initially directed to Kathleen, we see the way Kathleen was positioned as teacher in their planning conversations, capable of making sound decisions. However, it is also evident that Cayla offered practical alternatives for how to organize the class and reminded Kathleen that she could change her original plan if it

wasn't working. Daily, informal conversations like these often provided another lens through which Kathleen could make sense of teaching.

The support Cayla made available to Kathleen was due, in part, to the way Cayla was integrally tied to planning and implementation, and also, to how she was consistently present in the classroom. Although Cayla had talked extensively in our mid-semester assessment meeting on October 11 about the need to step away from the classroom more often at the end of the semester as Kathleen began completing the majority of the planning on her own, this never really happened. Even after Kathleen had taken over the majority of the planning and teaching responsibilities, Cayla would usually spend most class periods in the back of the classroom, working at her desk. Although she did not often interject—which allowed Kathleen to continue to feel positioned as the main teacher—Cayla still had a deep understanding of what had happened during each class period, which made her available for continued help and support. When I asked Kathleen and Cayla about this unusual balance in our final interview on December 6, they described it this way:

Kathleen: I don't feel like it's weird having [Cayla] here or not here.

Cayla: Yeah

Kathleen: It's just...

Cayla: Yeah, cause that's one of the things that I was worried about ... I was always like, well am I giving you enough time alone? Do you need more time? Cause for me, I remember ... I felt really, like, exhilarated when the teacher left, and I had the class to myself. I felt like that was really exciting, but, because early on, I had a couple subs in here, um, cause I had to be out, I think, Kathleen said that she just kind of had already felt that, so it was...

Kathleen: I had those moments.

Cayla: Yeah, those...

Kathleen: Being like, all right, here goes. So then it was kind of like...

Cayla: So when I was here it was like never, yeah.

Kathleen: Yeah. And I feel like the kids, like having you here doesn't make a difference in terms of how the kids react.

Cayla: No, definitely not.

Kathleen: You know like, they behave the same way when you're not here as when you're here, and so it's not as though, having you here or not here changes what I have to do in terms of classroom management.

Cayla: Exactly.

In this conversation, we see how their early relationship had set the terms of their partnership in ways that allowed Cayla to be present in the classroom without undermining Kathleen's feelings of autonomy. Not only had Kathleen been both comfortable and a strong presence in the classroom from the beginning, but she had also had the opportunity to "be alone" in the classroom early on, when Cayla was out for institutional purposes. Therefore, when Cayla *was* present as the semester progressed, Kathleen still felt positioned as the teacher. Kathleen described this balance further in her blog on October 26, saying

I have been thinking a lot about what has been making my classroom management successful. I think that Cayla and I have created a climate where I am fully supported, and feel like I have a resource there with me, but I am also able to be a full authority in the room. I think some of the other student teachers are having more trouble with classroom management because there is more stepping in by the cooperating teachers.

Cayla does not step in when I am teaching. I like this because I know if I need her, or if I start to go down in flames, she is there, but I am also able to try different classroom management techniques so that I can feel comfortable when I have my own classroom. Because it has been like this since the very beginning, I think the students see me as another teacher with just as much authority (almost) as Cayla. I feel very comfortable making discipline decisions knowing that Cayla will back me fully.

In this blog, among other sense-making spaces, Kathleen was composing a story where the balance her and Cayla had struck in their mentoring relationship allowed her to be both fully supported and fully autonomous. Cayla's presence became a welcome support without becoming a referendum on Kathleen's own ideas and decisions in the classroom, a setting that ensured Kathleen could take risks, try new ideas, and author change in the classroom. Indeed, Cayla's presence opened up more ideas to use in creating change and new possibilities.

### *Conceptual and Practical Support*

As described, Cayla was intricately intertwined in the planning and implementation of Kathleen's classes throughout the course of the semester. This enabled her to provide tangible support, both conceptually and practically, as Kathleen made sense of her experiences in the classrooms. As Grossman et al. (2001) describe, conceptual tools are "principles, frameworks, and ideas about teaching, learning, and English/language arts acquisition that teachers use as heuristics to guide decisions about teaching and learning" (p. 14); in other words, those tools that guide teachers in big-picture ways, such as adhering to a framework of constructivism in the classroom, or believing that students should "have voice" in the classroom. These are the tools that can guide a whole range of planning and instructional decisions. Practical tools, on the other

hand, are “classroom practices, strategies, and resources that do not serve as broad conceptions to guide an array of decisions, but, instead have more local and immediate utility” (p. 14). For instance, when Cayla suggested that Kathleen should change the seating chart in her classroom to break up particular groups of students, she offered Kathleen a practical tool. Throughout the course of their partnership, Cayla made a variety of these tools available during their regular, informal, co-teaching conversations.

Consequently, as Kathleen’s role shifted to gradually assume the majority of responsibility over the course of the semester, her toolkit of practical and conceptual ideas grew, in part, through her and Cayla’s collaboration. However, even as Kathleen began to appropriate the support, ideas, and perspectives that Cayla had offered more heavily in the beginning of the school year, Cayla continued to be an integral presence in the class, working with small groups, answering questions, and understanding the workings of the class. Thus, she was still available to provide these tools as needed, even when her and Kathleen’s roles had, for the most part, reversed. Below, I provide examples of the types of conceptual and practical tools that Cayla offered Kathleen through their informal conversations (for a full list of all documented support, see Appendix G).

The ubiquity of Cayla’s conceptual support and influence on Kathleen’s thinking about teaching and practice of teaching can be seen in almost every data source across the semester. For example, in seminars, particularly, Kathleen often brought up her and Cayla’s shared planning conversations and decision-making as she shared stories about her classroom with her fellow student teachers and myself. During our fifth seminar on September 28, as we were discussing rubrics for the TPA assignment student teachers were completing, and talking about the strengths and weaknesses of the rubrics for that assignment, Kathleen mentioned, “That’s

something that Cayla and I were talking about too, that you don't really know if a rubric doesn't work until you try it." Although the comment was about a practical tool, the use of rubrics, the idea was more conceptually broad, that teachers need to "try" ideas with students before they know if they will work. Later, in my mid-semester interview with Kathleen on October 12, she made sense using a similar conceptual tool from Cayla, in response to a question about how students were changing her perspectives on teaching, saying

And, I mean, you're not gonna know until you try. And that's a big thing that Cayla keeps saying, too. You just have to try and it's probably not going to work, and that's okay.

Cayla's continual comment that Kathleen just "had to try," would become a large piece of her story about teaching, one that Kathleen mentioned across a variety of storytelling opportunities.

Later, in that same seminar on September 28, when we discussed whether student teachers should choose skills-based or content-based goals for their TPA lessons, Kathleen said, "That is something Cayla and I have been talking about a lot, how, as a new teacher, the tendency is to do content and not do skills because it's so much harder to do skills." Here, we see how Cayla had shared some of her own stories of growth from her time as a new teacher with Kathleen, discussing how she had focused more on content goals rather than skill goals when she first started teaching. In my first interview with Cayla, in August, she had also mentioned this as one of the ways she had grown the most since her time as a beginning teacher. In this comment from Kathleen, we see how Cayla was attempting to help Kathleen grow in this way sooner than she had in her own career. In all of these instances, Kathleen brought her and Cayla's conceptual discussions into our seminars, showing the weight of their impact on her thinking about certain

conceptual tensions in teaching. Cayla's conceptual support stuck with Kathleen as she made sense of teaching in different spaces, such as interviews and seminars.

However, Cayla also offered practical tools and ideas in their planning discussions, making new ideas available to Kathleen when she was unsure what types of lessons could engage her students. Indeed, because Kathleen entered student teaching with a strong conceptual basis for her story about teaching, it was this practical support that she sought more often. In response, Cayla offered a variety of practical ideas, including lesson models, classroom management ideas, assessment techniques, and materials from past years, such as power points, tests, or assignments. This set of practical tools often enabled Kathleen to follow through on new conceptual ideas and adapt her instruction to her growing knowledge about her students in ways that might not have happened if Kathleen had been responsible for creating every instructional tool from scratch. Kathleen was composing a story about teaching that demanded a wide range of practical tools to "try out," and, as a novice, her knowledge of practical tools was more limited than Cayla's. Thus, by bolstering Kathleen's repertoire of practical ideas, Kathleen had more ideas to try when her lessons in YAN were not initially effective. One can imagine that with fewer resources to draw on, Kathleen's teaching story might have been composed differently.

Kathleen wrote about Cayla's practical support often in her blogs. For instance, on September 14, she shared,

Cayla had some great ideas for increasing engagement in full class discussions by making it more like a game. I am feeling really lucky to have the support to try new things and feel out what works with the class. I think that's really what teaching is all about—taking in the situation/class/material etc. and adapting to the moment.

The results of Cayla's ideas, when implemented, often resulted in increased engagement, making her support immediately useful to Kathleen. In this instance, when Cayla provided ideas for Kathleen to use that she might not have had access to otherwise, the tenor of the class changed. As Kathleen wrote about how Cayla's support affected her class, she was able to tie this occurrence to her developing ideas about good teaching: that it was about adapting to the moment. Later in the month, in a blog written on September 28, Kathleen similarly stated, "I had a successful lesson with my YAN—much more engagement thanks to some successful brainstorming with Cayla and some creative use of a silent discussion." In this way, Cayla's involvement in planning discussions often provided just-in-time support to Kathleen as she struggled to increase engagement in YAN. Later in the semester, as Kathleen became more comfortable planning for YAN and her other classes, she used her blogs as a space to reflect on the role Cayla's involvement had had on her planning, teaching, and thoughts about growing as a teacher. In a blog written on November 1, for instance, Kathleen reflected in the following way

I am glad that I have gotten to experience things like research projects, and lit circles in YAN, that can be so intimidating to organize and facilitate. There seem to be so many moving pieces. So it's nice to have these things go well with the help of someone who has done it before. I think taking those kinds of risks in the classroom are really important, so getting over the intimidation factor is pretty key.

Here, Kathleen characterized Cayla's involvement as making not only new ideas available, but also the logistical support to try those ideas, especially when they seemed initially intimidating. Ideas that might have sounded good in past methods classes or in a teaching textbook were difficult to implement logistically now that Kathleen was attempting to use them in a real classroom. However, with Cayla's practical support, they became easier to "organize and

facilitate,” and in return, Kathleen then experienced their benefit in terms of student growth and learning, and infused their tenets into her developing story about good teaching. The practical ideas that Kathleen sought and Cayla offered in their instructional conversations were important as Kathleen decided what would and wouldn’t work in her classroom.

### *Summary*

The stories that Kathleen would begin to compose about what it meant to be a teacher in her early months of student teaching, which I turn to in the next chapter, were influenced by the availability of the tools in Cayla’s and Kathleen’s intertwined mentoring relationship, as well as the manner in which they were offered and positioned Kathleen. Cayla’s ideas, perspectives, and support were put to immediate use in the classroom, thereby creating new possibilities and contributing to a storyline of instructional adaptation, while also existing as the tangible (and natural) support of a colleague and mentor rather than a referendum on Kathleen’s previous actions. In these ways, the setting of Kathleen’s student teaching informed her developing composition by both providing practical ideas to try while still positioning Kathleen as competent, which was important to her continued sense of agency. Their routine ways of making sense of “failures” and problems, which I will describe shortly, was to contextualize them and develop new instructional possibilities that might work more effectively for students in the future. As a result, Cayla’s presence not only provided more ideas to try, and, as Kathleen articulated, the support to actually try them as a novice, but also a buffer from feelings of failure and doubt. During the course of their co-teaching conversations, Kathleen found Cayla to be a person who, like herself, made sense of difficulties by coming up with more ideas/tools to use; who saw difficulty as an integral part of growth, and who viewed herself as a teacher with

agency. In such an environment, one can imagine that even if Kathleen had succumbed to feelings of failure when students in YAN did not respond to her instruction positively, she might still have had another lens through which to see those issues—Cayla's. Since Cayla did not tend to make sense of difficulties in a fatalistic way either, Kathleen was further shielded from a sense of failure that might keep her from trying to make changes in YAN. The way Kathleen was positioned and positioned herself in that relationship—as a valued and competent member of the team—provided a fruitful setting for the storytelling moves with which Kathleen entered student teaching to continue to influence her developing composition.

## CHAPTER SIX

FINDINGS:  
A Teaching Story of Instructional Adaptation

*“I kind of feel like if I’ve learned anything; it’s all about experimenting.  
It works or it doesn’t, and that’s okay.”*  
–Kathleen

In the following chapter, I first tell the story of some of Kathleen’s experiences with YAN in August, September, and October, considering the ways her stories helped her make sense of early experiences in the classroom, and make decisions. Through this process, instructional adaptation emerged as a central theme in Kathleen’s story about what it meant to be a teacher. As I will share, this theme was not composed in a vacuum, but, in many ways, mapped on to Kathleen’s earlier storytelling moves that subverted success/failure binaries by seeing “failures” as not only unproblematic, but often as preludes to growth; and herself as an agentic force in addressing problematic experiences and making classroom decisions. Further, these themes and storytelling moves influenced the way Kathleen conceptualized her students and their capacities, and the instructional decisions she felt were possible in her classroom. From early, informal discussions that focused mainly on “what to do” instructionally in light of student responses, to mid-semester conversations that started to “look back” and consider the import of past decisions on current experiences, Kathleen was making sense through narrative means. This was particularly apparent in October, when she named two “turning points” in her experiences with YAN as precursors to her own growth as a teacher and to students’ increased participation and engagement in the course.

As daily sense-making conversations made way for more and more solid declarations of “what teaching is all about” by the end of September and early October, Kathleen worked to create a story that would both sustain her through difficulties, making them almost imperceptible, and deliberately engaged in storytelling that couldn’t “let her down” when things went awry. It is this transition from the “rough drafts” of August and September to the more polished narrations of a teaching life in early October that I share in section one, showing the ways that even small language choices in informal instructional conversations that occurred early in the semester had import for the larger story Kathleen would begin to tell about what it meant to be a teacher by the end of the semester.

In the second section, I share revisions and additions Kathleen made to the instructional adaptation narrative as she looked back across the semester as a whole in November and December. The conclusion of the semester brought new lenses with which to assess and “tell” her story of teaching, and although Kathleen often maintained that “instructional adaptation” was the most important thing she had learned, she also began to discuss the ways these shifts in instruction had both affected and been affected by developing relationships with students. I share some of the ways her story grew more complex as she looked back and assessed, together with Cayla, the actions she believed spurred positive shifts in YAN during the semester. Throughout both sections, I also highlight how stories—those both local and cumulative—were influenced by storytelling moves that surfaced before the semester began.

#### Rough Draft of a Story: August, September, and October

As I mentioned earlier, YAN, a senior elective, was the class Kathleen took complete responsibility for earliest in the semester, making it an important space for her to develop stories

of teaching. In other classes, Cayla did the majority of planning for much longer, and in the case of 10<sup>th</sup> grade, a team of teachers planned together for the entire semester. Kathleen described these co-planning experiences as very helpful mentoring experiences, which provided her with a variety of lenses to think through instructional decisions, philosophies, and ideas. However, because YAN was, in a sense, “her own,” it was in this class Kathleen had the most responsibility, and also the most personal struggles, during her time student teaching. It was in YAN that Kathleen’s developing story became not only an evolving philosophy of teaching, but also a daily action plan for dealing with difficulties in those times when her instruction was not effective. It was in YAN that she was most “on the line.” In light of the deeply felt nature of the difficulties she experienced in YAN, and her sincere desire to make change, Kathleen’s experiences in this class led, most directly, to a focus on instructional adaptation as an integral part of good teaching, a story that emerged from and aligned with her continued propensity to remake failure by discussing problems with a focus on solutions and compose a story that defined her teaching role as active. Importantly, by the middle of the semester, Kathleen also began to describe “turning points” in the story of YAN as those moments when she faced trouble, acted on possible solutions, and, eventually, saw growth.

Although not neatly delineated, the multiple contexts of my conversations and interactions with Kathleen shed light on the way certain talk opportunities, most notably instructional conversations with Cayla, provided space to use and embody developing storylines about teaching, while others—such as seminars and interviews—provided spaces to formalize “rough drafts” of stories through reflection. Kathleen’s story, that began to construct teaching as an activity where teachers should adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of students, became more and more refined as she shared it across multiple settings and strove to act from its tenets.

As I will show, when things “did not work” initially in YAN, Kathleen’s most prevalent sense-making move was to seek out ways to change daily instructional tasks to promote more engagement; or, more generally, to discuss problems by figuring out possible solutions. Her collaboration with Cayla made this continual focus on adaptation even more possible as it provided the raw material of multiple teaching ideas with which to experiment.

Further, this focus appeared connected to the storytelling moves that surfaced during Kathleen’s initial interview. Similarly to the ways she had described past problems in terms of how they helped her to grow, she often described problems in YAN by imagining new possibilities to change them; or, when she spoke of those difficult experiences in the past tense, to describe them as precursors to growth. As she looked back, she often named these discoveries “turning points,” giving them added weight in her teaching narrative. In this way, “failures” were not often described solely as “failures” in Kathleen’s stories. Although disappointing and frustrating, surely, a focus on how problems could turn into growth influenced the nature of Kathleen’s sense-making around difficulties. This sense-making tool, as well as a focus on being an active teacher with the ability to make change, made way, in part, for a focus on instructional adaptation to become a major storyline in Kathleen’s developing teaching narrative.

Interestingly, this teaching story continued to expand and grow more complex in Kathleen’s final weeks of teaching to include a more diverse set of facets that complimented her focus on instructional adaptation. By including these expansions in this story of Kathleen’s stories, I demonstrate the ways that a powerful storyline that affected Kathleen’s teaching came into being, but did not remaining static.

*Beginnings of a Story: Connecting Problems to Solutions in early Experiences with YAN*

Although Kathleen had been excited to plan activities and choose novels that would encourage students to build community and share their voices around what she considered “teen issues,” many students did not often participate meaningfully in those activities in the beginning of the semester, at least from Kathleen’s perspective. Rather, the large majority of students didn’t respond to her questions, didn’t work on her activities, and generally remained quiet. This response was, at first, shocking to Kathleen, who had felt her questions and reading selections would spark deep conversations, and she became increasingly frustrated. In her first blog on September 14, she described the situation by saying, “I have been extremely frustrated with the lack of engagement from the students. They are not disrespectful, they are not chatty or distracted; it's like they are literally not there.” It is important to remember, that, in Kathleen’s first interview before the semester began, she had described teaching as “going well” when students were engaged and learning by doing. However, in her previous experiences teaching in a voluntary outdoor education program, she had not encountered many students who were not initially engaged by her curriculum. In other words, Kathleen had not worked with students who appeared uninterested in her instruction, and with YAN, this was happening for the first time. As her attempts to engage were not met with participation, and since engagement was essential to her story of good teaching, she was challenged to consider alternative routes to engagement—a relatively new endeavor in her teaching career. How Kathleen reacted to this issue, and its outcomes, was important to her developing story as it would influence how she started to conceptualize her students, as well as how she might respond to such occurrences in the future. Would she continue to describe her students as “not there,” and impervious to any of her efforts? Would she locate blame in them, in herself, in the curriculum, or in some other feature?

As Kathleen realized that her initial instruction was not effectively engaging the vast majority of her students, one of her first responses was to seek feedback and mentor support from those around her, a focus that was integral to the story she began to tell about YAN. For instance, during our fourth seminar on August 31, as Kathleen and I were discussing the dates for my first formal observation as her university supervisor, she mentioned, “Yeah, I’m excited to have you observe that class because they’re the ones I’m having the most trouble with, they’re, like, the least enthusiastic.” Even at this initial stage of the semester, Kathleen described that she wanted me, to see her most “difficult” class in order to provide feedback. Rather than keeping me out of a situation where she might not look to be performing her best, she invited me into it in order to gain more information to improve it. In statements like this one, she coupled brief stories about the class, describing them as one she was “having trouble with,” with statements that indicated she believed in the possibility of change. So, even in these tiny moments, stories of “trouble” were not described as hopeless, but with “excitement” that a mentor’s possible ideas could be useful. By talking about YAN as though the tenor of the class could be changed through mentor feedback, change became more of a possibility. Kathleen did not describe this class only through its failures, but also through a lens of possibility. She also took an agentic role in its possible change by inviting a mentor to come and help. In another similar instance, when I mentioned that we could change the date of a scheduled triad meeting for later in the week because Kathleen had mentioned she wanted to attend a student organization meeting at that same time, she refused, concerned that the rescheduling would take away time for our observation debrief about YAN, a debrief that was important as she considered next steps.

In that same triad meeting on September 12, Kathleen’s tendency to couple concerns about YAN with talk about possibilities for change was, again, evident. As demonstrated in the

following vignette describing that meeting, Kathleen used her scheduled triad meeting to focus on how to increase engagement in YAN. In this way, Kathleen actively drew on mentor support to increase her agency in the class while also inserting hope into the conversation about YAN, storytelling moves reminiscent of the way she conceptualized student teaching even before it began. Importantly, the ways Kathleen's and Cayla's collaboration interacted with Kathleen's narrative moves around the course, as well as the ways the conceptual and practical supports Cayla offered made new things possible as Kathleen described future actions in YAN, were also apparent. Below is a brief vignette that documents Kathleen's and Cayla's discussion about YAN on September 12, and the storytelling moves used to make sense of and imagine the future of YAN.

*When I asked Kathleen how she would like to use our triad meeting time today, she mentioned that the most “pressing thing on her mind” was how to plan for Young Adult Novels, which she had recently taken over completely. Cayla agreed, telling me that Kathleen had been trying to figure out how to differentiate with regard to the varying levels of ability and interest of students in the course. Kathleen had set the agenda for the meeting and taken charge, but Cayla had also shown that she was aware of the tensions with which Kathleen was wrestling with regard to YAN. Kathleen first described that she had so many ideas for the class, but because many students hadn't been reading or talking in class, it had been difficult to achieve those goals. In response, Cayla asked a few questions. “Do you think they are really tired? Or are they not engaged in the reading?” Kathleen responded that she was not sure, but she'd been brainstorming with Taylor (another teacher in the English department), and she suggested that perhaps the students should read more in class. In this brief exchange, it was clear that Kathleen was*

*pursuing multiple perspectives and ideas to use to change the nature of the course, while, at the same time, Cayla was offering questions to better understand the range of issues that might be contributing to students not reading. In this way, she also offered alternative perspectives through which Kathleen could see students' actions.*

*After considering the parameters of the issue and possible reasons for it, Kathleen and Cayla shifted into a brainstorming session. Cayla wondered if Kathleen should have the students pull out a vignette from the book they were reading and complete an activity with it, as a way to make more personal connections to the characters. Kathleen picked up on this idea, and offered that tomorrow could be a "character day" and Thursday could be a "personal day," and eventually she could have students write their own vignette as an assessment. This talk of assessment led Kathleen to think about her larger goals, and how she wanted her students to focus on ways the classroom community might change over time as students shared their thoughts and opinions. Cayla's casual suggestion about a possible activity helped to clarify Kathleen's thinking about her larger goal, and Kathleen then modified Cayla's suggestion for her own purposes.*

*In response, Cayla suggested that Kathleen could have students pull out excerpts from the book that exemplify these themes of community, so that Kathleen and Cayla wouldn't have to "do all the work for students." Kathleen now had a few ideas to consider in helping students reach the goals she was discussing, but she pushed further, saying that she thought these were good ideas, but also wondered aloud, "How to make it work?" and "What do I actually do to organize for class?" Here, Kathleen sought not only the ideas to help create her vision, but also the logistics to follow through on them. Cayla responded by saying, "Take baby steps—find one place to have students start on in*

*the text and then get them finding community excerpts in groups,” suggesting a modeling and collaborative activity in response to Kathleen’s question. Considering this, Kathleen wondered aloud, “What if some groups work and others don’t?” to which Cayla mentioned that Kathleen could put students in a seating chart. In this way, Kathleen’s quest to imagine possible solutions and implement them effectively was met with tangible support to follow through.*

*But Kathleen was not quite done thinking about the class. Suddenly, Kathleen asked Cayla, “Do you think it’s worth doing something artsy?” There was a sense that she had considered the options on the table, and felt they were not engaging enough. Cayla responded, “Definitely,” adding that she had enjoyed doing art activities in YAN in previous semesters. After Cayla listed many past “artsy” assignments she had done in YAN, Kathleen and Cayla narrowed down Kathleen’s original idea of having students draw a four-square chart representing different parts of a character to a two-perspective activity where they would draw their character as the world sees them on one side, and how they see themselves on the other. Again, Kathleen initiated an idea, and Cayla followed up, not only with multiple ideas to consider and use, but also the tangible support to organize for them effectively.*

*At this point, Kathleen seemed clearer on the reasoning for her instructional plan, its connection to larger goals for the class, and the logistics of how to organize for it in class. But she still was considering each individual student in her mind, thinking about how particular students would interact with the activity based on her knowledge of how those students had previously participated in class. While considering which students she might need to support further in the activity, Cayla offered that they, together, could talk*

*to certain groups about the important of participating and reminded Kathleen that she could create a seating chart if needed. Here, Cayla extended her practical support into the classroom itself, offering to talk to students with Kathleen if she felt that would be helpful.*

In this vignette, the equanimity of Kathleen's and Cayla's teaching relationship, as well as the tangible support, both conceptually and practically, Cayla offered Kathleen, are clear. Kathleen was often the initiator of instructional questions about how to engage students. In this example, she demonstrated that she had gained some knowledge about her students, and used this information to guide her questions about implementing instructional ideas. As the initiator of the conversation, Kathleen was not positioned as solely a novice, but also as a legitimate partner with important questions, knowledge, and ideas to support the class further. And yet, she was also offered targeted, immediate help that was necessary to realize her goals of engagement and deep learning. These supports ranged from ideas about seating charts to ideas about artistic activities to support in planning collaborative learning opportunities. Kathleen might have entered student teaching with a clear picture of what she wanted to see in terms of student engagement, but the logistics of classroom life were new to her, and Cayla offered conceptual and practical support—within the flow of their informal conversations—that made organizing effectively for learning more available to Kathleen. In this way, Kathleen was positioned as both a learner, picking up valuable ideas and knowledge about teaching, but also as a teacher with valuable ideas and knowledge of her own to contribute, a position she had occupied from the beginning of their partnership. Importantly, Cayla also asked questions about students who weren't engaging in class activities, providing Kathleen with multiple perspectives to consider

them through, rather than settling on a sense that they were somehow deficient or defiant. In this way, the setting of Kathleen's student teaching continued to position her as a competent novice.

In addition, throughout the course of the conversation, when "problems" were described, they were almost immediately coupled with possible solutions and ideas that might change the tenor of the course. For example, at the start of the discussion, Kathleen described how she was worried that students weren't doing the reading for the course, so she had brainstormed with another teacher, Taylor, to come up with the idea of having students read more in class. In addition, she was now brainstorming with Cayla to come up with ideas for students to use the text in targeted ways in class. Later, when Kathleen noted that she liked the instructional idea they had brainstormed, but was worried about how to implement it effectively, she asked Cayla questions about how to make it work. Finally, when Kathleen was worried that particular students might not engage in the planned activity, she discussed those students with Cayla, and they came up with a plan to implement targeted discussions and a new seating arrangement. Each worry or potential problem was discussed as a question rather than a finality, and, through these questions, possible solutions were continually generated. Importantly, these questions were generated by a teacher who demonstrated that she felt a sense of agency. Although Cayla offered her own questions and ideas, the majority of the conversation was directed by Kathleen's desire to figure out solutions by drawing on resources. In this way, Kathleen's sense that she had the capacity to act in positive ways in the classroom, demonstrated in her initial interview, was embodied as she actively sought support to shift the engagement level in YAN. This tendency, along with the mentoring relationship that Cayla and she had developed, made a variety of practical and conceptual tools available to Kathleen as she made sense of YAN's seeming disinterest in her instruction. It also focused her on what she would do to change the situation

rather than “telling” the problem as immutable. She sought, through her mentors, to expand the repertoire of ideas she had to leverage in the class. Her conversations with Cayla were especially important in this quest, as they had multiple discussions that increased Kathleen’s toolkit of ideas, including turning discussions into games, using silent discussions to engage students who didn’t want to talk, changing seating charts, and speeding up transitions between activities. Their collaboration was marked by the idea that failure, however keenly it might be felt, was not a reason to give up but rather an impetus to figure out something new; in such a setting, YAN was not often described in one-dimensional ways.

By the end of September, as Kathleen began to implement some of the ideas generated in multiple discussions, she also began to describe some relative “success” with YAN. Notably, she started to describe “success” when she moved away from using whole class discussions to a “silent discussion” format that allowed students to write their ideas rather than speaking in front of the entire class. As this shift started to take hold, Kathleen also began to make more concrete statements about the power of adaptation in teaching. In this, she shifted from conversations that mostly looked forward—to gather ideas to make changes in YAN—to conversations that also started to look back, making sense of what had already occurred in YAN. For instance, Kathleen’s comment from her blog on September 14, the beginning of which I shared earlier describing her frustrations with YAN, concluded in the following way,

I have been thinking a lot about Young Adult Novels. I have been extremely frustrated with the lack of engagement from the students. They are not disrespectful, they are not chatty or distracted, it's like they are literally not there. Last class was pretty successful—relatively. I tried to do more activities with more manipulatives and it worked pretty well. Casey had some great ideas for increasing engagement in full class discussions by

making it more like a game. I am feeling really lucky to have the support to try new things and feel out what works with the class. I think that's really what teaching is all about - taking in the situation/class/material etc. and adapting to the moment. I have been trying to bring in visuals and real life examples to help them connect to the book - so far that part has worked really well.

Kathleen had used many suggestions, both from her own toolkit and through suggestions from Cayla, and some of them had changed the dynamic of the class—at least for isolated class periods—which led Kathleen to state, on more than one occasion toward the end of September and beginning of October, that teaching was about experimenting with a variety of ideas until things started to change. Her tendency to couple discussions of problems with questions that focused on new possibilities had made way for a rough draft of a teaching story about instructional adaptation to take shape. Because she was reflecting on what had happened in YAN as she had tried different instructional tools, those were the experiences she began to memorialize, however informally, as “what worked” in teaching. Thus, as Kathleen connected trying new instructional ideas—and having the support to “try new things”—to some “relative success” in engaging more YAN students, instructional adaptation started to become a “go-to” storyline to deal with difficulties, and eventually, a more generalized teaching story.

When she wrote, just a few sentences after describing her frustration with YAN, “[My cooperating teacher] had some great ideas for increasing engagement in full class discussions by making it more like a game. I am feeling really lucky to have the support to try new things and feel out what works with the class,” Kathleen created a narrative shift. In this moment, she went from describing YAN as “literally not there” to describing the support she felt she had to “feel out what works for this class,” which, in turn, transformed her sense of reality. In a matter of

sentences, the story went from a hopeless situation with no possibility of change to a story that anticipated something “working” in the near future. In addition, it became a story that provided a blueprint for Kathleen’s actions, compelling her to figure out what *would* work by using the support available in her setting.

In these small, informal moments, Kathleen’s teaching story was evolving, and her propensity to seek out mentor support, and take advantage of the availability of new ideas, was integral to the adoption of instructional adaptation as important to teaching and handling difficulties. Similarly to storytelling moves documented before the semester began, failures did not often end as failures in Kathleen’s daily sense-making, but rather provided opportunities to figure out what to do. This storytelling move provided a plan of action that shifted over time and allowed her to see students in new ways as they interacted with different instructional activities. Consequently, the story didn’t linger on definitions of students as “disengaged” or as defined by one type of behavior, but rather centered on an active teacher who needed to change the instructional practices. In this way, her early stories about herself—as agentic, as capable, as coming to student teaching equipped with skills that would be useful in the classroom—encouraged a teaching narrative that constructed her role as an active one. In many ways, the stories Kathleen entered teaching with prompted certain types of talk when making sense of what was occurring in YAN – talk that focused on both struggles and possibilities, and talk that engaged Kathleen in being an active “solution-finder” in her quest to engage her students. These rough drafts of a teaching story became more and more refined as Kathleen started to reflect back on her growing set of experiences with YAN as the semester progressed.

*Refining a Rough Draft into a Flexible Storyline*

This teaching story continued to be refined over time as Kathleen had more experiences with YAN and then discussed those experiences and their meaning in other conversational spaces in light of her burgeoning ideas about instructional adaptation. For instance, during our fifth seminar on September 22, I asked the student teachers to share significant teaching moments from the week, both to gauge what was pressing on their minds as well as to open a discussion around any problems they might be having. Kathleen shared the following, relating the story of using a “silent discussion” in her class in place of a whole class discussion:

Kathleen: ...One [significant moment] was yesterday when Makenzie was there, and an activity I planned went really well, and I was really excited—cause I had done a silent discussion with my silent class...and it worked really well. They silently discussed beautifully. And there was a lot of, um, cause they were into it, it was silent in that it was not a full class, but they were talking to each other in their groups, and then passing between groups. And, um they typically are really good in their groups, and really bad at class discussion, so like sharing out and debriefing is virtually impossible. So I was looking for a way for them to share their thoughts in a way that was, like possible for them.

Aaron: Yeah

Kathleen: And this worked really well and so that was exciting – to have an activity with them not be a dud, so that was fun.

Later, when I asked Kathleen about the significance of her story to her larger teaching narrative, she said the following:

Kathleen: ... like, kind of the power of finding things and, like, experimentation with the class? Cause like, I, I think, in terms of the silent discussion, like, that was just like, well why not, you might as well try it, you know, it can't be worse than what's going on already. Well, I mean, it can always be worse. (Laughter)

Makenzie: But you didn't think it would be.

Kathleen: Right, right, but it was pretty slow and boring

Makenzie: Mm hm

Kathleen: The way it was going, so, um, I think that idea of experimenting and looking at different ways to get kids involved, it just, it was just particularly powerful, I think.

Makenzie: Mm hm.

Kathleen: And um

Makenzie: That by trying something different

Kathleen: Right

Makenzie: You might have this totally different...

Kathleen: Yeah

Makenzie: Outcome

Kathleen: Yeah, this totally different class experience

Makenzie: Right

Kathleen: Which, you know, like even though they're quiet, I mean, they're not bad kids, they're just. Not that I thought they were bad kids before.

Makenzie: Right.

Kathleen: Just how, so, I guess, how much power a teacher has to manipulate the classroom experience by the activities you choose to do.

Makenzie: Mm.

Kathleen: I guess is what I'm thinking.

Here Kathleen discussed what she'd learned about the class before her teaching experiment—that her students were great at discussion in small groups, but didn't often share when asked to talk in front of the whole class. With this knowledge in mind, she had experimented with the silent discussion activity, in hopes that this activity would capitalize on their discussion strengths, but also encourage them to share with the whole class. Since things were already going “poorly,” Kathleen was seeking possible solutions, and described herself as having little to lose. Such a low point, however, was not the final word, and Kathleen sought to “remake failure” by attempting something new. Through experimenting, she had seen an activity “not be a dud,” a story that wouldn't have been possible without constantly trying new things and connecting problems to possible solutions. In this way, a sense that failures were mutable, and that they didn't tell the whole story, served Kathleen, and by extension, many of her students, well.

Furthermore, by implementing a different classroom activity, she had also been able to shift her own perception of the students: it was not that they were “bad kids,” but that they were quiet. As a teacher, it was up to her to create a classroom activity where they would want to engage more authentically, and where something different would be possible. This took experimentation, and in this instance, it worked for the better, helping to reinforce this concept as one that was important to teaching for Kathleen. Importantly, as Kathleen considered the new activity—the silent discussion—she told the story about it as an instructional tool that made

something new possible for her students. She did not construct students as static in her story, and, although she was frustrated with them, she still considered ways she could change outcomes based on experimenting with new instructional tools.

Importantly, Kathleen had used her resources, as well as her knowledge of students based on her close observations of them in class, in order to plan this instructional experiment. She wasn't throwing out ideas blindly, but using Cayla's experience and her own knowledge of the students to make educated guesses about what might work to encourage student engagement toward curricular goals. Kathleen later noted this change as blog-worthy, when she wrote, on September 26, that she "had a successful lesson with [her] YAN—much more engagement thanks to some successful brainstorming with Cayla and some creative use of a silent discussion." She went on at the end of the blog to note,

I have been thinking a lot about student engagement and how frustrating it is to have to trick students into succeeding. However, I am feeling empowered by my success with my seniors, if only to realize that it is actually possible to get a group of reticent learners engaged with a lesson plan. It just takes some time to get to know them. What an amazing realization!

Again, we see how powerful this idea of experimentation and adaptation was for Kathleen, and how she tied it to the notion that a teacher can experiment well only *if* he or she has taken the time to get to know the students. Her tendency to seek solutions while describing difficulties in informal conversations had made way for new ideas to try and then reflect on through story. Although still irritated with the idea of "tricking students into succeeding," and describing the students as "reticent," opportunities to reflect on the outcomes of her attempts to adapt—whether in conversation with peers, mentors, or herself—were becoming spaces to refine the beginnings

of a teaching story over time, one that would continue to impact the ways she composed stories of students and saw their capabilities. Importantly, Kathleen used one of her earlier, common story moves—describing problems as conduits to growth and change rather than failures—as she began to reflect back on frustrating experiences in YAN, and their gradual change. Now, at this point, the process of adapting instructional tools was becoming the new learning tool gained through telling about and engaging with the initial “problem” of “reticent learners.” As she continued to act in accordance with this storyline, even these hints of negative compositions about students would begin to transform in subtle ways.

### *Using the Story with Peers*

Instructional adaptation had become such a strong storytelling theme for Kathleen by the end of September that she began to use it in discussion with her peers in seminar. In our sixth seminar, on September 28, Aaron, a fellow student teacher, shared a story about his students not reading in class. He ended the story by saying, “So I’m just basically kind of stuck right now, you now. Well I mean, not stuck, but you know, just gotta keep trying new things when this isn’t working, but it also seems to be par for the course from the teachers I’ve observed.” In response, Kathleen offered an idea for him to try, asking, “Have you thought about...the group reading with the roles? Have you thought about that? That might work.” When Aaron mentioned that he might try it, Kathleen went on, saying, “So that they read together, but not all together. That could be interesting to try.” Aaron had been describing the situation without much hope, and, in response, Kathleen jumped in with an idea to try, similar to the way she had sought tangible ideas from mentors to attempt with YAN when she had been frustrated. In this way, she treated his discussion of a class problem in the way she had wanted her mentors to respond—with hope,

with the possibility of change, but, most importantly, with a tangible idea to try. In this way, Kathleen started to use the story she had begun to formalize in blogging and seminar talk opportunities, not just to frame her own teaching, but also as she considered a fellow student teacher's situation. She didn't see the situation as one that was failing, but as an instance where Aaron hadn't yet discovered the appropriate instructional tool.

Later in the same seminar, Janna also offered Aaron an idea for his class, telling him about a lesson on inequity that she'd done recently where students were given different amounts of materials and told to build the same house. Students who were given fewer materials described the activity as unfair, and it gave the class a jumping off point for discussing structural inequity in society. She thought Aaron might try a similar type of scenario activity to engage his students. Interestingly, Kathleen responded by saying,

Something I have noticed is the ethnic divide between my Honors and non-honors class and how it's literally polar opposite, and part of me wonders if in my non-honors class where 26 out of 30 kids are Latino and, in speaking with them and doing stuff about immigration and talking about ethnic identity, it's clear that they feel marginalized, and so I wonder how it would have been different if it hadn't been an AP, like how it would have gone in a population that already felt marginalized, does that make sense?

Here we see, again, Kathleen's tendency to not experiment blindly with different instructional ideas, but to use her knowledge of students to consider whether or not the activity would work. Kathleen's story about instructional adaptation as important to teaching was accompanied by the importance of deep knowledge of students, and here, she embodied it in discussion with her peers as they made sense together about how to move forward in Aaron's class.

*More Bumps in YAN's Road*

Although Kathleen had experienced some “success” with YAN through her use of the silent discussion, her trajectory with the class was not one of linear improvement, and another large difficulty was on the horizon. Emboldened by her use of the silent discussion to encourage deeper engagement around the class text, Kathleen decided next to try a “graffiti wall.” Students would write their opinions to questions, some sensitive, having to do with the content of the novel they were reading, *Speak*, in order to explore possible connections between their own experiences to those of the heroine of the novel. Through this written discussion of important issues in the book, Kathleen hoped that students would be able to “discuss” more sensitive topics in a safe manner, especially considering that the book dealt with sexual assault and trauma. However, the activity did not go as planned. In Kathleen’s blog from October 5, she described the experience in this way:

Today in our graffiti discussion, [my seniors] wrote inappropriate and offensive words on the papers and on the boards. Because the class is so resistant in class discussions, I have been trying to provide different ways for them to express themselves. I was and am still very angry. I am thinking that next class I will have to address this in a more comprehensive way—particularly because of what I found on the sheets of paper later when I looked. The content of *Speak* requires extreme maturity. It is essential to have a safe community to even begin to deal with these issues of sexual assault and trauma. I think that this is how I am going to use that as my angle to address it. I am not sure whether I want it to be a discussion, or whether I want to create a kind of mini-lesson about why that kind of language is offensive and inappropriate and destructive to our community. Luckily because I have until Tuesday, I have some time to think about it.

The language is particularly offensive because it deals with sexuality, race, and gender issues—so I think I am hoping that it will be productive to deal with it head on. I could even try and tie it to the theme of losing voice.

In the face of frustration and anger, which she clearly expressed, Kathleen also began to brainstorm possible responses to the issue and appreciated the time she had to figure out what to do next. Similarly to the way she had made sense of previous difficulties in YAN, she wrote about this one by considering multiple ways to alter her instruction to make a change in the tenor of the classroom; in other words, she again connected her anger and frustration with the problem to possible solutions, leaving space to create change.

In this way, she also utilized the space of the blog to use some of the sense-making tools that she and Cayla used together when YAN was not engaging at the beginning of the semester; namely, discussing problems through their possible solutions. Here, we see evidence of Kathleen's more personal appropriation of a tool that she had always valued and used—gathering feedback and multiple perspectives in order to make planning decisions—but had used previously, most often, *with* Cayla, other mentors, and colleagues. Now Kathleen was drawing on this tool and supplying the perspectives and options *on her own* as she considered what to do next in the face of this new difficulty. She offered her own ideas for instructional adaptation through the space of the blog. Thus, the storytelling moves she was developing to make sense of and move forward in the face of classroom frustrations was becoming more available to her when she was on her own.

In response to the graffiti wall incident, Kathleen eventually decided to talk to the class directly about the offensive comments. A few days after the writing, she explained to the class that she considered the language written on the walls to be offensive, which, in turn, made the

classroom an “unsafe space.” She told her students that “building community and sharing stories can make a strong community,” and “you all signed our classroom guidelines,” that talked about how classmates needed to be mature in order to talk about sensitive issues. She then said, “I will not ask you to share yourselves if that’s a possible risk,” and later, that it was their “choice now if we can create a community or not.” She finished by sharing pieces of students’ own written reflections, anonymously, from an open mic the class had engaged in the week previously. As a part of a reflection after the activity, many students had written about the importance of building community in their classroom, and how sharing made their community stronger. Kathleen shared that she had been disappointed by the comments on the graffiti walls, and that if *she* “was disappointed, your classmates must have felt horrible.” She then finished by telling the students that they now had a choice about how they wanted the class to be, and asked them, “Do we have an understanding?” and then moved on to the next classroom activity. However, although Kathleen had made an instructional decision about the graffiti wall and implemented it, her sense-making about the incident was far from over. As this experience coincided with the timing of the mid-semester interview I had scheduled with Kathleen, I listened to much of this sense-making during the course of the interview.

### *Naming Turning Points*

By the time of our mid-semester interview, which occurred about a week after the graffiti wall incident, on October 12, Kathleen was starting to name events from the previous months of student teaching as “turning points,” much as she had named life events from our pre-semester interview as “epiphanies” on the road to becoming a teacher. For the most part, these turning points involved coming through difficult experiences and learning valuable lessons about what

worked in teaching, and were given added weight in the larger storyline under development.

When describing her biggest learning moments so far in the semester, Kathleen first turned to her experience with the silent discussion, how well it had gone, and how she had realized the importance of instructional adaption and its possible effects on a class, saying,

The day that you came, and I did the silent discussion, that was exciting. Um, that was kind of a turning point in my planning and thinking about what was possible, so that was exciting...Cause that was just, I had been so frustrated, well I'm still frustrated with that class. But I had been frustrated in a different kind of way with that class. We, I wasn't, I couldn't figure out a way to get them to talk to each other about the material. Um, and so, they just weren't talking. They would just stare at each other. It was painful for everyone. So it was just exciting to be like: Oh, I can accomplish the same goals with a different set of tools, you know, so like thinking about what my end goals are, and then being, and keeping true to those end goals, but being really flexible about how I get there. I think. Yeah.

By planning a different type of instruction that catered to what she knew about her students, she had seen new possibilities in the classroom. This new instructional tool had helped her to create different circumstances, even in a class that had proven so frustrating up to that point.

Importantly, her more current and fresh anger about the graffiti incident did not diminish the power she afforded the silent discussion decision. In much the way her struggle of not getting into PhD programs had led to new understanding about her authentic career path, her decision to make changes in a “non-responsive” class had led to new understandings about what it meant to be a teacher. By describing this moment, in retrospect, as a “turning point,” it was given weight in the storyline, and more power to shape future sense-making and actions.

The way Kathleen told this story about teaching also had implications for how she composed and created possibilities for her students. As Kathleen refined and retold the story of the silent discussion in this new space, she described that it was “she” who couldn’t get the students in YAN to talk, not that they there was something “wrong” with them that kept them from talking. In this way, she constructed the situation as something she needed to experiment with instructionally, rather than something inherently problematic in the students, even as she expressed frustration with them. Kathleen described the initial problem through its solutions, and narrated herself as an agentic force that had power to affect situations when she said, “I can accomplish the same goals with a different set of tools.”

Later, Kathleen did place some blame with the students, saying that they “refuse[d] to participate,” and “[had] never turned anything in;” however, she coupled this story with a caveat, saying that “at the same time,” it had been “pretty cool” to “experiment and do whatever” to try and get them more invested. She said,

I think you know the whole point of the class is to talk about teen issues through young adult novels and so, it’s been challenging. So, like I’ve set it up that we’re talking about empowerment and voice and um, building community and how like individuals can impact their community and it’s just been wildly frustrating because they’re, they refuse to participate. At all. Ever. (Laughs) ... There are five or six people that participate and do the work and are in the class, and then there are 24 that are not in the class. Like have never turned anything in, you know? And so, um, I mean there are some people in the middle, but not really. It’s pretty stark. Um, and so, it’s frustrating to figure out how to get them invested in the class. As seniors and especially because attendance is a huge problem. We have five to seven kids absent every day. Which is just logistically, um, like

impossible, to deal with (Laughs). Yeah, so it's just been frustrating. But at the same time, um, it's been cool because as a class in terms of the, um, like, planning process, like, kind of up for, like none of the other English teachers in the department teach that class, this is the only one, so I can kind of do whatever I want. Which has been cool, just to kind of experiment and do whatever... And then having the opportunity to kind of try stuff out, and fail a whole bunch. And have a couple that go really good.

In this comment, we see how Kathleen drew on her developing story about teaching—that it involved instructional adaptation, even in the face of difficulties—in order to change her perspective on a class that she initially described as “wildly frustrating.” She also coupled her description of a difficulty with a description of what she had learned through experiencing it. At the end of this response, Kathleen also discussed how she had both failed “a whole bunch” and had also had some lessons that had gone “really good.” She valued the time and space to experiment instructionally, and intimated that “failure” was a nonthreatening, although perhaps frustrating, part of the teaching story that she was composing. With instructional adaptation, for Kathleen, came both some failures and some lessons that had gone “really good.” We see how, similarly to the way Kathleen pushed against binaries of success/failure in her first interview—not wanting to set the terms for success early but rather to be open to elements of success and failure in each experience—she was now making both success and failure “okay” as she looked back and told her developing story about teaching in the moment. Instructional adaptation had become a central storyline that could help her realize this authorial choice, for if teaching was about adapting, the point was to *keep trying* to engage students successfully as you gained more and more knowledge, not to *always know* exactly how to plan and execute a plan before it got started.

After discussing the silent discussion as a turning point, Kathleen then quickly turned to the graffiti incident, saying

[Another learning experience was] the other day with the graffiti discussion where they put swear words over everything, which, well, it's all over the sheets. We had to take them down because it's inappropriate stuff everywhere, so I had to deal with that on Tuesday. And that was just disappointing. I don't know why it was a learning moment. I think because I didn't freak out, probably, I was able to, like, deal with it. That was kind of, as much as I'm really mad at them, it was kind of reassuring that I could kind of deal with it and it's okay. [It was] another big turning point.

As was apparent from her blog, Kathleen had thought through many possible responses to the inappropriate words on the graffiti walls, and had decided on a course of action that she felt would make the most difference to her students. Even though, at this point, she had not seen the outcomes of her class discussion of this incident, she felt it was a learning moment for her because she was able to “deal with it,” and for it to be “okay.” She hadn't shied away from the issue, but had addressed it head on, and this felt important to her. She was noticing that her story of instructional adaptation, put into action, had helped her to handle this problem, rather than letting it derail the class further. Something difficult had happened, and, for Kathleen, these experiences were often precursors to learning and growth. Even when she didn't yet know what the outcome would be; her own ability to make it through the experience seemed to indicate growth and learning to her, even if the particular form of that growth and learning had not become clear. Further, she described the experience as another “turning point,” giving it added weight in her developing narrative of becoming a teacher. Kathleen saw this problem through the lens of a solution, and even though the long-term outcomes were not yet clear, she highlighted

the ways she had exercised agency in the difficulties of YAN. Her story indicated that she felt she had been able “to deal with it,” and described facing challenging situations with possible solutions as positive turning points in her story of teaching.

*Generalizing the Story: What does this add up to?*

Even after the difficult experience with the graffiti wall, Kathleen was still formalizing large themes of her teaching story. This included the importance of instructional adaptation when accompanied by a growing understanding of students. When describing how she was developing as a teacher through her student teaching experience, she described how “having students... is making a huge difference...because it makes everything more interesting.” She went on to share that “good teaching...is unique to the class, so one class is going to need something totally different from another.” This realization helped her to discover that teaching was about

Getting to know the kids and kind of trying to figure out what’s going to work for them.

Uuum, and then in addition to that ... how much power you really have to set up success once you figure that out. Um, which is pretty cool. So I think that’s what’s, like, changed the most, in terms of how I think about teaching is that now that I have students, they are like so much bigger than anything else that I think about in a lot of ways.

Here, again, we see the ways that Kathleen tied deep knowledge of students to being able to adapt in positive ways as she made sense of the work of teaching. We also see the ways that failure was not a viable option in the story she was creating. Learning about your students and trying things along the way would ensure “success,” and if difficulties happened to occur along the way, they did not change the possibility of creating success. Further, Kathleen was beginning to make general statements about what “good teaching” looked like, and how she could embody

good teaching through her own agency in the classroom. Kathleen was developing and refining a large sense-making tool that she could carry with her into future teaching situations; one influenced by earlier stories, put into action in the beginning of the semester, and continually refined through experiences in the classroom and discussions about those experiences.

Remember that when I asked Kathleen what she was looking forward to in teaching before the semester began, she had said that she was actively trying “not to anticipate” in order to be open to learning from the experience. When I asked her what teaching looked like when it was “going well,” she had refuted this binary proposition by stating that she expected elements of failure and success to be present in all of her experiences. Untied to a specific agenda in the classroom beyond student engagement with the curriculum, by the middle of the semester, this openness had made way for her to try new instructional ideas with YAN that she had not initially considered. It had helped her to see her students in more dynamic ways, and to begin to believe that her assessments of students could change through the intentional use of a variety of instructional means. In many ways, she had set the stage to be able to compose teaching stories that couldn’t result in “failure.” When this resulted in more engagement in classroom activities, as with the silent discussion, she was more able to specifically articulate what had helped her to handle initial difficulties. Consequently, by this point in the semester, Kathleen was beginning to describe a more stable storyline than she had entered student teaching with: by getting to know students and figuring out what worked for them, she could set up a successful classroom. Although not static, the storyline was solidifying and becoming more prevalent in conversations about instruction; it was becoming something she felt she “knew.” I wonder what stories Kathleen might have developed had she *not* continually connected problems to possible solutions

or had seen failure in the classroom as the fault of the students or herself. What things might she now “know,” by the middle of the semester, if those had been her repeated storytelling moves?

When Kathleen later discussed how her students were contributing to her stories about teaching, she reiterated these themes—that knowledge of students was central to experimenting well—but also connected this developing idea to the storytelling move that had been present in her initial interview before the semester began: that failure and success would both be present in each class, saying,

Mostly they're hilarious. Um, kind of what I talked about first. The how, like, they're so central to what I'm thinking about all the time in a way that, I mean it makes total sense that they would be. But it's hard to imagine what it's like to have it that way when you don't actually have them. I think that's the biggest thing, that thinking about what's going to work for them, I guess...I definitely have stuff that doesn't work, and I definitely have stuff that has worked better. And it's pretty obvious when it happens. Um, cause when it doesn't work, it's just torture for everyone. And, I mean, you're not going to know until you try. And that's a big thing that Cayla keeps saying too. You just have to try and it's probably not going to work, and that's okay.

For Kathleen, together with the voice of Cayla, “you just [had] to try.” Many ideas would not work, but as a teacher, you just had to keep trying. In many ways, it seems, Kathleen's earlier desire to blur the lines of success and failure in the classroom were integral to a composition of this kind of story about teaching. As Kathleen had had experiences that helped to develop her story about the importance of experimenting, it was important that her initial storytelling moves had made failing occasionally “okay.” For who can try new things if failure is not an option? In this way, we see the expansion of Kathleen's earlier storytelling moves as they were honed

through interactions with YAN and the use of available tools in the setting. Kathleen entered student teaching with ideas about mentorship; engagement; a desire to subvert the traditional binary construction of success and failure in teaching and learning; and also a sense of agency and competence. As she experienced a perceived lack of engagement from YAN, and used multiple ideas and perspectives to experiment with different instructional aims, she expanded her story to include instructional adaptation—which would result in both success *and* failure—as necessary in a teaching life. However, by describing difficulties in the classroom through possible instructional adaptations, Kathleen continually told stories in ways that provided pathways to action, and so it was important that she felt and the environment affirmed that she was empowered to implement action in the unfolding storyline.

### *Summary*

In reflecting on the development of Kathleen's teaching story over these first three months of student teaching, it is compelling to look at the ways it expanded over time through both actual experiences in the classroom and opportunities to talk about the import of those experiences. Kathleen entered student teaching having made some authorial choices, however tentative, about student engagement and learning. Further, she had an intention to learn from Cayla's classroom; she desired to be open to figuring things out with others through multiple lenses and subvert traditional notions of failure and success; and she felt a sense of personal agency. Her experiences with YAN, and her discussions with Cayla and others about how to move forward in the face of difficult experiences, provided opportunities to enact the action plan of these early stories and consider their usefulness in creating a more engaged, positive classroom environment. In places like seminar, her written blogs, or interview experiences,

Kathleen then had the chance to formalize the way her teaching story was developing. And although one might argue that the interview space is an unusual one in student teaching, and answers given there might be influenced by how one wanted to appear to the interviewer or in the larger project, it is striking that these themes appeared regularly across talk opportunities and were made manifest, through the implementation of a variety of instructional means, during the semester. Further, I wonder how the sense-making space of the interview affected what was made available in YAN.

Importantly, the way Kathleen memorialized those initial frustrations with YAN—by connecting difficulties to possible solutions—became the rough draft of the story she would start to formalize toward the end of September, and then use, both with her peers and as she experienced more “trouble” in YAN during the graffiti incident. As she continued to discuss difficulties by brainstorming possible adaptations, instructional experimentation became the sense-making “norm,” which Kathleen began to reflect on as she saw the students react differently to different instructional activities. Therefore, her storyline of instructional adaptation became a robust sense-making tool within the first month of student teaching, and remained in place, although not static, for the remainder of student teaching. This helped shape what she saw as possible for the rest of the semester. In Kathleen’s case, an initial tendency to subvert binaries of success and failure and to compose her teaching role as one with agency influenced the ways she acted in YAN; which, in turn, influenced what she saw as possible, and what became possible, in the classroom. One can imagine that a teacher who saw failure as possible—or who located blame within herself or the student—might have acted in very different ways, memorializing different experiences with different emphases.

### Final Revisions in November and December: Instructional Adaptation Also Creates Stronger Relationships

In this final section, I discuss how Kathleen's story of teaching continued to be composed, formalized, and expanded as her student teaching experience came to a close in November and December. The end of the semester brought new opportunities for assessing the experience "as a whole," further refining the developing storyline. During this time, several themes in how Kathleen composed her teaching life remained constant; for instance, Kathleen still felt that teachers should gather information from colleagues in order to experiment with instructional strategies that would work well for particular students. And even more so than at the beginning of the semester, she felt it was important to get to know students, and put student knowledge at the center of instructional adaptation.

At this point in the semester, Kathleen and Cayla had acted from this particular story theme over time, and now had some evidence to consider when formalizing the story in reflective spaces. Acting on this developing theme in a setting rich with conceptual and practical support made way for Kathleen to frame "problems" in ways that imagined possible solutions, which, in turn, demanded thoughtful action on the part of the teacher without blame or fear of failure. Problems, and failures, although frustrating and upsetting, were not able to derail Kathleen's sense that, by trying, failure could be remade into gradual solutions. As the end of the semester brought a plethora of audiences and spaces for reflection about "what she had learned" during student teaching, Kathleen continued to refine her story of teaching. These opportunities also provided spaces to expand on this theme as she looked back. As Kathleen continued to reflect on the theme of instructional adaptation at the end of the semester, she also began articulate how the instructional decisions she had made had contributed to more trusting

relationships between her and the students in YAN, and, in return, how more trusting relationships had made certain instructional ideas more possible.

*The Power of “Evidence” to Support a Storyline*

By November, Kathleen had experienced what she termed a “turning point” with YAN after the graffiti board incident. Since that point, when Kathleen had talked candidly to the students about the need to create a safe space in their classroom, and after the introduction of a literature circles unit, Kathleen also began describing more sustained engagement from her students. Although not perfect by any means, November brought more enjoyment and participation for both Kathleen and her YAN students, which, in turn, provided interesting evidence to Kathleen as she continued to make sense, with Cayla, about what had happened in YAN and why the classroom space had seemed to become more effective for more students. She began to add to the storyline by composing a “resolution,” of sorts, describing the class in terms of movement from difficulties to a gradual, and imperfect, resolution. For instance, in her blog on October 26, Kathleen noted,

I am also feeling really good about my seniors. I think the talk we had about maturity after their graffiti discussion went really well. Today the class went very well. I think that the engagement in the class is a lot better. AAAAaaand we are almost at half of the class passing! Okay, maybe it's a low bar, but it's definitely on the rise.

Kathleen had responded to the graffiti board incident with a straightforward discussion of how to keep the classroom safe for students to share their views, and now was describing the discussion as having gone well, and making a difference. This discussion coincided with the fact that Kathleen felt she was beginning to see more “engagement,” and also was seeing more students

passing, two tangible signs of improvement. Importantly, she attributed the increased engagement, at least in part, to her own action in the classroom. Kathleen saw herself as having an effect on the tenor of the classroom, therefore, continuing to compose herself as a teacher with agency. In her blog on November 1, she wrote about how she was also noticing improvements in her own teaching, saying

I am definitely starting to feel more comfortable. I can tell because I don't feel about to panic when I have a few minutes unplanned at the end of class, or when I have to cut something short because I don't have enough time. I feel like I can go for it, and it will be fine. Obviously this isn't making me NOT plan or making me plan less, but it is definitely making me more confident in working the plan I have to fit what's happening in my classroom. I think I have just gotten more comfortable with going with the flow—that I am not going to go down in flames—and that feels good.

So, not only were her seniors exhibiting more engagement and passing the class in larger numbers, she was also noticing growth in her own level of comfort with teaching, especially when it came to thinking on her feet when activities didn't go according to plan. She was beginning to tell a story of growth and moving from struggle to resolution in her larger story of the student teaching semester as a whole. Importantly, in this blog space, she linked the two together in her telling—describing the movement from difficulty to relative resolution in the same story space, the start of a cohesive plot line. Kathleen described the “turning point” of the graffiti discussion as having marked a change from relatively small class participation to more engagement; thus deepening the idea that handling problems through imagined solutions was important work in teaching, and, even more importantly, that *she* could handle those problems in effective ways that moved the class forward. Problematic experiences were often catalysts for

growth, learning and problem-solving in Kathleen's storytelling, and these moments were especially important in Kathleen's evolving narrative. As she imagined solutions to difficulties, acted on them, and described resolution of difficulties as connected to those actions—she was composing a story that had the potential to prescribe certain teaching moves in the future, and composed herself as an actor in those moves.

In our ninth seminar on November 16, Kathleen summed up the progress in YAN with a very positive story. Her fellow student teacher, Janna, had been describing two students she said “didn't like” her, and continually “brought down” the class and made it a more negative environment. She concluded by saying, “Isn't it amazing how one or two people can change the entire culture of a class?” Janna told this story as one with no alternatives, that two students could change the culture of a class negatively, period. In response, Kathleen provided a contradictory story, opened up meaning beyond the closed frame offered in Janna's comment, and discussed how students in YAN had changed over time, especially one group she had perceived as a negative influence on the class at the beginning of the semester. Kathleen attributed the change, among other factors, to her use of instructional adaptation, saying

But it's also true that... I had a couple of kids in my senior class who were super-toxic, and um, so in the beginning it was bad. But for some reason, they've lost their power [to make the class a negative space], which is kind of exciting. I think it's a combination of assignments, and seating charts, and that they weren't going to graduate, and sports. It was a combination of all of these factors, and they kind of lost their power and it's exciting. Well one of them still is, he's a jerk to everyone ... but all but one are passing – like with Cs. One still has like a 35%, but I'm emailing his dad, and at least he's coming to class, so I don't know. So I think the biggest takeaway I've had is how much power we

have as instructors—I mean sometimes it’s out of your control, but there are so many things to try ... It’s exciting.

Here, Kathleen attributed a range of factors—one being her experimentation with assignments—to the change in the “toxic” nature of the class in the beginning of the semester. In addition, she described multiple reasons that might have contributed to the change, some of which had been in her control and others outside of it. Some of the factors had come from Kathleen’s toolbox—in the assignments she had actively chosen—and some had come from Cayla’s support—as in the seating chart changes—and some had been institutional in nature, such as sports and the fear of not graduating. But, according to Kathleen, a combination of these factors had produced a sea change in her classroom. Whereas once a majority of the class had been failing, now many more were passing with a C or higher. This “evidence” provided Kathleen with data that supported the utility of the story she had been embodying and formalizing throughout the semester: that “trying things” often worked, and that her initial assessments of students had been proven too narrow. This story didn’t preclude difficulties in a teacher’s life, indeed “sometimes it’s out of your control,” but, in the end, for Kathleen, there were “so many things to try” in the face of a negative classroom climate, and that was “exciting.” Further, she told the story of her YAN students through turning point language; they had been “super-toxic,” and then she had employed a myriad of factors to “try” to change the toxicity; and they had “lost their power” to affect the class negatively. In this way, she gave the story more weight in her sense-making about the power of teachers, and composed herself as an important and active player in that change. The themes apparent in Kathleen’s storytelling in this more informal, conversational environment with peers mirrored many of the themes she described in our mid-semester interview.

By December 6, when I talked to Kathleen and Cayla together, and asked them to share the story of YAN over the course of the semester, it was clear that many of the issues they had described early in the semester for YAN were on their way to resolution, from their perspectives. Kathleen started her response by saying that she felt students in YAN were “doing really well right now,” and that they were all engaging creatively in the final project for the class: creating a podcast script for a talk show involving the characters from their literature circle novels. Interestingly, although Kathleen was the lead teacher for YAN at this point, Cayla still demonstrated the detailed knowledge she had about the students, Kathleen’s instructional decisions, and the progress of the course over the course of the semester. This detailed knowledge allowed her to be a powerful co-author in Kathleen’s story about YAN’s progression over time, reinforcing Kathleen’s telling of the story through extensions and agreement. Below is an excerpt of this discussion that demonstrates Kathleen’s “resolution” storytelling about the students and Cayla’s involvement.

Makenzie: What about, what about Young Adult Novels? ... I’d love to hear you guys talk about that class.

Kathleen: I feel like they’re doing really well right now.

Cayla: Mm hm.

Kathleen: They, um, and today they, all of them got at least halfway through a script which I felt like was good.

Cayla: We’ll probably need that Monday

Kathleen: We’ll definitely need that Monday.

Cayla: Yeah.

Kathleen: Yeah.

Makenzie: Oh, you think it won't be enough time to record?

Cayla: No, because...

Kathleen: because it took them this long to write it out.

Cayla: And it was like, it took them maybe 20-30 minutes to wake up, I was like, hello!

.... Would a cool blast of air wake you up at all?

Kathleen: Yeah, 1<sup>st</sup> hour is really hard for them.

Cayla: Yeah.

Kathleen: But I feel like they're all gonna have something.

Cayla: Yeah, I agree.

Kathleen's description, and her focus on the positive work of the students, demonstrated a large shift in perception from the class Kathleen had written about on September 14. The students, according to Kathleen, were actively involved in their final projects and were completing them creatively. She could point to tangible positive outcomes in the class, and, in addition, these assessments were confirmed by Cayla's agreement, someone who was integrally invested in and knowledgeable about the course.

As the conversation continued, Kathleen focused on the specifics of each group's project, discussing how the students had been creative and approached the assignment differently, even when two groups were reading the same book. As Kathleen described this, Cayla extended what Kathleen noticed about each group, and also described the ways she had learned from Kathleen's experience with YAN.

Kathleen: And um, they're being really creative about how they're doing it. I feel like just looking at the ones I saw today, they're all really different.

Cayla: Cool. Which we've noticed pretty consistently.

Kathleen: Yeah, which is cool.

Cayla: Yeah.

Kathleen: Cause like Katy's group is doing like, like um, later in life interview? And the mother calls in, but Susan and Sheila's group are doing um, like, like it's a, a school intervention...

Cayla: That's interesting.

Kathleen: Yeah.

Cayla: I think that shows the power of how the literature circles really do become what you're group wants them to become.

Kathleen: Yeah.

Cayla: Which I think is pretty cool, and a good thing to bring up [for me] next semester.

Cause last year I had two groups that did ... I felt like they were all kind of the same thing, they didn't emphasize the differences between what they were focusing on. Where I think a lot of the activities that you planned, with like their, their advertisement posters and their, um, the calling in the radio show, a lot of their personalities came out a lot more in the lit circles. And part of that, too, could be that question of the day. That helps spark them into thinking about their book in kind of a different way.

Kathleen: Yeah, mm hm.

Cayla: So I thought that that was kind of cool...

Kathleen: Yeah

Cayla: A cool product of it.

Kathleen: Yeah, it is cool, I mean, and I feel like they've all really taken ownership over their book.

Kathleen and Cayla both thought the creativity on display was “cool,” but Cayla extended the assessment to include a conceptual tool about the instructional practice of literature circles, saying that the students’ individuality showed “the power of how the literature circles really do become what your group wants them to become.” Cayla noticed this happening in Kathleen’s classroom, and saw a new depth in creativity that expanded beyond the effects she had seen in her previous use of literature circles. She now felt that Kathleen’s activities had helped the groups become more “individual” in their interpretations of their books, and this was something she wanted to use herself in her own future teaching. We see that, by the end of the semester, Kathleen was making tools available to Cayla as well—another by-product of their positioning as co-teachers and collaborators, further supporting Kathleen’s ideas about the power of the instructional tools she had initiated over the course of the semester.

In this short excerpt, both Kathleen and Cayla knew intimately what was happening in the day-to-day workings of YAN. At this point in the semester, Cayla was still available to make tools, perspectives and stories about teaching available, and Kathleen still took Cayla up on these offerings, considering and using them. What had shifted was Kathleen’s *need* for them. In the beginning of the semester, Kathleen had described how she wanted her students to respond to her teaching with engagement, but when that did not immediately happen, she actively sought out the resources available from mentors to bolster her own toolkit to continually work to create the engagement she measured as “good” teaching. At this point, Cayla’s role had shifted as Kathleen’s repertoire of instructional tools had grown. Although Cayla still offered tools as a

part of their collaboration, she was also an important voice that could support and give credence to the story, and actions, that Kathleen was composing.

By describing problems in terms of possible solutions early in the semester, and then looking back and telling about changes in the class through “turning point” language later in the semester, Kathleen had refined her story of what it meant to teach, putting instructional adaptation high on the list. Importantly, through the course of these experiences and telling about them, she had helped change, together with her students and Cayla, the situation in YAN, which had evolved from a class that was, from Kathleen’s perspective, “literally not there,” to one where everyone was going to complete the final project, and students had “really taken ownership of their book.” In this way, the vision Kathleen entered student teaching with, the ways she and Cayla had discussed YAN, and the story that they developed through the possibilities in their setting, had transitioned into a story that now had some anecdotal evidence to support it. From Cayla and Kathleen’s perspective, the instructional adaptations they had tried had helped the environment in YAN to improve, giving more weight to the instructional adaption narrative and the potential that it would continue to be a sense-making tool in the future.

Later in the December 6 conversation, Kathleen and Cayla described a long list of reasons for the shifts in YAN as they discussed it together, which I excerpt below. Building on each other’s ideas as they memorialized the reasons for the shift in YAN, they were, in many ways, showing how they had co-authored a nuanced story for YAN over the course of the semester. Kathleen started the discussion, and by the time they finished it, they had discussed nine different reasons for the changes in YAN, demonstrating the complex context they brought to their assessments of what had happened in this classroom. Notably, they included actively handling problems, adapting instructionally, gathering a variety of tools from colleagues, and

getting to know students and figuring out what would work for them—all central storytelling themes that Kathleen had developed over time—as they described what had happened in YAN. Importantly, Kathleen again described addressing the graffiti wall incident as a “turning point” that changed the tenor of the course, demonstrating the ways she composed herself as an active protagonist in the changes that took place in YAN. I have numbered the “reasons” they describe for convenience.

Kathleen: There were a lot of things.

Cayla: Yeah.

Kathleen: No, but I think that, um...

Cayla: addressing it was a big piece.

Kathleen: Yeah, I think (1) addressing it was a huge turning point, when we had the talk about the language that was on the graffiti stuff. I think that was a big turning point. I think (2) giving them roles in their groups which we stuck to really strongly for awhile, and then I was able to kind of...

Cayla: (3) Splitting up some groups that were pretty toxic.

Kathleen: And new seats. Um, and then I think just (4) consistently asking them to participate.

Cayla: And I think too, (5) giving them the opportunity to participate in ways we knew were strengths.

Kathleen: Yeah, with silent discussions.

Cayla: Yeah, the silent discussions, and giving them a voice without them actually having to speak, and then I think they slowly ... were more comfortable doing things.

Kathleen: Definitely.

Cayla: The (6) lit circles worked really, really well, cause that was the other thing I was worried about was the whole idea of putting themselves out there with people that they don't know, because they picked their groups based on what book they wanted, so, and then we kind of fudged with them a little bit, but um, but they, they worked out really well.

Kathleen: Yeah.

Cayla: I mean there's probably only like one, maybe two groups that ... were not functional...

Kathleen: But even so, like a lot of, I've gotten role sheets, even if they're a little bit late, for most people.

Cayla: Oh good. Good. Yeah, for the majority.

Kathleen: So they're all having a discussion, so... Cause we were like, for awhile, lit circles aren't going to work. We're going to have to do something else.

Cayla: I think when we were in, even in Bronx [a unit from September], we were like, oh wow, this might not work.

Kathleen: Cause they weren't doing anything at that point. I couldn't get them to do anything. Plus, I think part of it too, (7) I feel like I, I had a learning curve in terms of figuring out what they needed and how they worked and what they responded to, you know. So that helped once I figured out what was going on.

Cayla: Which was quick. I mean you – cause even when they were working with me, they weren't working, so it wasn't like ... it wasn't like just you at all, it was just, you know, getting them to work.

Kathleen: (8) Getting to know the kids.

Cayla: Getting to know them more than anything else.

Makenzie: And trying a bunch a stuff.

Cayla: Yeah, definitely.

Makenzie: I mean I feel like you guys have tried so many strategies.

Kathleen: Yeah, and that's been cool, (9) cause some stuff works really well, and some stuff doesn't.

The interview space provided Kathleen and Cayla another chance to reflect on and formalize the story about teaching Kathleen had been developing as she worked with YAN, implemented resources from Cayla, and acted according to the story she was developing. Now that YAN students had started to participate more and most students were passing the course, their story took on new meaning, because, to them, it “had worked.” Kathleen’s developing story now had evidence to support its veracity. Importantly, it was not one thing that had changed the outcomes in this class, according to Kathleen and Cayla, but a multitude of active strategies implemented by them both. In their tellings, Kathleen and Cayla put the onus of change on themselves; they needed to get to know the students, address issues, and ask students to participate in ways that they knew were strengths. Some ideas would work and some would not (failure was okay, and often not the only story), but as teachers, they needed to continually assess and adapt the curriculum and daily instructional practices to meet perceived needs and to ensure students’ participation in a rigorous curriculum. In this storyline, a teacher needed to actively imagine and implement solutions—and, importantly, more than one—in order to act in ways that had the potential to create a positive classroom community. In this discussion, they felt they had been able to do this, at least in part, effectively. There was no silver bullet in Kathleen and Cayla’s

retelling of how problems in YAN had become resolved, there was rather a myriad of factors that they had imagined and attempted.

### *Storyline Expansions*

Kathleen's story continued to be dynamic in other ways as well, by expanding to include new themes. In a December discussion with Kathleen about what she had learned from student teaching, she continued her theme of instructional adaptation, but described it through a new lens: how "trying lots of things" could also support relationship-building with students, which was important for positive classroom experiences as well. Kathleen was looking back across her experiences, noticing the ways her story had been embodied with positive outcomes for students, and began seeing it in new ways. She said,

Um, well, now I kind of know what I'm doing. Um, and I think, especially trying a lot of things, instructionally is big. I think I've really come to kind of appreciating, I think we've talked about this a little bit before, like kind of the, coming at it from relationships, and coming at it from instruction. And how like they're so intertwined, like your instruction's gonna be so much more powerful for the relationships, and the relationships have the opportunity to become important based on the instruction that you use. So, I think that's what I'm taking away most of all. Is that you can't, trying all those instruction things are really important for those relationships and vice-versa. I think is the biggest thing.

This theme had begun appearing in conversations with Kathleen about a week earlier. In our tenth seminar, on November 30, I asked the student teachers to come to our meeting having thought about what they might call their "teaching philosophy," a statement that showed "what

they knew now,” after student teaching for the past four months. In addition, they were also going to speak to a group of pre-service teachers who were student teaching in the spring that night, offering advice and answering questions about their experiences. Both of these storytelling opportunities provided new audiences to formalize stories. The teaching philosophy was something that they could potentially share with administrators once they started looking for jobs, and the advice they were giving pre-service teachers was to guide peers about to experience student teaching. I was interested to see how Kathleen’s developing story would remain similar and how it might change when shared with these new audiences.

When Kathleen shared her teaching philosophy, she described how she felt that “to create an effective learning environment, you need to take the time to have personal connections, but also build instruction that helps students succeed, I guess?” When I asked her if she saw the relationship as circular, that relationships can make certain instructional things possible, she responded quickly, saying that, actually “instructional stuff can make relationships possible.” When discussing the experiences that had helped her compose this story, she said

I think with [YAN]—that’s become really obvious. The instruction was so essential for them to be successful, and the way that I structured the class had a big impact on how the class was run. And it was only when it was running smoothly—or started to run more smoothly—that I was able to connect with them on an individual level because I had that freedom ... having those relationships then made that instruction easier.

Here, we see how, through this telling opportunity, Kathleen was attaching meaning to the difficulties she had experienced in YAN, and the way she and Cayla had acted to address them. Because she had adapted instruction and used knowledge of her students to plan in ways that capitalized on their strengths, the class had begun to run “more smoothly.” Looking back, she

was now telling the story in ways that attached greater meaning to this positive shift for the class. Because the instruction had become more effective, she had time and space to connect with her students on an “individual level,” which, in turn, had affected her students’ willingness to engage in further instruction.

Early in the semester, Kathleen had been endeavoring and seeking ways to create a classroom environment where students were engaged. When this did not occur immediately, she sought feedback and resources. Importantly, Cayla’s stories about teaching—that you have “to try” lots of things—as well as Cayla’s practical and conceptual resources “to try” those new things, were also available. Kathleen had been supported to imagine a myriad of solutions and act upon them, which influenced how she considered and worked to affect the classroom. As the semester came to a close and she started to see and name actual changes in the classroom, she attached new meaning to the original storyline. She was now describing how, through the process of instructional adaptation, she had also able to establish deeper and more trusting relationships with students, which enabled further change in the classroom. At this point in the semester, as she was asked to “summarize” what she had learned, a variety of stories were taking the shape of a more coherent story.

As I mentioned, Kathleen and her fellow student teachers also had the opportunity to talk to a group of university students who were about to student teach in the spring that night. This space offered a new audience for telling the story of student teaching, and interestingly, much of Kathleen’s developing story remained constant as she spoke to them. For instance, when Kathleen and her peers were asked by a future student teacher, “What’s something that you wish you knew last semester?” she responded, saying,

I think that all the methods stuff where it's like yeah, yeah, yeah, there's all these strategies; well it's because you go in there and sometimes they work and sometimes they don't. And so having a lot of ideas is really helpful. So all your notes about different discussion protocols and different ways to organize your classroom, like that's all really useful cause sometimes it's going to totally not work, and sometimes you'll find one and it will be this magical thing that totally works and it will be like OMG what happened to my students, and it's an awesome fit between the method and the kids. So I would say take all of your notes with you—use them, try them, a lot of them won't work but that one will make it all worth it.

Here Kathleen shared her story about experimenting instructionally in order to find something that worked for her students, and also, how it was “okay” if everything didn't go perfectly the first time through—central tenets of what she had been describing as good teaching since early in the semester. She continued this theme later when she and her fellow student teachers were asked what their biggest take-away from the experience had been, saying,

I think the biggest thing that I've taken away is that the kids are hilarious; love them because they're awesome. And, uh, it's kind of incredible the difference that you as the teacher can make—so if you get in there the first day and you're like, 'OMG, this is awful,' it will get better, just keep trying different things. And it's okay to fail, it's only one class, you have tomorrow and you have all this support. You're not there to reinvent the wheel, go with it and be a part of the community that you're in. Celebrate those successes and learn from those failures. Cause you're going to have both in every class every day. And that's okay. And you'll be great.

Kathleen had entered student teaching wanting to shift away from a binary mindset that she could either fail or succeed in this experience, wanting instead to conceptualize her teaching as always having elements of both. When she entered Cayla's classroom, she entered a storyline where she was quickly composed as a "successful" teacher, where problems in the classroom were something to work on over time rather than referendums on your effectiveness as a teacher, and where it was important and necessary to continue to actively "try things" until something worked for your students. In other words, Kathleen entered a setting where her desire to subvert a success/failure binary was met with a setting that did just that. Over the course of the semester, Kathleen had been frustrated and felt failure many times, but this did not appear to consume her story of what it meant to be a teacher; instead, she composed a story where those instances had helped her learn how to be a better teacher. At the end of the semester, she shared a compilation of this storyline with future student teachers as an important "take-away" from her experience.

### *Summary*

By addressing "failures" and difficulties in her retellings of daily classroom events—but always coupling them with possible solutions or stories of ideas that had improved the classroom climate—Kathleen embodied a story of teacher action, and more importantly, her own ability to act. This story was made possible, in part, by her own feelings of competence as she entered the experience. In this story, failures and difficulties were opportunities to imagine solutions and act on them, rather than ways to describe an experience, or a class, holistically. Instructional adaptation, and, through the lens of hindsight, its importance in deepening relationships with students, had emerged as a storyline that helped Kathleen realize many of the authorial choices

she made before student teaching began: the desire to be open to learning and to remake “failure” into a nonthreatening, and indeed, integral, part of the experience.

Further, different audiences and storytelling opportunities at the end of the experience provided reflective space to expand the story to include more complexity. As Kathleen looked back on the experience, through the lens of a “resolution,” she began to describe how her instructional adaptation storyline had not only increased engagement, but had made way for more positive relationships with students, which, in turn, had made new instructional tools more possible. These would be the stories she took with her as she approached classes in the future, making it more possible that she would consider instructional tools as not only academic in nature, but also as the building blocks for stronger relationships which could make deep learning more possible.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS: Story Matters

Kathleen entered student teaching with stories of good teaching. She prized student engagement in learning, she wanted to be open to the experience of learning in a successful classroom, she was intent on removing success/failure binaries from the story she would develop over time, and she believed she brought skills that would increase her competence in teaching. She constructed herself as agentic, but also as a learner. Further, Kathleen entered a particular setting and developed relational ways of being in that setting. She told “within” a set of cultural expectations for teachers, and “to” a particular audience, most often Cayla and myself. Together, Kathleen and Cayla constructed a partnership where conceptual and practical support buoyed Kathleen’s desire to meet problems with new possibilities. Positioned as competent and capable in the setting and through her mentor relationships, yet still a novice, Kathleen’s initial hopes for the semester and her common storytelling moves contributed to the narrative under construction. It was significant that Kathleen felt confident in her skills and was positioned as a co-teacher by her cooperating teacher. This made it more possible to take risks and attempt a variety of instructional tools.

As Kathleen moved through her student teaching experience, she was challenged as a storyteller (McGinley, in review; McGinley et al., 2006) when students in YAN did not overwhelmingly participate in her initial instructional design. Expectations went “awry” (p. 28), as Bruner (2002) notes, which caused her to search for ways to make sense of an unanticipated

struggle. How Kathleen would come to understand her students and herself would impact the possible futures for the YAN community. For instance, I can imagine a very different story being told, one where students who didn't engage were deemed "incapable" or "unwilling" to participate in meaningful activities, or one where instructional methods became more rote and mechanical with each passing day. However, the setting and relationships of her student teaching, in addition to the common stories and storytelling moves she brought to the experience, interacted in ways that encouraged Kathleen to move beyond frustration into problem-solving, and to see "failures" not as the final word, but as motivation to figure out next steps.

Kathleen wanted to be open in her interpretation of student teaching, and as she actively sought out instructional possibilities through small conversations that linked difficulties to new ideas, she began to tell a story of *how* to inspire engagement in her students by getting to know them and adapting her instruction to best support them. As she memorialized the "silent discussion," for instance, as an instructional tool that helped her see students in a new light and realize the positive outcomes that were possible through instructional experimentation—rather than a failure that indicated her students were unable to participate in discussions—a storyline of instructional adaptation as a "way of life" in teaching began to take shape. And as she continued to act in accordance with this storyline, even when the outcomes were unexpected and disappointing, as in the case of the "graffiti wall," Kathleen created a narrative that enabled her to keep faith that her developing story could help her generate more effective situations in her classroom. Over time, she even began to craft her story of the graffiti wall as another turning point toward growth, and as something good that had come out of difficulty. In these ways, Kathleen began to "*become* the ... narrative" (Bruner, 2004, p. 694) through which she told about her teaching experiences, while the "culturally shaped cognitive and linguistic processes"

that gave life to her teaching stories started to “achieve the power to structure perceptual experience, to organize memory, to segment and purpose-build the very "events" of a life” (p. 694).

Accordingly, these stories and storytelling moves both shielded Kathleen from the sometimes paralyzing effects of struggle in the classroom while also providing her with a multiplicity of new possibilities to try. She was an agentic protagonist in her own story, and the “theory of agency” she demonstrated in her stories ascribed her the power to make change in the worlds she occupied (Ahearn, 2012). This, combined with sustained conceptual and practical support—among other factors—contributed to a teaching story that encouraged complex analysis, prompting her to gradually tailor her instruction more intentionally to her students’ strengths, while still engaging them in meaningful academic tasks.

As Kathleen discussed daily occurrences in informal conversations with Cayla, *it was important* that she often made sense of difficulties by discussing a variety of possible solutions. When she summed up large experiences with me in interviews, *it was important* that she often constructed past difficulties as preludes to growth and learning. These ways of making sense through story—both informal and formal—gave shape to her teaching commitments. As she considered events with others in terms of how she could change them, she became more able to actually change them (Wortham, 2001). As she talked about students in ways that allowed her to consider their actions through more lenses than her initial frustration, she was able to imagine new instructional tools that could better address their unique beings. Her stories allowed her to “objectify in language” what she had at first thought and then “[turn] around on it and [reconsider] it” (Bruner, 1986, p. 129). This helped her fashion stories in which she could have more empathy for her students as she considered the “contextual dimensions” of their humanness

(Witherell and Noddings, 1991). She was able to move beyond frustration to begin to see the “creative potential” (Bateson, 1989) of a nonlinear arc to learning to teach, one different than she had tentatively imagined before the semester began. In many ways, she had made space to improvise during that initial interview in August, when she opted not to create a predetermined vision for what would constitute success, choosing rather to “[discover] the shape of [her] creation along the way” (p. 1).

By the end of the semester, as Kathleen looked back across her experience, her evolving story expanded still further as she made sense of the ways her instructional experimentation, and her willingness to continue to try and engage her students in ways meaningful to them, had deepened her relationships with students. Kathleen’s stories demonstrate ways that teaching lives are not only reflected on and debriefed through storytelling, but also defined and created through them. Engaging with Kathleen’s narratives across the semester provides a window into the ways story matters, and ways different story-forms affect how new teachers see themselves, their students, and possible futures in their classrooms.

#### Kathleen’s “Summation”

Three months after student teaching ended, Kathleen completed her final major assignment for her Masters degree, a formal narrative and theoretical task called the “comps” paper. Asked to relate a “dilemma of teaching” she had experienced during student teaching and to use theory to explain her reasoning, Kathleen focused the assignment on YAN and used the blogs and videos that had been a part of the data collection process to help illuminate her thoughts about the experience. I share a few excerpts of Kathleen’s final paper here, as insight into the ways her storytelling across the semester was reinforced and further expanded in this

later storytelling opportunity. This paper provides a direct look into the ways Kathleen's memorialization of her experience in YAN might matter to future students. In describing the ways she came to consider instructional adaptation essential to good teaching, Kathleen wrote:

With the "silent discussion" and the "graffiti discussion" attempt, I had begun to think about what my particular students needed ... I began designing opportunities for students to make up points that they had lost in the first unit. I started taking late work. I reprioritized formative assessments so that the smaller check-ins that I asked of students could help their grade. I was communicating with my students. I found out that one of them wasn't doing any of the reading because he was struggling with comprehension – he was not a great reader – so I found him an audio version of the text to assist in his fluency, and thereby his comprehension (Beers, 2003). I gave him extra time to complete the reading homework. I tried every discussion protocol I had read about in my methods classes. I started using group roles, both for discussion and collaborative reading in class. I had students drawing, acting, cutting, and gluing (Beach et al, 2006). The class became one big instructional experiment. Obviously some things worked really well, and others didn't. But my students could see that I was excited, and that I was trying to engage them ... The end result: more than two-thirds of my class passed.

Here, Kathleen described her instructional experimentation as directly responsible for more students passing, and she continued to deepen a storyline where "thinking about what my particular students needed" was essential to student success and being a good teacher. What Kathleen doesn't memorialize here, and is more apparent when looking at her sense-making from those first sometimes difficult weeks in August and September, is that she entered student

teaching with storytelling moves and practices that would help her create the above storyline with these emphases.

As Kathleen concluded her comps paper, she summed up her experiences by, again, blurring the line between success and failure. Even when describing the nine students who didn't pass her class, she lent complexity to their unique selves, saying:

The dilemma of fostering student motivation was a constant struggle for me during my student teaching. Students come into our classrooms with whole lives worth of baggage. Not only do they carry with them their home and personal lives, but they carry with them experiences related to school that can either positively or negatively affect their relationship to school. For my seniors the tables turned when I realized the dual power of community and instruction to positively encourage student motivation. My instructional risks forced community building, which allowed for more instructional risks. However, I didn't reach all of my students. Nine students ended up "failing" the class. With my limited experience, I'm not sure how I could have reached those nine students. But, I end where I began. I will "assume that there were complex factors behind any apparent failure which, if understood, could be used to transform it into positive learning" (Kohl, 1996, p. 6). For my nine students, those complex factors just remain to be discovered.

Through this recounting, we see the ways Kathleen, just as she did in the blog shared at the beginning of this dissertation, continued to carve out an agenda for herself as a teacher through story, even when considering apparent "failure." She indicated that, as a future teacher, it would be important to continually seek out complex factors that rest beneath the surface, checking her assumptions along the way. She looked toward, and started to create, an imagined future where, with more experience, she would gain more tools to help her accomplish this work. Ending in a

way that both acknowledged the reality of missed opportunities, but still composed a story of hope for the future, Kathleen began to create that future. She continued the process of fashioning a teaching career that would continually refine the storyline of instructional adaption and student-teacher relationships as central components of her teaching story.

### Implications

Kathleen's story gives me hope, as a teacher educator, that deficit storylines of marginalized student populations can be changed and checked, even when they still appear so forcefully in large societal narratives that affect teacher sense-making (Sleeter, 2004). However, changing storylines is not a simple task, but rather a complex process that involves an intricate attention to the relationships, settings, available tools, and storytelling moves that populate student teaching, as well as teacher education more generally. Increasingly, it also demands real attention to the national storylines and district pressures that make further demands on a teacher's story. There are no simple solutions, and my small case study just begins to scratch the surface of potential possibilities. However, below I share seven implications for teacher educators to consider regarding the lens of storytelling in learning to teach. Although not an exhaustive list, here I attempt to give shape to some of the ways this study has helped me think about teacher education, and shed light on possibilities for teacher educators to consider in their work with new teachers.

#### *Stories Matter in How Student Teachers "Make Sense" of Their Experiences*

In the face of educational reforms that often tell teachers' stories based on the test scores their students receive, this study suggests ways to broaden the scope of how we understand what

contributes to a teachers' daily decision-making, and to offer another lens into how choices get made, students get constructed, and new teachers decide what is important. It calls us to take seriously the ways narratives help shape our lives, and how our accounts of experiences organize our reality (Bruner, 1986, 2002). Understanding how the narratives through which we relate our lives help construct them, while considering the ways the narratives student teachers weave have just as much potential to reify inequitable structures as they do to disrupt them, this dissertation suggests the importance of paying attention to the stories being told by those newest to the profession, as well as the ideological environment in which those stories take shape (Bakhtin, 1981). It sheds light on the value in considering the nature, the tone, and the content of stories told in tiny moments across a preparation experience, to consider what these stories reveal, and to analyze what is made available in the sense-making spaces where new teachers co-author their stories with others.

As Bruner (1986) describes in his analysis of "great" literature, novelistic ways of telling can engender a perceived life with a complexity that demands that we "make sense" about others using a multiplicity of alternatives that might be, at first, outside our sphere of immediate reference. Such stories can enable a deep sense of the complexities that are possible when we consider all of human action, and can help render others' actions, which might at first seem strange, more comprehensible. The pursuit of this type of narrative sense-making could provide productive lenses as we design teacher education spaces, considering questions such as, "How are our classes memorialized?" "What will new teachers use from them to make sense of their experiences with students?" and, "Do new teachers have stories that will help them move forward when confronted with difficulties?"

As new teachers make sense of what it means to teach, they are challenged as storytellers by a myriad of constraints, including political realities, myths about teaching, and district mandates, not to mention difficult moments in the classroom. Accordingly, the ways we, as mentors, model how to interact with grand narratives, societal stories, and daily setbacks matters for the ways new teachers will engage these experiences in the future. Like Kathleen, will they strive to push on constraints to create space for new scripts of teaching and learning? Will they tell stories that make mishaps a nonthreatening and integral part of a story of growth? And will they have the support needed to create such brave storylines? Narratives help create teaching lives. In response, we should consider how new teachers are making sense through narrative, the themes that drive their stories of teaching and becoming a teacher, and the ways this affects the possibilities they see and create in their classrooms.

*The Positions We Are Afforded and Take on When Telling Stories Matters*

The roles we imagine for ourselves in the narratives we compose can affect our sense of agency. This is an important consideration when thinking about the student teacher-cooperating teacher relationship, as well as other mentoring roles, and the positions those relationships afford new teachers. We tell our stories “within” the influence of cultural and social stories (Bakhtin, 1981; Davies, 2000) and “to” others, who position us in a variety of ways (Wortham, 2001; Razfar, 2012). These positions include certain “rights, duties, and obligations” as well as expectations about how individuals should enact them (McVee et al., 2011, p. 5). In accepting, rejecting, and dialoguing with such expectations, individuals negotiate positions through interactions with the storylines available in the local, socially contextualized, experiences of daily lives.

Because the ways we are positioned as we tell stories can affect the roles we compose for ourselves, it is important to consider the setting of student teaching and what it affords novice teacher storytellers. For instance, Kathleen asserted agency both in her developing storyline as well as through the forms in which her story took shape when she set out to define her teaching story outside traditional boundaries of success and failure. In this way, difficulties did not overwhelmingly define the teaching story she constructed, and she told stories from a position where she felt she could make change, affecting her ability to realize change. For Kathleen, this was an underlying theme with which she entered student teaching, but for student teachers who might not arrive with similar agentic stances, I wonder how to make them more available, perhaps through increased self-awareness. If, as Davies and Harré (1990) describe, community members deemed incompetent forego the right to share meaningful assistance within that context; thus, the positions afforded student teachers in creating teaching stories help to construct and constrict their opportunity for participation, engagement, and action. As we notice the stories under construction for our teacher candidates, it is important to consider the roles our new teachers are creating and accepting for themselves, and how the environment and the relationships within it are contributing to those constructions.

### *The Stories We Tell About Difficulties Matter*

Bruner (2002) describes how the “impetus to narrative is expectation gone awry” (p. 28) describing the ways that difficulties often drive us to make sense of experiences through story. Difficulties, too, can have a great impact on the stories new teachers tell about what it means to be a teacher. For instance, Kathleen, although feeling the frustration of initial problems intensely, tended to compose difficulties as mutable rather than fixed. In talking about problems through

the lens of what she might do to intervene in them, and by constantly asking others around her for their perspectives and ideas, her sense-making stories did not often allow problems to define a story completely. In this way, the narrative tools Kathleen used with others, most notably with Cayla in the beginning of the semester, affected the tools she used on her own when she encountered difficulties later in the semester.

Much like great novels that encourage readers to *create* meanings rather than *holding* meanings within their pages (Bruner, 1986), Kathleen's ways of "writing" her tale, frequently together with Cayla, in conversational stories often allowed her to consider multiple meanings behind events, and therefore, to imagine a variety of solutions. This was especially important in those first few weeks "on the job," when she was making sense in snippets of conversation that focused on figuring out what to do when her students were not participating. At that point in the semester, Kathleen was not interested in creating large narratives of what it meant to be a teacher; rather, she was concerned with deciding what to do the next day. However, these moments of informal talk, so seemingly small, helped influence the larger narrative she would start to memorialize toward the middle of the semester. The tools for meaning-making and the practical resources that were available to her as she did this work supported the focus on instructional adaptation that she began to formalize.

Accordingly, we might consider the ways we make sense of problems *with* student teachers, and how the stories through which we problem-solve have the potential to affect the way new teachers will encounter problems in their future teaching lives. As a young university supervisor years before my experience with Kathleen, I remember the pain I felt when hearing student teachers describe the difficulties they faced. In these situations, I often fought the urge to offer quick-fix solutions that concealed the complexity of their students. However, Kathleen and

Cayla tended to consider difficulties through multiple lenses and offer a variety of solutions as they talked things through together. As teacher educators, one potential way to assess our work with new teachers is to consider the ways we co-author discussions of difficulties.

### *The Timing of Storytelling Matters*

As I've discussed, stories, in conjunction with the setting and relationships in which they are told, can help new teachers make sense of their roles and the "problems" they encounter in the work of teaching. In addition, Kathleen's stories have prompted me to consider the idea of *pivotal storytelling moments* in the process of learning to teach, and, further, that the first few weeks of student teaching can often be one of those pivotal moments. Although before student teaching began, and starting again in mid-September, Kathleen tended to tell larger, more comprehensive narratives of what teaching should be and what teachers should do, it was in those first few weeks of student teaching, as she took on the responsibility of her role, met difficulties, and responded to events, that her stories seemed the most malleable. It was then that she sought the most mentor support, tangible ideas, and alternative explanations for what was happening through emergent, informal stories. And it was these small stories—told often with little thought to the coherence of the larger storyline under construction—that affected the more formalized narratives she began to tell as she looked back at the middle of the semester.

In light of this, paying attention to early storytelling moves, especially as they are used to compose stories that relate frustrations in the classroom, seems a particular vital exercise for teacher educators to consider. It might be in these pivotal moments, when stories are often at their most flexible, that teacher educators could be working to offer new lenses and helping students to interrogate common storytelling moves. Rather than frontloading university stories

solely in methods courses that take place before student teaching begins (e.g. Doyle and Carter, 1993), we might also consider ways to place stories from the university and stories from the classroom into greater conversation in order to expand possibilities in the classroom.

*Settings and Relationships of Storytelling Matter*

Kathleen's stories were greatly influenced by their setting and the relationships she developed with her mentors and the teaching resources made available. For instance, Cayla never "had" to leave the classroom, as other cooperating teachers felt compelled to do, because, as she described, Kathleen was seen "as a teacher" by the students from the beginning of the semester. Whereas other cooperating teachers sometimes felt the need to exit the classroom in order to bolster their student teacher's autonomy, Cayla did not, which allowed her to be more connected to what had happened in each class. This afforded Cayla the added benefit of being able to offer alternative perspectives, tangible ideas, and support in a sustained way throughout the semester. Kathleen was, therefore, in a more supported position to take risks that, in many ways, improved the atmosphere of YAN. Due to the nature of the story she was often telling and the collaboration she and Cayla had established, Kathleen didn't see Cayla's support and perspectives as judgments on her teaching. Rather, they became a natural part of the co-teaching relationship she and Cayla had established.

In other words, in addition to her openness to learning, Kathleen was positioned in ways that allowed her to engage openly with the alternative perspectives offered to her. Rather than seeing new ideas as a referendum on what she had already done, the competent position she assumed composed her as a co-teacher, albeit one that was new and could benefit from shared ideas. As Davies (2000) notes, we tell our stories from the perspectives of the positions we have

taken on as our own in relationship with each other. Further, we compose in a heteroglossic state (Bakhtin, 1981) and what is available matters, as does the context for conversational storytelling.

Precisely because the setting of our stories and the relationships in which we tell them matters, it is important to plan for these relationships carefully and to consider, together with other mentors, the importance of mentoring roles in providing alternative viewpoints, supporting new teachers with tangible ideas, and helping novices to compose roles that balances the need to grow and learn with the confidence to take risks, as well as offering support to do so. I wonder what would it look like to consider it a part of our jobs as teacher educators to offer multiple lenses, alternatives, and interpretations; to make openness available where it might not be; and to, sometimes, *be* the physical representation of another lens? How might we say, “I think I see it slightly differently,” in ways that contribute to more possibilities for dynamic change in the classroom as well as the creation of narratives of students as capable and dynamic? Indeed, what would it look like to reframe our roles as co-authors rather than supervisors and instructors, and to consider how we could use our time with student teachers to contribute to more generative storylines for them and their students, rather than telling them what to do? And further, what would it look like to consider the ways teacher candidates might help us co-author and transform our stories in powerful ways as well, providing us alternative lenses and perspectives through which to consider the work of teaching?

As teacher educators, it’s important to consider what the setting of student teaching, story-wise and position-wise, makes available for new teachers as they make sense of daily classroom events. New ideas—which we, as mentors, often offer in the spirit of learning and collaboration—can be seen as referendums on one’s work in contexts where a teacher is telling stories of failure and/or feels unable to do anything different. For Kathleen, trying hard even

when things didn't work initially became an integral part of her teaching life. But as Britzman (1991) demonstrates, this is not a storyline typically available to new teachers.

*Stories Matter for Students in Classrooms*

In this dissertation, I have tried to highlight ways that, when storytelling is enacted in forms that are dialogic and open to dwelling in alternatives and multiple perspectives rather than submissive to the authoritative word, student teachers are more able to enact feminist post-structural tools when encountering societal discourses about what it means to be a teacher and enter into conversation with them. In providing one case study of a student teacher who strived to keep her storytelling open, and created new possibilities when her initial instruction was not serving her students well, I hope to show how our stories affect the ways we are able to “see” students and what they are capable of doing, especially those who are culturally different from ourselves. If we wish to create new narratives and new possibilities for teachers and students—especially in the face of every-growing entrenchment of achievement gap narratives (Gutiérrez, 2008)—it is important to circulate new stories.

Similarly to the way Kathleen pushed against binaries of success/failure in her first interview, not wanting to set the terms for success early but rather to be open to elements of success and failure in each experience, she later made both success and failure “okay” as she looked back and composed an evolving story about her teaching life. Instructional adaptation had become a central storyline that could help her realize this authorial choice, for if teaching was about adapting, the point was to *keep trying* to engage students as you gained more knowledge about them, rather than *always knowing* exactly how to plan and execute a plan before it got started. Further, these new instructional tools helped her see her students through new lenses. By

discussing problems as questions rather than finalities, new solutions were continually generated. The setting of her experience and the position she occupied made it more possible that she would risk trying these new ideas to see if something else might work.

As Kathleen focused on change and solutions; different forms of instruction and deeper relationships became possible in her classroom; and, importantly, more students began to pass. And although I did not attempt to problematize classroom narratives of passing and failing, which could be a whole dissertation unto itself, this shift to more students passing indicated, to Kathleen, growth in her teaching story. Even though students were rather secondary in my telling of Kathleen's teaching story, for her, they were much more central, and the work she did to get to know them, on their own terms, was central to the storyline she created. How can complex narratives of students, which might encourage different actions in classrooms that go beyond remediation, gain wide circulation unless teachers start to tell them to each other, start to act from them, and start "see" students differently?

Attention to sense-making through narrative means becomes even more important as teachers work with marginalized populations, for whom negative stories abound in societal narratives. Students of color, students in poverty, and students who are English Language Learners, for instance, are often depicted as "lacking" a variety of academic skills, while stories about their "cultures" and their negative effect flourish (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). In Kathleen's case, although she was often frustrated with students, her initial stories demanded that she act to make changes in the classroom, which, over time, allowed her to see students in new ways, and define them through more than their lack of engagement. Although Kathleen had moments where she used deficit orientations to make sense of her students' actions, more often, her story compelled her to move beyond constructions of students as, for instance, "disengaged."

Because her story continued to prompt her to look for new ideas and solutions, it helped create a classroom where she continually used her knowledge of students to try new instructional ideas. In return, this variety of instructional ideas helped her see students do different things, which further reinforced storylines centered on student strengths. The setting of Kathleen's student teaching, and Cayla's alternative perspectives and flow of instructional ideas, further contributed to this "re-seeing."

*Storytelling is an Important Lens in Considering the Social Organization of Teacher Education*

As noted in the literature review, the space of field experiences in teacher education have long been considered to have the potential to change teaching storylines; however, they have not always been able to live up to that goal (Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Zeichner, 2010). This study suggests that not only *attention to stories*, but also *more* field experiences and *more time to tell stories about those experiences with others* could be productive ways to organize new teachers' experiences toward changing canonical storylines. Using stories—and storytelling situations where we ask "What if?"—as a way to invite conversation between the multiple voices in teacher preparation is one way to bridge the two separate worlds of teacher preparation (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985)

If all that comes before student teaching involves "anticipation with little understanding," and all that comes after involves comprehending the work of teaching by storying experiences (Doyle & Carter, 2003, p. 135), it might be productive for us, as teacher educators, to consider ways to be more active in the movement *from experience to story*, rather than working so hard to influence storylines *before* our students have experiences as teachers. As demonstrated in my work with Kathleen, her initial stories in those first few weeks of being "on the job" in a "real

classroom,” however disjointed, informal, and conversational, had a lasting influence on the more coherent storylines she began to construct towards the middle and end of the experience. Accordingly, it is important to notice and be involved in new teachers’ stories of those first, early days in intentional ways. For Janet Alsup (2006) critically reflecting on the stories under construction across a teacher education program, and beyond, is not “something that can be learned through its application to isolated assignments, lesson plans, or class discussions,” but “must be applied to the larger, more abstract discourses of teacher” development (p. 125-6). The work of teacher educators, for Alsup, is to assist students in engaging in potentially transformative discourses that help to shape their narrative teaching worlds, not solely from societal narratives of who teachers should be, but from intentionally woven bits of storylines that serve to help them enact pedagogies that both embody the teaching lives they set out to create and are more effective for all learners.

In acknowledging this, teacher educators might consider questions such as, “What are productive ways to co-author with my teacher candidates?” and, “How can we begin to help pre-service teachers tell generative stories from the beginning of their preparation?” This could involve engaging new teachers in more “on the job” practice sooner, so they could begin to story experiences together with peers, teacher educators, and school professionals earlier in their experiences (Doyle & Carter, 2003; Ritchie & Davies, 2010). By looking for ways to provide student teachers with earlier opportunities to narrate their initial experiences “in charge” of a class, we might increase the possibility that tools and stories from university coursework cross over into field experiences, and vice-versa. By attempting to create spaces where a multitude of experiences, and lenses on those experiences, come to talk to each other in stories, we have the potential to create more awareness in student teachers of the narrative turns of their evolving

teaching lives, the ways previous stories interact (or don't) with new information and experiences, the ways they meet challenges as storytellers, and the ways their stories matter for the students they will encounter.

### Limitations

One limitation of my work is that I did not have access to more stories in Kathleen's constellation of storytelling. I was not privy to the sense-making she did with family members, with friends, or with her partner, for instance, and this lens would have provided a more robust picture of the moment-to-moment storytelling Kathleen did over the course of the semester. In some ways, I consider it more ethical that I did not protrude my research lens into those more personal spaces; however, the truth is that in almost all of the data I collected, although varied, Kathleen was usually talking to me, her supervisor, or to Cayla, her cooperating teacher. Although mitigated by the closeness of our relationships, I can only speculate about how the power of our positions affected the story under construction. However, because Kathleen seldom held back in describing the difficulties she was experiencing, it seems plausible that her storytelling was, for the most part, similar to what she might have said was I not present.

Another weakness of my study is that more student voices weren't heard. Although I set out to collect data from students about how they experienced the results of Kathleen's actions in accordance with her story, due to logistical constraints, only a few consented. And although Kathleen did request and receive data from students about their experiences in her classroom, which she passed on to me, I focused more on Kathleen's stories than students' stories. In future work, I hope to involve more student storytelling in pre-service teachers' experiences in order to

see how student voices might interact with evolving teacher narratives in potentially powerful ways.

### Conclusion

Even with these limitations, this dissertation offers an important voice into the conversation about teacher education. In a system that continues to privilege narratives of technical proficiency and test scores (Ravitch, 2010), and considering the reality that teachers' narratives are often privileged above students' stories, storytelling can provide an important lens when striving to understand teacher growth and learning. However, it is not without tension that I leave the pages of this dissertation. Storytelling is a tricky business, and I am left at the end of this process considering the pieces of the story that have been left out, the ways I have told the story differently than Kathleen might have, and the ways my own story intersected with hers to compose this telling of it. It has been my struggle to represent Kathleen accurately, to not simplify her story into a monolithic chunk. I have strived to share dominant themes in her stories about student teaching, but also to show places where they were contradictory and conflicting, but there are certainly many places where I was unable to accomplish these aims.

However, even though the story shared here is only partial, only ever a piece of the complex set of relationships, past experiences, ideas, and actions that make up teaching lives, I am struck by its importance. As Kathleen debriefed her struggles with YAN in the setting of her and Cayla's mentoring relationship, she defined a course of action as a teacher; one that proved mostly constructive in her student teaching experience. I find it compelling that as Kathleen created a storyline that involved seeking more information about her particular students, using a variety of instructional tools, and developing more meaningful relationships—more students started to engage with her activities and fewer students failed her class. A story that troubled

binaries of failure and success, and a story that composed teaching as an active search for engaging and meaningful instructional methods was, in many ways, a generative storyline for Kathleen, one that outlined tangible ways to act in the classroom and created tangible benefits for many students' participation in and completion of her course. Although not without troubling elements—certainly, some students did fail her course—the semester ended with the majority of students creating scripts in the voices of the characters from their novels, synthesizing self-composed themes from their chosen literature circle books, and listening to each others' presentations with enthusiasm. It ended in many of the ways Kathleen had hoped for at the beginning of the semester, full of student engagement and the sharing of student voices. There had been a widening of what was possible rather than a narrowing.

And so I am left wondering about the power of telling; the power of memorializing one's experiences through conversational stories; the power of taking in and using what others think to help shape your interpretation; and the power of saying, "This is what I think this means," and acting from that space. These are, often, the moments when so much is decided about who students are and what they can do, when methods courses are deemed useful and/or unrealistic, when mentors' ideas are appropriated and/or resisted, when "not smiling until Christmas" becomes a helpful teaching story and/or a needless admonition. If, in part, it is in these moments where teachers compose their teaching lives, teacher educators would benefit from the opportunity to listen. Often distanced from the classroom, from student teaching, and from prolonged interaction with many of their students, university professionals are not often able to see how and if the stories of good teaching they promote are woven into the stories that are composed through a myriad of conversations in student teaching experiences.

Many questions remain for me as I sift through the meanings I have made as I told this story that is not my own, and yet, I have interpreted and wrested meaning from in this space. For example, I wonder, who gets the power to interpret? How did my admiration for Kathleen affect my role in her developing story and my lens in telling it? And what have I missed that was important? And yet it is these questions that also give me hope; hope that, I too, will continue to deepen my understanding of Kathleen's, and my own, teaching stories. It is these questions that remind me that there are other ways of seeing and interpreting these stories that I have yet to discover, and that following these various pathways might lead to new ways of being in the classroom, new ways of "seeing" students and student teachers, and new ways of imagining equity and working toward it.

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## APPENDIX A

## Pre-Semester Interview Protocol: Student Teachers

## Road to Teaching

- What led you to become a teacher?
- Tell me about important teachers in your own school experience...is there a story that exemplifies why they were important to you?

## Teacher Prep Experiences and Influence

- What was it about the Masters Plus program that drew you to it?
- If you think about your experience in Masters Program like a book (soundtrack), what chapter titles would you give for your experience in Master Program? In other words, what has the trajectory been like?
- Are there tools and concepts from your preparation last year that you think you'll use in this student teaching experience?
- Tell me about your experiences in practicums. Have they been positive? Useful? Tell me a story about a student or group of students that affected your development as a teacher...
- Now, let's focus in on your experiences at Westview in particular. How would you describe those experiences?

## Outside Influences (Media, Politics)

- Beyond teacher prep, there are lots of other voices that influence how we think about the work of teaching. For instance, there are many movies made about significant teachers, and now there are lots of documentaries, such as *Waiting for Superman*. How would you characterize Hollywood's representation of teaching and learning? What movies have you been drawn to?
- There is also quite a lot of talk about teaching in politics today – things like attaching teacher compensation to test scores, charter schools, and so on. How would you describe the political climate surrounding teaching today? Has it influenced your thoughts on teaching at all?

## Imagining Teaching

- Okay, now that we've talked about outside voices, I want to focus on your visions around teaching and learning. To start off, I'm interested in how you envision good teaching. So, when teaching is going well, what does it look like?
  - (What does it look like when it's going bad?)
- When you see yourself teaching, what do you imagine? (e.g. What would the classroom look like? What will be going on? What will a typical classroom scenario look like?)
- In general, what factors do you think make it possible to teach well?
  - (What factors make it difficult?)

## Imagining Learning

- Now, for the other side of the coin – I'm interested in your thoughts on learning. What does learning look like? How would you know if your students are learning?

- Tell me a story of a time when you were teaching or organizing instruction and you knew that students were learning or not learning
- Now think about yourself as a learner. What helps you learn? Describe a time when a class was organized in a way that really helped you learn.

#### Imagining this Student Teaching Experience

- To wrap up, let's talk a little about this particular learning experience you've got come up – student teaching at Westview. In general, what factors do you think make it possible to learn to teach well?
  - What factors make it difficult?
  - What do you worry about when it comes to teaching well in this experience?
- Tell me about the units/type of teaching you hope to do at Skyline? (What are you planning? How did you come to those preliminary decisions?)
- What types of routines are you hoping to put in place? Tell me about those...
- When this experience is over, what story do you hope to tell? What do you hope to have accomplished? What piece of learning to be a teacher do you hope happens?

## APPENDIX B

## Mid-Semester Interview Protocol: Student Teachers

*I want to hear how you are describing yourself as a teacher right now – a few months in – and am very interested in the types of stories you are telling and the types of talk you are engaging in, as well as how that affects what you do in the classroom and how you think about the work of teaching. I am going to ask you some sensitive questions about your conversations with your cooperating teacher, with me, with peers, with other colleagues, with students. Please know that this is all confidential, and also that I deeply respect your cooperating teacher and understand that all relationships – especially this one – are complex. Your answers won't change my respect for the others in your developing teaching, just help me better understand the intricacies of becoming a teacher and important relationships within that.*

1. How would you describe the ways you are developing as a teacher? (Philosophically and Practically)
  - a. How would you tell the story of your experience at this point in the student teaching experience?
  - b. How is this different or similar to what you expected the story would be?
2. How are you telling the story of your experience in different contexts (e.g. to parents and friends, to each other, to other teachers in the school, to other cohort members, etc.)?
3. What have been some of your biggest learning moments?
4. There are lots of influential voices as a part of your student teaching – cooperating teacher, university supervisor, students, other colleagues, school culture, district culture, state mandates, federal systems, friends, significant others.
  - a. What /who would you say are your top three influences?
  - b. What name/title would you give them in the story?
  - c. In what ways are they influencing the story?
5. What/who is helping to facilitate your learning and growth the most?
6. More specifically, what types of talk (and with who) are most helpful in your learning?
  - a. What are the features of this talk?
  - b. Who is it with?
  - c. How is it initiated?
7. Describe conversations with your cooperating teacher?
  - a. How are they structured?
  - b. What are their features?
  - c. How is it initiated?
  - d. What are the major topics?
  - e. How do they fit in to the way you act/teach in the classroom? How do they influence your teaching story?

8. Describe conversations with your university supervisor?
  - a. How are they structured?
  - b. What are their features?
  - c. How is it initiated?
  - d. What are the major topics?
  - e. How do they fit in to the way you act/teach in the classroom? How do they influence your teaching story?
9. Describe the alignment and/or differences between the different mentor voices in your student teaching.
  - a. How do you deal with this?
  - b. How does this alignment and/or differences influence your developing teaching story?
10. Describe the alignment and/or differences between your own voice and the mentor voices in your student teaching.
  - a. How do you deal with this?
  - b. How does this alignment and/or differences influence your developing teaching story?
11. Describe how students (talk with them, as a group, as individuals) are affecting your developing teaching practice and the story you tell about it.
  - a. How are they influencing your teaching story?
  - b. Do you feel aligned with the students?
  - c. How would you describe your relationships with students and how you think about them when planning?
12. Describe conversations with another significant person in your student teaching (peer, colleague)?
  - a. How are they structured?
  - b. What are their features?
  - c. How is it initiated?
  - d. What are the major topics?
  - e. How do they fit in to the way you act/teach in the classroom?
  - f. How are they influencing your teaching story?
13. During our last interview, you said \_\_\_\_\_ were the chapters for becoming a teacher. What would you add now after two months of student teaching?
14. From my perspective, thinking about and working with YAN has been a big learning experience for you. Tell me about YAN and your experience with them.
15. Now I'd love to hear about how you and your cooperating teacher have approached this experience together.
  - a. How does she talk to you about YAN period? What helps?

- b. What do you think/feel about what your cooperating teacher said about it?
  - c. What did it mean to you when the cooperating teacher tells you that?
  - d. What impact did your cooperating doing that have on you?
16. Here's a story you told last week: \_\_\_\_\_?
- a. Why is that important to you?
  - b. Who helped you construct this?
17. Tell me some of the most important moments in your developing teacher life from the past couple of weeks.
18. Going into the second half of student teaching, what would make this experience more educative for you?

## APPENDIX C

## Final Interview: Cooperating Teacher and Student Teacher Together

FIRST: Ask them to debrief the class I just saw.

- Walk me through this Research Assignment, what were you hoping for? What objectives did you have?
  - How is it going?
1. Talk to me about where the classes have been and are at right now.
    - a. What's going well?
    - b. What have the students learned this semester? How do you know?
    - c. What have been your most successful teaching moments?
    - d. What's still driving you nuts?
  2. Tell me about your collaboration in general? What is your dynamic? How was it created?
    - a. What has really worked? What have you changed because it didn't work?
    - b. What do you talk about the most? How has this changed over time?
    - c. In what ways does the other influence your thinking/decision making? In small ways/in the moment? Big philosophy shifts?
    - d. What do you think are your biggest differences as teachers? What are your biggest similarities?
  3. What are your big stories/themes from the semester?
    - a. What do you discuss a lot?
    - b. What are big metaphors that you return to make sense of what's happening? Have those changed over time?
    - c. Stories about students?
    - d. What purposes do these serve, do you think?
  4. What will you take from this experience forward into your future teaching?
  5. What would you tell other people about successful student teacher-cooperating teacher relationships and how to structure conversations?
  6. Tell me about how you are both thinking about teaching and learning at this point in the semester? What made that possible?
    - a. What has been successful and why?
    - b. What have kids really learned and how do you know?
  7. How are you thinking about your students?
  8. What types of stories do you tell about students? What purposes have these stories served?

9. What has been the thing you wanted to learn/teach each other?
10. Tell me about how you talk about students in general. What has this type of talk done for your teaching?

## APPENDIX D

## Pre-Semester Interview Protocol: Cooperating Teachers

## Road to Teaching

- What led you to become a teacher?
- Tell me about important teachers in your own school experience...is there a story that exemplifies why they were important to you?

## Teacher Prep Experiences

- How would you tell the story of your student teaching experience? What made it educative and/or not educative?
- What chapter titles would you give for your experiences becoming a teacher and as a teacher?
- What are important tools you have you learned since becoming a teacher? Why?
- Describe a time you attended a really useful professional development experience.

## Outside Influences (Movies, Politics)

- How do movies, media, and the political system tell the story of teaching?

## Conceptions of Teaching

- To start off, I'm interested in how you envision good teaching. So, when teaching is going well, what does it look like?
  - (What does it look like when it's going bad?)
- In general, what factors do you think make it possible to teach well?
  - What factors make it difficult?
- If you had to choose, what would be one of your favorite units you've ever done with kids? Describe it to me...
- What types of routines and activities work well in your classroom?
- What drew you to Skyline and keeps you at Skyline as a school?
- When there are challenges in a classroom, what should a teacher do? Where should they get support? What makes it possible to figure out how to act in the face of challenges?

## Conceptions of Learning

- Now, for the other side of the coin – I'm interested in your thoughts on learning. What does learning look like? How would you know if your students are learning?
- Tell me a story of a time when you were teaching or organizing instruction and you knew that students were learning or not learning
- Now think about yourself as a learner. What helps you learn? Describe a time when a class was organized in a way that really helped you learn.

## Conceptions of Novice Teachers

- What do you think student teachers need most in student teaching?
- What led you to become a cooperating teacher?
- What factors make it possible to learn to teach well?
  - What factors make it difficult?

## APPENDIX E

## Mid-Semester Interview: Cooperating Teachers

1. What stories about teaching and learning do you see your student teacher developing?  
How do they see the work of teaching and the encouragement of learning?
2. Is that story connected to what they are doing in the classroom?
3. How are these similar/different from your own stories of teaching and learning?
  - a. How do you make sense of these similarities and differences in your conversations about teaching and learning?
4. Describe you and your student teachers conversations about teaching and learning
  - a. How do they go?
  - b. What prompts them?
  - c. What routines have you developed?
  - d. What is the tone?
  - e. Who talks?
  - f. What happens as a result of these conversations?
5. What do you see as the biggest influences on your student teacher's story of what it means to be a teacher?
6. What I notice as student teacher's major difficulties: \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - i. How would you characterize these?
  - ii. How have you intervened?
  - iii. What other struggles have you seen that I'm not seeing?
7. Has your ideas about the role of a cooperating teacher changed over the past two months?
  - a. What do you see as the main responsibilities?
  - b. Where do you think these ideas came from?
  - c. How has your student teacher responded to this role?
8. How has the university influence affected your student teacher and his/her developing story of teaching? (Me, observations?)
  - a. How do you talk to your student teacher about this?
9. What are you surprised that the student teacher knew/didn't know?
10. In what ways has this student teacher developed expertise in teaching over the past few months?
  - a. What do you attribute this development to?
  - b. In what ways have you contributed to this development?
11. In what ways could your student teacher benefit from more support?

12. What should a beginning teacher leave student teaching knowing and being able to do?
13. What support is helpful/would be helpful as a cooperating teacher trying to make sure that the ST leaves with this knowledge and these skills?

## APPENDIX F

## Sub-codes for Kathleen

<b>1. CODE: Story CONTENT</b> (What Teaching is, What Learning Teaching Is, Who Students are)
SUB-CODES:
<i>(1) Teaching is</i>
a. <b>experimenting</b> with multiple strategies to reach
b. some things will work and others won't, <b>it's okay</b>
b. <b>high standards</b> and encourage
c. <b>student voice</b> , and
d. <b>student engagement</b> in learning activities
e. <b>knowing kids well</b> to do this work effectively,
f. <b>collaborating with colleagues</b> to get more information to use to plan with, and
g. <b>handling multiple tasks</b> in the classroom.
h. <b>building community/relationships</b> (towards end of semester)
<i>(2) Learning teaching is</i>
a. <b>getting feedback, ideas, and help</b> from colleagues and mentors,
b. <b>figuring things out</b> over time,
c. <b>intellectually interesting</b> and
d. <b>fun</b> ,
e. <b>better with kids</b> to plan for and think of
<i>(3) Students are:</i>
a. <b>fun, hilarious</b>
b. <b>frustrating</b>
c. <b>multiple things</b> at once
<b>2. CODE: Story DISCOURSE STYLE</b>
SUB-CODES:
a. <b>open to ambiguity</b>
b. <b>open to learning</b>
c. <b>contextualizing experiences</b> and people
d. seeking out and using <b>multiple perspectives</b>
e. <b>questioning/figuring out/problem-solving</b>
<b>3. CODE: Story GENRE</b>
SUB-CODES:
a. <b>success story</b>
b. <b>subsuming breaches</b> (does audience affect this?)
c. <b>problems</b> that aren't solved
<b>1. CODE: Story CONTENT</b> (Journey Thru Teaching)
SUB-CODES:
<i>(4) Journey Through Teaching</i>
a. <b>tough at times</b>
b. <b>YAN as catalyst</b> for growth
c. <b>C's classroom as successful</b> , good place for growth

d. <b>comfortable</b> in classroom
e. <b>ready</b> to take on more, grow more, <b>learn more</b>
<b>4. CODE: BREACHES</b> (and how they are handled)
SUB-CODES:
a. <b>Everyday Breaches</b>
b. <b>YAN</b>
<b>5. CODE: CO-AUTHORS</b>
SUB-CODES:
<i>(1) C</i>
a. <b>Intertwined Collaboration</b>
b. <b>Reframing</b>
c. <b>Multiple Perspectives</b> (Alternative and/or Supporting)
d. <b>Tangible Support</b>
<i>(2) J and A</i>
a. <b>opportunities to use story</b> to respond
b. <b>opportunities to use style</b> to respond
c. opportunities to reflect on experience and <b>formalize story</b>
<i>(3) US</i>
a. <b>figuring it out together</b>
b. <b>assessments</b>
c. <b>questions</b>
d. <b>opportunities to formalize story</b>
<b>6. CODE: STORY UNDER CONSTRUCTION</b>
SUB-CODES:
a. <b>formalizing the story</b>
b. <b>using the story</b>

## APPENDIX G

### Support Available in Mentor Relationship Across Data Sources

Data Source	References to shared planning, support, and decision-making	Category of Support	Type of Support	Examples
Triad 1 August 16 Content Log	0			
Seminar 2 August 17 Content Log	1	Conceptual  Practical	Classroom Management Routines	“I mean, <b>she</b> has a successful classroom, so why invent the wheel.”
Seminar 3 August 24	0			
Seminar 4 August 31 Content Log	5	Practical	<p>Cayla offers to help Kathleen create a Seating Chart</p> <p>Help deciding what content to prioritize</p> <p>Deciding to do anticipation guide together</p> <p>Two stories about last year’s students and how they engaged with material</p>	“I’m finding that I have, like the classes that <b>we</b> teach, it’s a really wide range of levels and abilities, and motivation and interest, and so, kind of like learning how to assess in different classes and how much time things are going to take in different classes, and like what kind of, especially language needs they have, I think that’s something?”
Triad 2 September 12 Content Log	9	Practical	<p>Cayla has knowledge of Kathleen’s tensions in YAN, and what Kathleen is confused about</p> <p>Cayla asks Kathleen questions to help her think through possibilities for why students</p>	Cayla asks Kathleen, in response to her complaint that students haven’t been doing the reading, “Do you think they are really tired? Or are they not engaged in the reading?”

			might be responding in particular ways	Cayla suggests that Kathleen can have students pull out excerpts from the book that exemplify these themes of community, so that they don't have to "do all the work for students."
			Cayla shares two Instructional Ideas, one based on something she has done in the past	
			Cayla offers to help Kathleen create a Seating Chart	Cayla tells Kathleen that she will help her set up a seating chart to help with student engagement.
			Cayla offers to talk to students about behavior	
Seminar 5 September 22 Content Log	8	Practical	Kathleen refers to things that "we" did in the classroom five times	Kathleen said, "Oh, I know which student have computers and which don't, we asked them that on the first day."
			Cayla and Kathleen asked students about their access to computers on the first day.	Kathleen said, "We had the whole gamut. We had to tell some parents their kids were failing and a huge disruption, and some parents, we got to tell them their kids were wonderful. Cayla did a great job of making it a positive experience, making it really instructive."
			Cayla supported Kathleen during Parent-Teacher conferences, and had parents sign forms right away.	
			Cayla gave Kathleen an introductory instructional idea to get to know students: Bio-Bags	
Seminar 5 September 28 Content Log	12	Conceptual	Kathleen said that she talked to Cayla about the TPA and how she could accomplish it.	Kathleen says, "This is something I've been thinking about, this is something Cayla and I have been talking about a lot, how, as a new teacher the tendency is to go content and not do skills because it's so much harder to do skills?:"
		Practical	They also discussed the TPA rubrics, and rubrics in general.	
			Kathleen and Cayla are co-teaching.	Kathleen says, "Well, and that's something that C and I were talking about too, that you don't really know if a rubric doesn't work until you try it."
			Kathleen shared that Cayla discussed how her own tendency in the beginning of her teaching career was to focus on content rather than skills.	K says her favorite of Cayla's rules is her bathroom

			<p>Kathleen used a test Cayla had designed; Cayla described why she thought it was an effective measure.</p> <p>Kathleen is using Cayla's bathroom rules</p> <p>Cayla shares some students' reading levels with Kathleen to help her to plan.</p> <p>Cayla has been watching Kathleen teach and providing detailed feedback.</p>	<p>rules, "You get 3 passes for the end of the semester. If you have any at the end of the semester, you get extra credit. If you don't have a pass, you don't leave – whether you get one from your friend, you buy one for a dollar. But if you don't have a pass, you don't leave. And it's so easy.:</p> <p>Kathleen says, "I have a binder of observation notes, she prints them out for me."</p>
Blog Post 1 September 14	2	Practical	<p>Kathleen and Cayla discuss shared frustrations.</p> <p>Kathleen and Cayla discuss instructional possibilities.</p>	<p>Kathleen says, "We have been dealing with a student the past few days who has spun a pretty incredible string of lies as excuses to leave the classroom. It is almost pathological. Cayla and I are both incredibly frustrated with this student, and I am feeling the disappointment of really and truly losing trust in a student. It is a challenge to continue to interact with him as though he had not attempted to manipulate and take advantage of us. I am really curious to learn more about what is going on with this student."</p>
Blog Post 2 September 26	1	Practical	<p>Kathleen and Cayla brainstormed instructional ideas.</p>	<p>"I had a successful lesson with my YAN - much more engagement thanks to some successful brainstorming with Casey and some creative use of a silent discussion."</p>
Blog Post 3 October 5	0			
Mid-Semester Assessment Meeting	20	Conceptual Practical	<p>Cayla knows what is going on in YAN with the Graffiti Walls. She tells her that everyone in the class paid attention when Kathleen</p>	<p>Cayla tells Kathleen that, while she was talking, some of the boys were trying to hide in their clothing, that they were trying to sink down, and they knew that this</p>

October 11	talked about it.	was a problem, and she says that the seating charts worked well.	
	Cayla affirms her evaluation of students' behavior on the graffiti wall as not okay.	Kathleen says, "Well and Cayla always talks about, like, remembering what the goals are in terms of prioritizing, so, so that's helped a lot."	
	Cayla and Kathleen brainstorm ideas for the rest of the semester with YAN.		
	Cayla tells Kathleen to always to prioritize large instructional goals.	Kathleen says, "I was bummed Joel wasn't here, cause like, I feel like he might have been one of the students who wrote obscenities on the graffiti wall)." Cayla responds, "Oh really?" Cayla tells Kathleen, "Well you could always pull aside some of the ones that weren't here, and you could say like, just say FYI, like, this is what I'm seeing, and I gave the same talk to everyone, and I want to do more of this, but if it's not going to work, so this is kind of your last chance, like, I just want you to be aware of it."	
	Cayla gives Kathleen Information about how last year's students interacted with an activity.		
	Cayla offers Kathleen alternative perspectives on students.		
	Cayla offers Kathleen classroom management support, providing an example script of what to say to a student.		
	Cayla supports Kathleen in figuring out books for book club.		
Mid-Semester Interview with Kathleen October 12	Conceptual  Practical	Kathleen shares that she discusses what's happening in classroom most with Cayla.  Kathleen says that Cayla looks for Kathleen's goals when she observes her.  Kathleen says that Cayla always says, "You just have to try."	Kathleen says, "Okay, yeah, I think C's obviously the biggest voice, and she's the one I talk to like most consistently about what's happening in the classroom. And my whole kind of, the way I've been thinking about this time is that, is really about like putting myself in a successful classroom."  And that's a big thing that C keeps saying too. You just have to try and it's probably not going to work, and that's okay.

			<p>Kathleen uses Cayla’s powerpoints and other materials.</p> <p>Kathleen teaches some of Cayla’s lesson plans.</p> <p>Cayla is helping Kathleen videotape her teaching.</p>	<p>Kathleen says, “ Cayla had this, a big powerpoint that she created because her mentor was into graphic novels, cause I guess one of her mentors at CU teaches, like, that’s one of her research fields, like she had all of these resource materials and she wanted to try them out. SO she did that, is doing that, and then I’m taking it over basically.”</p> <p>Kathleen says, “Like it’s been cool, like cause Cayla and I for awhile, like she would teach the 7<sup>th</sup> hour and I would teach the 8<sup>th</sup> hour and I would teach her lesson. and that was cool too because I could, you know, it just feels different, and I could feel the flow of her lesson versus what I was designing.”</p>
Blog 4 October 13	1	Practical	Shared assessment of student behavior.	Kathleen writes, “While it was good to question my reaction, it was reassuring to feel the backing of Casey and other teachers in the department that I was correct in my assessment.”
Seminar 7 October 19 Content Log	8	Conceptual	Cayla helps Kathleen contact parents.	Kathleen says, It’s something that C and I talked about, it’s hard when you first start teaching that you focus on content rather than skills – and obviously content is important, but I think that spending some time thinking about the skills really helps with academic language.”
		Practical	Cayla helps Kathleen connect her to resources, like ELL files.	
			Cayla helps Kathleen conceptualize and work on TPA.	
			Cayla talks to Kathleen about focusing on skills vs. content.	
			Cayla provides Kathleen with ideas for Instructional tools, discussion roles.	Kathleen says, “When we gave 9 <sup>th</sup> graders roles, we did a whole day of roles where, because they were having trouble – we do a ton of group work in that class – we had a couple classes that had really dysfunctional groups, so we did a whole day of role-playing. It was hilarious, but it worked pretty well.”

Blog Post 5 October 26	3	Practical	<p>Cayla supports Kathleen her resources and presence.</p> <p>Cayla helped Kathleen to be seen as an authority.</p> <p>Cayla and Kathleen created that system together.</p>	<p>Kathleen writes, “I think that Casey and I have created a climate where I am fully supported, and feel like I have a resource there with me, but I am also able to be a full authority in the room.”</p>
Blog Post 6 November 1	1	Practical	<p>Kathleen credits Cayla with offering her the logistical support to take risks and try instructional ideas.</p>	<p>Kathleen writes, “I think that Casey and I have created a climate where I am fully supported, and feel like I have a resource there with me, but I am also able to be a full authority in the room.”</p>
Lesson Debrief: K/C November 1	28	<p>Conceptual</p> <p>Practical</p>	<p>Cayla shares ideas in class with students to support Kathleen’s lesson.</p> <p>Cayla positively assesses Kathleen’s lesson.</p> <p>Cayla offers ideas about what books students should read, based on knowledge of students such as reading level, challenge, group dynamics, as Kathleen is putting students into literature circle groups.</p> <p>Cayla asks Kathleen for her opinion, and treats her as colleague.</p>	<p>Cayla mentions that she thinks that would be a good book for that student because it would be challenging. K agrees, with an “mm hmm.”</p> <p>Cayla says, “I think Eric should do something...” There is a pause. Kathleen jumps in with, “Harder?” Cayla says, “harder.”</p>
Lesson Debrief: K/C November 9	Multiple	Conceptual	<p>Cayla assesses interest and engagement in a lesson. Provides insight into one student’s comments during class.</p>	<p>Cayla says yeah, they were way engaged and interest is really high in all their books. And even a student (who hasn’t read) was asking his group, so what’s going on?</p>
Lesson Debrief: K/M November 10	10	Practical	<p>Cayla agrees with Kathleen’s instructional timing decisions</p> <p>Cayla offers Kathleen a classroom management idea: Writing the class a letter.</p>	<p>Kathleen shares that she wrote a letter to the class, and goes to look for it. Her and Cayla wrote it because, “we were so frustrated with them,” Kathleen says She shares it with me and says it was a compilation of all the stuff her and Cayla have been talking about. I say,</p>

			<p>Cayla shares instructional tools, including a past power point, ideas from her own mentor, the idea to cut up a chapter, and information she noticed from last year when she taught the course.</p> <p>Kathleen notes that the way Cayla talks to students about choosing books, and finding love of reading has shaped how she does similar talks.</p> <p>Kathleen uses Cayla’s independent reading program.</p>	<p>“That is really creative!” Kathleen says, “I know, it was Cayla’s idea.”</p> <p>Kathleen says, “So that powerpoint I reviewed? Um, we spent a whole 90 minutes going over that, because Cayla noticed last year when they did this that they couldn’t read graphic novels. Not anybody.”</p> <p>Kathleen says, “The summaries, um, are something that Cayla’s mentor, that’s written books about graphic novels, suggested, because I guess it helps them think about those stylistic choices.”</p> <p>Kathleen says, “But um, so we definitely have kids who you know have said like ‘Miss, I’ve never read a book before, I don’t know how to find a book,’ and I think a lot of that comes too, from Cayla teaching Young Adult Novels for so long where the whole thing is like, ‘Listen if you don’t like it, pick another one.’”</p>
Seminar 9 November 16 Content Log	2	Practical	<p>Cayla offers tangible support to Kathleen when a student tried to leave the classroom.</p> <p>Cayla offers Kathleen knowledge about students.</p>	<p>Kathleen says, “like they’re still completely out of control, but it wasn’t so awful. Like I have this girl today – one of the girls who wasn’t there – she said today, well she told Cayla – they just had this big research project due, 110 points summative, so it’s a huge project, and she, they had extra time to work on it today, and she refused – she said no, I want to take a zero.”</p>
Blog Post 7 November 17	0			
Seminar 10 November 30 Content Log	0			

Talking to Pre-service Teachers November 30	Multiple	<p>Cayla shared an overarching plan for entire semester with Kathleen before student teaching began.</p> <p>Kathleen taught some of Cayla’s lessons.</p> <p>Kathleen used Cayla’s classroom management routine.</p> <p>Kathleen felt that she had lots of resources to pull from in Cayla’s classroom.</p> <p>Kathleen felt generally supported in Cayla’s classroom.</p>	<p>Kathleen tells the pre-service teachers, “And then if you can meet with your CT and talk about what the overarching plan for what each book is or each unit you’re doing; it’s helpful to have an idea.”</p> <p>Kathleen says, “While I think designing is really important, I also think it’s good to teach your CTs lessons and see what they feel like.”</p> <p>Kathleen says, “But I would recommend sticking with the vibe your CT has because otherwise I think it does get confusing for the students, especially since you’re going in mid-year.</p> <p>Kathleen says, “So I did a lot of my own stuff, but I had a lot of resources to pull to contribute to what I was designing, so I really encourage you to do that too.”</p>
Final Interview: K/C December 8	Multiple	<p>Cayla told Kathleen about a concept that students didn’t get last year, so she could plan in light of it.</p> <p>Cayla and Kathleen talked through grading decisions as co-teachers.</p> <p>Kathleen and Cayla have tried lots of ideas together over the course of the semester.</p>	<p>Cayla says, “Um, and we’ve tried so many different ways, you know, bribery through um, through you know punishment, through changing seats and looking at their grades and contacting home and just nothing seems to really hold any value for many of them, and a number of them are gonna fail and so, second semester, we’re hoping that the reality of that you can’t just sit here and goof off and um, think that you’re still gonna pass this class, it’s not going to happen, so next semester should be better.”</p>