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JAEPL, Vol. 16, Winter 2010-2011

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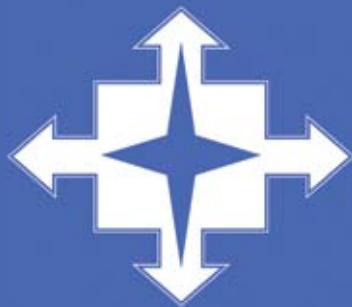
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JAEPL



The Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning

AEPL Conference Speaker: Imagination and Representation in Graphic Narratives
Louann Reid

Transforming Text: Finding the Poem Within
Deborah F. Carrington and Chapman Hood Frazier

Wise Teaching to Students' Kinesthetic Intelligence: The Teacher as Surrogate, Guru, Foreshadower, Choreographer, or Expeditionist
Sara K. Schneider

Nurturing Difference: The Autistic Student in Professional Writing Programs
Andrea Greenbaum

The Forgiveness Classroom: Bringing Together Students from Both Sides of the Walls through Deep Listening
Ruth Henderson

Writing as an Altered State of Consciousness: Process, Pedagogy, and Spirituality
Julie Kearney

It's Complicated: Using Facebook to Create Emotional Connections in Student-Professor Relationships
Anthony T. Atkins

Weaving a Song of Self
JoAnne Katzmarek

Out of the Box: Taking the Great Leap of Being
Bruce Novak

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JAEPL

The Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning (AEPL), an official assembly of the National Council of Teachers of English, is open to all those interested in extending the frontiers of teaching and learning beyond the traditional disciplines and methodologies.

The purposes of AEPL, therefore, are to provide a common ground for theorists, researchers, and practitioners to explore ideas to participate in relevant programs and projects; to integrate these efforts with others in related disciplines; to keep abreast of activities along these lines of inquiry; and to promote scholarship on and publication of these activities.

The *Journal of the Assembly for Expanded Perspectives on Learning*, JAEPL, also provides a forum to encourage research, theory, and classroom practices involving expanded concepts of language. It contributes to a sense of community in which scholars and educators from pre-school through the university exchange points of view and cutting-edge approaches to teaching and learning. JAEPL is especially interested in helping those teachers who experiment with new strategies for learning to share their practices and confirm their validity through publication in professional journals.

Topics of interest include but are not limited to:

- Aesthetic, emotional & moral intelligences
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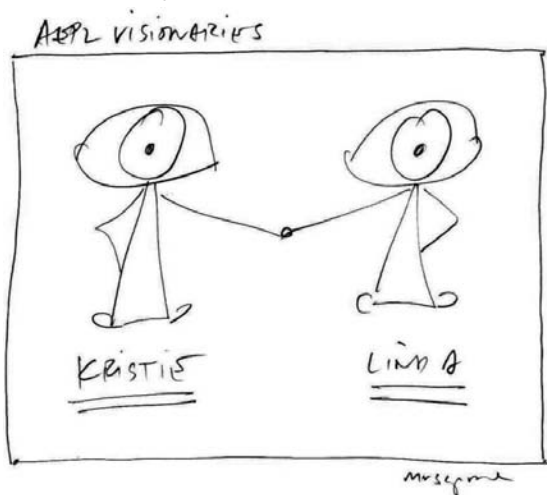
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EDITORS' MESSAGE

A deceptively cheerful morning sun breaks through the mid-November gloom that has been hovering over Pennsylvania and Illinois for the past few days. The frost melts on the mums, but several clumps have already bowed to the on-coming change of seasons. A proprietary deer strolls through a neighbor's yard, as a wickedly chill wind kicks up. Maybe later, when the sun climbs to more distant heights, the leaves that neither of us has yet raked up in our respective yards will just blow away.

We are nearing the final stages of preparation for this issue of *JAEPL*.

A steep challenge rises before us, but it no longer seems Sisyphean. After checking over the galleys that our first issue's writers have promptly returned, we know we will be able to follow Peter Elbow's fine guest editing of Volume 15 with an equally strong Volume 16. For that, we feel equal measures of gratitude and excitement. The writers in this issue have given *JAEPL* readers their best.



On the other hand, we wonder how well we will manage to match the great strides of our predecessors, Kristie Fleckenstein and Linda Calendrillo. They turned *JAEPL* into a fine NCTE-affiliate journal, creating an innovative space for well-established and emerging scholars alike to explore the values of AEPL in their intellectual work. Consequently, after 11 years under Kristie's and Linda's guidance, *JAEPL* has earned a solid reputation for advancing our ongoing discussions about

teaching and learning in many productive directions. We suspect that ultimately, Laurence Musgrove's wonderfully whimsical cartoon pays tribute to Kristie and Linda more eloquently than we can. Indeed, we may return more than once to Musgrove's sense of fun and art to say what we can't.

But as editors who follow in the wake of such impressive achievement, we are optimistic. The summer 2011 AEPL conference in Colorado has already inspired us. Its theme—"Literacy for Love and Wisdom: Being the Book and Being the Change"—closely resonates with the writers whose work appears in these pages.

Louann Reid's superb keynote presentation to the 2010 conference aptly opens this issue. Her discussion of graphic narratives shows us how our students can "be the book" by applying their own imagination and images to the printed page, becoming in effect, visual rhetoricians as well as visual thinkers. Reid gives us ample reason to enlarge and usefully complicate our definitions of literacy in the process. Following closely upon Reid's claims, Deborah Carrington and Chapman Hood Frazier demonstrate ways in which working with multimodal representations of texts enable teachers to recon-

ceive approaches to teaching poetry. Carrington and Frazer assert that students need to become poets first, personalizing the language and images of the texts they enjoy and the texts we assign, to discover richer, multiple meanings.

Sara Schneider's essay on tapping into students' kinesthetic intelligence expands upon what the preceding authors share with us. Her ground-breaking investigation of incorporating movement into teaching persuades us that this is another important way to accommodate students' various learning styles. Kinesthetic methods are not as intimidating to bring into our classrooms as we might think.

Meanwhile, Andrea Greenbaum tells us that accommodating learning styles must include a heightened awareness of autistic students, whose numbers are increasing in post-secondary institutions everywhere. She draws upon her own compassionate experience with such a student to provide basic considerations that we all must heed.

At the same time, Ruth Henderson's essay on the "Forgiveness Classroom" takes the themes of compassion, love, and wisdom to even greater heights, as she recounts the work she has done to bring incarcerated sex offenders and college students into dialogue. The result is an intensely moving and theoretically profound discussion that readers of *JAEPL* will cherish for years.

Julie Kearney's provocative argument to regard writing as an altered state of consciousness comes next, appropriately. Her claim that such an altered state enables students to make connections to spirituality will stimulate much thoughtful response.

In an equally provocative vein, Anthony Atkins asserts that instructors' participation in social networking sites—Facebook, in particular—can allow them to establish emotional connections with students, offsetting tensions that inevitably arise due to institutional concerns over gender issues. JoAnne Katzmarek also explores how online interaction facilitates relationship building in her essay on a teacher preparation course. A very diverse group of professionals come together in cyberspace to talk about published teaching narratives. Through their engagement in this collaborative experience, they gain valuable insights about their own stories.

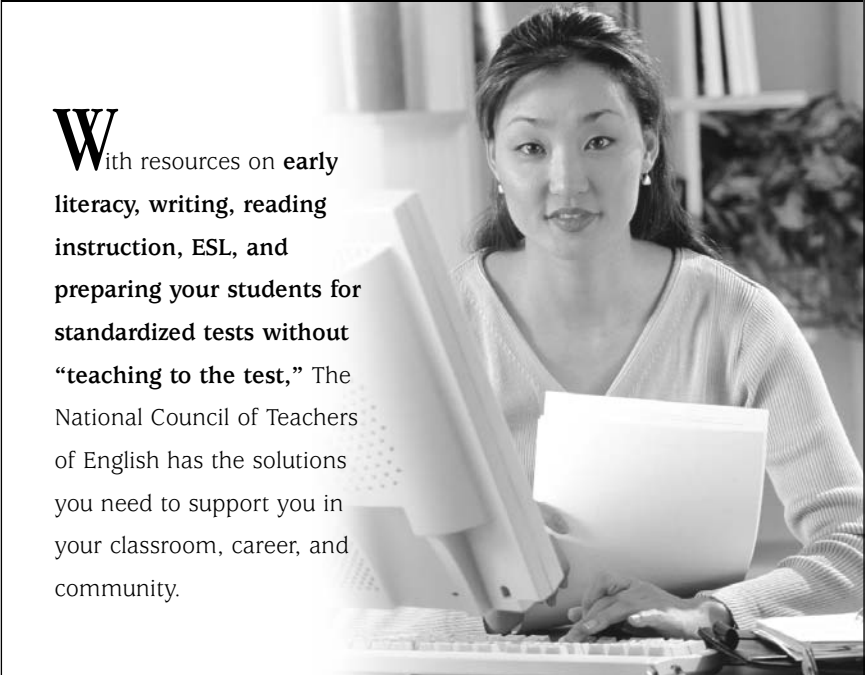
Seasoned *JAEPL* readers will notice as well that this issue includes a few new features. In addition to at least one lead article from a conference keynote speaker each year, a column—"Out of the Box"—will invite respected scholars to comment on how an occasion of innovative and sometimes radical thinking influenced their professional development. Bruce Novak, co-coordinator of the 2011 AEPL conference, writes the inaugural contribution. Furthermore, book review editor Judith Halden-Sullivan now introduces reviewers with her thoughtful opening remarks.

Readers will notice, too, that we have redesigned the cover and *JAEPL* logo—and that our new publisher, Parlor Press, lets us use a dash of color. The logo represents the out-of-box thinking that characterizes AEPL. The simple star at its core represents that scintilla of creativity that keeps teaching fresh and inventive.

We are thrilled to serve an Assembly that continues to thrive, both in its early summer conferences and in its strong presence at NCTE and CCCC. If you are reading this journal for the first time but haven't joined us as members, please take a moment to fill out and mail the form in our back pages. You'll be very happy you did. We can bear ready witness that AEPL is a warm, energetic group of professionals whose firm commitment to teaching and learning will surely revitalize you.

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Imagination and Representation in Graphic Novels

Louann Reid*

Author's note: Converting my AEPL presentation to an article required a few changes in structure. In addition, I incorporated material from the handouts and answers to questions that audience members raised. During the presentation, participants examined excerpts from graphic narratives, which are not included here. However, the activities are described for those who would like to find the images to adapt the activities for a class.

A 2004 *New Yorker* cartoon by Bruce Eric Kaplan shows a couple walking past a bookstore window. Noticing the books on display, one person says to the other, "Now I have to start pretending I like graphic novels, too?"

I don't know how many of you feel this way, but if you do you are not alone. Although graphic novels are increasingly popular in and out of school and more school and public libraries stock them, many teachers, parents, and students are still skeptical about their value.

As a firm believer in the power of visual thinking and the force of narrative, I am intrigued by both the form and the content of graphic narratives. As an English educator, I am curious about the pedagogical potential of graphic narratives. And as an avid reader, I am captivated by the stories that, according to their authors, can be told only in this form.

For the past five years or so, I have been interested in two major questions: What are the affordances of these multimodal texts? What are the pedagogical possibilities or, what can we as teachers do with graphic novels that we can't do without them? First, I would like to discuss how graphic narratives call on the reader's imagination through various means of representation. This is only one aspect of how graphic narratives "work," but I think it is an essential aspect for understanding the pedagogical potential of such texts.

Defining the Terms

Graphic Narrative

When I initially heard people recommending graphic novels, I was appalled. We already have too much graphic violence, graphic sex, and graphic language in our popular culture; did we need any more? Of course, you all know I was mistaken. Graphic novels may include graphic violence, sex, and language, but they are not defined by those elements. In fact, some are not at all graphic in those ways.

What, then, is a graphic novel? A graphic novel is a book-length story told in the medium of comics. It can be a collection of comic strips, a serialized story, or a continuous story. *Graphic novel* applies to all genres—fiction, nonfiction, memoir, mystery, fantasy,

* Louann Reid—keynote speaker at AEPL's June 2010 conference—is Professor of English, specializing in English Education, at Colorado State University. She is past editor of *English Journal* and co-author of eight imaginative textbooks for secondary school students, including the *Daybooks of Critical Reading and Writing series*, which also incorporate lessons on teaching visual texts. She has published several articles and chapters, co-edited two collections for teachers, and given more than 150 presentations in the US and internationally. She is currently working on a book on teaching graphic novels.

science, and so forth. Because “novel” implies fiction, some people—and I am one of them—prefer the term *graphic narrative* as a broader, more accurate label (Chute; Chute and DeKoven). Scott McCloud suggests that these works are created for a variety of purposes when he defines comics as “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in a deliberate sequence intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer” (9).

When discussing book-length works with teachers and colleagues, I sometimes use the term “graphic novel” because it is familiar. Comics scholar Paul Gravett acknowledges that the term has caught on, but he says *graphic novel* is a misnomer, invented “in an effort to overcome the stigmas of humor and childishness of the word ‘comics’” (8).

Nonetheless, I am uncomfortable calling a work a novel when it clearly is not. For example, both volumes of *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi, both volumes of *Maus* by Art Spiegelman, and *Fun Home* by Alison Bechdel are terrific book-length narratives told in the medium of comics, but they are not novels. They are autobiographical texts. Satrapi and Bechdel recount traumatic events from their childhood and young adult years. Spiegelman tells the story of his relationship with his father, a Holocaust survivor who lived in Poland during WWII. How can a self-respecting English teacher call these *novels* when they are nonfiction, based on the people and events of the authors’ remembered lives? Various terms have been proposed, such as *autobiographics* (Gilmore), *autographics* (Whitlock), and *graphic memoirs* (Versaci). I tend to like *graphic memoir* for works such as these because *graphic* is familiar and *memoir* is accurate.

Whatever we call these texts, they are worthy of our attention as readers and teachers. Martin Pedersen noted: “In 1990, Art Spiegelman won the Pulitzer Prize for *Maus*, signaling to the publishing mainstream what aficionados of the graphic novel had long known: comics are a medium capable of exploring themes every bit as serious as those studied by any prose novel” (32). To fully explore their pedagogical potential, we need to know how they explore serious themes and how they “convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer” (McCloud); in short, how they work.

Imagination

When I introduced graphic narratives in a graduate class for pre-service teachers, most students were intrigued by the novelty of taking comics seriously. One, however, was adamant that comics were a debased form of literature that should never be used in an educational setting. His major objection was that reading graphic narratives was too easy because students would not need to use their imaginations. Everything they needed to understand the story was there in front of them in the words and pictures. I was amazed by this reaction and doubt that I provided a persuasive—or thoughtful—response on the spot.

With the benefit of time and research, I know what I would say now. If we define *imagination* narrowly as *visualization* then perhaps he had a point. However, imagination is not merely visualization. Webster’s definition suggests that it is the “act or power of forming a mental image of something not present to the senses or never before wholly perceived in reality” (online). Maxine Greene, in a lecture on aesthetic education, emphasizes the importance of the arts—music, dance, theater, visual arts, and so forth—in helping us

How do words and images work together to create meaning?

1. Without telling students the title or source of the text, I first distribute just the words. I ask students two questions: Who are the speakers? What is the subject of the story this comes from? In discussion, I urge students to explain their thinking, giving reasons for their inferences.
2. Next, I distribute a photocopy of the page with the speech boxes empty and ask students to make inferences about the characters and their relationships. I also ask them to attempt to place the words in their original places.
3. Finally I give students a copy of the original page. Depending on how much time we have and how much I think the students already know, I might ask about:
 - a. What was easy and what was hard in matching words and images
 - b. How much the images helped them understand the subject
 - c. What they still had to imagine and what roles, if any, the gutters played

experience “illusioned worlds, created worlds brought into being by movement, sound, dialogue, color and line” (69). In another lecture, she associates imagination with perception and stresses the inventive and transformative powers of imagination:

The more we can actively and interestedly perceive, you see, the wider becomes the field on which our imaginations can work. It is imagination that enables us to reach beyond, to open up those possibilities. Imagination invents, you realize; it discloses alternative realities. . . . If it were not for imagination, we could not form . . . mental images of what-is-not where actual existence is concerned. Our minds would lack the power to mold experience into something new. (74)

Graphic narratives require our full engagement—perceiving, imagining, interpreting—to make sense of the experience of the text and to move into the world the author creates.

One obvious site for the exercise of imagination is the space between panels, the gutter. In reading among the panels, readers must mentally provide the transitions that would complete the action from one image or set of images to the next. Look at any page of a graphic narrative or even any comic strip to see what I mean.

Another site for engagement is the image itself. How the author or artist (and sometimes the author is the artist) has decided to represent ideas both inspires our imaginative constructions and constrains them. We can demonstrate this idea to students with a close reading activity. I like to use “The Bicycle” from *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (Satrapi 10). The sequence I use is in the shaded sidebar, above.

Representation

The *Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* explains that *representation* is,

Generally speaking, the use of one thing to stand for another through some signifying medium. A representation of an event is not the event itself but rather a statement about or rendition of that event. An artistic representation is an image or likeness of something achieved through a medium such as language, paint, stone, film, etc. (Murfyn and Ray 338).

In graphic narratives, the images do not merely signify, they also suggest, and those suggestions are at the heart of our reading. Rocco Versaci echoes Maxine Greene: in reading graphic narratives “we enter into an authored representation of the world” (5).

You can see this concept vividly realized in images from the wordless graphic narrative, *The Arrival*, by Australian author Shaun Tan (see Figure 1, below). *The Arrival* tells the story of a man who leaves his wife and child, hoping to make a life for them in a new place. Alone and unable to speak the language, the immigrant arrives in a spectacular yet bewildering place.

“Harbour,” a two-page spread near the beginning of the book, gives the reader a sense of the mystery such a place might present. On his website, Tan explains the thinking behind the art of *The Arrival*:

I am often searching in each image for things that are odd enough to invite a high degree of personal interpretation, and still maintain a ring of truth. The experience of many immigrants actually draws an interesting parallel with the creative and critical way of looking I try to follow as an artist. There is a similar kind of search for meaning, sense and identity in an environment that can be alternately transparent and opaque, sensible and confounding, but always open to re-assessment. (par.18)



Figure 1: “Harbour,” from www.shauntan.net

Not only is this image an example of Versaci’s “authored representation of the world,” it is also an example of how graphic narratives engage and estrange through their ideas and their artifice. We are aware of the construction of the story at the same time that we are immersed in it. Versaci emphasizes that “one can never completely ‘escape’ into a comic book because its form—impressionistic illustrations of people, places, and things—reminds us at every turn (or panel) that what we are experiencing is a representation” (6).

The tension between imagination and representation, which readers may experience only subconsciously, is one of the features of visual thinking that we need to teach

if students are to effectively navigate the 21st century world. A set of photographs is available online that reinforces the point that representations can be manipulated and do not necessarily reproduce what we might call reality ([http://www.pps.k12.or.us/schoolsc/pages/binnsmead/student/Hoax/hoax_test/Hoax %20Photo%20Test.htm](http://www.pps.k12.or.us/schoolsc/pages/binnsmead/student/Hoax/hoax_test/Hoax%20Photo%20Test.htm)).

The Value of Graphic Narratives in Schools

Although graphic novels are increasingly popular with readers, librarians, and teachers, the value of such texts in K-12 classrooms is still disputed. Major arguments are variations of the same complaint: they are too easy ("picture books are for kids"); the highest form of literary achievement is a print-only text. Critics claim that using graphic narratives dumbs down the curriculum, wastes valuable academic time, and does not make readers use their imaginations. I think the counterarguments are stronger, however, and I will spend more time on those.

Graphic Narratives Invite Readers into Literacy Habits

Literacy, as we know, is much more than just reading. James Paul Gee argues that even if we only consider print, there are multiple literacies:

in the sense that the legal literacy needed for reading law books is not the same as the literacy needed for reading physics texts or superhero comic books. And we should not be too quick to dismiss the latter form of literacy. Many a superhero comic is replete with post-Freudian irony of a sort that would make a modern literary critic's heart beat fast and confuse any otherwise normal adult. (14)

Furthermore, literacy requires not only the ability to make meaning of a text but also the abilities to create and communicate meanings in whatever form is necessary for an audience. When we consider our need to read images and multimodal texts and the multiple forms for communicating meaning such as tweets, blogs, and podcasts, as well as print and visual texts, we can see the complexity of the concept of literacy.

The content and the form of comics can both challenge and engage readers. Gee refers specifically to superhero comics, but the topics available in critically acclaimed graphic narratives include traditional literary themes of identity, family relationships, overcoming adversity, and so on. Contemporary graphic narratives also address some of the most serious issues of our time such as genocide and war, in addition to offering stories in favorite genres of fantasy, science fiction, mystery, and horror. There truly is something to attract every reader.

Comics can motivate some students to read or to read more. From a study of middle school boys in two settings, one a middle class school and the other a school receiving Title I funding, Ujiie and Krashen concluded: "For both groups, those who read more comic books did more pleasure reading, liked to read more, and tended to read more books" (53-54). While Ujiie and Krashen found that economics played little role in the beneficial effects of reading comics, they also found that gender mattered. Boys were far more likely than girls to express a preference for comics. More research needs to be done

regarding gender preferences if we want to understand the motivational and educational power of comics. The increased popularity of *manga*, films made from graphic novels, and a wider variety of topics that interest girls as well as boys since 1996 suggest that more girls may be reading graphic narratives than before.

Reading more is associated with vocabulary development. Cunningham and Stanovich argue that the amount and kinds of texts one reads affect vocabulary and knowledge acquisition. It may seem like common sense that more reading is better than less but few people would assume that reading comics would develop vocabulary. Yet comics do appear to be a beneficial kind of text because of the number of linguistically rare words they contain, the kind of words necessary to help readers enlarge and deepen word acquisition and knowledge. In a 1988 study, Hayes and Ahrens found that a sample of comics actually contained more rare words than a sample of adult books, children's books, and preschool books—and far more than are found in conversation (401). They conclude that “the time a child spends reading books, including comic books, is time lexically well-spent” (408). Contrary to what some critics assume, the vocabulary of some comics can be quite advanced. You can confirm this for yourself. If you skim the first five pages of *Persepolis*, for example, you will find the following words, many of which might be unfamiliar to the secondary school students who read this memoir: *obligatory, decadence, avant-garde, prophet, predecessors, Zarathustra, Norouz, and disciple*.

Including graphic narratives in school curricula has the potential to help students develop complex, multiple literacies. Shirley Brice Heath and Vikram Bhagat conclude a survey of research on comics with a strong recommendation:

In an era when literary texts and age-old literary themes enter new forms every year—from films to adventure games in arcades to hypertext—the visual and verbal powers of comics may be one of the most powerful and productive forms of preparation and motivation available to invite new readers into literacy habits. (591)

Graphic Narratives Enhance Visual Thinking

Since this essay was presented at a conference on visual thinking and learning, I probably do not need to make the case that visual thinking is important. But I do want to stress that we urgently need to teach skills and approaches for thinking visually and thinking about visual images. Not only is it now more economical and feasible for texts to include illustrations or other images, but it is also expected. Students who have grown up viewing a multitude of screens (television, video, computer, pocket games, and so forth) see print-only texts as dense, difficult, and downright boring. Students need to develop their print literacy, surely, but we educators have a responsibility to help them develop multiple literacies. In writing about how to teach and reach the millennial generation, Considine, Horton, and Moorman stress that “By privileging print, schools are failing to prepare students for tomorrow” (474).

Using graphic narratives can help students prepare for tomorrow. Texts are increasingly multimodal, so students need to be able to construct and comprehend messages that are presented in multiple modes. Modes are ways of making meaning and are usually identified as visual, gestural, spatial, linguistic, and audio. Graphic narratives employ several of these modes in combination.

What are the meaning-making modes in a multimodal text?

Visual—"use of line and white space, shading, perspective, distance, depth of field, and composition"

Gestural—"facial expression and body posture"

Spatial—"meanings of environmental and architectural space . . . layout of panels on the page and the relation between these panels through use of gutter space"

Linguistic—words

Audio—sounds

(taken from Jacobs 22)

When discussing multimodality, I ask readers to examine pages 11 and 12 of *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (Spiegelman). Artie visits his father and requests that he tell the story of his life in Poland during WWII so that he can draw a book about him. Reluctantly, his father agrees and begins his story. These two pages are rich in details to discuss—the number tattooed on the father's arm, the placement of characters in relation to each other, the size and shape of the panels, the use of texture and white space. As they read the pages two or three times, I ask students to select one or more modes and explain how they convey the story of the artist-narrator and his father. I give them a list of modes and explanations and encourage them to work in pairs or small groups. The handout looks like the shaded sidebar to the left.

Teaching with comics helps us show students how to identify the interplay of modes and understand ways they can employ multimodality in their own creation.

Teaching through and about Graphic Narratives

From reading graphic narratives, students can learn to comprehend, analyze, critique, and create multimodal texts that emphasize the visual. But the conventions of visual texts must be taught if we are to discuss and manipulate them. I like to begin with a series of activities that focus on the "larger picture," as it were, and reveal what readers already know about graphic texts. Then we move on to examine the craft or artifice of these works (please note the activities in the shaded boxes on these two pages).

Seeing "The Metamorphosis" from Multiple Perspectives

1. **Visualize from print.** I distribute the first three paragraphs of "The Metamorphosis" by Franz Kafka and ask readers to create mental images of Gregor Samsa and the setting of the story. After reading and re-reading the paragraphs, I ask readers to draw their mental images.
2. **Compare and contrast visualizations.** This has two parts. First, I ask readers to form pairs or small groups and share their visualizations if they feel comfortable doing so. Then, I distribute excerpts from three versions of this story that have been adapted as graphic narratives and ask that readers compare two of the four versions—three from artists and their drawing. It may be helpful for them to create a graphic organizer with

three columns: same, different, possible reason. See the Works Cited for bibliographic details of the versions I use (Kafka, adapted by Kuper 2003; Crumb and Mairowitz 1993; Sikoryak 2006).

3. **Evaluate representations.** In larger groups or a whole-class discussion, explore the questions: Which version best represents Kafka's story? Which requires the most imagination from the reader? Why?

Examining Craft: Visual Storytelling in the Wordless Graphic Narrative *The Arrival*

The pages of *The Arrival* are not numbered. For easier reference, I will indicate the page by its title, which is available on Tan's website: www.shauntan.net. The questions assume that readers are reading the story and not just viewing selected images. Of course, these questions can be adapted for any graphic narrative or for other pages in this one.

Pacing ("Ticket" and "Dinner")

- The basic layout in this book is twelve panels to a page, as in "Ticket." What story is told on this page? Describe the pace or speed of the story.
- "Dinner" is a full-page panel between two pages that use 12 panels. The page before "Dinner" shows preparations for the meal, and the page after shows the diners laughing, playing music, and enjoying themselves. How does "Dinner's" placement between these two pages affect the pace of the story? Why do you think Tan chose to use a full-page panel here?
- How does the writer's pacing (through the use of panels in this way) operate in concert or in counterpoint to the whole story?

Perspectives—angles and shots ("Inspection" and "The Market")

The images in comics panels can be discussed in the same way we discuss film shots and angles. For the purposes of this discussion, it is enough to know that film shots are described as long shot, medium shot, close-up and extreme close-up, and some of the angles are high, low, and eye level. If you are interested in finding connections between film and graphic narratives, you will want to know more. But you probably know enough to discuss how placement of items in the panel offers perspectives on the story.

"Inspection" uses several kinds of shots but no long shots. "The Market" employs a long shot viewed through the eyes of the main character. Discuss how these different kinds of shots convey mood and information.

Tone and Mood ("Flock")

- What effects are created by the type of panel borders used?
- What roles does lighting play in the effects of the images?
- What roles do color and contrast play?

Encouraging Experimentation: Creating Graphic Narratives

As readers construct visual texts, they not only develop their ability to communicate through images but they also increase their capacity to visualize from text, a strategy that proficient readers use effectively. This is a premise that Amy Vail, a pre-service teacher and graduate student at Colorado State University, wanted to try out as she considered using

film and graphic narratives to teach visual literacy. For part of her master's project, she adapted segments of *Twilight* (Meyer) as a graphic novel, using Comic Life software. (Less than a year later, *Twilight: The Graphic Novel, Volume 1* was published. No one consulted Amy on its preparation, but clearly she was not the only one who thought the book lent itself to graphic novel treatment.)

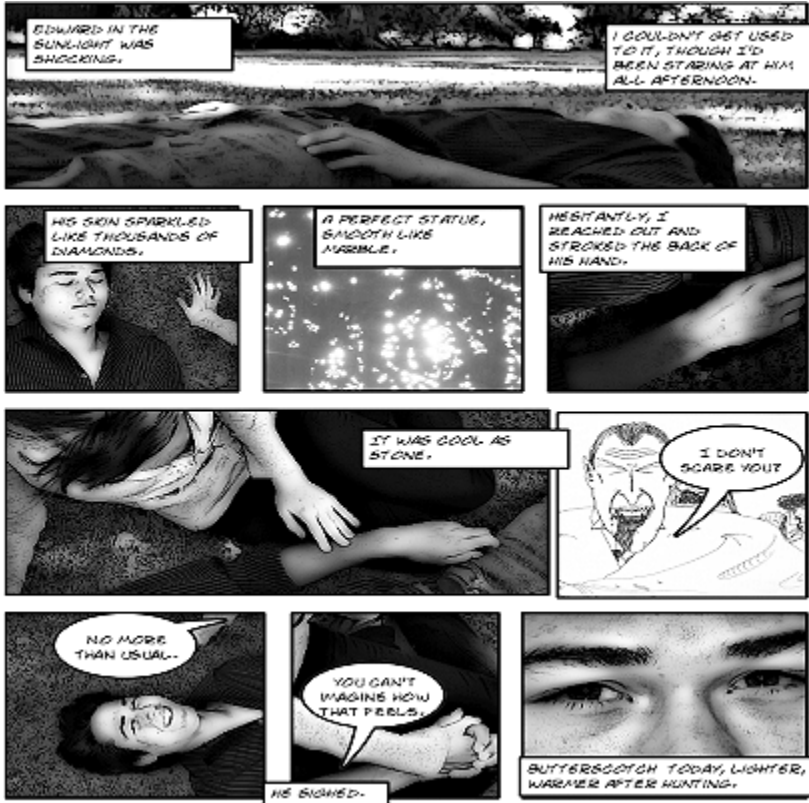


Figure 2: Amy's visual characterization

Amy's adaptation illustrates the points she wanted to teach about the literary, cinematic, and dramatic elements of a visual text, elements she took from *Reel Conversations* by Alan Teasley and Ann Wilder and from *Reading in the Dark* by John Golden. The following excerpts from her project are shared with her permission.

Literary Elements

Literary elements are those that we English teachers often discuss when analyzing print texts—characterization, setting, plot, and theme. Amy discusses her decisions regarding characterization:

This chapter includes a lot of inner monologue, which means I . . . had to pick . . . the essential words. I chose the first sentence . . . : 'Edward in the sunlight was shocking. I

couldn't get used to it, though I'd been staring at him all afternoon' (Meyer 260). The novel continues, 'His skin, white despite the faint flush from yesterday's hunting trip, literally sparkled, like thousands of tiny diamonds were embedded in the surface' (260). . . . I needed to condense the next sentence in order to convey the important information and yet leave room for the readers to create an understanding on their own. . . .

Cinematic Elements

Cinematic elements include pacing, shot types, angles, and so on. Amy explains the reasons for the images and layouts she used:



Figure 3: Amy's use of cinematic elements

When creating a comic, students could be given an opportunity to produce their text through cinematic shots. The 'exaggerated slowness,' for example, can be shown through clipped movements over multiple panels. McCloud explains how 'closure allows us to connect these moments and mentally construct a continuous, unified reality' (67). Stretching out the movement over multiple panels will help the reader see the slow gesture Meyer describes in her novel.

On page 8 of my comic, Edward's gestures are shown through specific images in order to convey his speed and his frustration with Bella. The center panel is a close-up

of Edward's face as he speaks. One panel shows him reaching through a medium shot of his arm, another panel shows him running out of the panel with an establishing shot of the field, one shows him standing through a shot of just his legs, and the final shows him climbing through a close-up of his feet on the tree. His body is disjointed and fractured on this page and these visual images help to convey the impact Bella has on Edward.

Dramatic Elements

Dramatic elements are those generally found in theatrical productions—lights, setting, costumes, props, and so forth. Any comments on make-up choices and positioning of the characters in relationship to each other:



Figure 4: Amy's representation of dramatic elements

Bella's make-up in the right top panel and the clothing of the two characters, as can be seen through the center panel, help to develop this sense of drama. Bella's lips are bright red and her eyes are lined with dark make-up. Her face is also similar in color to Edward's face, as they are looking at each other.

The positioning of the two characters in the center shows their clothing. The contrast between dark- and light-colored jeans and shirts combined with the way in which

their bodies are positioned helps to convey how the two characters fit together, almost like a puzzle.

Looking Ahead

Graphic narratives offer enormous potential for teaching and learning, for developing visual literacy, and for encouraging people to read. Supplementing a curriculum with visual narratives allows teachers to extend a reader's imagination rather than constrain it. Making sense of the craft of the work by examining the concept of representation can hone a reader's critical skills. And creating graphic narratives can not only reinforce a reader's understanding of how such texts work but prepare him or her to construct and communicate meanings in an increasingly visual future.

Give graphic narratives a try in your classroom; see how students respond. Perhaps, unlike the person in the *New Yorker* cartoon, you will not have to pretend to like graphic novels next time you see a display in your local bookstore.



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Transforming Text: Finding the Poem Within

Deborah F. Carrington & Chapman Hood Frazier*

“I hate poetry. It is confusing and I despise analyzing what a poem means. I don’t have any idea how I’ll ever teach it to a group of students.” Dustin, one of our pre-service teachers, expressed what many future teachers felt. When we mentioned poetry, many groaned. They had bad memories about how they learned poetry. They only recalled memorizing a list of poetic terms in elementary and middle school, analyzing poetry in high school and college, being tested on what the poet meant in English classes and on standardized tests. Often a class devoted to poetry is a discussion in which the teacher asks all the questions and eventually gives the answers. No wonder many teachers prefer teaching prose over poetry. They do not understand what Frances Kazemek and Pat Rigg advocate in *Enriching Our Lives*: “Poetry helps us understand ourselves and our world; it helps us see. . . in new ways. At the same time, poetry lifts our language. We find ourselves using language in new ways, in ways that are more vivid, more powerful, and more fun” (28).

We change teachers’ discomfort by moving from prose to poetry through a creative process that encourages students to read closely, read well, follow their personal thoughts and associations. It is imperative to provide creative, engaging activities for pre-service teachers, so they experience the power of imagination in a way that they can take to their students. We want our pre-service, pre-K to 12 language arts teachers to begin with language that is “safe” and explore its possibilities by making the words their own. By doing so, they begin to understand the power of language that Kazemek and Rigg mention.

By creating this link between prose and poetry, the process of working with a poem is demystified. Pre-service teachers find an opportunity to play with language and explore nuance. This approach incorporates what Louise Rosenblatt terms “aesthetic reading” or the “aesthetic stance,” which is a type of reading that encourages readers to read for pleasure. The reader and text act and are acted upon in a reciprocal process of meaning-making.

The purpose of this strategy, then, is to encourage students to work creatively with a page of prose text by transforming it into a poem. This shift in genre from what is a narrative or expository text to a poetic one illustrates how the seeds of one discourse may, in fact, be found in another. We find that pre-service teachers need to experience playing with text to understand the transformative heart of the poetic process. They learn the value of personal creativity and are better able to nurture it in students. Paul Torrance captures the transformation process in his 1992 definition of creativity: “Creativity is digging deeper. Creativity is looking twice. Creativity is crossing out mistakes” (5). Often, pre-service teachers use this poetic approach when designing their content units and find ways for students to transform informational texts, like content area textbooks, into an aesthetic expression.

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Selecting Text

The process is simple. First, we ask students to choose a key page of text from a selection of prose which they can relate to. Recently, as part of a presentation for teachers, we took single pages from a range of personal narratives, from Nikki Giovanni's *Grandfathers* to Sandra Cisenros' *A House on Mango Street* and asked them to select a page that spoke to them.

We often begin a session by having students discuss what texts are significant in their lives and why. In our Young Adult Literature class, for instance, we ask students to select a page from a novel they have read and found to be personally significant. When we worked with marketing students who were working on a campaign ad, they found a key page from a magazine to which they could relate. Having a choice is one of the cornerstones of the process since it creates an opportunity for ownership and is at the heart of the poetic process. Yet, since the words are not their own, the words can be moved, deleted, or highlighted without the gnawing sense the writer feels when she must sacrifice words for the good of the poem.

In keeping with reader response theory, we encourage students to respond aesthetically to the text and discover subtexts hidden within. *Knowledge-based reading processes* occur when a reader brings previous experience to the text to interpret it (Roe and Smith, 2005). Examples in this article demonstrate pre-service teachers' responses to the novel, *Speak*.

Yet there are other ways of applying the process. One middle school teacher suggested he would use the strategy when he taught *Beowulf*, to have students select a page that revealed something about a key character. Another teacher suggested having students all use the same page from a text to illustrate how the author creates "tone" or "mood" through his word choice.

The next step is for students to select what they consider the most important page from a reading. It might be a page that embodies a key theme from the story, or a page that has a character description they find appealing.

In the example below (Figure 1), a pre-service teacher chose a page from *Speak*. Wheel-chair bound because of an automobile accident that left her paralyzed from the waist down, she selected a page that revealed her feelings about her condition. Not only her image impresses, but the turn in the text itself from the initial phrase, "You are not good enough" to the illuminated, "Nothing is perfect, flaws are interesting."

These page selections often provide the backdrop for a powerful product, one that works both autobiographically as well as in response to the novel. With some students, we have experimented by having them select a page from the dictionary or a textbook that contains information they believe is important. But over the years, our favorite assignment is to begin the process by having them find a page that reveals something about who they are.

For an initial workshop, if time is short, we prepare photocopied pages from a variety of sources and ask participants to select a page that "speaks" to them in some way. By doing so, we still are encouraging the same close reading that this activity demands and promoting the close relationship with the text, a skill that is invaluable for the reader.

The activity, then, may have a variety of applications beyond the creation of a poem. If used as a pre-reading activity, students would be given a page of text from a story or

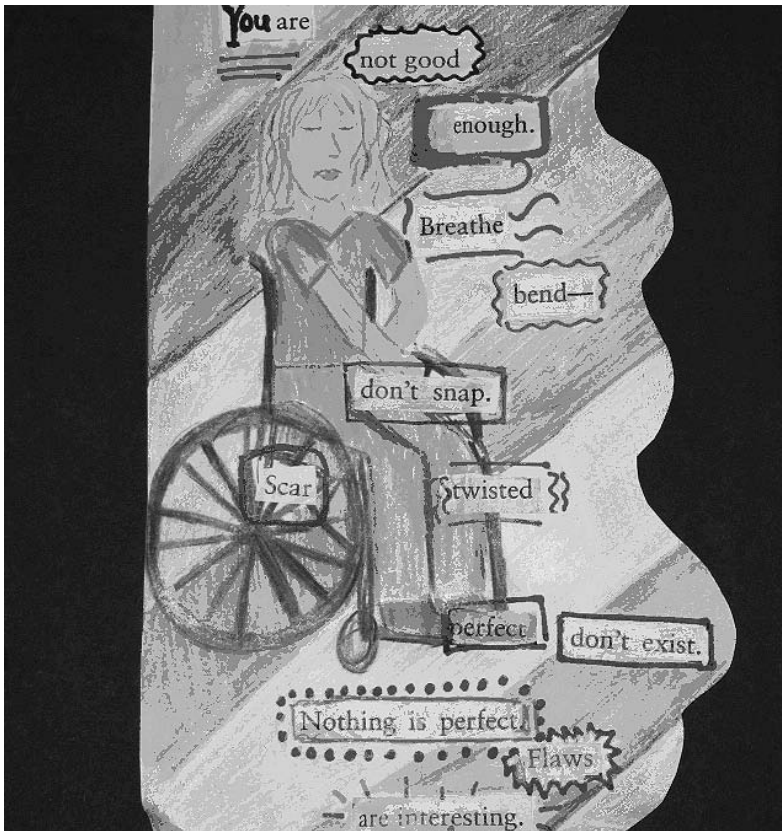


Figure 1: Personally illuminating a text

expository text they will be asked to read. By transforming the text, the students are able to explore their own response in a new and unusual way before reading the entire novel as a way to examine their own responses. We have used this process when pre-service teachers are writing their philosophies of education. We ask them to select a page of text from a primary source they relate to and bring it into class. Then, we ask them to complete the re-envisioning of text process with their page selection so their core beliefs surrounding teaching and learning emerge by using a combination of words and images.

Jeff Wilhelm discusses how an important part of the reading process is “front-loading,” or:

activating or building of background knowledge necessary to approach a particular text [including] the introduction of conceptual, procedural, or genre knowledge, i.e., knowledge about the content of a piece, about the strategies necessary to reading it, or about the text structure and the demands it places on the reader. (45)

This procedure, then, is one method that encourages the students to imaginatively approach a reading selection by encouraging them to intimately connect with a text. It could also

be used as a post-reading activity to amplify a feeling or connection that the student has to an author's text similar to what the student did in the example above. Possible themes for transformation are autobiography, culture or family tradition, key theme exploration, central conflict investigation, character development, or tone exploration.

Re-Seeing the Text

Once the students have selected a page, we photocopy it into either sixteen point font size or larger. It is important that students have a full page of text to work with, since it will allow them more flexibility with the artistic execution of the project.

Next, we present an overview of the process and show examples. One of the first examples we use that captures the re-envisioning of text and illustrates the kind of product we want the students or pre-service teachers to create is from Tom Phillips' novel, *The Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel*. Phillips has essentially transformed each page of the text into a visually new artistic product, one that actually creates a unique reading of the novel that is totally different from the original text. He explains his process on the book jacket:

I took a forgotten Victorian novel found by chance. I plundered, mined, and undermined its text to make it yield the ghosts of other possible stories, scenes, poems, erotic incidents and surrealist catastrophes which seemed to lurk within its wall of words. As I worked on it, I replaced the text I'd stripped away with visual images of all kinds. It began to tell and depict, amongst other memories, dreams and reflections, the sad story of Bill Toge, one of love's casualties. (1997)

Sometimes, we will read the above passage to the pre-service teachers, or we will explain what he did and show them selected pages from the text to illustrate the variety of methods he used transform the novel. Immediately, the participants grasp the concrete nature of the process and are excited about the possibility of working both with words and with visual art. We explain the purpose of the assignment, "to use the page to show something about who you are," and often show other examples that previous students have created. We place these examples in front of the room so the participants can come up and look more closely at how previous students have worked with the texts. Figure 2, below, completed by a graduate student in the English Education program, illustrates her revision of a page from *Speak* and illustrates her own internal conflict between home and school.

Now students are ready to reconstruct their page of text and need a variety of art media to highlight particular words or phrases. They can do this in a number of ways: by cutting out words with scissors or a craft knife, underlining or circling, coloring key phrases or words, painting over phrases with translucent colors. This stage is usually a thoughtful time as students consider the flow of meanings and the visual arrangement of text. Consequently, we often provide each student with at least a 9 x 12 inch piece of Bristol board or other sturdy paper to be used as a canvas or back drop for their visual representations.

As for the art media, simple, affordable and readily accessible materials work best: markers of all sizes and colors, crayons, colored pencils, ballpoint pens, oil pastels,

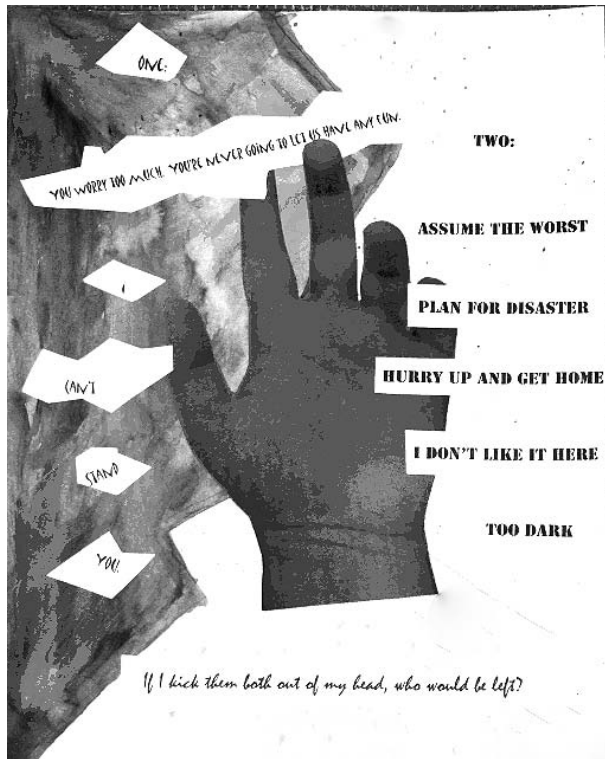


Figure 2: Depicting conflict

watercolor crayons and pencils, and watercolors. In addition, students can use basic office materials: correction fluid, rubber cement, glue sticks, tape, florescent highlighters, colored glue, and even a hole punch. At workshops, teachers have told us over and again that affordability and accessibility of resources are key issues in whether or not an activity is implemented.

Often during this workshop stage, we play instrumental music in the background to set a tone conducive to reflection. Former students and workshop attendees have said they like the music, and it doesn't get in the way of their reflection. With a laptop computer and Internet connectivity, a wide array of musical genres are available through Pandora.com, another free resource that students and teachers are glad to discover. The point is to create an atmosphere that encourages students to read closely to discern the significance of the words in front of them, and then to capture that meaning with recombined words and images.

Sharing the Text

One of the many strengths of this process is that the students do not sit back and passively experience a finished product; instead, they are engaged in transforming their text into a different genre that combines written and oral language as well as elements of the visual arts. "Understanding different genres assists readers in the recognition of text

structure and story elements” (Roe and Smith 244). Their ideas, images, and feelings are part of the process and constitute an aesthetic response to text, so it is important for everyone to share their work.

During sharing, students act out pieces individually or as a group recite their poems chorally. At the National Association of Multicultural Education Conference, one teacher who has worked closely with Native American students sang his poem to the group and commented on how many of his students really prefer to sing rather than just read. More often, however, students read their individual poems aloud to their classmates either to the whole class, or if they are reluctant to do so, we ask them to share in small groups. Inevitably, after doing so, students will volunteer certain poems to be read to the whole class because they are so good. Last year during our workshop at the Virginia Association of Teachers of English Conference, one teacher had selected a page from the Giovanni text and created a wonderful poem that she read to the group that revealed her own troubled relationship with her grandfather. It was a powerful experience for everyone. As Elliot Eisner observes: “Since the arts are open-ended and generate individual responses with no single right answer, they encourage participation and interaction. Everyone can contribute and discover a voice or medium for their thoughts, reactions, and ideas” (592).

Another strength of this activity is the support it offers to reluctant poets. It acts as a “literacy scaffold,” which is a kind of formula for writing a poem (Cecil and Lauritzen 67). Through the transformation of text, the student understands how the lyric genre functions both through their selection of key words and how they relate to each other—again, an aspect that Wilhelm refers to as “frontloading” (Wilhelm, Baker and Dube 48). In addition, the process of re-envisioning text helps pre-service teachers experience an immediate success in their first attempt at poetry writing.

This success can then motivate students to explore more complex and involved word play in the future. Likewise, students feel confident about the resulting visual created by the highlighted text and use of art media. The finished mixed-media piece is a blend of the poetic and the graphic and draws on both linguistic and visual symbol systems to convey a message. By thinking of a text in this way, we call into question the notion that it is only a linguistic production. Rather, by focusing on text as aesthetic experience, the creator brings forth a multifaceted result that merges the visual, the auditory, and the kinesthetic—elements that shape content to create meaning.

The example on the following page, Figure 3, (also from *Speak*), shows another response to the novel, one that captures the tone of it as well as the theme of repression.

Conclusion

Though we originally developed this activity with “at-risk,” reluctant secondary English students, we have explored its possibilities and adapted it for intermediate and upper elementary classrooms through workshops with students and their teachers. In addition, we have presented it to college creative writing classes, PreK-6 language arts methods classes, and even a marketing class in the business department of our university. We have found it to be engaging for graduate and adult students as well as for teachers from a variety of content areas. Each time we share the process with teachers, they have found a variety of ways to adapt it to their individual classrooms. One middle school teacher discussed how he planned to use it as a way to explore a key character, attributes, or to

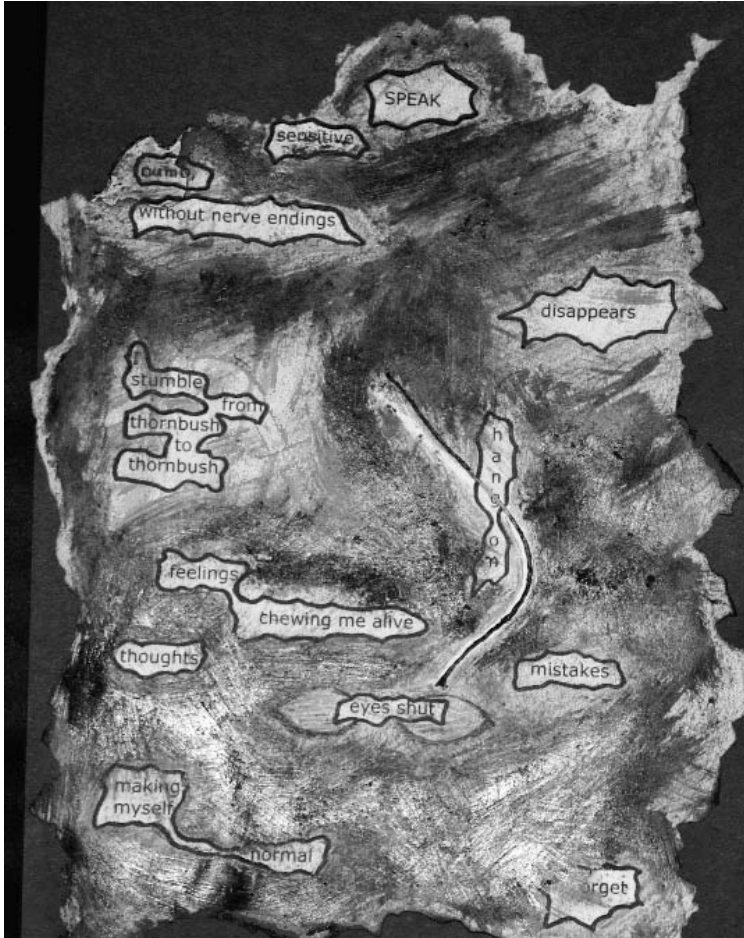


Figure 3: Capturing tone and theme

identify words and phrases that contribute to the theme of a story.

Several years ago, we presented it at the National Association of Multicultural Education as a strategy to explore the connection between literacy, text and culture. Participating teachers were guided to respond to the text through their unique cultural lenses, capturing aspects of their cultural identity in the process. In each case, this strategy has proven to be an effective method for encouraging the participants to work poetically and creatively with a text and to realize that doing so can be revealing and meaningful. With pre-service teachers, we want them to experience the excitement of shaping a written text that reflects something about who they are as well as understanding the value of a visual rendering of the text material. All of the six English language arts—reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and visual representation—are strengthened by such an engagement (Tompkins 8). Equally important, an opportunity to be creative with

text becomes possible for both teachers and students. This interplay of textual and visual elements allows for unexpected combinations and revelations.

As teachers ourselves, we demonstrate what Eisner refers to as “the relationship between cognition and representation . . . that multiple forms of representation cultivate different aspects of cognition” (353). All teachers need practice in how to flexibly generate different representational forms both within a single discipline and across disciplines in order to model that process for their students. Participating in aesthetic experiences like this one allows participants to feel their way through the ambiguity and chaos that is part of the creative process. The willingness to play, to generate, to make mistakes even, is a hallmark of creative teaching and learning (Torrance 8).

It is our belief that more engagement with the creative process will help teachers become more confident and more likely to structure creative opportunities for their students. When teachers experience the value of aesthetic involvement with text, and specifically poetry, they are more likely to include such interactions in their future instruction. And in this world of high stakes testing when creativity is often down-played, when the prescribed over-shadows the open-ended, teachers more than ever need to find original methods that encourage students to engage the material, and thus, themselves and the world. As author and researcher, Linda Reif reminds us in her luncheon conversation with the great art educator, Elliot Eisner, education is about the construction of meaning. Involvement in the arts:

. . . awakens our sensibilities to things that often pass us by. . . the outcome of a work of art is a surprise to the maker, and in the surprise the work of art remakes the maker. The great function of art is not only to provide another world for others, but to redefine ourselves because we are in the process of entering possibilities, entering worlds, finding things that we didn't know were there when we started. (xii)

The outward journey of re-envisioning text to find the poem within leads the reader to a new inner place that explores connections with the text, self, and world. Ultimately, the treasure to be found is in the heart of the poem.



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Wise Teaching to Students' Kinesthetic Intelligence: The Teacher as Surrogate, Guru, Foreshadower, Choreographer, or Expeditionist

Sara K. Schneider *

Introduction: The Kinesthetic Learning Spectrum

Put aside for a moment any thoughts about the word “regurgitation’s” sometimes derogatory usage in the educational setting: actually, the symbiosis of teacher and student is rather beautifully like that of a mother bird first ingesting the food she wants to later feed her chicks. The more experienced one takes part in the same physical act she asks of her offspring. This is not only modeling, it’s a “sharing in.”

Teachers discover this sharing-in quality when they practice alongside their students in learning activities that draw on bodily intelligence. Elementary school teachers in the Chicago-area village of Oak Park recently experimented with bringing kinesthetic learning methods to their classrooms. A kindergarten teacher quickly found the positive dynamic in this interdependence. Recognizing that when she was in front of her classroom, “the more I talked, the more they talked,” she decided to change her strategies: “I moved, and they moved.” In so doing, she created a trusting classroom of kinesthetic colleagues and fellow explorers.

In 1983, Howard Gardner published *Frames of Mind*, proposing that, rather than any singly valid measure of intelligence, there are really “multiple intelligences,” each localized in a distinct part of the brain, each offering a particular way of perceiving and encountering the world and a specialized approach to problem-solving.

Despite the academic controversies concerning Gardner’s theory, both the K-12 educational community and teachers of adult learners have become increasingly interested in its implications for differentiating instruction, especially to support learners who have not excelled in what Gardner termed the verbal-linguistic or the logical-mathematical intelligences that have been the mainstay of American education, as well as of intelligence and “high-stakes” tests. Differentiated lesson plans and methods of assessing student learning and progress have appeared in many classrooms. And as they vary their modes of instruction, teachers bring to bear their own varied intelligences.

Complementing the verbal-linguistic and logical-mathematical, Gardner identified five further intelligences: visual-spatial, musical, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and bodily-kinesthetic. The last of these may cause educators the greatest pause: many teach-

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ers may be predicted to enter their field self-identified with their oral and social skills rather than with their ability to learn and teach through movement and action.

Informal polling conducted among teachers enrolled in my Kinesthetic Intelligence courses in the Chicago area suggests that while many teachers may assign kinesthetic learning activities or assessments to their students, they are less likely to model them than activities related to the verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, or even visual-spatial realms, where they feel greater confidence.

Nevertheless, teachers are aware that many of their students may respond to bodily-kinesthetic activities when they haven't to seat-based tasks, assigning them even if they do not model them. This article arrays the roles teachers adopt with students when they ask them to learn through their bodies and the enormous potential for impact each one has, even in cases in which teachers consider themselves non-expert as movers. The principal issue, I propose, is not competence but the making of playful choices around participation.

Far from being a marginal means of perceiving, kinesthetic experience may be the most fundamental. When Sheets-Johnstone drew on studies of infant learning, she concluded that "thinking in movement is our original mode of thinking" (354).

However, far from being a monolith, the terms kinesthetic intelligence and kinesthetic learning cover a remarkable range of activities. They can involve learning about universal bodily processes, as in discovering and noting subtle fluctuations in heartbeat or in the humidity of the hands that occur in response to a stressor, such as bad news at work. They can also concern learning how to use the body to manipulate things in one's environment, such as how to wield a knife in the kitchen to create appealing shapes with raw vegetables or how to dig up tree roots without killing the tree. They embrace the dogged practice of physical activities one hopes will become made automatic as habits, such as learning to walk or to touch-type. Yet they also include in often-forgotten ways, complex activities that use the body to teach the mind or to expand perception by way of direct experience, such as developing a dramatic character through rehearsal or participating in a simulation of the historical interactions between particular social groups during the Holocaust.

The wide range and the near-universality of kinesthetic learning possibilities tells us that body-based learning has applications far beyond any kind of restrictive assumption that such learning and teaching apply merely to its conventional usages principally in early childhood to build motor skills or to the fields of sport or dance. Indeed, kinesthetic learning has powerful, underexploited applications not only for older children, but also for adults across the lifespan.

Think of the popular baby-shower games in which teams compete to see which can diaper a baby (doll) the fastest or guess the brand name of various chocolate bars melted into sample diapers. Such games are not only entertaining. They also enculturate the expectant parents to an aspect of their imminent daily physical reality! Similarly, taking a possible car purchase out for a test drive allows a potential buyer to consider and raise issues that might not otherwise surface, such as room for head clearance or ease in accelerating. In classrooms, kinesthetic methods may appear in foreign language learning with older students in such action- and gesture-oriented strategies as Asher's Total Physical Response or in medical training that brings students into contact with real patients, cadavers, and simulated models.

Table 1, below, displays vertically a spectrum of types of kinesthetic learning, from those based most strongly on physical repetition—getting a practice or habit “into” the body, such as learning to type, handwrite, or brush one’s teeth—to those most engaged in collaboration with the learning of abstract concepts. Each is associated with one or more roles through which teachers ply their craft. An explanation of these roles will follow.

Table 1: Range of Learning Tasks, Least to Most Abstracted from the Body

Kinesthetic Tasks	Examples	Likely Teacher Roles
Habit Formation Training the body directly, using repetition. Difficult to teach without capable demonstration though sometimes taught with expert verbal commands.	• Learning to hold a pencil, form letters, use scissors, type, drive, brush teeth, write script, ride a bicycle, dance • Practicing the motor skills involved in playing soccer, baseball, or sports (team or individual)	• Foreshadower • Choreographer
Association Training the mind through body movement, typically by repetition or by pairing movement and concepts to be learned. Teaching these skills requires some kinesthetic competence, even if tacit, though occasionally “comes from a book.”	• Learning English prepositions by dancing them • Jumping rope to memorize word spelling • Learning foreign languages using the Total Physical Response gestural method • Studying American Sign Language • Doing Body Math (learning multiplication, associating parts of body with columns of numbers)	• Foreshadower • Choreographer • Delegator
External Discovery Learning about the world through bodily interaction with the physical environment. May be closely associated with spatial and visual learning.	• Writing sensory descriptions by exploring objects tactilely • Interacting with museum exhibits • Learning math concepts by using the parts of the body to measure things or distances • Scavenger hunts • Walking the Stations of the Cross • Doing anatomical dissections • Practicing theatrical blocking	• Foreshadower • Choreographer • Delegator • Expeditionist

Kinesthetic Tasks	Examples	Likely Teacher Roles
Internal Discovery Gaining insights into inner life via body-based experiences. Here, repetition plays less of a role.	• Interpreting literature through the creation of living tableaux • “Voting with Your Feet” where students stand up, according to their position on an issue • Improvising dramatically • Dancing the process of mitosis (Lubeke) • Acquiring insights through contemplative movement or breath-work, as in yoga or tai chi	•Choreographer •Guru •Surrogate •Foreshadower •Expeditionist
Social Learning Learning about social realities, practices, and mores through action.	• Playing team-building games • Doing exercises from the martial arts to understand principles of positive conflict resolution • Acting out social situations, such as labor conditions in sweatshops • Inferring from physical experiences, e.g., gaining insights about American colonial culture by learning a social dance	•Guru •Surrogate •Choreographer
Concept Formation Making abstract concepts graspable through reference to or use of physical means.	•Creating Body Analogies, to illustrate the relationships between sentences separated by transition words (Wormeli 65) •Creating physical metaphors from linguistic metaphors •Understanding abstract concepts such as contrast, asymmetry, or texture through bodily-kinesthetic means	•Choreographer •Delegator

As is shown in the first row of Table 1, the most concrete use of students’ intelligence is for *habit formation*, when physical activities themselves must be mastered. Through repetition, the activity eventually becomes routine and the learner can free up his attention for other demands. Early fine motor skills training, including how to hold a pencil or form letters, falls into this category; so do complex cultural activities such as the teaching of small Ewe children in Ghana the culturally specific posture that will show them to be of high status, as Kathryn Geurts has detailed, or the training of South Indian marriageable young women by their mothers in the appropriate timing and duration of eye contact with visiting suitors, as presented in the Indian film *I Have Found It*.

The practice of new sports skills such as dribbling a ball or pitching also have as their goal the making habitual of successful movements.

In kinesthetic learning activities that are based on *association* (second row), body movement helps to encode a mental concept, such as an unfamiliar foreign word or the spatial relationships implied by prepositions such as “over” or “behind.” Students may memorize a concept or word in tandem with a gesture or movement. They may do “body math,” multiplying a two-digit number that they associate with each of their feet against a single-digit number mentally associated with their right knee (Armstrong 58). When the title character of *Akeelah and the Bee* memorizes her words for a spelling bee by reciting them as she jumps rope, she engages in associative kinesthetic learning. Also associative is that aspect of learning a theatrical role that involves memorizing assigned “blocking,” the movements over the stage space or the physical gestures associated with the performance of particular lines of a script.

Kinesthetic activities directed primarily toward *external discovery* (third row) often also involve spatial intelligence, including interactions with objects to be manipulated, such as blocks used for learning counting, and environments to be actively explored, e.g., in scavenger hunts or the circuit made by Catholics around the Stations of the Cross to experience and reflect upon the final events in the life of Jesus. Writing students are engaged in external discovery when they cultivate their ability to write rich sensory descriptions by exploring the tactile qualities of various objects.

In the fourth row are those learning practices that involve some form of *internal discovery*. Here, the learner’s insight derives from the proprioceptive, spatial, or felt sense of the experience, as when a performer suddenly seems to understand the dramatic character he is supposed to play after having experimented in rehearsal with a number of different interpretive possibilities. (Note that this is typically quite different from memorizing the blocking assigned by a director which, as mentioned above, is usually a process of association). The engagement of playwrights in dramatic improvisation in order to discover what their character “wants” or “says” belongs here, as do interpretive activities such as reading a passage about a character, then trying to “sculpt” the character with their own bodies in space or with clay, and finally using the insights or felt sense they get about the character in order to write (Wormeli 71). The Ewe teaching of proper posture mentioned earlier also partakes of this dimension, as each new generation learns a way to be from the way to stand.

Social learning (fifth row) encompasses those learning activities whose insights derive from the interactions among bodies and selves in a space, such as frequently happens when participating in social simulations or engaging in team-building games. The building of living tableaux of a literary situation in order to understand its complex dynamics teaches through relationship. So do class activities in which the instructor moves into and out of interactivity with the students, as in the Forum Theatre of Augusto Boal, which makes of every participant both participant and coach. Although speaking plays a major part in what the teacher does, the exercise Jeffrey Wilhelm calls “The Mantle of the Expert” may be considered a form of social learning. The teacher acts as a just-in-time content advisor to individual students trying to play their roles in a simulation and in need of, say, more historical information to take the next step; through such a role she models for students the seeing of others as living resources (101 – 102).

Finally, *concept formation* (sixth row) consists of learning that is ultimately most abstracted from direct viscerality, as when body-based experiences are used to help students learn abstract concepts. Students may learn through their bodies how a metaphor works as, in small groups, they negotiate meaning toward a shared physical representation of it. They may move around the classroom in ways that help them understand the differences between transitional words or phrases such as “however,” “on the other hand,” and “therefore” (Wormeli 65).

Table 1 simplifies how complex these learning tasks really are; many activities fit into more than one category. Medical interns’ interactions with patients can partake both of external discovery, as they gain practice in doing physical examination with real patients, and of social learning, as they strive to improve their bedside manner through trial-and-error interactions with patients. Other tasks may depend on the internal state of the student: some actors acquire their blocking largely through mechanical means and learn associatively, while others embark on a process of internal discovery to develop what some theatre people refer to as an organic character and gesture development.

Each type of learning proceeds differently, depending in part on how the teacher takes on the kinesthetic challenge. Next we look at how teachers can nurture students’ kinesthetic learning.

The Teacher’s Role in the Kinesthetic Learning Process

Many teachers, having been saddled with the expectation that they teach to each student’s strengths, assign but do not participate in learning activities or assessments that allow experientially oriented students to use their kinesthetic intelligence. Following perhaps an inhibition against being physical in front of their students, however, they may lose the opportunity for students achieving the maximum potential for insight and learning from the activity.

Such an inhibition is as much cultural as anything: bell hooks writes about the erasure of the body in the professoriate, while Susan Bordo hypothesizes that she lost an opportunity for a new academic position because, she believed, she “‘moved [her] body around so much’ during [her] presentation” (hooks 191 – 192; Bordo 183). The cultural prohibition against movement holds particularly heavily against women and is strengthened by public fear of the melding of private and public spheres in education. As Kimberly Wallace-Sanders has written, “The academy largely insists on the body’s erasure because the body is the undeniable reminder of our private selves” (188).

Yet in failing to overcome this cultural inhibition and in standing aside while students move, as if striving not to have a body of her own, both the teacher and students lose the full potential of kinesthetic learning activities. While the display or embodiment of expertise is the best-known way of teaching kinesthetically, other dimensions of active engagement can serve many other positive purposes. For, even with less expertise, a teacher is modeling: laying bare through her own attempts the no-less-important vulnerability of trying on movement; inspiring confidence that the task truly is achievable; fostering trust or deriving insights from the sharing of a physical experience with a student. Enthusiasm and willingness to jump into a physical activity alongside students can go a long way as, for example, the classroom teacher who reads in a teacher magazine about Paul and Gail

Dennison's Brain Gym—a technique for harnessing and integrating the activities of both left and right brain hemispheres—and experiments with some of the exercises with her students.

Modeling's power has been amply demonstrated in a wide variety of contexts. Methe and Hintze found great gains in students' work in Sustained Silent Reading when teachers modeled the desired behavior. The willingness to undergo student scrutiny is central to creating a sense of teacher transparency. Gillespie highlights the importance of this quality to the teacher-student relationship: "Teachers must be willing to allow others (students) to see them honestly; to allow their humanness to be a visible part of their presence as a teacher. ... [It] requires that teachers are genuinely, fully present" (214). One might assume that modeling or moving along with students—potentially a higher-psychological risk activity for both students and teacher—would similarly convey teachers' "humanness."

Applying D.W. Winnicott's delineation of emotional development in early childhood to the educational setting, Susan Handler emphasizes the ways in which the classroom milieu, as it exposes students to risk, has the power to "reinforce early positive experiences and propel children forward" (4). In Handler's application, a teacher can make students' learning and growth less risky for them if he mirrors their experience while remaining detached from their affective intensity. In most American classrooms, the primary medium of instruction and learning is verbal-linguistic. Students can safely be said in general to perceive their teacher as a competent speaker of the language, qualified to direct them in its usage. As several authors have noted, modeling helps students build their passion for the activity, and solidifies their trust in the teacher (Downey; Griss; Jowett; Methe and Hintze). In kinesthetic learning, the teacher can use his own experience of an activity, just as a reading teacher would use his own impressions of a storybook, to inform class discussion and debrief.

All teachers own the potential for positive impacts for student learning through kinesthetic activity, yet they come to the encounter with a variety of gifts and make different decisions about how to use what they have. In the model presented here, there are four initial teacher roles in kinesthetic teaching and learning: those who "can and do," that is, those who can both do the kinesthetic activity they ask of students and teach in an engaged way. There are those who "can't but do," who, that is, come in without pre-existing physical expertise but join nevertheless in the activity alongside their students. There are those who "can but don't," that is, who teach even as, for whatever reason, they rest from their past high kinesthetic exploits. All of these model something of value in the kinesthetic learning experience. Finally, there are those who "can't and don't"; they simply assign kinesthetic learning activities to students without exhibiting either interest or engagement in them. Each of these represents a way a teacher may bring kinesthetic learning into her classroom, given her existing or developing skills, her values as a teacher, and the subject matter or insights she wants to make available to her students. We can now look at each of these four teaching roles in turn to understand the role of the teacher figured in each. The central circle of Figure 1 below, poses each of these four roles—along with two variations—in relation to the others.

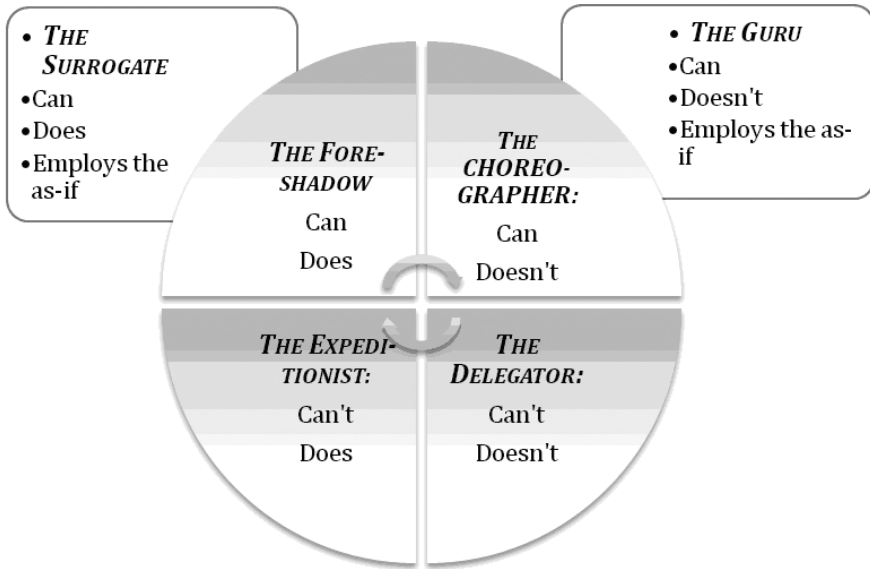


Figure 1: Six Teacher Types and Their Relevant Features of Kinesthetic Teaching

Those Who Can—and Do: The Foreshadowers

Those who both can and do, are “all there.” Eschewing theory, they move along with their students. A teacher who “can” may demonstrate or work alongside his students with confidence, or he may coach from the sidelines while still being perceived by them as kinesthetically competent. He models present or past expertise, demonstrating corporeal correctness or believably conveying some prior level of authority or expertise (since retired). Perceived competence does tend to give a teacher credibility in kinesthetic activities. For example, a teacher who wants to use yogic breathing techniques to help her irascible middle-school students learn to soothe their brushfire tempers may be more likely to be dismissed by those students if they don’t believe she’s experienced for herself the calming effect she’s pushing on them. Similarly, the science teacher who participates with her students in staging Kim Lubeke’s dance symbolizing the process of cell mitosis has quite a different effect from the one who bows out of direct participation with her students, concerned about the role of her advancing age on her movements skills (which she thinks were never really that good); the first teacher’s credibility stems either from proficiently “being there” alongside the students or else from reputedly demonstrating signs of having “been there.” Her proficiency holds her students in physical and psychosocial safety. They sense that what their teacher is asking of them will be worth the additional expenditure of energy and the potential for embarrassment, shame, or failure.

Kinesthetic competence may be perceived in the aged and arthritic ballerina who only rises from her wheelchair for short periods each day to show younger dancers key interpretive elements in the roles she originated; in the community college instructor who places her hand on her heart with confidence when introducing her adult ESL

class to the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance; or in the sixth-grade social studies teacher who draws on his sport experience and facilitates ball throwing and catching games to help the students understand principles of social interaction. While teachers may get excellent results by asking their students to create their own silent tableaux in order to get to the heart of a central conflict between a novel's characters, the teacher who participates in the experimentation through these tableaux—evidencing his or her willingness to interpret a novel anew in the presence of students—may inspire them to more open-ended, imaginatively reached-for possibilities.

Much cultural training has a physical basis in which experienced elders teach inexperienced youth, as when nineteenth-century European mothers teach a girl how much she must suck in her breath in order to fasten her corset, or contemporary American mothers teach daughters how to walk in high heels. And a whole class of examples of “hands-on” teaching can be found in the stereotyped movie scene of first physical contact between an onscreen couple, in which the man (in the role of the more experienced one) wraps his arms around the woman from behind, ostensibly to demonstrate how to hold a pool cue, golf club, or guitar, or to knead a mound of pizza dough. While the moviemakers—and the audience—know better, the character's overt premise is that the woman will learn through the man-teacher's body motions how her own should go (if she can concentrate!). I call this type of teacher the *Foreshadower*.

The role of the Foreshadower is perhaps the one that teachers most readily associate with body-based teaching and learning, and that frightens many of them away from moving along with students. However, the teaching of a Foreshadower is not the only way for students to gain insights from kinesthetic activities. Next we look at teachers who hold their expertise quiescent.

Those Who Can—But Don't: The Choreographers

Contrary to what one might assume from an article on kinesthetic teaching and learning, it is not in all cases better for a kinesthetically competent teacher to engage in physical activity with her students. Sometimes standing to the sidelines will be more likely to invite the desired result. For example, a classroom teacher who always got cast in leading roles in her own high school plays may believe that the more she demonstrates acting techniques in her ninth-grade honors English class's reading of *Julius Caesar*, the more she's hamstringing the students' dramatic acumen. Deciding to hold back from showing off her dramatic skills, she may well free her students'. Thus, the degree and type of modeling that may be ideal always depends on the situation, the teacher-student relationship, individual students' needs, the teacher's values, and the subject matter. The teacher who can but doesn't is a *Choreographer*. As Figure 1 shows, she is the only teacher type that is easily associated with the whole range of learning tasks.

The figure of the Choreographer is inspired by the retired dancer rehearsing younger performers and by the aging sports coach who, once an athlete, still has the imposing physique (and perhaps the chronic injuries) to prove it. In an instant, he can summon up a swift kick or an adroit shift of body weight that demonstrates to the students that he once really could do what he asks of them. The residue of experience is still there. In Marilyn Agrelo's film *Mad Hot Ballroom*, a documentary of an arts-enrichment program

that trained New York City fifth-graders in competitive ballroom dance, a school principal joins the professional dance instructors to teach the fifth-graders about proper ballroom dance “frame,” or body posture; she straightens her spine with the kind of élan that evokes this as a posture with deep roots in her body memory. Her knowing coaching seems to build the students’ confidence that they are getting able instruction. (It also doesn’t hurt the confidence-building that her past coaching has resulted in more than one city-wide win for her school’s dance team.)

For the Choreographer—the teacher who can but, generally speaking, doesn’t—corrections are often verbal. The relatively low physical involvement of the teacher allows the student to make her own discoveries; the learning environment remains truly safe, since the teacher’s expertise allows the student to rest in the knowledge that she’ll be prevented from making out-of-bounds or inappropriate choices. This style of teaching also affords an opportunity for true discovery, because the Choreographer cannot know in advance all the outcomes the student may come up with. It has a guide-on-the-side quality, exemplified by the student’s trial-and-error experimentation in the teacher’s presence, as when participating in a “Vote with Your Feet” human surveys exercise, in which students stand up at their seats or in a line according to their position on a particular issue or interpretation of a scene or character. Other examples of teaching that call for a Choreographer include driver’s education, classroom-based beginning computer instruction, or science labs in which the teacher allows the students to make their own mistakes under supervision, rather than trying to “save” student experiments that are beginning to veer off course.

Nevertheless, in the absence of ability, enthusiasm can go a long way. Next we look at the teaching of those who disregard any lack of expertise and jump in anyway.

Those Who Can’t—But Do Anyway: The Expeditionists

Although one might assume from the Foreshadower and the Choreographer examples that the teacher who identifies himself as a mover is inevitably going to have more success in bringing kinesthetic activities into the classroom than is a non-mover, a teacher’s inexperience in a particular discipline need not keep students from their birthright of body-based learning. Hence, the category of the teacher who can’t but does. A teacher putting into play John Lee’s exercise of getting up and moving in character in order to help a creative writing class discover what that character “wants” to do in a short-story exercise, need only model the enthusiasm of giving it a try, not turn out a convincing, much less virtuosic, display of character interpretation (124). Similarly, in an elementary school field trip to a local archaeological site, the teacher needs no special skill at digging or identifying fragments to be an effective model of the process of searching for buried artifacts in the ground; she can just outsource the faculty of kinesthetic competence to the archaeologist hosting the class visit. Given her proven leadership role with the students, her enthusiasm for (literally) getting her hands dirty carries a potent message about the value of the archaeological enterprise and what’s available to be learned in it. Such a teacher’s present-time willingness to be an active co-learner with her students, no matter how foolish she may end up looking, whets the students’ learning. This is the *Expeditionist*, whose capacity for kinesthetic engagement with her students is much more important for carrying the

learning than is any previously earned kinesthetic expertise.

The Expeditionist believes in the value of experiential learning and is willing to explore and learn alongside her students: she learns to milk a cow beside her students during a class field trip to a working dairy farm; learns and practices the laboratory experiments along with, or just one step ahead of, her students; or decides to try kinesthetic activities from multiple-intelligences sourcebooks that are designed to reinforce curricular concepts.

The learning led by an Expeditionist feels collegial to and builds trust with the students, as it emphasizes the willingness of the teacher to share the inherent vulnerability of the learning situation with them. It levels the playing field for students who are less confident with experiential learning: if the teacher, with the stakes perhaps a bit higher, is willing to jump in, then so can they. Enthusiastic if inexperienced participation also allows the teacher to gain those insights that are best available, and often come faster, with a beginner's perspective. She can then turn around and help students with those aspects of the learning task with which they actually struggle.

Those Who Can't—And Don't: The Delegators

As we have seen, many teachers *don't*; that is, they self-consciously exclude themselves from the ranks of those who could effectively implement kinesthetic strategies in their classrooms, believing they're neither kinesthetically competent nor capable of engaging in learning-oriented physical activity with their students without such competence. Yet, as we have seen, much learning can happen under the appropriate conditions, either where the teacher is highly competent but chooses to or must remain in a more distanced position, or where he has no particular kinesthetic training but is ready to jump in and learn together with his students.

However, if both teacher competence and engagement are low in a learning situation that depends on the teacher far more than on peers, it would be hard to transcend any but the absolutely most rudimentary instantiations of kinesthetic *learning*, even where kinesthetic *activity* is clearly occurring. The *Delegator* gravely limits his impact by remaining both physically detached and unschooled in the potential for kinesthetic learning.

This is the situation faced by many school teachers who, perhaps required to differentiate learning for students of varied learning styles, simply assign dramatic or other kinesthetic activities, say from a teaching manual, without an understanding of how the kinesthetic medium can be utilized to evoke or to cement learning. It is, arguably, where many teachers start out as they're trying to implement kinesthetic learning activities while in a fairly unconscious or even fearful state about using their bodies in their classroom teaching. (It is also the zone where principals, interested in incorporating a multiple-intelligences approach to differentiation, demand it of teachers without offering them the professional development to be effective.)

Having a physically disengaged teacher who is also not perceived by students as particularly competent makes this the psychologically riskiest environment for kinesthetic learning and the one least likely to succeed in accomplishing anything for the students other than blowing off energetic steam through physical activity and peer interaction. (Of course, this is not an insignificant value in an era in which physical education,

recess, art, music, and other relatively embodied activities are being cut from the school day, as Mara Sapon-Shevin has noted.)

Having looked at two spectra—the can/can't and the does/doesn't—and the teacher roles that ensue from their combination, we introduce just one more. This third, subtly deeper dimension of kinesthetic learning and teaching comes to the fore in the approaches of teachers I call the *Surrogate* and the *Guru*, both of whom bring social learning into play through their own “as-if” engagement with their students in social simulation. Such forms of teaching bring a new wrinkle to the very nature of modeling: rather than merely demonstrating and sharing in the activity, the teacher imprints human relationship itself. Next we look at this third dimension.

The Third Dimension of Kinesthetic Teaching: Teachers Who Enter the “As-If”

The third dimension of kinesthetic teaching can be a little harder to wrap one's mind around than whether the teacher *can* move, or whether she *does*. Here, the exact *role* of the teacher and the nature of the learning setting come into play as a teacher strives not only to reach a cognitive outcome but also to invite learning that will be applicable to a larger social reality. For example, a self-defense workshop may feature the instructor playing the role of an assailant to give her student-partner practice in the self-defense strategies of the class. Here, of course, the instructor is not an actual assailant. Rather, she knows both how to let the student's jabs find their mark for the sake of the learning experience and how to protect himself from true harm. The teacher is in a Surrogate role, standing in for the potential future attacker.

This martial arts partnering invokes what we might call an as-if condition, after the tradition of the “magic if” that was core to pioneering acting teacher Constantin Stanislavski's system. Using Stanislavski's magic if, the actor learns how to behave as a dramatic character would by imagining himself, as it were, in the character's own shoes and behaving *as if* he were the character himself. The gay actor required to play a dramatic love scene, with an actress he cannot find it in himself to see as attractive, imagines what the character, a heterosexual who *is* in love with the character the actress is playing, would do—and then performs those actions or behaviors.

In stage acting, the as-if refers to the development of a character. In the teaching-learning scenario, I am applying the as-if to the portrayal of *relationship*, part imaginary, part real, through the teacher's use of her body in her teaching. She uses her bodily presence, her immediate relationship with the individual student, or her construction of a simulated environment for learning, as a kind of rehearsal self that functions as a stand-in for future, outside-the-immediate-classroom-situation relationships and behaviors.

The as-if mode is much like what Johan Huizinga identified as “the play element in culture,” a mode of being whose rules “determine what ‘holds’ in the temporary world circumscribed by play” itself, and like what Richard Schechner defined, in reference to performance, as a “subjunctive” mode that can point to a future “indicative” mode of being for the student. Viv Aitken characterizes teachers as “relationship managers” who direct the starting and stopping of learning in a stylized partnership with their students; it is they who signal when play is to start and stop.

This final dimension of the model, examining social play as a simulation for future contextualized behavior, deals with a subtle and yet profound side of teaching, the instrumental role of the social world and the environment in teaching. It demonstrates how closely related kinesthetic learning is to both its social and spatial cousins, while also suggesting that many forms of compelling teaching, not just the kinesthetic, rehearse students using the as if. Because of its relationality, the teacher can see actual kinesthetic learning as it occurs; this is, fortunately, a far cry from requiring kinesthetic displays of learning acquired using other intelligences to be performed for her. The play dimension deals with the extent to which the student is aware of person and place as media, through which he can learn and then discard from his physical universe while retaining in memory, insight, pattern, and emotion.

A more detailed description of two quite canny teacher types follows, both of whom *can* and also *do* use relationship to teach. They are also referenced in Figure 2, above, which indicates that they are elaborations upon the more foundational roles the Foreshadower and the Choreographer.

Those Who Can But Don't—Gurus Who Use Simulation

Building on the role of the Choreographer, the Guru adds in an element of social simulation. The name is taken out of its original meaning, referring to Indian spiritual teachers who teach their disciples by wisely assigning practices or activities that will, by completing them within the context of the guru-disciple relationship, affect the desired learning. Here, of course, the name Guru is extended from the spiritual domain to all kinds of learning. Schön comes near the Guru's engagement in learning design when he writes about the role of the professional coach,

. . . who works at creating and sustaining a process of collaborative inquiry. Paradoxically, the more he knows about the problem, the harder it is for him to do this. He must resist the temptation to tell a student how to solve the problem or solve it for her, but he must not pretend to know less than he does, for by deceiving her, he risks undermining her commitment to their collaborative venture. One way of resolving this dilemma is for the coach to put his superior knowledge to work by generating a variety of solutions to the problem, leaving the student free to choose and produce new possibilities for action. (296)

The Guru may collaborate with the student from afar, anticipating her probable choices and experiences and designing environmental responses that will continue to teach in his absence. He may be a designer of simulations, like the overnight "Global Village" experiences for teachers and students hosted by the not-for-profit world hunger organization Heifer International, in which visiting students can experience, as realistically as possible, the conditions of poverty in many parts of the world. Instructional designer Michelle Evans's simulation "Follow the North Star," an intensely emotional weeklong simulation of antebellum slavery, offers enough realism that participants can form an affectively lasting relationship to an historical event outside their own life spans (cited in Weinberg).

Even emotionally and ethically challenging learning situations may place a teacher in a Guru role. A Holocaust reenactment, performed over several days during a summer camp, casts counselors as figures of terrible authority, doubling their power over the students. Remembering their raw experience in this simulation, participants may be drawn to review the dual roles of those they knew as camp counselors and to feel how the overall design of the simulation moved them toward learning, however painful.

The deep, in-the-bones learning that can come from Guru-designed simulations carries over from a relatively time-delimited situation to real-life commitments; here, games are celebrated as devices for learning living. After setting the stage, the Guru stands back to let the students do their own learning, as they maintain confidence in the structure the Guru provides.

Those Who Can and Do—Surrogates Who Use the Kinesthetic Relationship as a Teaching Medium

Also depending on social simulation to devise relational learning, the Surrogate brings his presence very centrally to the teacher-student relationship. Yet, among all the teaching styles, the teacher who acts as Surrogate holds a special betwixt-and-between position. While he is not the student's ultimate or true interactor in a real-life situation, he is an as-if partner, either selecting reactions that might be expected in a realistic context or else telling the student how such a partner would react. I am reminded of an Argentine Tango instructor who, feeling me anticipating his plans in leading me in the dance, decided randomly to pause and dance us in place to the music, thus training me to follow him, rather than to try to lead or pull him into movement. (Argentine Tango continues to be a male-directed social dance form.)

Such training was assuredly about teaching me surrender of control and social sensitivity in addition to dance technique—all in the service of fitting me to dance with future, "real" partners. Thus, the Surrogate is engaged, and engages the student, not only physically but also social-emotionally. In the classroom, the Surrogate may participate in an historical simulation or oral interpretation exercise opposite her student. She may stage and participate in Boal's Forum Theatre, becoming at one point director of an interactive scene, then participant along with students as another of them directs. The moments in which she appears in role allow students to perceive her in her duality.

The Surrogate may be considered an extension of the Foreshadower. Both are perceived by the student as being highly competent, both are physically engaged in the activity; one might say that both bring their professional bodies to bear in their teaching. The difference between them lies in a kind of use of the self by the Surrogate that is not required in the Foreshadower's teaching, a form that goes beyond *modeling for* to *playing opposite* the student. The teacher's own body teaches relationship *through* relationship.

Greg Downey describes a "reflecting" style of martial arts teaching that permits the teacher to play opposite the student and to train not merely his positions but also his instincts and patterns of movement in relationship (208). In a language arts classroom, the teacher helping her students stage a Shakespeare play is often a Surrogate. She may be both able and perceived as competent. In addition, in response to students' rehearsal readings of the witty lines, she may purposefully laugh in the places where she anticipates

future audiences will get the play's humor, thereby accustoming her students to allow wait time between lines. Such a Surrogate uses her own responses to actors' trial interpretations to suggest to them possible future responses by a real audience.

In his ethology studies, Bateson captures the simulation quality of the Surrogate role when he observes that otters not only fight, but play at fighting, practicing (or rehearsing) for when a real fight should offer itself (qtd. in Goffman 40). Goffman finds that in both human and animal play, "The playful act is so performed that its ordinary function is not realized. The stronger and more competent participant restrains himself sufficiently to be a match for the weaker and less competent" (41). Goffman calls the "frame" that cordons off the activity as a simulation a "key," which adds a "layer" or "lamination" to the activity performed (82). We might think of the edge of the frame as the student's and teacher's relationship to the real activity the teaching activity carries. The relating has several layers. As Donald Schön describes it, the participants are as if "in [a] hall of mirrors . . . continually shift[ing] perspective. They see their interaction at one moment as a reenactment of some aspect of the student's practice; at another, as a dialogue about it; and at still another, as a modeling of its redesign" (297). That reenactment is the province of the Surrogate.

Conclusion

One can work physically, one can work knowingly. That "knowing" is within all teachers' reach as they learn about the full potential and range of kinesthetic learning possibilities, from habit formation to concept formation. This typology of teachers and types of kinesthetic learning suggests a complexity in choices, interactions, and learning outcomes far beyond what has previously been suggested. What it points to, I hope, is that positive results with students are possible both for those who are expert movers, whether they exhibit their know-how explicitly or tacitly, and for those who unselfconsciously try kinesthetic activities along with their students, even without particular expertise. Returning to Table 1, one can observe that the Expeditionist, an enthusiastic if inexperienced teacher, figures prominently in learning activities that involve either external or internal discovery, while all five of the teacher types who are simply trying their best can find a place in learning tasks involving internal discovery.

Equipped with this model, both teachers and administrators may plan teaching and learning strategies with greater pragmatism, making choices founded on teachers' existing or developing skills, teaching values, and the subject matter or insights they want to make available to their students. Teachers can be empowered to adopt a form of bodily-kinesthetic teaching that will both reach all students and stimulate those who particularly shine in kinesthetic activities, even if not in other modalities such as the verbal-linguistic. In so doing, they restore students' access to their most vital path of learning. As they gain confidence in what they can offer students through their own physical or mental participation in kinesthetic activities, they stand to benefit those not only in the primary grades, but across the entire lifespan of learners—including themselves.

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Nurturing Difference: The Autistic Student in Professional Writing Programs

Andrea Greenbaum*

Pervasive Developmental Disorders

As director of the Professional Writing program at a small, Catholic, urban university, I've had to address the issue of inclusion of an autistic individual into the intimate setting of writing courses. While the nature of autism does not hinder an individual from gaining significant writing skills, the disorder may carry with it secondary difficulties, such as the impairment of "acquisition of concepts of self and others, and a delayed acquisition of insight into one's own behavior and that of others, with a resulting impairment in metacognitive ability" (Farrant, et. al 107). Such deficiency in metacognitive abilities often results in the exhibition of inappropriate social behavior, verbal outbursts, hand tics, and an assortment of distractions that make it difficult for autistic students to work within the confines of a writing classroom, where they are asked to participate in group projects, maintain deadlines, and to comply with educational etiquette and decorum.

A few years ago, a vigorous discussion took place on the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA) listserv about the many facets of coping with students with a range of disabilities. Dale Katherine Ireland advocated for greater understanding of disabled students. In her post to the listserv she wrote, "In the same way we want to make education accessible to students who use wheelchairs, we also want to make education accessible to learning disabled students who may need accommodations." Her argument was compelling, and given the vehemence of the discussion, I realized that this was certainly a topic that needed greater investigation. At my urging, we assembled a roundtable discussion at the 2007 Conference on College Composition and Communication, entitled, "Students with Disabilities: Creating Accommodations and Inclusion within the Composition Classroom." And while this panel attempted to articulate a range of concerns about the disabled, we neglected to discuss the most compelling questions of all: what will those accommodations look like, who will pay for them, who will implement them, and how will we train professors to address the needs and concerns of disabled students?

From my experience with a student with Asperger's Disorder who was in several of my classes, I would like to suggest that mainstreaming these special-needs students and providing them with writing opportunities—through the classroom, through internships, through university publications—not only aids in their personal and professional development and growth, but also serves both the university community and the

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community-at-large. But I would in the course of this discussion suggest that inclusion is not risk free, and without the necessary institutional brackets to support such an endeavor, both students and faculty will fail, and fail miserably.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “the average autism rate is 6.6 per 1000,” which means that about 1 in 150 children will have some form of autism (“Autism” par. 3). Given this statistic, the question then is not *should* we incorporate these students into our writing courses, but how *will* we do so without causing disruption to the other students and creating an undue burden for faculty. Further, how do we make sure that we are meeting disabled students’ special educational needs without compromising the educational goals of our institutions?

In brief, Autism Disorder and Asperger’s Disorder, according to the American Psychological Association, are two of five disorders that fall under the umbrella of Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD), a category of neurological disorders characterized by “severe and pervasive impairment in several areas of development” (“Autism,” Par. 1). But this clinical definition does not fully capture the nuanced complexity of this disorder. Perhaps a more holistic approach to defining these disorders might be as follows:

To begin to inquire into what is amiss in autism is to discover the indivisibility of those processes which make up our nonautistic being-in-the-world. Individual consciousness, volition, and empathy may be itemized as if they were discrete entities, but they turn out to be all of a piece, functionally interchangeable, each one definable in terms of the rest. (Glastonbury 4)

In sum, autism manifests in a variety of contexts and ranges. If you research autism in education, you will get significant scholarship related to early education, intervention, and mainstreaming, but there is a dearth of research that contributes to the discussion of what happens to these children as they become young adults and move into higher education. There has been notable discussion about the inclusion of disabilities studies in the academy, particularly in First-Year Writing courses (Price; Bruggemann; Mossman). Recently, the publication of two important disability anthologies, *Embodied Rhetorics: Disability in Language and Culture* (Wilson and Lewiecki-Wilson) and *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities* (Synder, Bruggeman, and Garland-Thomson) have contributed to the discussion of disability in the humanities. Yet there is still a scholarship-gap in addressing, in realistic and practical terms, how we include these students into our classrooms.

In part, this gap in research is expected since, until very recently, it was commonly assumed that young adults with autistic spectrum disorders did not go on to the university. At best, they found a trade or worked menial jobs. At worst, they received Social Security Disability checks, and they stayed home with their parents. However, this is no longer the case. According to Elizabeth Farrell, “There are no definitive statistics tracking how many students at the college level have the syndrome and similar autistic spectrum disorders” (35). Furthermore, a growing number of students are being identified as having high-functioning autism (HFA), which means, inevitably, they will be challenged to advance in their educational choices (Shore 293).

What we do know about college enrollment is that the number of students with autism-spectrum disorders are increasing. In fact, support organizations like College Living Experience, a for-profit program that assists disabled students with making a transition to the university, affirms this trend. Beth Phillips, an Admissions Coordinator for the Fort Lauderdale site told me that they currently have 90 students in Fort Lauderdale colleges, and in the relatively new support centers in Austin, Texas and Denver, Colorado, they have 23 and 25 students respectively. She reported that enrollment is on the rise, and that parents and students are seeking greater educational opportunities.

In fact, autistic educational strategies seem to be a burgeoning industry, and that area of academic investigation includes books like Ann Palmer's *Realizing the College Dream with Autism or Asperger Syndrome*, which provides reassuring advice to nervous parents, guiding them through choices like college size, curriculum, and whether or not the child should stay in a dorm environment. Additionally, programs like those offered through Marshall University in West Virginia are specifically targeting students with Asperger's (Trachtenberg par. 6).

By law, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is the legislation that mandates that colleges and universities provide equal access to programs and services for students with disabilities. Faculty and staff are not permitted to exclude a student with a disability from a course of study and we cannot suggest to a student that he or she pursue a more restrictive career because of a disability. However, as Farrall notes, "The absence of a common approach to students with Asperger's has led to widely differing interpretations of what constitutes 'reasonable accommodations' for them on campuses, as required by federal law." And this is where the difficulty lies, since faculty members are working without guidelines—or a safety net.

The Ethics of Disclosure

I would like to provide, as an illustration, my first encounter with Evelyn.¹ When she came to my office to inquire about registering for the Professional Writing Program, I thought that there was something "odd" about her; she talked rapidly, used manic hand movements, had a rather disheveled appearance, but she also appeared to be quite sharp. I have an uncle who was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, but because the spectrum of the disorder varies, I could not, with certainty, determine that indeed this was her specific disability, and until a student actively discloses the disability, you are not free to assume anything. Since I was her adviser, I would get calls from other faculty members wanting to know what was "wrong with her."

Evelyn enrolled in my Business Writing and Research course, where students are often required to work together in groups to create a variety of projects, from designing a brochure to developing a marketing plan for the operation of a business. Not surprisingly, none of the students wanted to be partnered with her. After a few weeks, Evelyn went to my university's Disability Services office and received an Accommodation Memo that outlined what modifications needed to be made to the course to adjust to Evelyn's unique needs. An Accommodation Memo typically includes instructions like letting the student

1. To preserve the student's requested anonymity, I've used a pseudonym.

use a tape recorder for lectures, extended deadlines for assignments, and often the right to take a test, a midterm or final exam, in the office of Disability Services.

Once Evelyn disclosed her disability, it freed me to interact with her in more appropriate ways; most importantly—and here is the lesson I want to impart—once she disclosed her disability to the class and spoke openly about it (which she did quite frequently), the class dynamic shifted dramatically. Students who were initially hesitant to interact with her because she was “weird” openly volunteered to do group projects, take notes for her, and guide her through computer research projects. By disclosing her disability, and by candidly addressing her needs, Evelyn created an atmosphere of empathy among the other students. Her presence in the classroom truly encouraged a recognition of “difference,” something we often give lip-service to in rhetoric and composition, but we do not fully apply.

The challenge, of course, is both ethical and legal: should we encourage disclosure? What if a student does not feel comfortable with revealing his or her condition? What then? What responsibility does the faculty member need to make to accommodate the student? How does a faculty member who is given no training in working with disabled students suddenly adopt a curriculum that presumes to meet their unique needs, as well as keeps the intellectual integrity of the program in tact?

I have no definitive answers to these questions since we are in the nascent stage of this higher educational phenomenon, but I will offer some preliminary suggestions for faculty to cope with this occurrence. However, these are the challenges that faculty and administrators must face in the next century, as those students with HAF will continue to enter the academy. Moreover, we need to begin research in our field (as opposed to merely replicating those studies that are in primarily in Education and Psychology) that documents and explores how writing, as a dynamic process, can be used as a transformative tool for shaping discourse for those who often struggle to create meaning.

Monica E. Delano advances that writing is a complex process that involves planning, drafting, self-monitoring, and revising text, and she suggests that academic interventions that provide explicit strategies for success, “are more likely to be effective with this population” (252). Delano argues for the use of Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD—a series of writing strategies developed and conceived by Steve Graham, Karen Harris, Charles MacArthur, and Shirley Schwarz)—whereby students engage in three types of writing strategies: understanding the use of action words, the use of description words, and the mechanism behind revisions. SRSD enables students with disabilities, particularly those with Asperger’s Syndrome, to perform better on written exams, write more fluid prose, and have a greater sense of confidence in their writing abilities. These types of studies with college-level writing students and programs need to continue to be implemented and developed.

A disabled student, like all students, has the right to confidentiality and privacy. I cannot say that it is always in their best interest to fully reveal their disability since numerous variables must be in place. I can only attest that in the small confines of a writing classroom, where the act of writing and responding to writing is an intimate process, the act of revelation helped to bridge an invisible barrier between the differently-abled student and the more traditional students. The result was that Evelyn was treated with the respect and dignity she deserved.

Obstacles Toward Full Integration

Even with the various accommodations given to her, Evelyn struggled through the rigors of the writing class, and she often engaged in activities that were, quite simply, disruptive: she spoke excessively in class, often veering off topic; she had a nervous hand tic, and she would continually flail her hands about; she'd arrive late and loudly take her seat; she would forget to turn in assignments, and she was in a perpetual state of disorganization. In situations beyond the classroom, she also would be intrusive, actively barging in on faculty meetings, and disrupting conversations with other students.

According to Leslie Rouder, Director at my university's Disability Services office, these are very typical behaviors for someone on the Asperger spectrum. "They don't get subtle nuances," so, she says, it is up to the instructor to punctuate and set limits. Autistic students require more direct instruction. For instance, while a traditional student might understand that you have shifted the topic of conversation, an autistic individual often has no idea that the shift occurred or that he or she has overstepped polite conversational boundaries. It is this inability to receive social cues that is, perhaps, the biggest obstacle toward full integration.

Conversely, the work that Evelyn submitted (*when* she submitted it) was always outstanding—another marked trait of high-functioning Asperger students—whose IQs are typically average or above and become expert in one or two areas. With my encouragement, Evelyn was a frequent staff writer for the Barry newspaper, wrote an essay for our literary journal, and with much effort, managed to secure an internship—a requirement for completion of the Professional Writing Program. While I tried to place her with several establishments (newspapers, publishing houses, magazines), the only receptive response I received was from the Advocacy Center for People with Disabilities, so Evelyn began her internship at that location. The students are required to keep internship journals that document their experience. Evelyn's journal reveals both her command of language, and the struggle of existing as an individual with Asperger's. She writes:

The internship will be at the Advocacy Center for Persons with Disabilities, a nonprofit agency with offices in the Tampa Bay Area and Tallahassee (State Capitol) as well as in South Florida. That site was chosen from a long list of sites I presented Dr. G. last fall. Evidently, that was the only organization that came through and returned Dr. Greenbaum's calls. The Advocacy Center for Persons with Disabilities primarily employs attorneys who represent disabled Floridians who are having trouble getting the services they need.

My first assignment is to write about hurricane preparedness. I think that this is a strange topic, as it is more practical living skills-oriented and less related to legal or administrative advocacy. I hope that this does not degenerate to all practical living skills topics, as I really wanted to help the disabled fight for their rights. When the supervisors learned how far I would have to travel from my Biscayne Gardens home to their Hollywood office, they offered to let me telecommute, pending approval from Dr. G. (who seems to be cool with the idea). (Spring 2007)

Evelyn's journal illustrates the navigational difficulties of integrating Asperger's students into writing programs. She is an articulate, thoughtful writer who possesses fine control over her language. However, her disability greatly impeded her ability to acquire

an internship at a newspaper or magazine, which would require her to go on interviews and interact with strangers who might be put off by the traits of her disability (excessive talking, inability to read social cues, and hand tics). Moreover, her journal reveals that even within organizations that cater to those with disabilities, like Advocacy Center for Persons with Disabilities, her supervisors preferred that she work outside the office and submit her work electronically. Evelyn's journal also demonstrates my university's underlying Catholic mission—to be of use. Evelyn recognizes that interning at this organization requires her to be an agent of change, understanding that with her literacy and expertise come the social responsibilities to advocate for others. This sort of socially responsible thinking is not only the goal of higher education but is also indicative of the kind of work we are doing in rhetoric and composition, empowering writers to use their critical thinking skills to advance social justice issues.

Like many students, Evelyn was hoping that her experience at the internship would eventually lead to a job offer, but it did not. While Gloria Weiner, the Senior Advocate and Evelyn's site supervisor at Advocacy Center for People with Disabilities, praised Evelyn's writing, she admitted that she didn't think Evelyn "could be in a conventional work setting" because "she's so typical Asperger's; she cannot stop talking."

Those of us who are struggling to integrate these students into the university environment have to recognize that even support organizations do not fully accept the unique challenges offered by these students. Nor are they willing to make the necessary financial and social investment in retaining such individuals within the work force. Moreover, Evelyn's presence in our writing program posed yet another dilemma: other writing faculty members had difficulty acclimating Evelyn into their classroom environment, and Evelyn's participation in a multimedia writing class proved disastrous when she failed to return valuable video equipment and told the professor that she had given it to her landlord as "collateral" until she could pay her rent. This professor found Evelyn's presence highly disruptive and contended that, "Seminar discussion is fatally compromised when it includes a student who has no grasp of social cues." Further, like many faculty members addressing those with special needs, my colleague felt ill-prepared for the strain of having an Asperger's student in the classroom. "Professors need to be trained to deal with this issue," he asserted, and at present, the university was not equipped to provide the necessary support structures for both faculty and students. Here is the rub: good intentions do not equip faculty with the skills to address the varied needs of these students. And even with the presence of a strong Disability Services division on campus, ultimately, faculty shoulder the burden of serving the diverse needs of these students.

Practical Advice for Working with Autistic Students

Faculty need, at minimum, practical advice for working with autistic students. Of course, there are no firm guidelines, and what has worked for me as an educator and writing administrator might not be applicable to others and their faculty. At the same time, below are some starting points to a discussion that must happen if we are to actively include all students in higher education:

1. Encourage disclosure, but learn to work around it if the student refuses to get an

- Accommodation Memo; once a student discloses, not only to the teacher, but to the class, there is a general sense of empathy and understanding.
2. Work within the local community—ultimately, like the rest of the student population, autistic students are in college to learn a profession, and they need access to job sites.
 3. Provide portfolio opportunities—let the autistic student demonstrate a range of writing skills.
 4. If there's a school newspaper, encourage the student to participate.
 5. Allow students to tape record lectures, or encourage other students to take notes for them.
 6. Provide an array of writing outlets—webzines, university literary journals, church newsletters. Encourage writing in as many venues as possible.
 7. Consult with your Office of Disability Services. Never try and handle a difficult task without guidance.
 8. Allow the student longer periods to complete tasks.
 9. Assist the student in getting into the habit of going to the Writing Center to get additional support services.
 10. Find out if your university has an affiliation with support organizations such as College Learning Experience that offers classes in "College Politics." This kind of support allows Asperger Spectrum Disorder students to learn academic etiquette.

I'd like to conclude with an idea postulated by Simon Baron-Cohen, who refers to those of us without autism as "mindreaders," an interesting metaphor, and one worth exploring in our discussion of students with autism. He says, "I don't mean that we have any special telepathy . . . I just mean that we have the capacity to imagine or represent states of mind that we or others might hold" (2). Our autistic students look to us to help them learn how to anticipate those states of mind that we and others hold, so they are not left in the dark about how to try to get others to respond with empathy toward them. If we are to embrace full integration—we who espouse a rhetoric of inclusion—it is time to move beyond the parameters of race and class and embrace a true rhetoric of difference, learning how to bridge the gap between us mindreaders and those whose brilliance is masked by a cloud of social solitude.



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The Forgiveness Classroom: Bringing Together Students from Both Sides of the Walls through Deep Listening

Ruth Henderson *

"Here they are, all sitting in a circle: The killers and the rapists, the drug dealers and the drug users, the men who stole from others and the men who beat their girlfriends. It is December. There is tinsel strung up on the walls of the visitors' room at Bay State Correctional Center in Norfolk. A sign above the double doors up front reads: 'Visits end here.' But there are no visitors here today, just prisoners. And one of them, Joseph Allen Jr., says he would like to talk about the time his father killed his mother."

"... Murdering mothers and abducting daughters are to many people unforgivable acts. But here, in a class called 'The Nature of Forgiveness' there is no such thing."

—Keith O'Brien, "The Hardest Word,"
Boston Globe Magazine, April 1, 2007

I have taught seminars and workshops on forgiveness at prisons in Massachusetts and Maine and at Pollsmoor prison in Cape Town, South Africa. This work was an outgrowth of my research on forgiveness in the aftermath of trauma. Keith O'Brien described my Boston University prison course in his *Boston Globe Magazine* article "The Hardest Word."¹ Since then, I've run my forgiveness seminar on the campuses of Boston University and Endicott College, and my most recent work involves bringing students together from both sides of the walls.²

My twelve-plus years of focus on forgiveness in the aftermath of trauma stems from my experience that compassion and forgiveness can serve to reduce violence significantly. Over the years, I have worked with many men who have committed extreme acts of violence, and who are now living in relative peace as they pursue their ongoing transformation. Many have achieved significant insight into the motivations behind their past behavior even as this ownership-taking process continues. If there is one thing above anything else that has helped them achieve their new way of living, it may be the experience of being listened to, and it is this crucial quality that I will focus on here. This deceptively simple tool of listening—deeply listening—has great power to effectively address much violence.

* Ruth Henderson's research and fieldwork centers on forgiveness in the aftermath of trauma and the role that narrative plays in the forgiveness process. Her work takes her to South Africa, Germany, Israel, and into New England prisons where she has worked as an arts therapist and educator for over twelve years. She created a seminar on forgiveness for incarcerated men through Boston University's Prison Education Program, and she now teaches this course on college campuses.

1. *Boston Globe Magazine*, April 1, 2007. See http://www.boston.com/news/globe/magazine/articles/2007/04/01/the_hardest_word/

2. The incarcerated men who participated in this meeting had participated in a one-day forgiveness workshop with me. They were not part of the college seminar I teach in prison. Their responses to the material were no different than those of the inmates in my seminars.

The following is presented not as a model to replicate, but as an essay designed to stimulate reflection on the role that listening can play in addressing the root causes of violence and an invitation for readers to explore how they might encourage deeper listening in their teaching practice. Here, I use the term *practice* in its broader sense, as when we speak of spiritual practice. For me, teaching is a sacred experience.

My Pedagogical Approach

Keith O'Brien describes the openness of the educational approach I use in this seminar, which was employed in both my prison course and my on-campus classes:

Forgiveness . . . requires deep thought about the past. But whether they actually learned to forgive themselves or others was up to them, Henderson told the men. Their grades were not dependent on that. The men could even take the class pass-fail if they wanted . . . All she asked them to do was really consider things, walk away with some insight, and respect the men in the circle. (47)

The flexibility of this approach, the seeming absence of rules, is heretical to the instruction-oriented, outcome-based pedagogies that dominate education today. Yet the less I was concerned with "instruction" and "results," the more I was available to listen to the students, the more learning seemed to occur. While this may sound more like therapy, and I have no doubt that this educational experience was therapeutic for some, this was very much an academic course. The listening I was doing—that all of us in the class were doing—was sparked by reading and writing assignments, student discussion, current events and possibly, on occasion, last night's dream.

When Parker Palmer points out that teaching can create an extraordinary kind of space, Mary Rose O'Reilley responds:

For what, we wonder? Well, for whatever has to happen. The act of contemplation begins, for each of us, simply in creating a space . . . After twenty-five years of teaching it takes all the courage I have to keep silence. . . . Something can rush in, something we did not plan and cannot control; how each of us, students and teachers, experiences these openings will differ. (6)

This approach is often demanding, and certainly can be frightening at times, but the openness of this kind of teaching can enable the kind of learning that stays with students throughout their lives. I was fortunate enough to experience this as a student in some formal educational settings, and so it was easier for me to develop this approach in my college teaching.³

O'Reilley further describes the openness of her teaching approach, which is very much in accordance with my educational values and methods, whether I taught the forgiveness course in prisons or on a college campus:

Pedagogy emphasizes technique; spirituality addresses who we are . . . when we talk about teaching within a contemplative frame of reference, I think we should keep our

3. My graduate school education was interdisciplinary and learner-centered—essential elements which enabled me to create the curriculum that I teach.

prescriptions to a minimum.

Good teachers . . . seldom tell you how to do whatever it is they do Dance teacher [Arthur Murray] did not paint little feet on the floor That's why, approached in one way, it's so hard to figure out what he was teaching, and approached in another, so easy. *It's easy if you just dance and get the feeling of the process from within the process itself* [emphasis mine].

So please don't try anything I've done . . . rather . . . follow the deepest leadings of your own heart . . . let methodology follow from the particular (this student, this hour, this blue spruce) rather than from the world of theory. (14)

As a scholar-practitioner, I offer my work as a *poetics of forgiveness*. By this I mean that my approach has more to do with the creative experience of poetry than it does with the construction of a fixed theory or argument. My approach is best understood as a *creative work*, the application of which has moved me beyond the limits of a conventional academic course. The creation of my forgiveness seminar was, for me, the creation of a poem. It is a kind of artistic creation, akin to a work of theatre, where every performance is unique, and dependent upon many actors. I understand my pedagogy itself as a living, breathing thing, not a static theory. And because of this, I invite readers to read about my seminar in the way a poet might read a poem: with the analytical aspect taking a back seat, still in the car, so to speak, but letting intuition drive.

While I am very intuitive and foster intuitive experience in my classroom, there *are* some instructional suggestions that I use from time to time, but they are small, simple and, like O'Reilley's approach, come out of the moment. For example, in the beginning of the semester, I talk a little bit about how one can use silence by drawing upon common meditation practices, such as recognizing thoughts as they interrupt the focus on your breath, and the compassionate detachment from those thoughts by acknowledging them and then letting them go. Easier said than done!

Wendell Berry offers spiritual instructions about how to enter the consciousness of creativity and contemplation in "How to Be a Poet," which is a listening we may bring to other people or to the *page*, whether we are writing or reading:

Make a place to sit down.

Sit down. Be Quiet

Breathe with unconditional breath
the unconditioned air.

Shun electric wire.

Communicate slowly. Live
a three-dimensional life;
stay away from screens.

Accept what comes from silence.

Make the best you can of it.

Of the little words that come

out of the silence, like prayers

prayed back to the one who prays,

make a poem that does not disturb the silence
from which it came.

In my own education, I discovered that contemplative silence as a learning process not only enabled deep listening, but just as importantly, it enabled *action* that came from awareness and clarity. My research on forgiveness was developed through qualitative investigation of the subject and later in collaboration with my inmate-students through teaching the seminar. This forgiveness work then developed further in collaboration with my college-campus students, as the course expanded its reach. Real education, to my

mind, consists of developing insights and discoveries that are acted upon. But what those actions are, I leave up to the student.

Forgiveness involves not just the mind, but the heart—many would say the *soul*. My seminar, whose title evolved to *The Experience of Forgiveness: Psychological, Sociological and Spiritual Perspectives*,⁴ was designed from this premise. This broader, interdisciplinary approach has been met with great appreciation and also with great resistance. Many students on both sides of the walls expressed a yearning to bring their “whole selves” into the classroom. Some academic administrators have been very encouraging of this approach. Others have found it quite threatening. Overcoming resistance from the system—both in the prisons and in academia—has always been more taxing than doing the actual work with the students, but the students have always made it worth it.

My Background and How I Developed the Seminar

My passion for working with prisoners began as an undergraduate at Boston University, where I took an English course with Professor Elizabeth (“Ma”) Barker, who had founded the BU Prison Education Program (PEP). Barker invited my class to a poetry reading at Norfolk prison (where Malcolm X learned to read), and I was enraptured immediately. Stunned by the intelligence, creativity, and moral sensitivity of the incarcerated men that I met, I started volunteering at the prison. Upon graduation, I co-taught an acting course at Norfolk in 1989, and this course inspired me to get a master’s degree in arts therapy, where I focused on working with incarcerated men. Among the prisons I’ve worked in are Bridgewater State Hospital (of Fred Wiseman’s *Titicut Follies* infamy) and the Treatment Center for the Sexually Dangerous.

One day, while working inside, I started wondering about the rehabilitative process for the *victims* of these men. At that point, I left my prison work to earn a doctorate in narrative studies, focusing my research on forgiveness. After investigating the stories of victims’ healing experiences through forgiveness outside the prison setting, I returned to work with inmates again. In this way, I’ve come full circle.

I taught the seminar for three semesters behind the walls and then started teaching the forgiveness course on college campuses. There, I began to dream about doing what my mentor Elizabeth Barker had done—bringing students into the prison with me. The opportunity arose at Endicott College, when a group of students in my forgiveness seminar asked me if I’d work with them through their Student Peace Alliance chapter. Before describing the experience of going into the prison with the Endicott students, let me further describe the forgiveness seminar they were taking.

The forgiveness seminar I designed was a hybrid program combining education, therapy and spirituality. I based my course in an academic environment because it had all the elements of a conventional academic course, such as assigned readings, final papers and grades, but the hybrid nature of the course enabled students to include both their

4. The course name was changed when I extended the seminar to the Boston University campus and then used the new name when I brought the course to Endicott College. I chose to change the name to provide a more comprehensive description of the course than the original title afforded. It is important to note that the course content did *not* change, for the most part, when the course was brought to campus.

feeling experience and their spiritual insights in their learning processes. While the course that I created may be unique in this respect, the principles and practices that governed my work are the most basic forms of human caring. They are used by people of all walks of life, throughout the world, every day—to great effect. Yet these principles are often lost today in the flux of complex socio-economic and political dynamics, resulting in much dehumanization. Comprehensive analysis of the harsh forces that fuel such violent dynamics and the inhuman treatment of individuals are beyond the scope of my expertise.

What I *can* offer is a glimpse of how I worked with men who have committed extreme acts of violence and who are now living in relative peace. I present myself as a witness to these men, who have achieved significant insight into the motivations behind their past behavior and who continue to engage in their ongoing transformation. The basic tools of compassion—like being carefully listened to—have helped them achieve their new way of living, and it is these simple tools that need to be rediscovered. It is my conviction that only by recommitting to these basic forms of compassion will it be possible to effectively address the violence that plagues us.

As forensic psychiatrist James Gilligan and others have pointed out, we know how to prevent violence; we simply have been unwilling to pay the cost of doing so.⁵ It is my hope that reflection on the basic elements of human compassion can serve to stimulate renewed awareness and inspiration for addressing violence in its various forms through the exercise of deeper listening.

Seminar Specifics: Details of Its Contents

To give you a clearer picture of what we were actually doing in the seminar, let me provide some of the nuts and bolts of the course. The following course catalog description and the questions that guided the classroom discussion were used in all of the college forgiveness seminars I have taught—on both sides of the walls.

Course Description

This seminar explores the psycho/ social/ spiritual dimensions of the individual's experience of forgiveness. The forgiveness process is investigated through the theoretical work of psychologists such as Carl Jung and Robert Enright, and spiritual/ political leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr., the Dalai Lama, Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu. Individual narratives by forgivers are considered and analyzed in relation to the frames provided by these researchers and political activists. Through readings, journals and group presentations, students will explore both the beneficial and problematic

5. Gilligan states "My own work over the past twenty-five years, in violence prevention programs with the most violent homicidal . . . men that our unusually violent American society produces. . . has convinced me that it is possible to eliminate most of the violence that now plagues us if we really want to. I am far from alone in reaching the conclusion that violence prevention is being limited more by lack of will than by lack of know-how. Elliott Currie in one of the best American studies of criminal violence that has yet been written also concludes ' . . . it is not because the problem is overwhelmingly mysterious or because we do not know what to do, but because we have decided that the benefits of changing those conditions aren't worth the costs.'" (22)

aspects of forgiving. Students will develop a warranted, personal position on forgiveness and its limitations in personal and social life.

Questions that Guided Classroom Discussion

The following open-ended questions were each given as separate, written assignments, which were then discussed in small groups and later brought back to the class by group reporters:

- What is forgiveness?
- Who is forgiveness for?
- Is forgiveness a response of weakness or strength?
- What are the benefits of forgiving?
- What are some of the ways people forgive?
- What are the obstacles to forgiving?
- According to Martin Luther King Jr., why should we love our enemies?
- Also according to King, how does one love one's enemies?
- What is love?

Students in all of my forgiveness classes wrote final papers consisting of two parts: part one was academic (some variation of “choose a leader we studied, focus on a passage from the reading, and discuss its transformative significance in terms of individual and societal forgiveness”). Part two was a personal response to the content of the seminar. Here, students focused on the most significant insight they had gained from the course—their *a-ha* experience, describing what they learned and why it was meaningful to them. The prisoners worried over their papers as all good students do. From an academic perspective, the inmates were diligent students, even as some of them struggled to write effectively.

When I taught the class on campus, I wondered if it would have the vitality that it did in prison. But the students on campus rose to the occasion when offered the opportunity to integrate the academic and the personal. In their final papers, they fulfilled the academic requirements even as one student wrote about forgiveness and the death of a parent, and another described his struggle to forgive an alcoholic father after he abandoned the family.

Listening 101

Early in the course, all students in my forgiveness seminars are introduced to the tool that is fundamental to this educational process: the crucial ability to listen deeply. The first reading assigned is Carl Rogers' “Communication: Its Blocking and its Facilitation.” In this article, Rogers explains the reason listening is so difficult is that if we listen with an open heart and mind, we might have to change not only what we do in the world, but our very sense of who we are. Rogers gives the example of listening to a Communist during the height of the Cold War (for today, think *terrorist*). Nothing could be more threatening than to have our sense of self questioned at the core, and so we often half-listen or listen only to formulate our counter-argument.

To address this issue, Rogers suggests that when talking with someone whom we disagree with, we do not say anything about our own perspective until we have been

able to reiterate—to the satisfaction of the person we are having a dialogue with—that person's viewpoint. Rogers also suggests that we actively seek out those aspects of the other person's position that we can value and acknowledge these things. In this way, we begin to empathize. This article had a profound effect on many students who worked to practice the openness of this kind of deep listening.

Students cultivated their listening skills through a variety of means. They developed the practice of *listening to oneself* through journal writing, *listening to one another* through group dialogue, and *listening for the spiritually transcendent* (however that is envisioned) through meditation. These listening skills are akin to what Peter Elbow describes as the development of *in-dwelling*, where the language of story and poetry help us experience alien ideas.⁶ Students reflected on the diverse narratives in the reading as well as the stories of each other as if making them their own.

Learners in college as well as in prison grew to love the practice and benefits of deep listening, but both groups also struggled to develop this difficult set of skills. One challenge concerned meditation, which I introduced to classes by giving a very basic overview of the range of meditation options. Some of these approaches we would try in class. I am no expert in meditation and told them so. This openness enabled a strong connection with students who appreciated my transparency. In the prison, I would often draw out those students who were experienced meditators, inviting them to lead the short meditation portion of class.

Classes on both sides of the walls had members who found it difficult to meditate. In both situations, I approached the issue in the same way: by affirming their experience and encouraging them to do what they felt comfortable doing, which might mean turning to reading or writing when the meditation became uncomfortable, or by quietly going off to the bathroom if they wanted to take a break. Giving these options to students always addressed the problem, and most stayed and did some meditation, once they knew they didn't "have to."

At times, students on both sides of the walls found it challenging to listen during classroom dialogue. I used *meditation as a conflict resolution tool* to address these occasions. For example, in my seminar on the Boston University campus, significant tension arose as we discussed forgiveness in relation to the Holocaust and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And in Norfolk prison, one student confronted another who was wearing sunglasses, accusing him of hiding from the class. In each situation, tension escalated, and as voices began to rise, I stopped them for a teaching moment and said we could use meditation as a tool to diffuse the interpersonal conflict. Any way they wanted to use the meditative silence was fine, I told them, "but the only thing you should not do is to rehearse your rebuttal to the person with whom you don't agree."

Since I had encouraged students to use the classroom as a laboratory, some student or other would make mention of Carl Rogers' communication strategy, quote a line from Martin Luther King Jr., or cite another figure we were studying. I always found it remarkable to see how students would work on such profound levels in these moments and how they would try to work as a group to resolve the tension. "We love you anyway,"

6. For an excellent article on the practical ways learners can enter into the perspectives of foreigners, see Peter Elbow's article in the bibliography.

one prisoner called out when the sunglass-clad student refused to take his glasses off. By the next class, the student had shed the sunglasses.

Group silence was powerful. During these times that tension arose, I lengthened our meditation period. Meditation served us well in calming things down in order to return to the heated issues later on. In the five semesters that I taught this course, several students who started to meditate outside class told me they were able to handle conflict in a more productive way as a result of meditating.

Another benefit of meditation for some of the incarcerated men (and I'm sure for the on-campus students to some degree) concerned the opportunity to work with their fear. In meditation, the men were directly confronted with themselves. Many of them have run away from this experience much of their lives, and so it can be very disturbing to face themselves in the silence of meditation. For some of the men, it is terrifying to do this. Since much violence can occur when an offender feels frightened, the meditation exercise gives men an opportunity to be scared and this time, not act out aggressively from their fear—to learn how to cope with fear differently. As one of my students once said about this issue, "In the old days, when I was afraid, I made *you* afraid." Fear of silent meditation did not appear to be an obvious issue on campus, but fear had to be worked through for the five students in my Endicott forgiveness class who wanted to go into the prison.

Preparing Endicott College Students to Meet Inmates

We met as a group three or four times to prepare ourselves for the encounter. In addition to using short, meditative silences to strengthen our listening ability, I asked them to keep journals of their thoughts and feelings about going in, particularly to write about any fears they had about meeting the prisoners.

We discussed their fears together. One student expressed fear of not knowing how he would respond to the prisoners. Would he have genuine compassion for them, or would he appear judgmental? Would he actually *be* judgmental? And just as important, would they judge *him* as a suburban kid who knew nothing of hardship and therefore couldn't be taken seriously? Another student was concerned about whether she would be able to "be herself" with them. She wondered how to be friendly and open while maintaining appropriate boundaries. For example, she was concerned about small talk leading to the question of where she lived, which happened to be in the state of Maine, and she did not want the prisoners to know this.

I listened and provided a space for students to respond to each other's concerns, offering my experience when I thought it would be helpful. This included telling the students what to expect in terms of getting into the prison (locking their personal possessions up, signing in, and going through a series of locked gates). I invited every question, which we discussed until all said they felt reasonably comfortable. By the last time we met, the group had gotten close and students indicated they felt fairly confident about going in, although, as one student put it, "It's like going on a roller coaster for the first time—there is still the unknown that won't go away until after you've done it."

This field trip was by invitation only. I chose five outstanding Endicott students from my on-campus forgiveness course. I knew them well, and they got along with each other well. Three of the students had just founded the Student Peace Alliance on campus, and

the other two students had been in other classes with me.

Each of the students I invited to be a part of the group said they'd like to go into the prison. I then asked them to talk it over with their parents. After they had a chance to talk with their parents, I called to talk with each parent for a half hour or more, giving them a picture of exactly what we would be doing and making sure I'd given them ample opportunity to express any question or concern they had.

Preparing Inmates to Meet Endicott College Students

Preparing the inmates for the encounter was fairly simple. I had given a short workshop on forgiveness to their unit of 30-odd men prior to this, which was well received. So the men in this sex offender treatment program had a sense of who I was and how I worked. They had sent me a thank-you card via the program director Dr. Barbara Schwartz. Dr. Schwartz is an international expert in the treatment of sex offenders. She and I first met at the Treatment Center for the Sexually Dangerous in 1993, when I worked there as an arts therapist.⁷ In preparation for this proposed meeting, I sent the following letter through Dr. Schwartz:

Dear Rule Program Men,

Thank you for the card you made me. It means so much. I, too, found our meeting together remarkable. You all had such open hearts and spoke your truths, whatever that truth was. I was so touched that I'm returning with some students from my on-campus forgiveness course.

These students have been listening to me as I have told them about you. They understand that you are all still human, regardless of what you have done in the past. They are eager to meet you, with open minds and with compassion in their hearts.

Now, I ask you, what would you like to say to my students?

You may want to begin by telling your story. You can tell them about who you are—where you have come from and who you are working to become. I recommend that you begin to reflect on this and start writing down your reflections in preparation for our meeting. [Some men wrote, some did not.] It would be good to bring your written reflections to the meeting, for you might want to read them to the group as a way to begin our discussion.

Remember that this experience is about developing understanding and connection through dialogue. Compassion and love are at the heart of this meeting.

There will be five students with me and I would like to have five volunteers to meet with them. If you have any questions, please convey them to Barbara Schwartz, and I will respond through her.

I am very excited to have this opportunity of learning and growth.

See you soon!

Going to Another World: A Narrative of the Face-to-Face Encounter

The following narrative of the trip to the prison is largely comprised of quotes that came from written reflections made by both Endicott College (EC) students and the

7. Dr. Schwartz was the clinical director there at the time. I knew of her renown prior to taking the job at the Treatment Center and accepted the position with the stipulation that I receive individual supervision under her. She later served on my doctoral committee.

prisoners after the experience. Occasional comments of my own experience as facilitator are also interspersed.

Jill, a dark-haired sophomore with brown eyes, begins:

When we took the trip up to Windham for a very unconventional field trip . . . I was not mentally ready yet . . . a little lost . . . I had no grasp on my feelings. I was about to compassionately listen to five men who committed sex crimes. Not that I live a textbook life, but this still was a weird concept for me. Once we drove into the prison parking lot, I was most drawn to . . . how funny these buildings and barbed wire looked set in the middle of so much open land . . . set into the rolling hills . . . It hit me as strangely beautiful.

I know something has been a big influence in my life when I remember the little details. . . .⁸

Teri, a slight guy in an oxford shirt and dark dress pants, commented on the meditation circle we held in the parking lot just before going into the prison: "I felt a strong bond between all of us; as if we were about to share something sacred and wouldn't let foreign influence destroy it . . . It was as if [we] . . . were brothers and sisters . . . this bond helped my confidence . . . going to a world I had never been in."

Late afternoon, my students and I entered the gatehouse, where everyone entering the prison goes to register, lock up their personal possessions, get their hand stamped, and in our case, await our escort. Elizabeth, an EC sophomore with a confident gaze, describes her experience there:

While others were in the bathroom a guard [said] something . . . that made me feel a great deal of empathy towards those we were going to see. He asked us why we had chosen to go to see *that* block of prisoners; he told us they were the most undesirable people in the prison . . . *the sex offenders*. He said that . . . with such disdain . . . I looked away, not sure how to answer this man.

Elizabeth's experience in this early moment was the exact opposite from mine. "God bless you for bringing those kids in here," I heard a woman's voice call out to me from the door as I washed my hands in the women's bathroom.

A guard with a friendly smile escorted us out of the gatehouse, behind the walls, and down a long stretch of open space toward the building that housed the sex offender treatment program. Jill continues: "I felt a surge of adrenaline run through me as we walked into the common room. . . . I think that was my body saying 'you know, you can still run.' Or maybe it was saying 'this is about to be a really important experience.'"

We went into the small meeting room where Barbara Schwartz works with the men. Painted on the wall was a giant, multi-colored circle, a diagram describing the deviant cycle of sexual abuse: "Triggers [what instigates the abuse], low risk situations, negative emotional states, medium risk situations, planning, grooming [victims], high risk situations, offense, transitory guilt, pretend normal." Each of these categories was subdivided to promote recognition of thoughts, feelings and behaviors at each of the stages.

Barbara Schwartz, who uses an electrical scooter, had her service dog, "Tembo" next

8. All student and inmate names are pseudonyms. Permission was obtained to cite their written commentary.

to her on the linoleum floor. An inmate in his 20s, balding, in a white tee-shirt and institution-issued pants, came into the room with a vanilla ice cream cone. With every lick the inmate took, Tembo grew more pleading. After a few more licks, the young guy bent over and offered the rest to Tembo. Everyone cheered. None of us could have imagined in advance how important this simple moment would be to our unusual encounter, but it broke the ice. We immediately had a shared, human experience—and something nonthreatening to talk about!

We sat in a circle: five incarcerated men, five EC students (three young women and two young guys), Barbara Schwartz, and I. I read aloud the letter I'd sent the men, which served as a reminder that this encounter was occurring in the context of compassion and open-mindedness. I told them that I was open to whatever any one had to say, so long as it was respectful and came from the heart.⁹

Teri described how his nervousness began to fade when I started: "As soon as you began to talk, being familiar with your voice, I already felt a lot calmer. . . . It felt good to see how excited the men were, you could see it in their smiles They looked at you for the most part, I think because at that time, they weren't sure how we would react. . . ."

The inmates ranged in age from early 20s to early 60s. Most took great care in their grooming and dressing habits, although their dressing options were limited to the institution uniform of blue jeans, light blue shirts and grey sweat shirts.

An inmate named Jared, 30ish, with wavy, dark hair, described first meeting the EC students: "I must tell you, I was scared as hell, sitting in a room with a group of people I didn't know and wondering if I would say something to cause even one of you to think worse of a sex offender."

"I did not know . . . what to expect from the students that came with you," Al, a prisoner in his late forties, would later confirm. "The atmosphere in the room not only allowed, but also invited me to feel more comfortable, more at ease, and to share openly and honestly. Soon after we came into the room, I realized that your students had not journeyed here to put us down or to judge us."

We all introduced ourselves by first names only. Barbara suggested that the EC students also include their majors and class years. A few of them added a small comment in their introductions, such as: "I'm Sharon, I'm a sophomore, a nursing major, and I want you to know that I'm coming here to listen and that I don't believe everything I hear on TV."¹⁰ During our preparation period Sharon had shared her fear that the group would have a difficult time getting into conversation. Now she was leading us in this important moment.

At Barbara's suggestion, when the men introduced themselves, they included the crime that had brought them to prison. In the treatment program which these men were immersed in, they were being taught to own what they had done. So out came their crimes: rape, sexual molestation of a step-child, murder in addition to rape.

But some inmates also added short comments to their unusual introductions.

9. Barbara Schwartz added that it would be best for the men not to discuss their crimes in sexually graphic terms. She needed to say this since, as part of her therapy program, the men *do* speak in that manner.

10. This dialogue is a paraphrase.

Elizabeth recalls:

Max's first words really stuck with me; I think they always will. He said 'I am not this place.' He went on to say that he liked to coach sports for kids and that he had a family who loved him. It brought out a real side of him . . . and I related to him much like in the thoughts of the Dalai Lama, as a person who sought out happiness and wished to avoid suffering . . . I found them to be very polite and articulate people, who craved to be heard, and I was more than happy to listen.

As a facilitator, I was relieved to notice that when the inmates named their crimes, none of the students flinched. I was thankful for the quiet meditation we had practiced together, both in the parking lot beforehand and throughout the semester. Sharon describes her experience of listening to the inmates:

While sitting with the men, I could feel myself listening more attentively than ever in my life. It felt like I was meditating in a way because my attention stayed solely on the men and not on thoughts that often tried to sneak in. Such power radiated from the words they spoke that any planned reaction to what they might say did not follow through, especially when Steve told his story.

Steve, a tall and slender man, had a small, folded paper in his hand, which he kept before him, ready to consult if necessary. I asked if any of the inmates wanted to start us off, perhaps by reading a statement they might have prepared for the meeting. Steve jumped in. He told the group that in order to explain how he came to prison—specifically, how he had committed his crimes—he'd first need to tell us where he came from. He said:

I'm a perfect example of what can happen to a person when you keep secrets about sexual abuse. My whole family life was very dysfunctional; our father was a sexual abuser, raping my sisters almost every night. . . . We never told, and the abuse went on for years. . . . I myself had become a sexual abuser later on in my life because of all the secrets I kept. The hardest thing for me while in prison was . . . to face myself and to come to terms with the bad things that I have done in my past. . . . I hurt a lot of people.

As a child . . . I was filled with hate. By the age of 10 . . . I was stealing and getting into fights with bullies at school. By the time I was a teenager, I was angry . . . not being able to protect my siblings from my dad . . . I trained myself not to feel hurt when I was about 16. . . . In the long run it made things worse. . . . It took me nearly 30 years in prison to change. . . . I've begun to think differently about others and myself. God helped me through one suicide attempt back in 1983. I now read my Bible every day and night . . . I know I can call upon Him any time . . . as well as my friends in the Rule program.

Steve explained to the group that in addition to sexually abusing others, he was also in prison for having killed someone. Although he didn't go into the details then, Barbara Schwartz later told me that he had killed a man as a way to "practice" killing his father—his distorted idea to save his sisters. He then turned himself in to the police for the crime.

Sharon describes her experience of hearing Steve's narrative:

I always thought I would react negatively and shut off whomever I spoke to who uttered the words, 'I murdered a man.' This can be contributed to my thoughts on violence However, as those exact words slid out of Steve's mouth, nothing happened. No negative

emotion, no disgust, nothing. I accepted it without any second thought, and to me that proved I already was growing from this experience. To look into the eyes of not only a murderer but a sexual offender, I felt two powerful emotions: trust and hope.

Other inmates went on to speak of their experiences prior to treatment, and students responded by offering supportive remarks or by asking questions for further understanding. At this point the group was running itself. The inmates in the room started talking about a poem that another man in their treatment unit had written. Barbara had one of the inmates get the poem, and she read it aloud, including the lines:

Let me look through the eyes of the innocent one I hurt,
Let me sort through all my lies, for once put her needs first,

Allow myself to feel her pain, when at first I broke her trust,
Take me back to that night again, feeling empathy is a must.

Let me feel her shame and pain, I will keep it inside my heart,
Never to forget her eyes of fear, when I tore her childhood apart.¹¹

With Steve's story and the poem, we all entered a level of listening that defies explanation. I sensed it in the others, and I knew that I had entered into a prayerful listening, myself—the kind of listening I do when I know I am going to hear some dangerous thing that is far bigger than I am. This kind of listening protects me from details that could destroy me if I didn't access a greater Presence. As a result, the deplorable details of experiences that should never have occurred were somehow absorbed into this deep listening and instead of feeling overwhelmed by the situation being described, there was, what I would describe as a *lightness* in the room.

"I'm glad I got caught," one of the prisoners said.

EC student Corey, slim and soft-spoken, later recalled: "I thought prisoners had no remorse. While this may be true of some . . . it was most certainly not true of this man or any of the men I talked to. All of them faced what they had done with eyes wide open, and they were helped to not turn away from the pain they saw before them."

They were *helped to not turn away from the pain* through Barbara Schwartz's fine work, and in that moment, I believe, through our group's compassionate listening.

Then, the inmates Jared and Max started talking about the role that their spirituality plays in their transformation process. Both men have adopted Native American spiritual practices. I was aware of this important aspect of Jared's life because earlier, when I had facilitated a forgiveness workshop, he had given me as a parting present, a bird's feather, which had been sanctified in a ritual. Now Jared and Jill were talking about Native American spirituality. As Jill asked more questions, inmate Max started sharing *his* experience of this spirituality. Jill and Max went back and forth in a clear and close exchange.

Max pointed to a leather braid he wore around his neck and spoke about how he had made it and the importance it bore for him, spiritually. He took it off his neck and turned toward Jill. "I would like to give this to you," he said, "if it's OK with Barbara." Barbara nodded and Max turned to look for Jill's response to the offer. "I would be honored," Jill

11. With permission of the author

affirmed.¹² The two of them stood up and in the middle of our circle, Max placed it on Jill's neck without touching her body in any way.

As the time drew toward a close, I asked each person to reflect upon the experience as a whole. Inmate Jared wrote: "Thank you for giving me the chance to share with you who I am as a man, rather than the bad choice so many people define me by." Steve, who had shared his story so comprehensively, described his experience of the encounter concisely: "I was very touched . . . It gave me a chance to tell my story to the students and to show we are still humans, even though our act was monstrous. Our goal is no more victims."

EC student Teri, who in our early preparatory discussions had feared he wouldn't feel sincere compassion for the inmates he met, describes how he felt after this experience: "The time we spent at the prison was one of the most genuine . . . of my life. It was like a natural high that you can only find when you try to help someone or something in the world. I could see it in all of us when we were leaving; we all didn't want to go. . . I often find my mind going to the same place; it is sunset and I am back at Dorm 2 with the inmates. We are standing right outside the door, watching the sunset. It is very peaceful. It reminds me of a poem from the book *Ceremony*, by Leslie Marmon Silko":

Sunset,
accept this offering,
Sunset.

Debriefing Process for Endicott College Students

A week after our trip to Windham prison, four of the five Endicott students met with me. Jill shared her frustration at her roommates' response: "They asked me how it was, but then after I said a couple of sentences, they were distracted and turned away. I was telling them one of the most important things that ever happened in my life, and no one was listening."¹³

Sharon agreed. "Being back on campus feels kind of surreal after that experience. It feels like what we did in there was real and what we do out here is unreal because it's superficial compared to that."

But Corey said he thought it was good for the others to know about the experience, and he felt that the students in our larger forgiveness class would be genuinely interested. Elizabeth said she'd be up for sharing with the forgiveness class. I recommended that those who wanted to share in class could, and those who didn't, wouldn't.

When I asked if any other insight or concern had come up since we last met, Corey said, "Well, it made me feel very vulnerable, and later, not in a good way." We discussed his discomfort with the discrepancy between who he was with the men and the façade he often presents at school. I encouraged him to regard himself with compassion.

Teri jumped in next "There on the hill where everything was so exposed . . . I felt exposed . . . It wasn't bad . . . just very powerful."

12. This dialogue is a close paraphrase.

13. This is a paraphrase based on notes of the conversation written directly after the discussion.

“Yes, we were all so vulnerable,” I said, “and it was that very vulnerability that kept us safe.” It has been my experience that when you have the clear motive of trying to be of service and when you empathize as much as you can with the inmates, it is the very permeable boundary of your psyche, created through empathy and the sense of service, that keeps you psychologically safe. This way, if someone wants to try and hurt you, it’s like a knife trying to cut water. Your very vulnerability turns you into water.

After reflecting together upon the prison visit, the students wrote comments. Corey offered this insight:

To hold a person accountable is right. To demonize that person for what they are being held accountable for is not. . . . The most dangerous person in the world is the person who has nothing to lose. When you prohibit a man who has committed a heinous crime from ever rejoining the human community, you create an alienated person that has no incentive to change his behavior.

And Jill wrote:

Throughout the process I have never doubted their humanity. But I don’t think I ever really looked at what their humanity would be like. . . . I never expected the men to be as vulnerable as they were. I’m working on the struggle of understanding how to have compassion for the perpetrator and the survivor or victim. What does it mean to say that you care about both of them? We are not raised to think that is possible. Sometimes I wonder if it is possible. But I know how I felt about those men after we met them and how I still feel when I’m writing this reflection. By caring for these men, it does not mean that I will stop putting all my heart towards helping the survivors of the trauma But I’m starting to see that it is an insult as well to neglect the perpetrator.

I sent the inmates the Endicott student’s responses to the experience, so the men could know how they had affected the students. I received the inmate’s responses to our meeting and shared them with the students at a later time. Jared’s comments were especially appreciated:

The hand shakes and kind words on your way out were genuine, real and moving. They showed me you all truly cared Words that were spoken that night [planted] deep roots in my life. I hope and pray you will never forget the power of our meeting, and that it has helped you all in some . . . profound way to understand there is goodness and love in even the darkest of places It did for me.

At the request of the EC students, our group also had a reunion at a restaurant near the College over a year-and-a-half later. After dinner, Elizabeth commented upon the fact that she would have liked to have a formal discussion about how we understood the prison experience. Here is Elizabeth’s assessment:

Two years later I can say that. . . going into the prisons with our group has made me a more open-minded individual . . . I have realized the root of the problem is much deeper than just their crime Our society has let these men fall through the cracks . . . The men I visited with in prison were often victims themselves. Prior to my visit I thought

that these men had committed these crimes of their own accord. And while you can argue they certainly did, I passionately feel that the abuse they suffered in their own lives has a direct correlation to their crime.

How has this experience changed my every day life? I would like to think that I am not so quick to judge the people around me. One never really knows someone else's suffering. . . . In the end, compassion is really the only thing that matters.

This is how the work continues.

Developing an Approach to Forgiveness Research and Practice

Over twelve years ago, when I first began my research on forgiveness in the aftermath of trauma, I investigated the existing literature on forgiveness research that had been done in the field of psychology thus far. At that time, I not only discovered a paucity of material concerning the subject, but came to see there were two glaring omissions concerning *research approaches* to the study of forgiveness. The research being done in the field emphasized forgiveness as a *cognitive process* and employed, almost exclusively—the standard cognitive methodological approach of positivist-empiricism. This focus emanated from the discipline of psychology, whose academic culture favors thinking over feeling, and the mind over the body.

My focus on forgiving in the aftermath of trauma had heightened my awareness of these issues since traumatic injury often has a profound impact on the body, and the traumatized body, in turn, deeply influences both cognition and emotion. It is not to say that researchers weren't endorsing research that examined the physiological aspects of forgiving. Rather, they had constructed intervention models of forgiveness that left little room for the body in the process. Further, their models had been designed to exclude traumatized people from their respective forgiveness programs.

When I examined how these psychologists worked with emotions, I ran into a similar limitation. As a writer and arts therapist, I discovered that research approaches to the study of forgiveness omitted adequate exploration of feeling experience. I found that cognitive-oriented social science approaches didn't offer enough ways to respectfully facilitate non-rational engagement concerning forgiveness. The arts, on the other hand, incorporate the world of dreams, visions, images, and intuition.

While much can be gained from standard social science quantitative research concerning forgiveness, qualitative approaches are able to get to the *heart* of the forgiveness experience in a way no statistical analysis ever can. Qualitative approaches typically include one-on-one interviews using open-ended questions. Here, it is possible for the interviewer to open himself or herself up to an engagement with the unknown through deep listening. With this attentiveness, people being interviewed can tell their stories.

While traditional social scientists often include interviewing in their research, it doesn't tend to have the level of openness I'm talking about here. The kind of listening that I'm speaking of involves a vulnerability on the listener's part. The person asking questions is so open that s/he may be profoundly changed by receiving the speaker's response—not just as a professional, but as a person.

Artistic research methodologies facilitate the discovery of many unique insights by including the humanity of the investigator-creators, rather than by trying to detach

themselves from their humanness. In this way, I experience the culture of the arts as having more integrity for forgiveness research. That is, the arts provide a more integrated approach.

But the arts offer even more to the forgiveness process. They provide vehicles for healing. In addition to facilitating deep feeling processes, they provide frameworks to express such experience through structures such as poetry, dance and music. Because expression is fundamental to healing, engagement in the arts is often inherently therapeutic for someone who has been injured.

As a writer, I was most aware of this in terms of storytelling. Still, I was stunned to discover just how crucial a role story plays in healing. I learned that narrative engagement wasn't just important to the healing process of novelists, but was fundamental to the therapeutic experience of a vast spectrum of people (such as those speaking at truth commissions, historic memorials and self-help groups). As the men spoke their truth in the forgiveness seminar, the course became a place to hear their stories and to hold them as sacred.

A Final Word on Theoretical Influences

Both my research and practice evolved in response to that which I was investigating. My research approach was eclectic and can be understood as an "emergent design," a term coined by Shulamit Reinharz, founding director of the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute at Brandeis University.

In creating a poetics of forgiveness, *imagination* became a tool in the research process. Subject matter took precedence over any pre-established, formally structured methodology. I served the subject and, through intuition, the subject taught me how it wanted to be investigated each day. Yet, there are several psychologists whose theoretical work has deeply influenced my way of working. Carl Jung, Judith Herman, James Gilligan, and Clark Moustakas have provided cornerstones that enabled me to build my research and practice.

Carl Jung's transpersonal psychology taught me how to work with spiritual matter in a way that was detached from metaphysical debate and offered students a validation of their various experiences and acknowledgement of the basic human need for spirituality. Forensic psychiatrist James Gilligan was the Medical Director at Bridgewater State Hospital, when I worked there as an arts therapist. His book, *Violence: Our Deadly Epidemic*, offers profound insights into the psychic terrain of violent men. Trauma psychiatrist Judith Herman provides the flip side of the equation of violence by outlining the therapeutic course trauma survivors generally take in their healing processes. While her work primarily highlights the experience of traumatized women, many of her findings not only apply to men, but also to male perpetrators, once we see they are also victims.

Finally, humanistic psychologist Clark Moustakas's transpersonal phenomenology and heuristic research methodology have had a major impact on how I approach my work. The major elements in Moustakas's transpersonal phenomenology are self-identification with the focus of inquiry, inner-dialoguing, heightened use of intuition, and indwelling. These elements have helped me understand the importance of Carl Rogers's deep listening on the profoundest level. The researcher or group facilitator seeks to put out of action her

preconceptions, theories, and ideas that would interfere with listening to and hearing the person in therapy from *his* perspectives and views. Such deep listening requires setting aside interfering moods, attachments, and concerns that intrude on the development of an open and fresh relationship with the person. Putting one's preconceptions aside and fully opening oneself to the new experience of listening to what the person has to say requires the commitment of significant energy. There is no substitute for the expenditure of such energy, if one wants to help the person transform.

On the other hand, the stages of Moustakas's heuristic process are immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis. As a writer, I found these latter stages to be congruent with the creative process of artists. One is paid a visit by the muse in the form of a powerful desire or a persistent pull to learn more about an issue, problem, or question. In spiritual terms, one might say a "call" is heard. Responding to the muse or call sets off a process where a student immerses himself in the subject of inquiry. This *immersion* in the material is followed by an *incubation* period, where the subject of inquiry is no longer the focus of the student's deliberate mental calculations. It is as if a seed has been planted, and it now lies in the ground until it is ready to sprout forth. It bursts forth only when it is ready, and with it comes the emergence of new insight. This *illumination* occurs spontaneously and is followed by an explication of the new insight, which is deepened as it is explained. This *explication* process is akin to a storytelling experience, where the storyteller, who begins the narrative, tentatively gains understanding as a result of telling the story. "A-ha moments" occur, and the explication of those moments naturally results. The seminar format I designed provided room for students to have incubation periods and to share their flashes of insight when they felt ready.

I am certain that my openness to the men I worked with played a substantial role in their willingness to be open and honest with me. This mutual openness was the ground of our exploration together. Clark Moustakas's deceptively simple tools enabled many creative, healing experiences. My use of them was equally creative in that I drew upon them spontaneously, and only when useful, for I had intuitively incorporated them into my own being.

The fruits of becoming present for another person's experience and deeply listening to *another* are life-changing. Such openness brings understanding, and deep understanding often brings a profound sense of personal peace. I know this peace. It is what fuels the work, which is bigger than I am. This kind of teaching enables me to continue learning how to listen and how to respond—and to watch people grow before my eyes.



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Writing as an Altered State of Consciousness: Process, Pedagogy, and Spirituality

Julie Kearney*

"When your Daemon is in charge, do not try to think consciously. Drift, wait, and obey. . . ."
—Rudyard Kipling

"Even if they do not originate in the heavens, [writing processes] certainly go beyond our intentions and our control, acquiring—with respect to the individual—a kind of transcendence."
—Italo Calvino

Writing-to-learn is often touted by composition scholars as one of the underlying goals of a writing class. This goal, however, is increasingly overshadowed by mainstream society's ideas about the main functions of writing: 1) that school-sanctioned writing should serve only the purpose of communication—the production of correct, clear, and well-organized prose for a variety of audiences and purposes; 2) that school-sanctioned writing should serve fundamental needs in our society by producing literate individuals who are able to adhere to correct business formats and conventions; and 3) that writing should serve to test (rather than *discover*) knowledge and can, for this purpose, be neatly packaged as a formula, ready for inspection. The 2008 report commissioned by Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, for example, while advocating more innovative course design and more assessment based upon student engagement, is still quick to remind us that, "[a]ccording to the most recent National Assessment of Adult Literacy . . . the percentage of college graduates deemed proficient in prose literacy has actually declined from 40 to 31 percent in the past decade" (*A Test* 19). Yet the link between proficient literacy (with its emphasis on correct conventions and effective communication) and writing-to-learn is implied in the same paragraph from the Spellings' report, which reveals: "These shortcomings have real-world consequences. Employers report repeatedly that many new graduates they hire are not prepared to work, lacking the critical thinking, writing, and problem-solving skills needed in today's workplaces" (*A Test* 19).

Many of the ideas concerning the function of writing—at least as they are manifested in the pedagogies of our schools and universities—reflect only the utilitarian and product-oriented notions of writing: proficient literacy, correct conventions, and effective communication. While each of these functions do have their own merits, reducing the function of writing to these few serviceable aspects neglects valuable teaching approaches that can promote more proficient critical thinking and problem solving, as well as more proficient writing. These approaches are most often found in the theories of process writing pedagogies, particularly expressivist approaches to teaching writing, which tend to place as much emphasis (if not more) on the process of writing and writing-to-learn

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as they do on the product. Unfortunately, given the common beliefs concerning the utilitarian goals of writing, expressivist approaches are often rejected as not sufficiently rigorous for respectable composition classrooms. In addition, the experiential research methods associated with expressivist approaches are often regarded with suspicion, as is the empirical data concerning the writing process that often focuses on the enigmatic concept of writing and the unconscious.

So, in an attempt to reinvigorate the investigations into writing-to-learn, this essay reexamines the philosophical theories put forth by expressivist practitioners such as Emig, Mandel, Elbow,¹ and Murray,² positioning them in a more scientific framework that can help to explain how the unconscious aspects of the writing process affect the ability to concentrate and to retrieve memory. From this framework—which consists of two psychologically based perspectives: the psychological *systems* approach developed by psychologist Charles Tart and the psychology of flow and creativity proposed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi—parallels can be drawn between what is termed “an altered state of consciousness” (ASC—a state that amplifies focus and aids in the retrieval of memory) and the writing process. These parallels are significant because they demonstrate how student writers who cannot achieve a level of ASC sufficient enough to carry them beyond anxieties concerning correct mechanics and conventions will also suffer in terms of their learning potential. Unlike writers who are able to reach an ASC during the act of writing, writers trapped within their realm of ordinary consciousness will find it more difficult to access the hidden memories, ideas, and feelings necessary for learning or to explore those areas normally inaccessible to them—all of which are important foundations for critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity.

Research into the unconscious in writing began because certain composition scholars acknowledged that those of us who write on an extended or regular basis recognize certain subconscious aspects of the writing experience that often escape less experienced writers. Loss of a sense of time, for example, or loss of a sense of space are the most basic of these experiences. But, more importantly, many experienced writers also report the ability to access vivid details of emotions and memories that are only accessible during the intense concentration of the writing process; these heightened recollections act as mechanisms for both learning and critical thinking. In more extreme cases (particularly for professionals), writers adept at achieving ASC report the ability to conjure ideas, narrative, characters, and concepts that are not necessarily drawn from their memory—exemplifying the potential of writing as a tool for discovery and invention.

This shared awareness by experienced writers prompted several composition researchers to attempt to explain these enigmas. Beginning in the 1960s and 70s, Janet Emig's and Barrett Mandel's articles address the notion from a philosophical standpoint. Later, in the 1980s, taking a more scientific approach in their attempts to discover what happens inside the minds of writers as they write, composition “cognitivists” Sondra Perl,

1. It should be noted that Elbow sees the terms “expressivist” or “expressionist” as problematic and credits them both as terms of “disapproval” coined by Berlin.

2. Donald Murray is an expressivist particularly noted for his views on writing-to-learn. See especially his book *Write to Learn* and a quote from *Expecting the Unexpected* where he states his belief that “writing is not the reporting of what was discovered, but the act of exploration itself” (4).

Nancy Sommers, Linda Flower, and John Hayes used protocol analysis (where writers were asked to verbalize their thoughts during and after writing) as their main research methodology. Ironically, though, the empirical data the investigators gathered was drawn from externally observable, and perhaps most important, *conscious* behaviors (i.e., verbal responses to prompts and interview questions), a factor which later became a focus of criticism.³ It is perhaps because of those criticisms that more recent composition scholars utilize a less positivist approach and, recognizing that the *unconscious* in the writing process is a function that is, by its very nature, *unobservable*, usually restrict their research to qualitative inquiries that only indirectly address the concept of the unconscious and the retrieval of memory.⁴ While all of these research approaches tend to leave us with more questions than answers concerning the workings of the unconscious in the writing process, what these scholars have provided is a tantalizing insight into the role the unconscious plays in writing-to-learn—an insight that can be expanded upon using a theoretical framework based on ideas from Tart and Csikszentmihalyi.

In *States of Consciousness*, Tart argues that attempts to study the internal processes of the mind from an external behavioristic approach are ineffective, but his systems approach organizes the various degrees of human consciousness into discrete structures and subsystems more readily adaptable to research. Tart's systems approach is easily applicable to the study of the writing process and, used as a foundation to examine a writer's internal process, can help to demonstrate that the act of writing, in itself, is the *cause* of an altered state of consciousness (ASC) that shares many similarities with the trance-like states induced by hypnosis, meditation, and hallucinogenic drug use. While different from Tart's systems approach, Csikszentmihalyi's model, called "flow," includes various markers indicative of an ASC and emphasizes the enjoyment of concentration and creativity that comes from the ability to control consciousness through certain activities, including writing. The major similarities between the two psychologists' theories lie between the ways in which Csikszentmihalyi defines several requirements for achieving enjoyment and flow, and Tart's description of the four destabilization processes described below.

Tart begins explaining his systems approach by first describing an ordinary state of consciousness as a state of mind characterized by "a high degree of rationality and a relatively low degree of imaging ability" (54). Tart argues that the basic function of this ordinary state of consciousness "is to cope successfully with an (external) environment," a state wherein the mind maintains a constant alertness of the immediate surroundings for any potential threats to survival (63). The negative aspect of this need for alertness is emphasized in Csikszentmihalyi's claim that "the normal state of mind is chaos. Without training, and without an object in the external world that demands attention, people are unable to focus their thoughts for more than a few minutes at a time" (*Flow the Psychology* 119).

3. See North (218-226) for a detailed critique of the empirical research methods used by Perl, Sommers, and Flower & Hayes, as well as a critique of Emig's empirical study.

4. See, for example, the collection of articles in Brand and Graves that employ a qualitative research approach and the anthology edited by Anderson and MacCurdy that emphasizes the psychological benefits of writing.

But moving beyond this chaos and away from an ordinary state of consciousness is not as simple as it might seem because, according to Tart, there are at least four distinct psychological processes in place which constantly stabilize our ordinary state of consciousness: Loading, Negative Feedback, Positive Feedback, and Limiting. In this complex psychological system, all or several of these consciousness stabilizers might be functioning simultaneously to maintain the ordinary state of consciousness necessary to satisfy our primal instinct for survival. But if we want to make a transition from our ordinary state of consciousness, we must actively induce an *altered* state by disrupting “enough stabilization processes to a great enough extent that the baseline pattern of consciousness cannot maintain its integrity” (71).

For example, in Tart’s systems approach, “Loading” refers to the constant bombardment of physical sensations and thinking processes continually occurring in an ordinary state of consciousness. Our consciousness is kept so busy with the input of physical sensations (Exteroception) and the constant chatter in our heads (Interoception) that there is little attention left over for any digressions. We can see an example of the destabilizing of this process using the most familiar of altered states, sleep. In order to induce sleep, we must first destabilize the Loading process: a dark, quiet room helps to slow down the bombardment of physical sensations, but an uncomfortable bed or a cold room will only serve to keep our minds busy and prevent sleep.

Writers, too, are aware of the necessity to disrupt Loading stabilization before beginning to write. Many writers need a place away from distractions and often require either complete quiet, or music, or some sort of rhythmic background noise to help them destabilize the Loading function and block out distracting external input. Csikszentmihalyi describes the necessity for blocking out the internal input by observing, “If the musician thinks of his health or tax problems when playing, he is likely to hit a wrong note Flow is the result of intense concentration on the present” (*Creativity* 112).

Emig suggests a parallel to Loading destabilization when she describes writing habits (a favorite desk, the sharpening of pencils) as ways of “reducing the minutiae, suppressing the irrelevant, [and] subordinating the daily in our writing contexts” (9). While she also provides much anecdotal evidence of professional writers using rituals, even most beginning writers recognize the need to block out distractions as they start their writing process, so they utilize writing habits and rituals to initiate such external blocking. Emig distinguishes between ritual and habit by explaining: “Where habit is suppressive, ritual is evocative; where habit is eliminative, ritual is initiatory” (9). The words “suppressive” and “eliminative” resound as accurate descriptions of Loading destabilization, and “evocative” and “initiatory” are words synonymous with induction into a trance or an ASC.

Loading destabilization (blocking distractions) is enough to begin induction into an ASC, but other processes such as Negative Feedback must also be minimized to sustain a trance-like state. According to Tart, Negative Feedback refers to a correction process that takes place when our consciousness extends beyond its preset limits. One example involves becoming suddenly alerted by a noise in the midst of daydreaming and being reminded of the necessity to stop daydreaming and monitor for threats. Another example involves the negative response of feeling anxious when our thoughts stray into areas our social background or traditions have taught us are taboo. This anxiety, according to Csikszentmihalyi, is because “we are always monitoring how we appear to other people; we

are on the alert to defend ourselves from potential slights and anxious to make a favorable impression" (*Creativity* 112). He adds that when people are in flow, they are too involved in what they are doing to worry about what others might think (112). For writers, however, there is an even stronger reason they are able to avoid this negative response; a writer's Sense of Identity becomes skewed when she assumes the identity of a fictional narrator in a fictional story, and what might have been a taboo subject for the writer herself becomes much less taboo in her new identity role. She might feel, as Csikszentmihalyi puts it, that she "has stepped out of the boundaries of the ego" (*Creativity* 112).

This transfer of identity roles caused by the destabilization of Negative Feedback can also be seen in hypnosis where, for example, a participant in a hypnotist's stage show often acts and speaks in ways normally beyond their preset limits of public modesty. Both the writer and the hypnotized can hide behind the masks of their new identities and are thereby able to alleviate much of the responsibility—and therefore anxiety and guilt—associated with transgressing taboos and also with assuming perspectives not normally available to them in an ordinary state of consciousness.

Even if the writer is composing nonfiction, ideas that would be too difficult to explore (either verbally or physically) due to preset social constraints can be explored through writing if the author feels secure that her or his writing will not be read by anyone else. In this case, the expressivist approach of private writing—which does not need to be read or assessed by the teacher or other students, and where socially constructed taboos, ideologies, and identities can be explored while hidden from public ridicule—will act to destabilize Negative Feedback. Elbow warns, "it's not just 'mistakes' or 'bad writing' we edit as we write. We also edit unacceptable thoughts and feelings" (5). It is in this respect, then, that a writing pedagogy that advocates Elbow's theory of a writer's need to ignore her audience as she writes is also one that will help student writers destabilize Negative Feedback and induce an ASC, while at the same time enabling exploration of new perspectives. In advocating the loss of self-consciousness as necessary for flow, Csikszentmihalyi also underscores the benefits of destabilizing Negative Feedback with his conclusion that, "Paradoxically, the self expands through acts of self-forgetfulness" (*Creativity* 113).

The next process in Tart's approach is Positive Feedback that works in response to our need to feel good and be rewarded. Tart uses driving (one of the many automatic activities, such as running and walking, that lends itself easily to induction into an ASC) as an example. When we are not concentrating, we might drive off the shoulder or narrowly avoid causing an accident, at which point we are instantly jarred back to ordinary, wakeful consciousness. Having learned from the incident, the next time the hypnagogic thoughts begin to take over as we are driving, we will immediately feel anxious and activate measures to reinstate ordinary consciousness: long before we reach a potentially dangerous situation, we'll roll down the windows or stop for coffee and be rewarded with the knowledge that we are safe drivers.

Positive Feedback is probably the most difficult of the four stabilization processes to overcome in order to induce an ASC, at least for a writer, because as Tart explains:

During the formation of our ordinary d-SoC [discreet State of Consciousness] during childhood, we are greatly rewarded by our parents, peers, and teachers for doing various

socially approved things, and because most of our socially approved actions are initiated by socially approved thoughts and feelings, we then internalize this reward system and feel good simply by engaging in the thoughts and actions that were rewarded earlier. (66)

One of the socially approved things that is the most easily recognized, and therefore, most easily rewarded by teachers assessing the compositions of beginning writers, is students' adherence to correct conventions and grammar rules. But if mechanical and grammatical correctness is the main focus of a writing assessment, imagine how difficult it must be for beginning writers to overcome the feelings of anxiety or alarm that surface as they involuntarily misplace punctuation or misspell words. Just as the sleepy driver is brought back to complete wakefulness as soon as the first signs of hypnagogic thoughts begin to surface, so too, the mind of the writer undergoing induction into a trance state will be jarred back to an ordinary state of consciousness by worrying about correctness. It is a worry about failure similar to this example that Csikszentmihalyi addresses as one of the elements that acts to inhibit flow (*Creativity* 112).

One way to destabilize this Positive Feedback process and help induce both an ASC and flow is to encourage writers *not* to worry about mechanics, grammar, and correctness as they write. Freewriting and journal writing—two pedagogical approaches strongly associated with expressivism—are both ways of encouraging fluency in writing by destabilization of Positive Feedback. In fact, any form of informal writing practice that is not assessed by the teacher for mechanical or grammatical correctness will act to destabilize this process, but without this form of destabilization, student writers will constantly be jarred back to ordinary consciousness as they become anxious about spelling or comma placement. Such writers will be unable to reach a level of concentration necessary for intense concentration and learning. As Elbow points out:

Editing itself is not the problem. Editing is usually necessary if we want to end up with something satisfactory. The problem is that editing goes on *at the same time* as producing. The editor is, as it were, constantly looking over the shoulder of the producer and constantly fiddling with what he's doing while he's in the middle of trying to do it. No wonder the producer gets nervous, jumpy, inhibited, and finally can't be coherent. (5)

Freewriting, private writing, blogging, journal keeping, unstructured writing, and associational writing are all pedagogical strategies that help to discourage correctness anxiety and easily support destabilization of Positive Feedback. And, as Mandel reminds us, these writing techniques are simply terms for “*actual* writing,” adding, “What these pedagogical strategies stimulate is natural fluency” (376).

The fourth stabilization process described by Tart is Limiting, and it involves the various subsystems of consciousness that he defines as Memory, Sense of Identity, Space/Time Sense, Motor Output, and Emotions. Each of these subsystems is capable of destabilizing ordinary consciousness. For example, tranquilizers act to blunt strong emotional responses thereby interfering with emotion's ability to destabilize ordinary consciousness. Tranquilizers are, therefore, a Limiting stabilizer.

Of the several subsystems involved in this process, one, Sense of Identity, has already been mentioned, but others such as Emotions and Space/Time Sense are also de-Limited through the act of writing. For example, rather than *suppress* (Limit) emotions as certain

tranquilizing drugs might do, writing enables the writer to *express* (literally “squeeze out”) emotions, again destabilizing the Limiting system of ordinary consciousness. But this can only be accomplished by allowing student writers to express their emotions, concerns, or feelings in writing, either privately or publicly, by encouraging narrative explorations of past events, feelings, relationships, etc. Such strategies clearly de-Limit emotions and memory. Csikszentmihalyi encourages such an approach by explaining, “Writing becomes a therapy for shaping some order among the confusion of feelings. It is possible that the only way writers can experience flow is by creating worlds of words in which they can act with abandon, erasing from the mind the existence of troubling reality” (*Flow the Psychology* 132).

But even though part of a pedagogical approach to encourage induction into ASCs and promote fluency should include allowing students to choose topics they feel passionately about, those topics do not necessarily need to consist of traumatic events; emotions and passions can stem from a variety of subjects and perspectives. Because only the student writer herself, however, can determine what these topics are, the invention stage of writing becomes a crucial step in de-Limiting. Once students have chosen their own topic—one they have a unique interest and passion for—the intense focus that results from writing about the topic can draw the writer’s attention away from her habitual measurements of time (checking a watch, feeling hungry, noticing the sunset) and her awareness of position in space (in the room, on the chair), thereby further destabilizing the Limiting of Space/Time sense. This aspect of Tart’s systems approach can also be compared to one of the main elements of Csikszentmihalyi’s notion of flow, where he explains, “[I]n flow we forget time, and hours may pass by in what seems like a few minutes” (*Creativity* 113).

Many of the pedagogical strategies associated with writing-to-learn *are* introduced to student writers, but, unfortunately, in an educational climate saturated with rewards related to assessment and accountability, the *product* of writing has continued to be privileged over any kind of process. In many cases, the term “process-writing” has come to mean a rigid three-step system of prewriting, writing, and revision, with the product as the only part that merits reward. In the worst cases, even the three steps have been completely eliminated, and the students’ only reward is a numerical score assessed via a timed writing sample during high-stakes testing. Csikszentmihalyi warns against such extrinsic rewards and explicitly cites the educational benefits of process over product:

Another thing that would help [learning] is focusing on the process rather than results. One of the obstacles is when a child gets the message that the only reason to play music, to learn music is so that they can end up in Carnegie Hall 20 years later or something, or that the only reason to learn to read and write is so they can get a job. (“Flow and Education” 26)

It’s clear that the products of some of the expressivist strategies such as journal writing and freewriting cannot be easily assessed by administrators seeking accountability, but these expressive “products” are also often discounted as fun, non-rigorous, non-academic writing relegated to the stage of invention or saved for times in the semester when the “real” work has been completed. What we fail to realize, though, when we treat these strategies as a less-than-crucial part of writing, is that student writers who are unable

to practice such strategies—and practice them often—and who are, therefore, unable to reach an ASC or a flow state, are also students writers who will never lose themselves in the act of writing to the extent that they will enjoy writing enough to eventually care about the technicalities of the craft. As Mandel points out, “Just as sitting and breathing are simple—when they are not conscious—so writing simplifies as the writer disappears into the act itself” (373).

Empirical evidence for the benefits of informal writing and efficacy of the “expressive” strategies of writing pedagogy are found in the studies done by James Britton and his colleagues in the 1970s and, more recently, in research conducted by educational psychologist Deborah McCutchen. While induction to an ASC was certainly not promoted by either of these scholars, both understand the fundamental need for any writer to practice writing that is enjoyable and would induce an ASC (as described here), in order for that writer’s skills to develop enough to produce effective written products. McCutchen specifically cites writing fluency as the necessary precursor for writers to move beyond limitations caused by short-term memory constraints and reach a level of skill that will enable them to tap into their long-term memory (16). In order to reach that stage, however, and eventually achieve a strong level of fluency and, hopefully, enjoyment in their writing, student writers require significant and repeated practice in expressive writing strategies capable of destabilizing ordinary consciousness.

Depending on the quantity of processes destabilized and the extent to which each is destabilized, writers with different writing abilities in different writing situations will be able to reach varying degrees of ASC. Most experienced writers are able to induce a state that temporarily limits their ability to measure time and space, and most also find themselves able to induce a state strong enough to recall vivid images and details of memories thought to be long forgotten. Writing, therefore, seems to qualify as an example of an ASC in which memory retrieval is enhanced, provided, of course, that writers are first able to achieve fluency because “[o]nly with fluent encoding processes can writers begin to build retrieval structures to information stored in LTM [Long Term Memory] and, when such LTM knowledge is itself sufficiently rich, capitalize on the resources of LT-WM [Long Term-Working Memory]” (McCutchen 16). It is this ability to retrieve long-term memory, along with the ability to fully concentrate, that reflect the underlying writing-to-learn goal of a writing classroom, and student writers able to experience this level of ASC have obviously moved beyond mechanical concerns, substituting self-consciousness with self-discovery.

Writing fluency, writing-to-learn, self-discovery, and memory retrieval are the major benefits of inducing an ASC through writing discussed so far. But writers who are able to reach the full potential of an ASC also report the ability to tap into an unidentifiable source—a source that many claim gives them the sense of almost conjuring ideas, narratives, or characters not necessarily drawn from their previous experiences. Writing scholar R.D. Walshe declares that during writing, “[w]hat come out are only partly ideas from the conscious mind . . . but it includes the opening up of a creative source that lies behind the everyday mind” (21).

While many unskilled writers find this a puzzling notion, most skilled writers, particularly those with experiences in creative writing and poetry, cite a familiarity with this “creative source that lies behind the everyday mind” and agree that such a phenomenon

does exist. This belief is also supported by many well-known, published authors, including Kipling and Calvino, who—while they might not describe their experiences in terms of an ASC—do acknowledge encounters with a source of creativity beyond their ordinary consciousness.

Csikszentmihalyi identifies this phenomenon as symptomatic of the creative process and refers to it as an aspect of flow characterized by the merging of action and awareness. Writer Freeman Dyson describes this experience of flow: “I always find when I am writing, it is really the fingers that are doing it and not the brain. Somehow the writing takes charge” (qtd. in Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity* 118). These experienced and obviously fluent writers are able to destabilize the systems of ordinary consciousness during writing and induce an ASC deep enough to enable them to tap into a frequency beyond logic or reason and explore concepts unfamiliar to them in their normal conscious state. The value of this ability lies not within the confines of creative *writing*, per se, but in the concept of creativity in general—a concept defined by psychologists as “the ability to produce work that is both novel (i.e., original, unexpected) and appropriate” (Sternberg and Lubert qtd. in Dietrich, 1011). Creative explorations, therefore, are enhanced by the writing process, which not only enables the writer to capture and record these new ideas, but also serves as a catalyst to create and even conjure them. These creative endeavors cannot be efficiently assessed or graded by tools like high-stakes testing, yet they figure as some of the most important cognitive aspects of an effective business, political, scientific, artistic, and humanitarian workforce.

For all of these useful outcomes—effective writing, learning, artistry, problem-solving skills, and creative capacity—recognizing writing as an ASC and promoting a writing pedagogy conducive to inducing ASCs in writers is worthy of more consideration in our research and our writing classrooms. It is even more important when we consider that the generation we teach is bombarded (as we all are) with input via television, movies, the Internet, video games, iPods, cell phones, etc., and therefore starved of the time for quiet contemplation during a walk or a drive—both activities associated with brief induction into an altered state of consciousness. Csikszentmihalyi reminds us that “one obvious way to enhance creativity is to bring as much as possible of the flow experience into the various domains” (*Creativity* 342). He argues: “It is exhilarating to build culture—to be an artist, a scientist, a thinker, or a doer. All too often, however, the joy of discovery fails to be communicated to young people, who turn instead to passive entertainment” (342). Maintaining pedagogical strategies that enhance the potential of writing as an ASC and encourage it as an avenue to creativity is one way to bring the flow experience to our young students, particularly when writing might just be one of their few opportunities for induction into an ASC (apart from drugs—many of which are addictive and harmful).

The connection between ASCs and creativity is also documented by psychologist Arne Dietrich who says, “[T]he fact that throughout human history humans have always looked at ways to alter consciousness is a powerful indicator that there are some beneficial effects” (qtd. in Eason). And while Dietrich also argues that “little is known about the brain mechanisms that underlie creative thinking,” he is quick to stipulate that scientific studies into creativity “have replaced the view that the creative act is a mysterious or even mystical event” (1011). Yet writers tend to disagree, often labeling

the parallels between writing and ASCs as not simply creative acts, but also as spiritual experiences. For example, bell hooks remarks:

Not much is written about the connection between writing and spirituality. Even though new age writing describes circumstances where writers receive ideas mysteriously, rarely does anyone talk about the sustained link between spiritual practice and writing. Writers are reluctant to speak about this subject because literary elitism engenders a fear that if we describe “unseen forces” shaping our vision and the structure of our writing we will not be taken seriously. (1)

Writers’ reluctance to speak about this seemingly spiritual source of creativity perhaps also comes from the associations it has with the notion of hallucinating—the end result of many ASCs (including those with negative connotations) explained by Tart. In discussing an ordinary state of consciousness, Tart describes it as a state of mind characterized by “a high degree of rationality and a relatively low degree of imaging ability” (54). But the high level of ASC attained by some writers is completely opposite, characterized by a low degree of rationality and a high degree of imaging ability.

Psychologist John Bradshaw also attests to both the ASC and the spiritual aspects of writing. In an interview with Regina Paxton Foehr, he claims, “When you’re writing, you go into an altered state. . . . That narrowing of your ordinary consciousness then opens you up to . . . what all spiritual traditions and many psychologists believe, that we have a higher self, that is, a self that is not limited by space and time” (qtd. in Foehr 62). Another professional interviewed along with Bradshaw is Larry Dossey, a medical doctor involved in research into the healing power of writing, who alludes as well to writing as an ASC, maintaining: “[Writing is] simply learning to function as a conduit for ideas that are already out there. I think that the job of the writer is to tap into this source. . . . I think there’s a tremendous amount of empirical evidence that the mind is indeed nonlocal” (qtd. in Foehr 53).

Each of these experts is obviously considering the ASC aspect of writing as more than simply a way for writers to easily access memories, ideas, and feelings. They also seem to agree that writers achieving an ASC are able to reach, perhaps, the source identified by C. G. Jung as the Collective Unconscious and, as such, a source that might immediately raise suspicion, perhaps even ridicule, from a scientific standpoint. Yet this source—and ASCs capable of tapping into this source (whether induced via religious ceremony, fasting, hypnosis, mediation, sensory deprivation, dance, dreams, drugs, or writing)—have led to some of the greatest benefits for humankind, from biblical prophecies to scientific discoveries.

On a more personal spiritual level, James Moffett provides a profound practical reason to consider promoting an ASC as part of our writing pedagogy:

Suppose we don’t learn merely to get by, get along, get around, or get ahead. These are all essential, but they fare better when education aims beyond them on the assumption that they are the means and education the end. Suppose we don’t so much learn to live as live to learn. Once understood in this way, knowing becomes a different matter—and a much more important one. Making a living and making a life become part of making sense of life, so that everything in it has meaning. (5)

Moffett continues by explaining that “‘educate’ means to ‘lead out’” adding, “What is there to draw out and develop—‘unfold’—besides the garbage of conditioning and the private wealth of narcissism?” (7). His final conclusion: the Soul. It’s heady stuff to practice in educational institutions—particularly when we consider that many other wonderful activities which help to induce ASCs—dance, music, painting (all of which can be religious practices, by the way) are gradually being cut from educational programming all over the Western world. I dare say that if writing did not have its utilitarian function, it too might be considered in the cutbacks.

From this point, it is interesting to return to Tart and his introduction to the processes of stabilizing ordinary consciousness. He states that the four processes (Loading, Positive Feedback, Negative Feedback, and Limiting) are “analogous to the ways people control one another”:

If you want someone to be a good citizen (1) you keep him busy with the activities that constitute being a good citizen, so he has no time or energy for anything else; (2) you reward him for carrying out these activities; (3) you punish him if he engages in undesirable activities; and (4) you try to limit his opportunities for engaging in undesirable activities. (63)

Destabilizing these systems and inducing ASCs just might cause a dangerous lack of control or, even more shocking perhaps, help produce creative, happy, problem-solving, fluent writers who become spiritually conscious.



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It's Complicated: Using Facebook to Create Emotional Connections in Student-Professor Relationships

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In the aftermath of the recent tragedies at Northern Illinois and Virginia Tech teachers and students drew together to heal the devastation caused by campus violence.¹ In the wake of such tragedies teachers, students, and the surrounding respective communities at Northern Illinois and Virginia Tech developed strong emotional bonds on their campuses as everyone suddenly seemed to realize that we're not just students and teachers defined by what we do, but rather that we are all humans with thoughts, feelings, and emotions.

After such tragedy, the emotion on these campuses becomes transparent and indeed becomes a reaction *expected* by members of the public. In the February 2008 *Chronicle of Higher Education*, three new assistant professors, Joseph Flynn, Andrew Kemp, and Samara Madrid, outline their experiences just after the shootings at Northern Illinois University. Their accounts illustrate how they felt during the days just following the tragedy. Through their accounts, we learn their feelings about their campus. Andrew Kemp claims he had already given his "heart to the university" after one year of teaching there. He typically wears sweatshirts with the NIU logo or some other NIU paraphernalia to class (C4). Kemp simply claims "I am hurt." Samara Madrid displays her emotion even more prominently by hanging a sign in her office that reads "Love is spoken here" (C4). She says, "As a new assistant professor I never expected to witness such an event. NIU is my new home, and this new campus is my family. The tragedy has uncovered the love that resides within me for my students" (C4). Joseph Flynn, another new assistant professor at NIU, responded with empathy, saying, "The campus shut down, and so did I . . . I slept. I wept. I talked to no one—not even my wife and son, much to their consternation and concern" (C1).

In light of recent university tragedies, I thought deeply about my relationships with current students. Was I doing enough to show them that I really did care about what happens to them now and after they graduate? I know early in my teaching career I truly did, but now, in the wake of tenure, publication, and reputation I had come to distance myself slightly from certain mentoring situations. Is the same kind of love that Flynn, Kemp, and Madrid illustrate in their narratives possible without a larger tragedy?

These tragedies illustrate the power of, and the need for, emotional connections between teachers and students. Emotions are a vital part to learning, and positive emotional connections between teacher and student facilitate learning. However, as a male teacher committed to nurturing my students, males and females, I have discovered

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1. On February 14, 2008 at NIU, a shooter killed five students and wounded more than 20 people. On April 16, 2007 at Virginia Tech, a shooter killed 32 people and wounded many others. Both shooters committed suicide.

that such emotional connections in everyday teaching life are fraught with problems. In this essay, I argue for the necessity of strong emotional bonds between student and teacher and want to suggest Facebook as a medium by which teachers and students can connect without running the risk of misperceptions.

Need for Emotional Connections

I used to meet with students for lunch on campus, chat with them in the library, and meet with many of them in my office. I discontinued these activities not because something had happened or because someone had said something to me, or even that I thought anyone *thought* something inappropriate. Indeed, my colleagues seem satisfied with my interactions with students and my university seems to encourage strong bonds between students and professors. However, I wanted to maintain my reputation as a caring professor rather than, as some of my students say about other professors, a “creeper.” Like many of us, I had heard about other professors at many universities who found themselves in precarious rumor-milled stories involving poor choices with students. Certainly, unverified academic rumors remind a new tenure-line professor like me that mis/perceptions and mis/communications can happen and sometimes cannot be undone. While close relationships with my colleagues help to squelch rumors, students and other members of the campus community may view my mentoring relationships differently. Why chance it?

Sara Hopkins-Powell seems to encourage strong student-professor relationships but with some trepidation. For example, she reminds me why I began to distance myself when she says, “The concept of unconditional love may seem an unlikely topic for college faculty members to consider in this time of sexual-harassment charges and consensual-relationship policies” (285). Slowly, in fact, I fell victim to worrying about what others thought of me (like most untenured faculty members), particularly if they saw me having lunch with a student or mentoring students outside the confines of my office or building.

Of course, I suppose all of this depends on what we really mean by unconditional love. The question Hopkins-Powell seeks to answer in her brief essay is: “How do we experience unconditional love in our teaching?” (285). She then relays what I think are two positive experiences of unconditional love: one as a student (as in graduate student and dissertation advisor) and one as a teacher. Hopkins-Powell suggests that we cautiously develop relationships of this nature with our students. She says,

It is because we are human beings, and practicing this love can carry us past the indifferent students and the endless meetings. It is because, as a colleague of mine from Mexico says, ‘teaching is the most important work in the world, and we do it one student at a time.’ When you are enriched by another’s love and friendship, it is a deep breath of life. (287)

“A deep breath of life” echoes the feelings of Flynn, Kemp, and Madrid. Few of us become professors or teachers for monetary gain. Indeed, I never felt more successful as a teacher than watching a recent student receive a senior medallion award, an award for which I had nominated her. However, distancing myself from students became something I was doing regularly but unconsciously. I eventually realized that I was worried about

what others thought about my interactions with students. Hopkins-Powell identifies the kind of worry about misperception I experienced when she says,

Other issues to be aware of are the inherent power differential and the potential for oppression within the relationship. Faculty members must constantly remain sensitive to relationships that change from platonic to sexual—whether real or imagined—particularly with younger students or those who are mentally fragile. Boundaries need to be maintained and spoken about in an open and thoughtful way. (286)

I see clearly why some professors shy away from relationships of any kind with students. Sometimes, even when boundaries are clearly set, those on the outside do not always recognize them. Having boundaries might also mean needing to post them on an office door. The reality of why unconditional love is not happening in many cases comes in Hopkins-Powell's final reason for why teachers should practice this type of relationship. She says,

some faculty members, out of fear of sexual harassment charges, have completely shut students out of their lives. They have no personal interactions with students, even with the door open. I view that as a tremendous loss, both for the faculty members and the students. With care and maturity—and a degree of courage—we professors can open ourselves up to deep intimacy and love with a person whom we bring into our hearts, and hold for a lifetime. (287)

I work at an institution where the focus, at least on the surface, is primarily about teaching, working with students, and engaging in student-professor relationships—ones that generate research, foster learning, and give the students a unique learning experience. When we professors begin shutting out our students for fear of misperception, indeed I think we all miss something significant, something meaningful. While unconditional love can define a committed teacher, what are the dangers of practicing it in student-professor relationships for someone like me, an untenured assistant professor who is also a single, mid-30s, heterosexual male? How might we practice unconditional love without giving rise to both misperceptions and misconceptions?

Problems with Emotional Connections

Less than a year ago, I went to Greenville, NC, to visit one of my professors from undergraduate school. If I ever loved a professor as a student, it was he. I mentioned to him that I took an undergraduate to a conference in Georgia. The student won a grant that required him to attend a conference. Since the student and I were working together on another project, I asked him to submit a proposal with me so that we could both attend and offer a presentation. The issue heated up, however, when I also confessed at that moment that I was really only willing to work with male students. He sat up in his chair and said, "And, so, the women who deserve your attention and help will be passed over for no reason except that *you* fear their gender?" I said, "No, but I fear my colleagues' perceptions of me working, traveling, and developing mentoring relationships with them." What I wanted to say was that I could not afford to have any troubles simply

because women are in my office working on their projects. Being much more experienced than I, he claimed that I was discriminating against my female students and that I should stop worrying so much and just do my job. While I knew he was correct in many ways, I still felt nervous and apprehensive.

Jane Gallop's provocative account of being accused of sexual harassment shows why. The book breaks from the norm of sexual harassment. I found *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* disturbing in many ways. I immediately thought: "If a feminist can be accused of sexual harassment then surely anyone could."²

I admired Gallop's collaborations with her graduate students. She writes,

Although always tricky, they generally produce excellent results: I see the students consistently learn a lot, work really hard, and clearly benefit from working with me; I also learn a lot in such relationships and derive real satisfaction from seeing the difference I can make in the quality of their thinking and their work. (54-55)

Yet ultimately her relationships with students crumbled before her because of a specific incident of miscommunication and misperception. She continues,

in this case, the relationship failed. Not because of its adventurous style but in the way so many teaching relations fall apart: more than once I told the student her work was not satisfactory; she did not accept my judgments and became increasingly suspicious and angry. And because so much passion had been invested in our relationship, the failure was particularly dramatic. The student felt let down, became outraged, and charged me with sexual harassment. (55)

Gallop's experience reinforced my hesitation to work with students at a university where the population is largely female. For example, in an English composition class last semester, I had 22 female and three male students. English majors are predominately female, as well. Inevitably, situations occur where working with students who are intelligent, motivated, and bright would be female.

Last semester, I worked with four young women on four separate independent projects, took two of them to a regional conference, and nominated some of them for department and university awards. They came during office hours and frequently brought food, coffee, and good cheer to everyone around. The faculty members next to me and across from me loved them as much as I did. However, one day while two of them were in my office, a graduate student stopped by, stared at us, and then said out loud, "Do you only work with girls?" The three of us looked at each other and became keenly aware of what the grad student implied.

However, having a conversation with my female students about this very incident, I was surprised to learn that they were very aware of male professors who shrank away from them when they sat next to those professors in their offices. One student said that every time she entered one of her professor's office, he would move his chair as far away from her as possible, refuse to lean over her to look at a paper, and never allow her to

2. I am aware that my first thought does not have much basis in the reality of sexual harassment cases, but in general, it seems that those most often accused of sexual harassment are male.

be herself—which all together made her uncomfortable, and in fact, made her feel like she was doing something wrong. She decided that she would not return to his office.

This sort of shrinking away from students can create an environment where everyone seems on edge. It is not the way to help students learn or facilitate unique learning and teaching experiences. This is the reason I employ Facebook.

How Facebook Is a Solution

Facebook has garnered a range of responses and more than its fair share of publicity on television, the Internet, and in print. Universities around the country are creating various restrictions and limitations on the use of such social networking sites.³ However, while some are complaining about Facebook, many professors of writing are investigating ways with which we can use Facebook in the classroom. Facebook helps make connections between people transparent when used for classes or interest groups. Danah Boyd and Nicole Ellison define such social network sites as:

web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site. (n. pag.)

The potential value of Facebook for student-professor relationships becomes apparent almost immediately. Many of my students are “friends” on my Facebook, which means that I am able to view their news feeds, uploaded images, interests, and even chat with them if we are both on our Facebook page at the same time.⁴

One of the most common ways I use Facebook to create emotional connections with my students is by being involved with Facebook in the same way as the students. For example, many of my students are members of the student media board, and they have a Facebook site. I joined that group so I could keep up with what my students do outside of my class, but still within the confines of the university. Sometimes they are pleasantly surprised that I already know about their articles even before the student newspaper has been released. For instance, I knew when one of my students published an article in the school newspaper that was recognized by the student media director; therefore, I could congratulate her when I saw her.

I also use Facebook to share my photos, thoughts and ideas, and students sometimes comment on them. Thereby, we can become friendlier without having to be within physical contact with each other, erasing the potential for misperceptions. Facebook becomes even more useful when students and I embark on individual projects.

3. For administrative and pedagogical reservations concerning Facebook—students’ and faculty’s improper use, cyberstalking, etc.—see Read and Young and Bugeja.

4. Facebook also allows users to share their current status. For example, before leaving for an academic conference I often leave an update that might read: “Heading out to San Francisco for the C’s conference.”



Figure 1: Portion of Atkins' Facebook Page

Yet professors and students also need to be aware of self-disclosure. How much should professors disclose about themselves? We must be cautious on Facebook almost as much as we are face-to-face. Jeffrey Young writes of a religion professor at Dartmouth who wrote a number of embarrassing statements about her colleagues on Facebook. Problem? She mistakenly thought she had adjusted her Facebook's privacy settings so that only her Facebook friends could see the posts, but unfortunately anyone who came across her Facebook page could read her rants (and, indeed, many professors now have Facebook accounts and/or search Facebook users for various reasons). Eventually, Young observes, the professor had to apologize to her colleagues and claim that all her comments were made in jest. So, like many modes of communication one should always recognize the rhetorical situation.

Facebook, however, has provided a medium whereby students and professors can connect effectively and intellectually. Facebook has offered a way that I can engage students, maintain a close relationship with them, forward a research agenda, and teach them valuable technology skills without running the risk of misperceptions: mine, my students, my mentees, and my colleagues. Mentoring and expressing love for my students, or developing what Kenneth Burke would call identification, can be facilitated using Facebook (see 19-28).

Facebook can even reconfigure what unconditional love for our students actually means. Joseph P. Mazer's, Richard E. Murphy's, and Cheri J. Simonds' experimental study examines the effects of professors' "self-disclosure via Facebook on anticipated college student motivation, affective learning, and classroom climate" (1). The authors delve into how professors' self-disclosure on Facebook affects students' perception of teacher credibility. Their study addresses three hypotheses represented below, suggesting that when participants viewed a professor whose level of self-disclosure on Facebook was high, they would anticipate:

- Higher levels of student motivation than participants who view the Facebook website of a teacher low in self-disclosure.
- Higher levels of affective learning than participants who view the Facebook website of a teacher low in self-disclosure.
- A more positive classroom climate than participants who view the Facebook website of a teacher low in self-disclosure. (5-6)

In all three cases, these hypotheses were supported by this study. The students who agreed to be part of the study were asked to come to a computer lab where the researchers had created three Facebook profiles of teachers with pseudonyms for names. One profile had little more than a head shot of the instructor, the second one had a medium to high range of self-disclosure, which meant there were “wall” postings, additional pictures, and possibly a few other things. The third profile had more pictures in various situations, wall postings, groups, quotes, etc. In short, a higher degree of self-disclosure from professors can increase students’ motivation to learn. The students were asked to browse a given profile to develop an impression of what it would be like to be in class with the teacher. The study results support the idea that the higher degree of self-disclosure a professor has of her/himself directly affects the motivation of the student as well as the classroom environment (9). The data in this study suggests that professors should be less guarded about themselves and their personal lives.

Obviously, professors should not reveal the most intimate details about themselves on Facebook, or even in face-to-face classes, even though writing professors know that students have few qualms about revealing details about themselves when writing in first-year composition courses. Rather, professors should advertise their boundaries as permeable, based on maturity, scholarly interests, and intellectual merit. The few negative responses coming from this study suggested that professors needed to consider their professionalism when using Facebook, and that professors should also use Facebook more for teaching rather than for personal reasons. In all cases, however, students seemed to have positive responses to teachers who used Facebook (11-12).

The fact that a professor has a Facebook account brings what colloquially means “street-cred,” or what professors might call ethos. Having credibility and establishing ethos fosters an honest working relationship between professors and students that can be fun and empowering for both.

However, a user of Facebook—whether professor or student—should remember that a profile also has the potential to reveal ideological characteristics of a user. Anne Hewitt and Andrea Forte investigated relationships between faculty and students within the Facebook community because they were skeptical of such characteristics. For example, they say,

Through personal contacts, we learned that some faculty members at various institutions are establishing accounts as a way of connecting with students. We heard anecdotes about increased communication and friendlier relationships with students. These observations raised questions: ‘How are student/faculty relationships affected by interaction on Facebook, if at all?’ and: ‘What does the social landscape look like when faculty begin to frequent an online place where students regularly socialize?’ Because social networking communities are built to support presentation of self, identity management is likely to be a significant issue for participants in communities whose membership crosses perceived social boundaries and organizational power relationships. (n.p.)

The perception of the authors mirrors that of many. If faculty “frequent an online place where students regularly socialize,” then there is an automatic assumption that faculty should not be there. I find this line of thinking completely fair when it comes to face-to-face interactions in social settings where the space is designed for students, for example,

downtown bars or restaurants dedicated to serving the student population, but I am less inclined to think so about online community spaces that cater to various audiences for various purposes. And in fact, the author's two-year study supported the idea that students "are comfortable with faculty being on the site" (n.p.). Much like Mazer, et al., the authors used Facebook profiles for students to view. However, this study used real faculty member Facebook profiles to gauge how students viewed their relationships with the professors. The study took place in two large courses at two mid-sized public research universities.

More important, many professors are discovering various pedagogical possibilities. Recently, one of my colleagues observed students using Facebook to help them find information about a local debate occurring on campus. My colleague, who is currently teaching activist rhetoric in an upper division professional writing course, agreed to share two experiences of Facebook in the class. Below is the first example she emailed to me:

I was walking students through some exceptionally dull PowerPoint slides covering the third chapter of Hart and Daughton's *Modern Rhetorical Criticism*. Both because the book is hard and because I was enabling them not to buy it since it's not the backbone of the class, I made very detailed and 'texty' slides outlining the chapter concepts. I used the campus tree email from the chancellor as an illustration of how the chapter's advice on 'Analyzing Situations' might help them analyze a real situation. When we were going over the audience factors in the analysis, we talked about skepticism toward the chancellor's ideas because of audience members' attitudes toward her role. That's when they took it upon themselves to go to Facebook to critique the make-up of the university's environmental assessment committee.

My colleague also assigns students to teach the class about a current or historical activist organization, social movement, or incident of activism, to demonstrate its rhetorical strategies and adherence to course concepts. She said,

The second instance of academic Facebookin' was more typical, I would guess, of how we imagine social networking sites being used: during a student presentation on the Westboro Baptist Church's protests of funerals, a student went to the Facebook profile of his friend who was killed in Iraq. He wanted to show the class his connection to someone whose funeral had actually been protested by the group, to add a layer of meaning to the shock and horror with which his classmates were already reacting. (The student who showed this Facebook profile, btw, was *not* one of the presenters and didn't know that he'd be hearing a presentation on WBC that day; it was a spur-of-the-moment reaction to show us the page.)

Using Facebook in classes can encourage long-lasting professional relationships with students, mostly without misperception based on the proximity of student to professor. Using Facebook helps students learn technological skills and enables student-professor relationships to form for the benefit of the university, department, student, and professor. Student-professor relationships are delicate in some cases and professors should put boundaries in place, but we must continue to put student-professor relationships back into university education.

For example, when I was working with four female students on individual projects, we agreed to communicate via Facebook.⁵ This prevented my office from being filled with students most of the day. Making the move to communicate online provided a space where we could chat freely and share ideas among each other. As I prepared for a conference on information literacy in Georgia, I began sharing my proposal and project with the four students, who immediately began critiquing it thoughtfully. We noticed that two of the students' projects worked well with what I was working on so we meshed the projects into a conference panel. Using Facebook, we chatted, added links and commented on each others' projects.

While we had met face-to-face a few times as we prepared most of the work on the projects, the work for the conference presentation was done totally online, using mostly Facebook. Eventually, the three of us travelled to attend and present at the conference. By this time, the two female students, had become very comfortable with me because they had come to know more about me as a person. We were able to maintain a close bond with each other over the course of a year.

Another experience of using Facebook to help students professionalize occurred while I was directing an honors thesis for a student who recently won a grant from our undergraduate research and learning center. The university earmarks the grant for "undergraduate student travel to attend a professional conference with a faculty sponsor." The student's honors thesis was strongly influenced by my own interests, which made it only common sense that she travel with me to the University of North Carolina-Charlotte where I would be running a workshop with a colleague who works in the same area. As the situation unfolded, I reminded myself that anything I said or did could have consequences. I booked our hotel rooms and arranged the travel. The student then asked if another student, with whom I am also currently working, could accompany us since there was room and no additional monies needed. Not sure what to do, I spoke with a colleague who encouraged me to allow the second person to go. The three of us went to the conference where they both excelled. Watching them interact with faculty from other universities and teach the participants how to use Facebook was probably one of the most gratifying moments of my entire teaching career. They conducted themselves with professionalism and intense attention to all details. I could not have been prouder to have both of them with me.

After the four-hour drive back, the first student looked at me with a bright face, thanked me, and even hugged me. The other student also hugged me and told me the workshop was the best experience she had had, since becoming an English major.

Readers can experiment with Facebook by creating an account, profile, and adding "friends." Simply go to <http://www.facebook.com/> and submit your full name, email, and password. Facebook is intuitive to work with. Once you have created an account, you can begin to use the "search" feature to find new "friends." However, I do not tell students that I have a Facebook account, nor do I "friend" my students. I leave the students to "friend" me, if they choose. This way, I am not bothering them nor appearing as though I want to snoop into their lives. If my students send a "friend request" to me, I typically accept

5. We also used Wikispaces to house the content of our projects. This way we could all comment on each others' projects.

it. Accepting the friend requests sent to me by the four female students who worked with me all last year was, indeed, the smartest thing I did. It has changed the way I work with students.

We professors must recognize the potential emotional connections we can have with our students. We can begin to create those emotional connections with students now. As Facebook and other Web 2.0 technologies become ever more prevalent, more professors are turning to them to teach technology skills, writing for online venues, increased audience awareness, or a number of other pedagogical aims. Certainly, there are a number of ways to integrate these technologies into the classroom, but what has helped me develop such close emotional connectedness to my students and increased the quality of their productivity is the fact that they have enjoyed getting to know me on Facebook. My classes are full every semester, students often enjoy working with me on honors and independent projects, and indeed, I continue to include them in regional conference presentations. I have avoided misperceptions of my work with them.

At the campus vigil on that Friday night after the shootings at NIU, Samara Madrid recounts what the Reverend Jesse Jackson told students, faculty, and administrators:

He asked us to embrace one another, to reach out to those next to us. I stood in the back, with my colleague, good friend, and fellow assistant professor Kim Zebehazy, and with tears in our eyes we honored those lost as we hugged and embraced those who are still here with us. (C4)

Let us not wait to love our students, nor wait to recognize when they need us—especially when some technologies can make it possible for us to maintain intellectual and emotional connections with them.



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Weaving a Song of Self

JoAnne Katzmarek* ·

Discovering What We Know

What I enjoyed most during my many years of teaching high school English was listening to the stories students told as they made astonishing connections of their lives to the literature being discussed. Anne Bradstreet's poem "Upon the Burning of Our House" will always remind me of Jeremy (pseudonym), a 16 year-old farm boy from southern Wisconsin who, over the same weekend as the poem was assigned to be read, lost his home and possessions in a devastating January house fire. During that next week in our 4th hour American literature class, Bradstreet's images were seared into all our brains and hearts as he told of the frantic actions and overwhelming feelings his own fire had produced. In particular he identified with Bradstreet's litany of things lost. "Here stood that trunk, and there that chest," as well as the sacred everyday activities that would no longer happen there: "Under the roof no guest shall sit,/ Nor at thy table eat a bit" (44).

Jeremy told us how he and his family, as they tried to make sense of the fire, always ended up "listing" what was lost: family pictures, baseball gloves, winter clothes, even kitchen appliances. And for them, too, the vanished gatherings: family Christmas dinners or summer evenings on the porch listening to the sounds of a farm. Their litany helped them, like Bradstreet, to forge a shape for an event whose meaning was otherwise too enormous to grasp.

Joan Didion wrote that stories fill in the space between what happened and what it means to the individual. Jeremy's talking about his family's ordeal helped him to understand that event in new ways. Giving students the opportunity to understand more deeply their own experiences can help us, subsequently, to connect the students to our learning goals. For Jeremy, for me, and undoubtedly for many of the adolescents in that American literature class, Bradstreet's loss will be more understood because of Jeremy's story.

I suspect stories might have been the only entry point for some adolescents into Emily Dickinson's metaphysical landscape, as well. Her ambiguous images and precipitous questions sometimes beguiled them into probing for connections. For example, "I'm Nobody, Who Are You? Are You Nobody Too?" occasionally invited passionate accounts about rude treatments from disloyal friends, painful yet irresistible bouts of peer pressure, even fake admiration from the glittery groups. The adolescents didn't accept as wholeheartedly as Dickinson that it would be "dreary to be somebody" (133), but the idea riddled them enough to want to know more about the eccentric poet and what she might have meant. Sometimes the stories helped them to view their own experiences with a different and maybe wider lens, as when the lanky basketball player (seated in the front

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row—I remember that, too) bravely admitted that he had fewer friends after an ankle injury benched him for the remainder of the varsity season than he had when he was the starting center. How could he have known that his story helped many of us understand the satire the poet might have meant when she wrote “To tell your name the livelong day to an admiring bog”?

Many classrooms—many stories. The students’ stories were our lifelines to the poets and novelists. Even I shared stories, though carefully, because I wanted their stories, so authentic and connected, to be the true transitions to the poems.

William Cullen Bryant’s “To a Waterfowl” drew the most complaints from students about its difficulty and, they argued, its absurdity and irrelevance. I pointed them to the 7th stanza where Bryant claims he has learned a lesson from watching and empathizing with the waterfowl. “Deeply has sunk the lesson thou hast given,/ And shall not soon depart” (354).

Rather than having them attempt to understand what that lesson could have been for Bryant, I asked them to consider what we in the Midwest in the late 20th century might learn from watching and thinking about a waterfowl. Predictably, this invitation was followed by silence and suspicious stares. So I offered my canoeing story.

My husband and I are canoeing in the evening on a small rustic lake, our eight-year-old son seated on the floor of the canoe between us. I am in the front in a white, hooded sweatshirt, the full August moon illuminating me like a headlight. We paddle silently to the far side of the lake, a dark bay densely fringed with dogwood and willow shrubs and lined intermittently with tall pines. Earlier in the day, we had seen an adult Great Blue Heron feeding her chick along the shore. Now in the dark, we hear a heron, probably perched high in a pine where they typically nest, squawking harshly. Nervous, I want to turn around the canoe. My husband and son, joyous at the scary sound, cheer instead to go farther into the darkness of the bay. Reluctantly I paddle us forward. In a moment, my son yells, “Mom, look up!” Above me I can see the wings of the Great Blue Heron and, in the middle of its terrible span, its fierce golden beak, long and arrow-sharp. I freeze.

My husband yells, “Use your paddle!”

“On the bird?” I ask. The students invariably laugh at this part of my story.

“Yes. Scare him off,” he yells. “I’ll turn us around.”

We head out of the bay, and I paddle fiercely—certainly as fiercely as Natty Bumpo paddling away from his pursuers in *The Deerslayer* (another typical American literature selection), to get back to our cabin on the other shore. My students enjoy this story. In particular, they savor the vision of their English teacher swinging a paddle wildly at a menacing bird who is defending her chick.

“But what did you learn?” they ask. And I pause.

“The experience teaches me some important things mothers will do for their children.” My story is simple. It is not deeply philosophical, but it does give me a chance to share my human experience and values with them at the same time we explore meanings of poetry and literature. Because I have told my story, they are freed to tell their own stories. For this poem, their stories often include hunting adventures. Is their story very different from the lesson Bryant learned “midst falling dew, while glow the heavens with the last steps of the day”? Well, what did he learn? Let’s talk about that. Their stories and mine are facile transitions to what the poet himself might have learned.

Lee Shulman claims that stories are a way for us to get at the learning that's already inside us: "Learning is a dual process in which initially the inside beliefs and understandings must come out, and then can something outside get in" (12). Then we can make connections to larger themes and patterns. In other words, stories can help students discover their own meaning as they prepare for subsequent learning.

It must be recognized, too, as Herbert Kohl reminds us in his essay, "Wicked Boys," that stories and the thoughts they provoke can be a vehicle to the development of an intellectual community in the classroom and perhaps, even more than that, stories can be the manifestations of such a community. Thus, as the students share these stories to clarify points in the literature, they are simultaneously creating a more literate environment as they encounter deeper meanings of it.

Connecting Lives through Stories

Fast forward to the 21st century, and I am now a teacher educator. I respect and value the energy and enthusiasm that nearly all of these teachers bring to their professional development. I elicit their feedback at the end of each course to learn more about their view of the strengths of the course they take with me, as well as suggestions to improve it. I am struck, every semester, by the claims that they got clearer images and framed more authentic questions about teaching and learning after hearing "the professor's stories of her own teaching and the stories from the other teachers." Some even say "I wish we could hear more stories about how these strategies actually work in classrooms." Stories. They learned from the stories, and they wanted more stories. What stories did I tell? What stories did they tell? I can't always remember because often the stories weren't planned parts of the class. It is natural and comfortable for me to use them to illustrate consequences of teaching a certain way or making certain decisions. And of course, my stories invite their own stories, much like when my high school juniors and I worked together to explore murky or baffling poems. Clearly stories have an impact on the disciplinary learning of a teacher, too.

I was asked a year ago to teach a course for in-service teachers that I had not taught before: "Teacher Self-Knowledge." The course would be taught completely online, so the curriculum as well as the venue would both be new to me. Until this time, I had managed only segments of courses as online interactions, usually as discussion forums, for example, about a controversial research report, or as a cyber place to provide feedback to classmates' projects. But in all those courses we had several earlier face-to-face sessions to accomplish the work of relationship building—so crucial to an energetic learning environment—before we moved to the online sessions. This course would be challenging to me in particular because we would go directly to online sessions with no face-to-face relationship building.

The questions that had originally inspired me to teach this course were: How could teachers learn more about their teaching personality, their teaching identity? How could we begin the discussions that would lead to this understanding? Stories. Stories could be the portal for these teachers to enter, comfortably and confidently, a new landscape of self discovery and their teaching identity. Additionally, as Kohl suggested, stories could nurture as well as express the intellectual community I hoped would evolve even in an online context. And in the spirit of yet one other American poet, Walt Whitman, these

stories could yield the details, the essentials of their teacher selves: “And of these one and all I weave the song of myself” (860).

In the course description, I invited teachers to explore ways that they could learn more about their teacher self-identities as a way to enhance their professional development and to support their well being. During the course, they read accounts and explanations offered by philosophers and researchers about the connections between teacher self-knowledge and teaching improvement, and they wrote their own versions of their evolving teacher self-identity. They examined artifacts of culture and art in order to understand more deeply the possible ways in which teacher self-identity forms and sustains itself. They created their own expressions of what teaching means for them. As they learned more about themselves, these explorations and expressions built their skills in reflective teacher practice.

I composed the course in five sessions or movements: Teacher Stories, The Work of a Teacher, Teachers in Art and Culture, Learning from Other Teachers, and Reflective Teacher Practice. Each session was constructed using four learning interactions: reading/ writing/ viewing, reflective writing, creating a project, expressing ideas, and sharing ideas. The order of these activities sometimes varied with the sessions. Following is an analysis of the opening activity of the first session. Keep in mind that this session also served as a way for teachers to introduce themselves to each other and to begin the relationship building that is unique but necessary in online environments.

In Session 1, “Teacher Stories,” teachers first read a teacher memoir or a novel written about a teacher. I suggested titles for this platform activity:

- Hilton, James. *Goodbye Mr. Chips*. New York, Grosset & Dunlop, 1934
- Spark, Muriel. *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. New York: Perennial Classics, 1999
- Dickens, Charles. *Hard Times*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1974
- Jones, Lloyd. *Mr. Pip*. New York: Dial Press, 2007
- Conroy, Pat. *The Water is Wide*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1972
- Bennett, Alan. *The History Boys*. New York: Faber & Faber, 2006

The list also included these nonfiction titles:

- Ashton Warner, Sylvia. *Teacher*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963
- Gruwell, Erin. *Freedom Writers Diary: How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used Writing to Change Themselves and the World Around Them*. New York: Doubleday, 1999
- Albom, Mitch. *Tuesdays with Morrie*. New York: Doubleday, 1997
- Edmundson, Mark. *Teacher: The One Who Made the Difference*. New York, Random House, 2002
- Kidder, Tracy. *Among School Children*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1989
- McCourt, Frank. *Teacher Man*. New York: Scribner, 2005
- Tompkins, Jane. *A Life in School: What the Teacher Learned*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley Publishing Co., 1996

I strove for a balance of traditional and contemporary, novels, plays, memoirs, both contemplative and practical. They also had the option of finding a “teacher story” not on my list; no one did that. Only one novel was selected for reporting, *Goodbye Mr.*

Chips, and this by a teacher from the U.K. who was pursuing a graduate degree at our university with the tentative plan of returning to his boarding school in UK in pursuit of the headmaster's position. The other selected choices were all non-fiction; several chose *Tuesdays with Morrie*, one chose *Teacher Man*, and another chose *Among School Children*.

After reading the text, they posted a response writing in the discussion area of the online course. I provided simple guidelines for this response writing in the course syllabus: a summary of the book, lessons/ insights about teaching that they learned from reading the book, and connections of the ideas in the book to their own teaching. In the last section, I asked them to be sure to include details about their own teaching story—for example, how they decided to become a teacher and their feelings about being a teacher.

The discussion area for this posting is an asynchronous discussion format, but I assigned a deadline for the writing to be posted, and immediately following that deadline, a “window” of time for them to respond to each others’ summary and connections. Some online instructors provide rubrics or checklists for these online discussions, but I did not—although I did monitor the discussions and also participated in them in order to model and coach deeper thinking or additional questioning. By Session 5, my involvement was really not needed as much as in Session 1. The guidelines in the syllabus, which I intentionally kept simple, said only that each teacher is expected “to respond to all of the other teachers’ initial postings and that the discussion should explore as much as possible the ways that writings by and about teachers add to our view/ perspectives of what it is to be a teacher.” The first discussion included an average of ten discussion turns per teacher, an especially lively beginning, since I had not established a standard for frequency of responses. I was pleased with the ease with which most of the teachers were able to introduce themselves to the others through the context of the teacher literature they chose. Two examples in particular, were stunning and elicited much conversation among the teachers.

Paula¹ reported on *Teacher Man* by Frank McCourt. She summarized the book and pointed out what she admired most about his memoir: his doggedness during 30 plus years of inner city school teaching. “I wish I could have read this book before I set foot in my own 2nd grade classroom in inner city New Orleans.” In her sharing, Paula began by explaining that like McCourt, her teaching experiences in pre-Katrina New Orleans, many painful, led her to believe that “perseverance counts more than education or pedagogy” towards successful teaching. She goes on:

While I did not have such wild expectations [as McCourt], I do admit to feeling that I could save the world, one impoverished child at a time. I wasn't prepared to face a classroom of eight-year olds who didn't want to be saved, especially by this cracker (excuse the racial term) of a teacher who talked funny.

She further clarified her language by saying that her northern white rural teacher presence mostly agitated her southern black urban students in ways she had not anticipated and only after much initial discomfort and intensely hard work, had she found ways to ease cultural transitions for both herself and the students.

One of the other teachers in the online discussion pointed out that it seemed that Paula and McCourt were both dealing with the challenges of being an “immigrant

1. All names of teachers are pseudonyms, to protect privacy.

teacher,” an observation that led to subsequent discussion for other teachers and at least one recommendation for the group for further reading on these issues, that being *Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* by Gloria Ladson Billings. One other teacher applauded her: “There is no replacement for life experience and you are wiser because of what you went through and will be able to help others.”

This isolated strand of online discussion suggests the power of the “outside story” (McCourt’s) to provide a substantive launch for a teacher’s own story as introductory online “talk.” And the resulting discussion did a nice job of blending McCourt’s and Paula’s stories into the broader concerns of teaching and learning and here, in particular, the role of teacher-identity and its impact on learning.

And what broader concerns are evident? I am reminded immediately of Lynn Bloom’s account of her own struggles essentially of “subverting the success stories” that are often told to teachers. Her own painful summer school experiences at “Prestige University,” where she seemed to get everything wrong, finds a strong match in Paula’s admission of unpreparedness to teach her second graders in New Orleans. Both of them clearly indicate that teachers’ professional growth is not always about the teaching we did well. We can be well advised to look at our “failures” as well for useful teacher knowledge.

Toby Fulwiler elaborates on this conflict between the ideal and the real, between Bloom’s “academic master plot” (and Paula’s “ideal” of saving poor, urban second graders) and the stories of failure:

To feel good about myself as a teacher, I need to feel knowledgeable, imaginative, resourceful, and relevant. And I need to believe in and celebrate (narrate) my classroom successes as much as to affirm my own identity as to affirm and enlighten others. At the same time. . . I need to be accurate, truthful, insightful, and vulnerable. I need to share with my audience things that don’t always make me look good. (93)

The ordinary, the mundane, perhaps even the “dark side” of experiences nurture growth and self knowledge. In later reflective writing, Paula mentioned the value she gained from sharing this story and reading the responses of her colleagues.

Another teacher in the course had read *Goodbye Mr. Chips* and used the traditional English boarding school experiences in Hilton’s novel as a way to tell of his own experiences teaching and serving as assistant headmaster in a U.K. boarding school, owning up to his doubts about whether he actually wanted to focus his professional goals on becoming the headmaster of his school as he had once thought. Tom had included in his summary of the novel many, family-centered sorts of responsibilities performed by Mr. Chips as headmaster.

Another teacher said to Tom: “The part where Chips was forced to announce the death of the students’ fathers (during the war) really got me thinking, how does one learn how to do this? Are you taught in classes about it?” Tom replied to her that her question made him realize that preparation for a headmaster’s work should include learning about emotional intelligence, a subject area completely overlooked thus far in his professional development. These comments led to rich contributions from the others about important texts about emotional intelligence, as well as testimonials from some

that they, too, could have used more information and knowledge about emotional intelligence in their work with particular students and families in U.S. public schools.

Tom was asked many questions about his work at the boarding school; the U.S. teachers were very curious about the UK boarding school type of education. One of his responsibilities as assistant headmaster was filling in for absent teachers, an experience, he claimed, that made him a better teacher:

The lesson plans are generally in subjects out of your special area, and you are required to follow the lesson plans. I have often found that these are some of the best lessons I have taught because they require you to think in different ways as well as use techniques that are out of your comfort zone.

This observation generated a flurry of comments on the needs for leaders in U.S. schools to “ratchet up” the quality of substitute teaching, as students could not afford to lose these opportunities to continue learning. Currently in the teachers’ schools, substitute performed poorly either because they weren’t left substantive plans to follow, or in some cases, they did not have the pedagogical skills to follow the plans that were left. Several admired just the basic requirement to follow the lesson plan and that Tom did so.

These are just two examples of how reading about and sharing teachers’ experiences provide a fertile context from which to begin to analyze our own teaching life and identity and simultaneously create a welcome and safe venue, i.e., Kohl’s notion of intellectual community, in which to share with other teachers our insights as well as our doubts. This introductory activity accomplished much: exposure to trade texts about teaching, relationship building for the teachers in the online class as they become acquainted with the unique backgrounds and experiences of their teacher-colleagues, and a beginning critical analysis of important aspects of pedagogy. The online responses to these stories and to other stories helped us make the transition as well to the topics and issues yet to be explored in the other sessions. For example, when Tom told about his experiences in the boarding school and his need to pay attention to broader emotional and family issues of his students, I was able to connect his observation to a major theme of one of the texts for the class, *The Courage to Teach* by Parker Palmer. In that text, Palmer explores multiple aspects of the emotional and spiritual health of teachers. Essentially, Tom’s experience helped me to scaffold for future learning in the class.

Stories as Ontological Events

Graves explores the importance of stories in his book about teacher stories, *How to Catch a Shark and Other Stories about Teaching and Learning*. “Every story is an ontological event; it connects me with the universe,” he claims (3). In other words, stories help us to understand our being, our teacher selves. And at the same time, the stories help us to connect with the rest of the world. Similarly, my goal in using teacher stories to launch the course, “Teacher Self-Knowledge,” was so that stories would help the teachers to connect to each other and begin relationship building—surely the biggest challenge of an online environment—as they explored and expressed their own connection to a published teacher story.

Kohl writes about storytelling itself in, "A Plea for Radical Children's Literature." He tells about listening to his grandfather tell stories of the days in New York City when he worked with the unions for workers' rights. His grandfather's stories and the vision they conjured up of a decent and just future affected him deeply.

I think what I got from that evening and many others like it listening to my grandfather was a sense of the power of stories to build comradeship and dedication to social struggle. I learned the importance of imagining good things in hard times, of keeping hope alive and never believing that 'reality' was fixed once and for all. Over the years I have learned to tell stories too, and I've come to realize how important it is for young people to hear talks of justice, to learn of the sorrows and joys of trying to make a better world. (64)

Kohl's hopeful tone reminds me of the optimism and support the teachers in my class gave to each other as they responded to the stories and their own struggles.

And what about these shared teacher stories themselves? What is the value of such stories in the process of this course, which is also intended to build pedagogical knowledge? Jerome Bruner identifies narrative mode along with the paradigmatic or logico-scientific mode as the two dominant ways of knowing. "Narrative mode leads to good stories . . . and deals in human or human like intention and action and the vicissitudes and consequence that mark their course" (98). In short, stories can sustain as well as deliver the essential parts of teaching knowledge. Sharing and telling stories provide ways for us to begin the important critical understanding of our own actions and values as ways to build teacher knowledge.

William Schubert extends this concept in his important work on teacher lore:

Teacher lore includes stories about and by teachers. It portrays and interprets ways in which teachers deliberate and reflect and it portrays teachers in action. Teacher lore refers to knowledge, ideas, insights, feelings, and understandings of teachers as they reveal their guiding beliefs, share approaches, relate consequences of their teaching, offer aspects of their philosophy of teaching and provide recommendations for educational policy makers Teacher lore for me includes both what I have gained from other teachers for my own teaching and what I can offer other teachers from my experience. (9)

By asking the teachers to write about published teacher stories and by encouraging them to share each other's personal stories, I invited them to develop just the kind of teacher lore Schubert describes. This beginning activity also contributed to the teaching knowledge of the participants.

Miller, in her work on teacher spaces, also confirms that teachers must converse with each other as a way of creating and revising teacher knowledge. She further notes, "We shared our evolving knowledge not through sets of goals and objectives or measurable means or standardized checklists of our behaviors, but rather through the stories that we told to one another" (13). This dynamic echoes Kohl's idea, mentioned earlier, that stories can be a vehicle to an intellectual community at the same time they can be manifestations of such a community. Additionally, integrating a narrative mode in our work as teachers can "penetrate cultural barriers, discover the power of the self and integrity

of the other, and deepen understanding of respective histories and possibilities" (Witherall and Noddings 4).

Teacher stories, ours and others, will inspire us to ask important questions about our teaching and guide us to seek deeper understandings of our practice, our sense of self, and our next steps in professional development. Paula gained important insight about the hard work of teaching students whose culture was very different from her own, and Tom clarified gaps in his own preparation for being a headmaster. These are not simple understandings. Paula, Tom, and the other teachers in the class benefited from their own reading and writing about their experiences, as well as having the supportive, critical responses and discussion from their online colleagues.

Fulwiler reminds us of the complexity yielded by the act of writing, insights he gained after he had written reflectively about his own teaching experiences: we cannot tell what we know unless we take time to share it over several tellings, and even then, we need others in turn to help us untangle what is true, certain, and uncompromised. Whether we are in each other's immediate presence or online, reading, writing, conversing, storytelling, all are ways of learning more about ourselves and finding possible answers to the questions Whitman might ask. Who are we? What kind of teachers are we? How can we weave a song of self?



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OUT OF THE BOX

Taking the Great Leap of Being: Finding Happiness and Hope in a Life of Thought

Bruce Novak* ·

Over three years ago, I made a momentous decision—a decision that, as Frost has said, “made all the difference,” though I’m not sure, even yet, what the tangible results will be.

I had a job I dearly loved. Nominally, it was teaching courses in Philosophy and Foundations of Education to a range of students, from college freshmen to doctoral candidates. I had the freedom to make everything I taught center on the development of the inner wisdom of great educators. As these were all required courses, they met with resistance from a number of students. But others embraced this approach in no uncertain terms. Comments from student evaluations included:

- “A life-altering experience”
- “The first time since kindergarten I’ve been treated like a human being in school”
- “The first time I’ve ever been part of a community at school”
- “I learned the importance of the soul and of people, to be less violent, and that I truly do have a vocation to teach.”

As you can imagine, this was often challenging, but *immensely* fulfilling work; work I could have imagined myself doing for the remainder of my years. It wasn’t tenure-track and didn’t pay well, but I was more than happy to accept these material constraints for the intellectual and spiritual freedom I was given to *truly* teach.

Eventually, though, the School of Education changed the makeup of the majority of the courses I taught in ways that made that teaching *far* more difficult.¹ And, at roughly the same time in early 2007, Barack Obama declared himself a presidential candidate, announcing at least the possibility that momentous “change” was about to occur. I had known Obama since 1996. He spoke at a conference I helped organize: “Re-Awakening Hope in a Time of Cynicism.” And he took one of the central slogans for his presidential campaign—“We are the *ones* we’ve been waiting for”—from the Politics of Meaning

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1. I’ve written about this change and its effects on my teaching in “The Audacity of Thought,” *Philosophical Studies in Education*, 40, available online: <http://ovpes.org/2009/Novak.pdf>

movement that had sponsored that conference.² What I saw was that, if this saying was right—and not *just* a political slogan—we were going to need a national educational curriculum geared centrally to helping us *find* ourselves and one another. I had devised just such a curriculum for teachers to pass on to others.

Three years down the road, the insights culled from my teaching have kept spiraling upward and outward, morphing into a potentially transformative worldview: incorporating insights from evolutionary psychology regarding the centrality of wise, artful nurturance to the development of our species. I drew from the concrete history of wisdom laid out by philosopher Karl Jaspers, religious scholar Karen Armstrong, and political theorist Eric Voegelin.³ These thinkers, among others, helped me realize that there was an Axial Age, a Great Leap of Being, in the middle of the First Millennium B.C.E., in which the disciplined integration of the individual soul with the cosmos was first practiced in cultures across Eurasia—through Confucianism and Daoism, mystical Hinduism, prophetic Judaism, Greek tragedy and philosophy. I was also profoundly influenced by the “transactional” literary theory of Louise Rosenblatt, translated from the philosophy of the very late John Dewey, and further translated into pedagogical terms by Jeff Wilhelm in his *You Gotta BE the Book*.

Wilhelm and I now have a book coming out next year from Teachers College Press: *Literacy for Love and Wisdom: Being the Book and Being the Change*, playing on the title of Wilhelm’s first book and Gandhi’s famous saying “We need to *be* the change we want to see in the world.” In our book, we show that art and teaching help form what poet/anthropologist Lewis Hyde calls “the gift economy,” a transactional economy supervening upon and transcending the merely *interactive* market economy of commodities and information.⁴ And we’re both organizing and keynoting next year’s AEPL conference, of the same title. Following up on the 2008 conference that Stan Scott and I organized, “Reclaiming the Wisdom Tradition for Education,” we hope to show how the discipline that has been called “English” has always tacitly been a discipline for the cultivation of wisdom in democratic life, an aim which can and must be made explicit, in times such as these, when that wisdom is sorely needed and the possibility of “change” is upon us.

This journey has not been at all easy. In its course, I lost my partner of thirteen years, who never understood either what I was trying to do or the rather roundabout ways I set about doing it. I had to learn to actively seek, receive, and rely on the more diffuse forms of love that others could give me—particularly the love from many of my former students, whose lives had been touched and changed by my teaching; the love upon which my ideas centered; the love of the artists I had studied—artists of so many kinds, who had given so fully of themselves and from whom I had received so many transformative experiences over the years. These artists especially were for me “the company we keep,” as Wayne Booth would say, the “dead poets’ society” who, as Goethe often observed, may be *all of our* greatest friends.

2. From the epilogue to Jim Wallis’s *God’s Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn’t Get It* (2005).

3. Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History* (1947); Armstrong, *The Great Transformation: The Origin of Our Religious Traditions* (2006); Voegelin, *Order and History* (1956-1987).

4. *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (1979).

Related to this new-found ability to rely on diffuse forms of love, I had to learn to distinguish between financial and moral bankruptcy: the latter having to do with the often unnecessary selling out of our dearest hopes and dreams. I had to learn not to be overcome by anxiety—to recognize that I was living a life that was very much worth living. I was flourishing *humanly*, *intellectually*, and *spiritually* in ways I had never done before. And I would probably be all right, thanks to personal, familial, and social resources that would tide me over for the time it would take to complete the book and conference.

Voegelin writes of the Axial Age as The Great Leap of Being. Great leaps are always made into the void, without a material net—though, one assumes, there is a spiritual support, the waiting arms of the cosmos that will catch us if we only extend ourselves. If “we are the ones we’ve been waiting for,” *what* we’re waiting for may be for one another to take that leap. And if “change” is coming, what it might consist of in a major way is more and more of us following the bliss of wisdom rather than the seductions of the marketplace—assuming that there will be another kind of market for our bliss, if that bliss is wise.



BOOK REVIEWS

Practices in Mindfulness

Judy Halden-Sullivan, Book Review Editor

American Zen teacher Charlotte Joko Beck recounts the following tale in her 1993 book, *Nothing Special: Living Zen*:

Master Ichu picked up his brush and wrote one word: "Attention." The student said, "Is that all?" The master wrote, "Attention. Attention." The student became irritable. "That doesn't seem profound or subtle to me." In response, Master Ichu wrote simply, "Attention. Attention. Attention." In frustration, the student demanded, "What does this word attention mean?" Master Ichu replied, "Attention means attention" (168).

Paying attention or *mindfulness* is a hard sell for both over-committed teachers and students accustomed to a cultural milieu better attuned to diverting attention. Mindfulness—becoming deeply aware of our world and our being with it—demands focused, consistent, disciplined practice. Experiencing mindfulness asks that we *slow down* to consciously and deliberately live our lives, fully awake. But how? And why?

In this issue, Ken DeLuca, a professor in a most pragmatic field, Technology Education, and also a student of Zen meditation himself, evaluates the efficacy of Deborah Schoeberlein's and Suki Sheth's recommendations in *Mindful Teaching and Teaching Mindfulness: A Guide for Anyone Who Teaches Anything* (Boston: Wisdom Publications 2009). In this study, Schoeberlein and Sheth reveal straightforward techniques for achieving everyday mindfulness to awaken teacher and student practitioners to their own lives—both in the classroom and outside it.

Brad Lucas, a writing studies specialist, assesses a series of nationally available teacher seminars on mindfulness to ferret out the do-able from the nebulous in Elizabeth MacDonald and Dennis Shirley's text, *The Mindful Teacher* (NY: Teachers College Press 2009).

In a related vein, Timothy Shea, an English Education professor, connects mindfulness to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's notion of *flow*—being fully absorbed, emotionally and intellectually, in the moment. He examines ways to invite total immersion in classrooms across the disciplines, the subject of Richard Van DeWeghe's *Engaged Learning* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin 2009).

Finally, in reviewing Robert E. Cummings's book *Lazy Virtues: Teaching Writing in the Age of Wikipedia* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt UP 2009), William Archibald, a composition studies professor with a specialization in technology, gauges Cummings's contention that one of the most effective—and, for professors, seemingly unlikely—paths for inspiring students' mindfulness is letting them do what they already love to do: immersing themselves in electronic engagement, in particular, permitting the social character of the internet to focus writing students' attention in powerfully rhetorical ways.

Attention, attention, attention: as these reviewed books attest, mindfulness is not solely the domain of mystics, but is accessible, practical and transformative—for our students *and* ourselves.



Deborah Schoeberlein and Suki Sheth. *Mindful Teaching and Teaching Mindfulness: A Guide for Anyone Who Teaches Anything*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009.

Kenneth P. De Lucca, Millersville University of Pennsylvania

The all-inclusive subtitle of Schoeberlein's and Sheth's study poses a challenging goal. How can one book cover so much? When I reflect upon my own experience as a Technology Education professor, my twenty-five-plus years of teaching mostly electronics in laboratory-based classes have not resulted in any tendencies on my part toward "kinder/gentler teaching"; sometimes I think I've seen and heard it all, at least every creative excuse ever dreamed. But I've also been a practitioner of Zen Buddhist Zazen (sitting meditation) for about 18 months, and its benefits have reached into my classrooms and laboratories. Zazen's influence definitely allowed me to better understand and have a greater appreciation for authors Schoeberlein's and Sheth's achievement.

In the foreword, Stephen Viola, director of the Transition to Teaching Program at the University of Missouri, St. Louis, states, "Tapping into the potential of mindfulness begins when teachers and students learn to pay attention to the *experience of paying attention*" (xii). This statement expresses the book's intent: how to teach teachers, while guiding and working with their students, to be more mindful, or present, in the classroom. Schoeberlein and Sheth suggest helpful behaviors teachers can adopt to ensure improvement in attentiveness.

Chapter 1, "Teach as You Learn," focuses on developing the ability to teach mindfully: "Take 5 Mindful Breathing (For Teachers)." Mindful breathing is nothing more than paying attention to one's breath. Practitioners notice how their breath fills their lungs and flows back out. While doing this, they think about nothing else. If they begin daydreaming, they return to focusing on the breath as soon as they can. After describing the benefits of mindfulness, both *for teachers*—it "improves focus and awareness, increases responsiveness to students' needs"—and *for students*—it "supports readiness to learn, promotes academic performance"—an exercise is presented that will seem familiar to practitioners of Zazen or other forms of mindful meditation (9). This exercise establishes a method for teachers to "settle down" by breathing mindfully. Instructors cannot notice the needs of others unless they are calm and properly in-tune with their environment.

Chapter 2 explains how teachers may develop "Mindfulness in the Morning" with variations presented on the "Take 5" exercise. These involve noticing thoughts and feelings as one is engaging in the "Take 5" breathing practice. The authors' point in this chapter is that, rather than permitting your mind to escalate your emotions to the level

of “I’d rather experience anything but this class,” instead make the transition into the day with a greater level of equanimity. For example, one suggestion for balanced clarity is being truly present as your significant other departs for her/his work and being able to sincerely wish that person “a good day”: this is “a great gift—for them and for you” (33). Numerous mindfulness suggestions for various occasions, from rising in the morning to a short reflection on the closing day, are described with tips for use in teaching, including “Greeting the day involves witnessing and participating in its arrival . . .” (18), while setting your intentions for the day to “stay patient with everyone, all day” (21). I enjoyed reading about these simple and quick methods any teacher can use to bring mindfulness into the classroom. Another example I thought compelling was, “If you are driving to work” or to class, “it’s best just to let driving be your main focus of attention; don’t try to do anything else as you drive” (36). How many of us are guilty of obsessive worry and planning en route to school?

Chapter 3, “On to School,” is full of suggestions for teachers. It introduces the mindful breathing exercise for students as “Take 1,” a version of “Take 5.” The chapter continues with other activities designed to be introduced by the teacher for use in the classroom. One technique noted in this chapter I have incorporated into my daily practice since reviewing this book: “Your ability to greet [students] with your full attention is a subtle yet powerful teaching strategy that often rapidly parlays into any of a number of desirable outcomes” (40). And this technique is reinforced by the suggestion that, “It’s also well worth taking the extra thirty seconds or minute to pause and ground yourself before you walk through the door and switch your focus to your students” (40).

Chapter 4, “How You See It,” is designed for students. Here they are introduced to *mindful seeing*, or noting the difference “between *looking at* something and *looking for* something” (65). The authors explain, “Simply observing the object is looking for the sake of looking, whereas noticing specific details has a purpose” (65). I must admit that I had to read that last sentence twice, but it began to sink in. Success with the latter task is increased when *mindfulness* is at its core.

Chapter 5, “Kindness and Connections,” begins with specific practices for teachers. *Metta*-meditations (*metta* being a Pali word that can be translated into English as “lovingkindness”) are introduced along with the mindful noticing of kind actions. *Metta*-meditations are designed to first reflect kindness to one’s self and then to others: loved ones, casual acquaintances or individuals about whom one has a neutral feeling (e.g., the mail carrier, a colleague), and finally people who may have caused us pain. Instruction is given to introduce students to this form of meditation, with careful mention of the “weird” thoughts students may have about a practice of this type (73). The authors are quick to point out that the teacher must determine which practices from the many possibilities put forward in this text should be attempted in the classroom. Chapter 5 closes with discussion of the ability of students to *notice kindness*. Students are asked, “to notice unexpected *opportunities* to act kindly” (84). Students are asked during a brainstorming session to list examples of acting kindly: “Suggestions typically range from the profound, such as comforting a grieving friend, to the seemingly superficial, such as opening the door for a stranger” (85).

Chapter 6—“Beads on a String,” Chapter 7—“Body Awareness,” and Chapter 8—“Mindful Words” are about mindful activities for students. Topics such as drawing,

eating, walking, journaling, and mindful speech actions are addressed. For example, in Chapter 7—“Body Awareness,” “Walking with Awareness” is introduced: “The idea is to build on the momentum related to students’ familiarity with walking ‘as if’ they’re tired, proud, or procrastinating, to create an opportunity in which they focus on walking while attending only to the experience of walking” (117). The activity ends with, “Walk while paying attention to every movement you make with each step” (118). Throughout these chapters, I found the authors’ style and suggestions extremely useful; however, not all activities can be carried out with all grade levels. Instead, the authors provide the reader with enough suggestions and specific instructions to at least use portions of these mindful activities with students of all ages. This is the overall strength of *Mindful Teaching and Teaching Mindfulness*.

Chapter 9, the last chapter of the book, is entitled “Full Circle” and returns focus back to the teacher. The authors write: “Teaching each day is like running a marathon, except after you cross the finish line and students leave, there are still a few more sprints after school” (158). Time after school is considered: from closing down the classroom—“Caring for the physical space of your classroom ...” (159)—to heading home, making sure to “Mark the transition from school to after-school and consciously place yourself in new environments” (160). Mindfulness techniques are made a part of these actions. A method for finding *satisfaction* is provided that includes the “Take 5” practice and reflections upon why you wanted to teach in the first place, high points, and challenges. A daily reflection is suggested, including “find[ing] at least one thing, however small, for which you can express gratitude” (169). Suggestions for setting intentions for tomorrow and practicing being in the *here and now* conclude the chapter.

Appendix 1 (“Summary Encapsulation”) and Appendix 2 (“Formal Instructions and References to Informal Activities”) were very helpful after reading the book, as a thorough understanding of the book’s content is essential to benefit from these aides.

This book is a quick read; it provides many helpful techniques to enhance a teacher’s ability in the classroom. Student involvement in the mindfulness process elevates this book from a self-help manual to a serious work with the capacity to impact many lives. No prior familiarity with meditation practice is necessary to work through the suggested activities; they make sense and they work.



Elizabeth MacDonald and Dennis Shirley. *The Mindful Teacher*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2009.

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Part of the Series on School Reform published by Teachers College Press, *The Mindful Teacher* offers readers a distillation of four years' worth of seminars on mindful teaching practices, centered mostly in the city of Boston and aimed to offset the alienation caused by institutional mandates and managerial practices in the public school system. Shorter than an issue of an academic journal, *The Mindful Teacher* is a quick read packed with autobiographical reflections, austere theoretical discussions, and—perhaps most importantly—frameworks to guide teachers toward a daily practice with minimal, or at least minimized, alienation from their work as educators.

Supported by a Boston Collaborative Fellows Grant (and numerous other funding sources), The Mindful Teaching seminars illustrate how good ideas from both K-12 and university settings—coupled with robust funding sources—can have a profound impact on the life world of teachers, especially given that the “contemporary credit crisis and recession are only the economic manifestation of a larger societal crisis of values that has now reached virtually every corner of the globe” (MacDonald and Shirley 1). With teachers facing increasing pressure to sacrifice their pedagogy to accommodate initiatives like No Child Left Behind and a host of other data-driven decision making practices, authors Elizabeth MacDonald and Dennis Shirley set out to create spaces for teachers to reflect, meditate, and develop strategies for thoughtful survival. In other words, they wanted to seek a path for the future: “What possibilities remain for ethical, caring teachers to hone their craft and to inspire their students with the sheer joy and delight that is to be found in learning?” (2). Emerging from these seminars, *The Mindful Teacher* offers readers a vicarious experience that explains not just possible frontiers but the origins of the current situation, the complex—and highly individualized—challenges that each teacher faces, and the interplay of strategies that localized groups can implement to promote professional, and personal, well being.

Divided into five chapters, the book first documents the dynamics of “The Great Divide” between teachers and administrative pressures driven by institutional mandates, then in Chapter 2 articulates the importance of professional learning communities and their capacity to promote mindfulness. Uniquely, the discussion of mindfulness combines Ellen Langer’s work on cognition and imagination with the teachings of Vietnamese Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh. Chapter 3 then offers an extensive account of the Mindful Teacher seminars: [1] describing the eight-part structure of the seminars, [2] identifying the “ten clusters” of questions that emerged from the seminars, and [3] offering what they call “six anchoring illustrations” from seminar participants who “demonstrated aspects of mindfulness to reconceptualize and improve their work as educators” (29-30). In Chapter 4, MacDonald and Shirley take us out of the seminars and into the theoretical frameworks generated from them: “Seven Synergies of Mindful Teaching,” as well as “Three Tensions of Mindful Teaching.” Such numbered lists run the risk of commodification or simple reduction (à la Stephen Covey), but given the compact nature of *The Mindful Teacher*, they accomplish quite a lot in a short space. Ultimately, Chapter 5 encourages readers to

enact a mindful teacher leadership—one that clearly is intended to nurture teachers in their professional support communities, not to promote advancement into administrative positions or purely political leadership.

For the remainder of this review, I'll offer an overview of Chapters 3 and 4, which elucidate the process of the seminars and invite readers to contemplate their own engagement with such practices. The eight-part structure of the seminars began first with an exploration and discussion of "Pressing Concerns," prompting teachers to consider a general range of topics of concern. From there, participants engaged in "Selective Vulnerability," confronting the struggles that individuals faced and generating discussion from those unique concerns that spoke to larger problems. The third and fourth portions of the seminars introduced, respectively, the importance of "Scholarly Research," followed by the practice of "Formal Meditation." In other words, the seminar worked toward a traditional model of sharing the aggregation of research knowledge, but then followed it with an atypical practice of guided meditation. Following the individual meditation session, small groups worked together to troubleshoot "Psychological Intrusions" and consider approaches, if not outright solutions to problems. The sixth stage of the seminar then proceeded to a "Tuning Protocol," a session in which the entire group of participants would, in effect, focus on just one person and her or his troubling issue. The last two stages of the seminar prompted participants to reflect on their discoveries and give themselves assignments to promote mindfulness in their everyday lives in the weeks that followed.

Fortunately, MacDonald and Shirley do not belabor the details of the seminar, providing instead just enough detail to enable readers to imagine the process and contemplate their own participation in it. While this book review cannot reproduce the ten clusters of questions verbatim, I can provide a short list of the central issues around which they gather: conflicted beliefs, dignity and self-respect, a healthy personal life, systematic inequities, teacher leadership, responses to violence, tenacity in teaching, minding different perspectives, developing positive relationships, and awareness of assumptions behind differences (38-39).

Curiously, Chapter 3 ends with six "anchoring illustrations" that provide us with representative case scenarios based on seminar participants and their experiences. At first, I found the chapter's approach to be too compartmentalized, dividing the content into convenient lists. But upon reflection, it occurred to me that the chapter's structure avoids representing the mindfulness seminars as a "treatment," one in which alienated teachers are put through a process that cures or otherwise solves their problems. Instead, by first presenting the seminar design and then the shared phenomenon represented by the question-clusters that emerged, readers can consider each of the six illustrations on its own terms, reviewing the struggles of six teachers who will, by no means, have their problems solved but may, indeed, start a new path that keeps them in the classroom and inspiring their students.

Chapter 4 presents the Seven Synergies of Mindful Teaching, a representational system in which the *combined* efforts of each of the elements are stronger than the sum of the individual contributions. First, "Open Mindedness" prompts a commitment to allow the complexity of the world to present itself. "Caring," loosely based on Nel Noddings's work, attends to the emotional longing, loving, and aspirations that accompany teaching. The third synergy, "Stopping," drives home the importance of resisting the frenetic pace

of daily life: the authors here stress the importance of “taking an inner account of what is transpiring, and not allowing yourself to be rushed into actions that you might regret later” (65). They even prompt the reader to put the book down for a moment of meditation and reflection, accentuating the aims of the authors to *encourage* their practices, rather than simply document them for academic purposes or glory in their successes. The fourth synergy, “Professional Expertise,” assumes the diversity of knowledge and wisdom in the profession, insisting that it must have a place in a mindful practice. The fifth and sixth synergies, “Authentic Alignment” and “Integration and Harmonization,” identify the need for teachers to enact their pedagogies in ways that work within existing structures and constraints, yet seek to find a balance between effectiveness and acquiescence. Seventh, “Collective Responsibility,” sounds a note of idealism in terms of mutual responsibility among individuals and community, but given the lofty challenges of the other synergies, it is a fitting final element that heightens the importance of interpersonal relations. In closing Chapter 4, MacDonald and Shirley identify the “triple tensions” along three spectra: between contemplation and action; ethics and power; and the individual and the collective. Altogether, by identifying synergies and situating mindful teaching among these tensions, this framework offers a handy scaffolding for teachers to pursue a path away from alienation and toward mindfulness.

While I appreciate the streamlined approach taken in *The Mindful Teacher*, I also found myself wanting the authors to practice the art of “Stopping Themselves.” With this extensive work predicated on teacher alienation, the authors give us only a perfunctory gesture to Marx and a rather generic explanation—something akin to “job dissatisfaction”—when I think there’s much more at stake, especially in terms of despair for the profession and an overriding angst about community and the future of participatory democracy. Moreover, while I enjoyed the extended reflections by Elizabeth MacDonald, I was less interested in her journey than I was in those of the seminar participants. I would have gladly traded in a shorter account of hers for one or two more of theirs. Furthermore, MacDonald’s excessive self-reflections drew striking attention to the near absence of Dennis Shirley and his experiences in the project and its processes.

All in all, *The Mindful Teacher* should give readers a clear sense of the transformative power of continuing-education initiatives that promote community, self-awareness, and strategies for transformation. It’s certainly no substitute for the relationships that can emerge from extended discussions of the problems we face in our schools, but it does point us in the right direction, down a path that starts with every one of us taking the time to stop, breathe, and consider the possibilities we face together.



VanDeWeghe, Richard. *Engaged Learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2009.

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In my visits to public schools, I observe a disconcerting reality. I see adolescents sitting in rows listening and sometimes writing, but barely looking interested in the lesson being taught. Some slump with their heads on their desks, tuned out to the class entirely. Others appear to be paying attention, but on closer examination, it is clear that they are not. Their eyes are glazed, and they look like they would rather be anywhere else but in school. Their questions exemplify their lack of engagement: "Why do we need to learn this? Am I ever going to use it?" In the two decades in which I have taught students of all ages, I have wondered how teachers can consistently find ways to bring meaning and fulfillment into the acts of teaching and learning, when both can seem like losing battles.

On the flip side, in our extra-curricular lives, we all know what it is like to be so immersed in an activity that we lose track of time or our surroundings. It could be a hobby or a sport or an intellectual pursuit. As Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi explains in his influential study, *Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life*, "For a child, it could be placing with trembling fingers the last block on a tower she has built . . . for a swimmer it could be trying to beat his own record; for a violinist, mastering an intricate passage" (3). It is what is called "flow," an "all-encompassing state of engagement" (VanDeWeghe 2). It is what teachers recognize as an essential albeit elusive key to learning.

Richard VanDeWeghe, author of *Engaged Learning*, has observed a similar pattern in his over 40 years in the classroom as a teacher and researcher. As important as engagement is in learning, its presence is erratic at best in the classroom. *Engaged Learning* is a result of his inquiry into finding solutions to this perennial problem. He uses Csikszentmihalyi's ideas of flow as the standard for his inquiry into the roles that engagement plays in learning that involves both the heart and the mind. He draws from his teaching and research expertise to help him make sense of the practical ways that teachers of all levels and disciplines can teach their students the art of engaged learning.

This disparity between school and home engagement was observed by Smith and Wilhelm in their study of adolescent boys' reading habits both in and out of school. They discovered that boys usually experience flow in some way when they were passionate about some activity. However, what they observed was that "flow" more likely occurred outside of school when they were involved in activities they really cared about, such as fixing a car or playing a video game. These researchers believe that for teachers to replicate this optimal state, they need to focus on creating conditions in the classroom "that will make students more inclined to engage in learning what they need to know," thus creating a state of "flow" and the essence of engaged learning (53). It is into this understanding that *Engaged Learning* arrives as a guide to helping educators find ways to make the elusive goal of engagement a classroom reality.

VanDeWeghe sets out in this book to find ways to "negotiate the barriers" (ix) between the students' more engaged "real" world and their less engaged classroom world. He believes that there are authentic, research-based ways to bridge this gap, which could revolutionize our schools as they clash with current ideas about teaching and learning. He

beckons us to consider the dream of classes full of engaged and interested students who make connections between school and home, and who see learning as much broader than a textbook or a stage of life.

The strand that ties this book together is the dual way of looking at engagement. Engagement is both mind- and heart-based. VanDeWeghe argues that these two aspects must be considered together as necessary components of deep, engaging learning. He contends that to separate them is to truncate learning, which leads to apathy and disconnection.

As this is a work of inquiry, it is propelled by key questions:

- What makes students excited about learning and, conversely, what makes them disaffected or only marginally involved?
- What do flow experiences have to teach us about the nature of engaged learning?
- How can we plan our teaching, based on a deep understanding of student minds and hearts when they're truly engaged in learning?
- What do typical classroom activities such as reading and discussing look like when they are guided by mind- and heart-based engagement theory? (xiii)

The book is organized into two parts. Part I provides the background of VanDeWeghe's inquiry into theories of learning and engagement. He closely examines the meaning of flow as defined by Csikszentmihalyi, explaining in full detail the engaged state for which we as educators and learners strive. In this initial section of the book, he first examines the role of flow in engaging brains and then in engaging hearts. He ties these chapters together by explaining ways that an understanding of flow and the ways it can engage minds and hearts can then transfer to instructional planning.

In Part II, VanDeWeghe moves beyond theory to examine specific ways that the engagement defined in the first part can be put into classroom practice. He draws not only from his own teaching experience, but also from observing classes and collecting data across a wide range of grades and disciplines. In this section, he first looks at strategies for modeling engaged learning, and then he discusses the ways that words and discussions can engage learners. At times, he notes, well-intentioned, overly helpful teachers can undermine students' agency. VanDeWeghe posits that teachers who develop engagement in their classes choose their words carefully in order to help their students become independent and, thus, more engaged learners. This observation coincides with Peter Johnston's research that revealed how teacher language has the power to shape students' identities as learners and "help them understand how their brains and hearts work in tandem to improve achievement" (VanDeWeghe 67).

The next two chapters explore the ways teachers can support engagement for both readers and writers. VanDeWeghe ends this section with a chapter on memory pathways and their role in supporting long and short-term memory. The afterword discusses a few of the author's lingering questions, which range from assessment issues to classroom research, acknowledging the organic nature of learning.

When I first picked up this book, my classroom teacher's skepticism set in: I thought it would simply be another education book written by a professor in an ivory tower who was rolling out lofty ideas that looked good in theory but in practice were impractical to implement. While the premise of the book has interested me for decades, leading me to

my own inquiry, I had almost given up hope of finding consistent ways to thoughtfully and genuinely engage learners. Of course, I knew engagement was important to effective teaching, but it seemed more a matter of luck and personality and less a matter of skill developed from empirical evidence. *Engaged Learning* changed that.

It is obvious from the outset that VanDeWeghe is both an experienced practitioner and simultaneously a skilled researcher. He establishes his wide understanding in the fields of “brain research” and learning by logically organizing and building a strong case for developing flow by engaging students’ hearts and minds. As he does, he responds to possible objections to his ideas while supporting them with examples from a range of classrooms, disciplines, and grade levels.

By the time readers finish the first part of the book, they have a clear idea about what flow is and how it is important to learning. They also understand the necessity of engaging both the mind (neurological) and the heart (humanistic) because “teaching and learning are not done by disembodied intellects but by whole persons whose brains cannot be disconnected from feeling and spirit, from heart and soul” (Palmer 10).

As important as it was for VanDeWeghe to establish his basis for engaged learning in the first part of his book, it was even more crucial for him to show ways these concepts could be enacted in real classrooms—and he does just that. He shows how “common activities” can lead to engaged learning across subjects and levels, K-16 (43). The focus of these activities should center on the instructor modeling effective work habits because our students learn as much, if not more, from observing us than from what we say. He echoesSizer’s and Sizer’s thoughts on the ways teachers model engagement by living out their love of learning which, in turn, inspires students also to immerse themselves in learning. Models of *teacher* engagement demonstrate flow, instead of just superficially recommending it.

Engaged Learning is true to its title—it is an engaging read. Dr. VanDeWeghe speaks with authority and yet also with warmth. It’s as if we are his students and the professor is imparting his acquired wisdom to help us do what we aim to do, but in relation to which we often fall short. He shows us that engagement is not only possible but also necessary, no matter what we teach. This is one text that will find a place in my required reading list for my methods course in the teaching of English. How it both engages readers and characterizes engagement *for* readers make it an important book.

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Cummings, Robert E. *Lazy Virtues: Teaching Writing in the Age of Wikipedia*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt UP, 2009.

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If you want to build a ship, don't herd people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work but rather, teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.

—Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

When students arrive in my networked classroom, I have noticed that they sit down at their computers and promptly log into Facebook. Once there, they look as if they're travelers upon a vast desert and have come to an oasis where they find the cool water of their friends' words and images. What can we as college writing instructors make of this? One option is to use social media and "crowdsourcing" to teach students to write for real audiences and to be critical of the writing they do.

When you want to crowdsource on the Web, you "split a task into smaller pieces and unleash it to millions of people around the world" (*oDesk*). This way of working is discussed by Robert E. Cummings in his fascinating new book, *Lazy Virtues: Teaching Writing in the Age of Wikipedia*. This "lazy," collaborative type of work—a kind of crowdsourcing—began, he says, when computer-hacker culture invented Unix, the first software code for computers. The work programmers did on Unix was lazy in the sense that code used for it was shared and repurposed over and over again. We see it elsewhere in corporate practices like Google's "20 percent time," where "engineers spend one day a week working on projects that aren't necessarily in our job descriptions" (K). Laziness in this sense is a virtue, something done outside of the regular workflow, an activity mobilized in the service of the organization.

In his book, Cummings takes this notion of laziness and applies it to teaching writing to undergraduates. He says,

Thus, 'laziness' serves as masthead for the particular set of conditions where individuals are motivated to work by intrinsic desires rather than solely traditional motivations. To the extent that this condition is persistent in our students' lives, the field of composition must embrace it (124).

The writing we want students to do, he says, can be done much more willingly and creatively by them if we tap into their preferences. Letting students choose their topics as a way to get good writing is old news, but Cummings says that it's not enough; we must give them real audiences, too. The environment that does both is the wiki, specifically Wikipedia. Before I get into Cummings' argument for using Wikipedia as a student-writing space, I want to show how Cummings' ideas dovetail with the growing prominence and usefulness of wikis.

Ushahidi ("testimony," in Swahili), a wiki/ crowdsource application created by the Kenya native, Ory Okolloh, during Kenya's most recent troubles, gave human rights activists and victims alike the ability to tell the world what was happening on

the ground by “collect[ing] user-generated cellphone reports of riots, stranded refugees, rapes and deaths and plot[ting] them on a map, using locations given by informants” (Giridharadas). The similarities between *Ushahidi* and what Cummings talks about in regard to his composition students help illuminate his argument for the epistemological and pedagogical uses of Wikipedia.

Ushahidi data is measured in the same way Cummings talks about measuring his students’ writing in Wikipedia. The difference is that Cummings uses a “limited sample set” of one class of students. Yet the potential is the same. Not every dot on the *Ushahidi* maps is reliable, but the dots show a pattern. Cummings measures the “truth” of his students writing or how well they decipher the rhetorical nature of a Wikipedia page, by the fluency of their posts and how many edits occur in the pages they work on. The difference is that those looking at the *Ushahidi* maps take each point and aggregate it into a whole. The aggregation in Wikipedia goes on too, but the community of readers and writers use aggregation to refine and control the message. The message viewers receive from the *Ushahidi* maps is gleaned from the quantity of similar plottings, which indicates greater concentration of activity.

Ushahidi cannot be said to be lazy in Cummings’s sense because lives are at stake, but the philosophy is the same: make the activity modular and granular—that is, break the task into pieces and have many individuals participate in putting the pieces together into a recognizable whole. Do you come up with the truth when you do this? Both Cummings and Giridharadas—who explains the *Ushahidi* testimonies as “good-enough truths”—would both agree about the practical benefits of wiki technology. In each case, wiki technology modularizes and granulates the process so the truth can emerge bit by bit.

Cummings is sensitive to Composition instructors’ objections that Wikipedia is not a reliable source and thus should not be used to do college research. Jimmy Wales, the creator of Wikipedia, has himself suggested that Wikipedia not be used as a primary source by students (Young). But Cummings has something different in mind: he wants his students to use Wikipedia as a writing space, not as a research tool. The justification of his approach is tortuously explained by way of transactional economic theory.

Cummings sets up Wikipedia as a premier crowdsourcing environment that has its roots in the evolution of economics from the market, to a market economy, to commons-based peer production (CBPP), which he cites as the basis of wiki culture. In other words, people first produced commodities for themselves and for their local markets, and then, with the advent of the Industrial Revolution, these commodities became modularized. In our information economy, modularization has become granular, allowing very low cost production, increasing the availability of knowledge, and spurring innovation, thus flattening the organization (oDesk).

Why should writing teachers and students care about this transformation from the market, to a market economy, to commons-based peer production (CBPP)? The principle reason, according to Cummings, is that students are going to eventually work in a CBPP system when they leave college, and they need to be prepared for it. Cummings’ basic argument that Wikipedia provides students with real audiences rings true. What is problematic about this wiki-way is that it barely suits the institutions and classrooms that we learn and teach in today. He deals with this problem by giving an example of a Wikipedia assignment he uses in his First Year Composition (FYC) course. The assignment

is the last of the term, which Cummings justifies by noting that, by the end of the term, students have gotten to know one another, thus making collaboration easier. But perhaps his placement has more to do with the perceived reluctance of some students to abdicate assessment of their posted writing to the crowd on Wikipedia, who can be particularly rigorous, if not totally dismissive. Cummings counters this problem of assessment by having students journal and discuss their postings with each other. But the fact remains that having one's contribution to a wiki page removed by a stranger gives students pause, to say the least.

Yet there are good reasons in Cummings's case studies for why some students' postings are preserved, which serves as the crux of his method: students' own vigilance in examining the nature of the wiki community that controls certain pages becomes their ticket to enter a particular discourse community and have their contributions accepted. What it takes to understand and reach an audience with one's writing is something we all want to teach our students. Wikispaces provides these lessons, and, if particular students don't survive the gauntlet of edits, then there is a lesson there, too. But students are often so conscious of the power of grades that it is difficult for them to let loose and trust the reader-centered experience Cummings wants to give them, and for obvious reasons. They have relied on teachers to give them the reward they need to advance in their studies, and now to be told by strangers that their writing may be inadequate is quite a blow.

The job we have as teachers, and Cummings realizes this, is to convince students that these new writing spaces are indicative of the work environments students will inhabit when they graduate. This is not the call to duty that those who see FYC as a skills course might imagine, but a testimony to the realities of social economies, economies of which students are well aware as practitioners of social networks. Yet students may not realize these economies also reflect the jobs that will help build their careers. Cummings wants to bring this news to the composition classroom, and his message is well worth considering.



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CONNECTING

Growing Up

Helen Walker, “Connecting” Editor

“Grow up!” the dad says to his whiny daughter after her chewing gum drops in the dirt, she tries to brush it off, and he throws it in the wastebasket. “Grow up,” we say to ourselves when we get tired of our own sniveling and private pity parties, and we finally recognize how stuck we are.

Some think, I being one, that our number-one gig in this lifetime is to grow up. And teaching is a great day job, since it keeps us plugged into our real vocation. Any age of student seems to work. Kindergarteners up to grad students all create their own collective magic potion and even the stick to stir it—if we are agile enough to catch hold of it!—as they bubble and froth in the cauldron that is a classroom. The teacher narratives in this year’s “Connecting” section illustrate this notion wonderfully.

To grow up, it takes lots of practice and therefore, the ability to recognize opportunity. Not to mention, dedication to the cause. Teachers have a ton of opportunities. Every day in a classroom brings us opportunity to practice reaching out for that higher self that the spiritual gurus of all religions say each of us has access to.

We can work on not feeling sorry for ourselves (that’s what babies do when they get hurt). We can keep our eyes peeled for a more grown-up solution than the one we used the last time, with the same problem. We can practice asking a new and harder question quite soon after we get a long-awaited, decent answer to the last question we asked.

Of course, whining never looked so good as when opportunities to grow up hit us head on—as they do every day while teaching. Fortunately for our growth, teaching doesn’t afford much time for whining.

To grow up, we have to listen to our teachers—and yes, that includes listening to our own “inner teacher” as well as those teachers who are the mentors that find us. We have to listen openly and vulnerably to really *hear*, so we don’t miss the lessons that the voice of silence can teach us. Then we must *see* the up direction (especially hard when this kind of “up” isn’t spatial). And then we have to get moving, even when inertia is so hard to overcome.

To complicate this, our teachers are very often our own students. How humbling is that?

The wonderfully written stories below prove that, as hard as growing up is, teachers are doing it—and our students are constantly showing us the way.

Be inspired.



Mandy

Grace Feuerverger*

There are many children who touched me deeply during my school teaching years. But one student shines out in my memory with a special light. Mandy was in a Grade Five class that I taught half a lifetime ago. When she walked into my classroom on that first day of the school year, I somehow knew that she was meant to teach me something very important.

The school was near a Children's Aid Society home, and some of my students actually lived there. In some cases, the abuses they had suffered in their family homes had been so severe that they had to be removed. But instead of being comforted by living in their new quarters, these children were stigmatized by their non-institutionalized peers. I quickly learned that there were three unspoken strata of child society in my class. At the top were those who lived with their biological parent or parents, which did not necessarily mean that all was well for them. Then there were the foster kids—they, at least, were in a family. The lowest were those in "Children's Aid." But to me, Mandy, recently placed in Children's Aid after being shuffled through foster homes for years, was a princess. A Native Indian princess whose parents had succumbed to alcoholism and drugs. Over time, Mandy became a "muse" for me.

Mandy was bright and generous, though very fragile. She once told me that if only she had behaved a little better her parents would surely have kept her. However, the version in her file said:

Ten year old child, very cooperative. Brutally beaten by father at age eight. Ribs broken, lacerations, serious bruising. Hospitalized for six weeks. Unsuccessful stays in homes. Placed in care.

Some weeks into the new year, Mandy invited me to be her guest for dinner at the Children's Aid Home. I accepted and saw in her eyes a look of pride. It was only a small gesture of compassion, but I found out later that no other teacher had ever visited a child in the Home. Later, other invitations came. I always went and shared lovely times with the children there. I related strongly to their suffering. What is compassion, after all, if not, as Rachel Naomi Remen writes in *The Heart of Learning*:

the experience that all suffering is like our suffering, and all joy is like our joy. When we know ourselves to be connected to all others, acting compassionately is simply the natural thing to do. True compassion requires us to attend to our own humanity, to come to a deep acceptance of our own life as it is (34).

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Our classroom became a space where Mandy could become an artisan of her own healing. Sometimes, she reached out to others in astonishing ways. She helped the ones who needed attention in the reading circles. Sometimes, however, she lashed out cruelly at someone and then became withdrawn and filled with rage. Other times, she felt remorse. Mandy's presence cast a large spell in my classroom. I witnessed the holiness of her struggle to escape from the wreckage of her lived experience. How was she able to possess, let alone communicate, any faith in humanity? And yet she did do this. Perhaps it helped her to know that I saw who she really was: a wounded child trying to figure out a way to rebuild and reconstruct a burnt out existence. She was an expert at being abandoned, and yet she tried hard not to abandon others. From where did she receive the strength and will to do so?

I think she must have known, on some level, that I was a comrade-in-arms. Many of the other children had also seen the "enemy" from up close. They became what Tobin Hart calls "Sacred Mirrors." When I shared with them some stories of my own childhood, which had been eaten away by the rottenness of war, my students listened. If there was one lesson I wanted to share with them, it was this: in spite of violence, there will still be love in the hiding places. The trick is to find it.

One day Mandy offered me one of the greatest gifts of my professional and personal life. Here is what happened. A racial slur had been uttered by one of the teachers toward a student in a classroom next to mine, and I had overheard it. I was beside myself with sadness. This teacher was often at me about the "clannishness," "stubbornness," and "stinginess" of the Jews and loved to taunt me subtly. I was a new teacher, and she had been there forever and felt that she needed to dominate everyone. Trying to stand up to her was like taking on Goliath. I was expected to keep my mouth shut. It would be my word against hers. I had endured her anti-Semitic and racist "jokes" in the staff room and saw how many teachers laughed with her while some, like me, stayed silent.

Schools are not necessarily safe places. We have to fight to make them so. But at that time, I was afraid—a child of people who had been cruelly treated. I had no voice and no song. And I did not yet have my permanent teaching certificate.

Then something that I regarded as truly abominable happened. In May, this same teacher decided to bar a child from the end-of-year track meet because of some minor offence. This was cruel and unusual punishment, and it seemed to me that it had more to do with the color of his skin than with anything else. Some of the other teachers were upset too, but the principal was a weak man who was in fact under the thumb of this teacher and very close to retirement. The students who belonged to this boy's team were upset because he was a star player. Mandy was also on that team.

I decided to open up a discussion with my class about this injustice since the details had leaked out anyway. The safest thing would have been to ignore it, but unexpectedly, I found myself talking about tolerance, inclusiveness, and respect for diversity in a multicultural society (long before it was fashionable to do so). The sense of relief that swept over the children and me was like a fresh breeze in a heat storm. And then Mandy spoke out with words that arrived like a thunderclap: "Express yourself, Mrs. Feuerverger. You have a right to." She may as well have been Moses coming down from Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments in hand.

There was silence, the kind of silence which speaks the truth. The children began

to nod their heads. The clarity in Mandy's defiance was astonishing to me. We had been living on the inside of a local tyranny, and she had blown the whistle. I knew in that instant that I had to live up to Mandy's words.

I walked through the small corridor of light which she had opened, and I kept plowing through it until the decision was reversed, and that boy was allowed to participate in the track meet. For the first time in my life I discovered a "still small voice" in a place deep within me. It had the kind of quietness that, once heard, can smash all forms of tyranny. I understood the power of a spiritual response to effect change deep in the heart. Mandy's words held out a vision of transformation, and I marveled that these words had come from what appeared to be powerlessness, and yet had the authority to transcend all of us and to offer us this blessed gift.

I have been trying to live up to her words ever since. How had she known so exactly just what I needed to hear at that moment? How fortunate I am that Mandy shared her indignation, her soulful call for equality. Dear Mandy, I hope that you have survived, and that you have found love in your life. You deserve it. I will never forget you. Perhaps one day you will come back and tell me about all that has happened to you. In the meantime, you are safe in the warm embrace of my memory.

From Past to Present

One fall term not very long ago, I shared the story of Mandy for the first time with the students in my graduate course, "Multicultural Perspectives in Teacher Development: A Reflective Seminar." I have been a university professor at OISE of the University of Toronto for almost two decades. In the midst of the "Goodbyes" and "Happy Holidays," the students turned in their final essays. The following week, I was at home packing for a holiday trip and began to collect the essays to take along, when a note fell out:

Dear Grace,

I remember in one of your class discussions this term you were telling us a story about a little girl who was abused and neglected as a child. You finished off the story by saying how much it affected you. The last thing you said before you opened it up for comments was, "This child really gave me insights on understanding that the students in our classrooms come from many difficult situations, and that although their family environments may not be safe, they may need only one teacher to make a difference in their lives. The last thing you said was 'I feel that I will meet this student again.'

And you did! For that child's circumstances resemble my own Thank you for allowing me to write this final paper. This is the first time in my life that I felt comfortable and at ease. Your teachings and power have helped me speak and write from the soul. This is what I call 'The Power of Teaching.' You are the first teacher in my life to give me the energy to remember. You have given me the opportunity to reflect on my past. It has made me appreciate who I have become today. Best of luck.

I stopped packing, sat down at my desk, and read her final paper. The paper was a bittersweet testimony to her inner strength in the midst of violence in her own childhood home. Afterwards I looked out of my window at the cold December twilight and

wondered at the complexity of human emotions and the soulful forces which are present (though often hidden) in classrooms all over the world.

A thought struck me: that one can recover one's voice—that one can be healed—only by becoming vulnerable again. Such miracles happen in classrooms where teachers understand that the sources of knowing are in their midst: in our students. I am reminded of Tom Barone's words:

Each student is, like the rest of us, a person in the midst of writing and re-writing his or her own life story. Each is comparable to an artist in the middle of a creative process that moves toward a resolution that is not pre-formulated, but gradually emergent. The end of the story of each living human being is yet to be encountered (126-127).

Barone goes on to quote the literary critic Frank Kermode, who describes how we all rely upon the stories of others for guidance in writing our own.

I wrote this email message to my student that wintry evening as the light outside disappeared:

Dear ***,

I am packing for a holiday trip and wasn't going to read your essays until I returned, so I guess I was just lucky that your essay was on top of the pile on my desk. I have just finished reading it and am sitting here in gratitude. You have given me a precious gift for the holidays with this paper. I feel truly privileged that you chose to share your professional/ personal story with me. And I want you to know that by what you have written, you have given me back a piece of my professional/ personal life. Thank you for your courage, my dear. I am in awe.

With all my best wishes for the holiday season, Grace.



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A Teaching Success or Failure?

Gesa E. Kirsch*

It is the end of the semester, and I send a very ordinary reminder email to David, a returning student majoring in business: "Please be sure to turn in your final portfolio at my office by Friday. It was good to have you in class."

In response, I receive a most unusual reply:

This [class] was very important to me also. However, I regret that. I planned to focus my next two years to guarantee that I would have a comfortable future and never more have to go through things that happened to me in the past, but you made me feel like sixteen again and a dreamer. NO GOOD.

What do you say to a student who falls in love with writing again, who rediscovers his creative, artistic side? David is thirty, an immigrant from Brazil. His English isn't fluent, but his spirit and insights come through clearly. David loves to write, and his essays move his peers and inspire his writing tutors. What do you say to a student who works a 60-hour week at a factory to pay tuition at a small private university?

David has set very clear goals—to succeed in business and live a comfortable life. He works day and night. In fact, he works the night shift at the factory because it pays more. In his essays, he describes the surreal world of starting his day just before midnight and ending it in the early morning hours. He describes how buildings go up as if by magic, how streets and bridges are being repaired, as if by invisible hands.

As a teacher, how do I respond to a talented, thoughtful writer like David, someone who writes moving stories about leaving one country for another, about starting with one hundred and twelve dollars in his pockets when he gets off the plane in New York City? A writer who describes his struggle to learn English, make new friends, find a new home on a new continent? A writer who reveals the regrets he carries in his heart and the hopes he holds out for the future?

Is this a teaching success or a teaching failure? Do I encourage David to pursue his newly found passion? Clearly, he has discovered the writer within, and that feels like a teaching success. But I have also thrown him into a world of turmoil. David has a decade of struggle behind him. Does he need any more of that? Obviously this is not my decision to make, nor is it a simple either/ or choice between a world of artistic struggle or a comfortable life. But I can't get those two strangely juxtaposed sentences out of my mind: "This [class] was very important to me also. However, I regret that."

Once in a great while, I think I have achieved some simple clarity for myself. Like I thought I had figured out my goal for my students. I was sure I wanted them to use my class to find their "writer within," and that, with this discovery, they would enjoy a life of

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creativity, insight, and reflection. And now here I sit at my desk, mulling over where I have been, and where I want to go when I teach again next semester. What do the Davids—and the Sarahs, and so on—really need from me? What does teaching successfully really mean?



My RIF'd Life

Betsy Newmeyer*

Everyone, from the parents to the principal, assured me my job would be returned to me before the summer's end. "Just politics," they said. So I reluctantly filled out my unemployment paperwork, and I waited.

Truth be told, by the end of my seventh year I was getting burned out. I had taught five different grades (first, fourth, fifth, seventh, and eighth) at three schools in two vastly different districts. Coping with yet another unfamiliar grade level, more apathetic teachers unwilling to collaborate, and frazzled principals so worried about test scores and budgets that they micromanage their staff . . . well, let's just say it was beginning to take its toll on my health and my sanity. While others frantically scrambled to find another job, teaching or otherwise, I decided to wait it out and take advantage of my forced sabbatical.

The first five weeks of summer were great. It was a summer break like any other, minus the steady paycheck. I relaxed. We took day trips. We enjoyed a fantastic family vacation at the beach. All was well . . . for a while.

By the sixth week, the kids were bored, the house was trashed, and everything and everyone was tightrope walking on my last nerve. I envied my husband who cheerfully left the house each morning for his thus-far-recession-proof job. I cursed the daycare for being closed all summer and dearly wished kindergarten would start early. I took solace in my computer and had every intention of writing copious amounts of dramatic storylines and dialogue, but instead found Facebook, Pogo, and trolling the internet far more interesting than the characters I'd laboriously created.

In August, two days before school started, I finally got a call . . . for a long-term subbing position. Not the call I'd been waiting for, but after spending ten weeks at home with my two adorable young children, I was eager to make my great escape. I accepted the position.

Let me tell you, subbing is often a horrible job I wish upon no one. Few people can lovingly walk into some else's classroom and take over for a day, a week, or longer, with virtually no support or appreciation. I almost envied the child who sat underneath a table mooing while kicking the other kids. Quite frankly, I'd been wanting to do that from the moment I stepped into the class. By the end of my month, the kids had come to tolerate me

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but fervently awaited their teacher's return. I was more than ready to turn in my keys and had come to the conclusion that I was not meant to teach first grade. Subbing takes a special person. I am not *that* special, regardless of what my parents have told me over the years.

As my subbing job wound down, I received two phone calls from the district. One offered me a temporary, part time position with no benefits, teaching reading intervention to fourth and fifth graders. It was a hotly debated position, one that our union told us to avoid like the plague. But of course it's easy to tell someone to turn down a paying job when you still have one. The other job I was offered involved teaching two home-hospital students, one a second grader and the other an eighth grader. Since my unemployment checks had stopped but our bills had not, I gladly accepted the positions. They weren't much and were a far cry from the full-time-classroom-of-my-own position I wanted, but at least it would put food on the table.

With nary a day to recover from subbing, I went back to work. I will say this: working part time does have its perks. While all the other teachers are stressing out over assessments, report cards, and parent conferences, I get to go home every day at 11:00 and have a leisurely lunch in front of my television.

I have spare time galore . . . well sort of. Any spare time I had has been replaced with picking up my son from kindergarten, running back and forth to baseball practice, and a myriad of other errands that I apparently had been neglecting for years. However, I have taken up hula dancing again and am attempting to write my next novel.

In my determination to not just survive but thrive during my RIF'd year, I've also decided to become a healthier person. I exercise 30 minutes each morning (well, most of the time), eat healthier foods like hummus, artichokes, and bell peppers, and have learned to make a killer omelet with less than 50 calories. My girl friends even thought it would be really fun to create a Biggest Loser game of it and lose weight together. Our initial goal was to drop twenty pounds by April 1st. April is here and so are most of those 20 pounds. Our new deadline is June 1st . . . of next year.

My RIF'd year is almost gone. While I may not have suddenly morphed into June Cleaver as my husband secretly wishes, I have managed to put my life and my teaching into perspective. Teaching is my career, but it is not my entire life and whole being. It's who I am, but I am also a mother, wife, dancer, writer, photographer, and musician. I'd begun to lose sight of what was truly important in my life. And sure, our bills are just as high as ever, but we have finally learned to start living within our means. We haven't touched our credit card in months, not even during the holiday season. I want to teach my children how to live a healthy, debt-free life so they can follow their passion(s) in life, regardless of how crazy it might seem. Most important, I want to teach them how to thrive when times are tough.

To my fellow RIF'd friends I say this: band together to support one another. You'll need it. Make a party of it. Above all else, take this hopefully once-in-a-life-time opportunity to explore and nurture the passions you have hidden inside yourself, what you might have been neglecting, and all else will work itself out in due time.



Will's Story

Anita Voelker*

Lice made a haunting contribution to my vocational development and my decision to become a teacher. I was in the Appalachian Mountains of western Maryland, completing a field experience in a three-room schoolhouse. Two teachers taught the first through fourth grades, and the principal taught the fifth and sixth grades. There were no secretaries, aides, or special teachers; the school had no art room, computers, cafeteria, or gymnasium. The school was unrefined, and I loved it. More so, I loved Will. A brown-eyed first grader, Will wore scuffed shoes much too large, which consequently slid up and down. His heels were chafed and red because he did not own socks. He did, however, have an impressive case of lice.

I was in charge of the listening station in the first and second grade classroom. The night before, I had set up the reel-to-reel tape recorder, expressively read one of my favorite stories, *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, and cleverly added sound effects with the tools available in my dormitory room. At school the next day, the teacher entrusted me with choosing children to come to the station and use the headphones to hear the story and do an activity with me. Will's was the first name I called.

Quickly the teacher was at my side. "You can't pick Will. His lice will infect everyone else who uses the headphones."

Will was smiling at me as he proudly headed to where I was waiting. The teacher was unconvinced by my argument to allow Will to join me. She told Will to return to his seat. He was an outcast: uninvited, uncalled. At the end of the day, safe in my car, I cried the whole way down the mountain.

That night I poured out my angst for Will in a letter to my uncle, a dedicated Baltimore schoolteacher. Within a few days, I received his wise words. He gently told me that the Wills of the world are why I need to stay focused and teach, not just from my mind and heart, but also from my soul. To see children through my soul's eyes would be the work God called me to do. Inside the envelope, my dear Uncle Chester tucked a five-dollar bill and suggested I treat Will to a milkshake.

Today, I adore my work and am passionate about literacy and literature. Teaching gives me energy. But truthfully, my real mission is as a lookout for "Wills." Amidst all the voices and emotions clamoring in my head on that drive down the mountain, one clear thought pierced the din: the taped story, regardless of its elegance and sound effects, was *not* why I wanted to teach. I wanted a *relationship* with each and every Will. My college students do not have pervasive lice (thankfully), but many students who come to sit in my office are weighted down with issues or problems that keep them from living their lives fully and joyfully. I spend a lot of time listening to them, sometimes over coffee, tea, and, yes, occasionally over milkshakes.



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Elitist White Lady Who Tries Too Hard (But Has Nice Taste in Shoes)

Allison Brimmer*

One August, I rushed to my mailbox to see what the students in my Advanced Cultural Studies course had to say about our intensive summer seminar. We had been discussing axes of privilege and power: race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, and so on. The course compelled self reflection—confronting our privileges, prejudices, and our participation in the systems that kept them intact. There had been recognition and resistance, connections and conflicts.

When things got intense, we retreated into defensiveness. Whether we had white skin color privilege, or male privilege, or heterosexual privilege, we were uncomfortable watching the messages conveyed in popular culture that had previously gone right over our heads. Films that at first glance were so empowering managed to reify stereotypes instead. TV shows and ad campaigns reinforced what they purported to reject. DOVE's "real woman" campaign showed models who were not stick-thin, though DOVE was clearly peddling cellulite-defying lotions and creams. Light bulbs were popping everywhere. Students reported feeling supported as well as challenged to reconsider their prejudices, and the truth that they, in one way or another, participated in systems of inequality.

So when I read the evaluations that identified me as "an elitist white lady who tries too hard (but has nice taste in shoes)," I was disappointed. Okay, crestfallen. Of course I try hard! That's why I became good at creating environments and assignments that help students engage in genuine self-reflection. After all, students write on their evaluations that the course changes their lives! And then they say that I am elitist *and* have good taste in shoes.

It is true that I continue to model the ways that money can buy approval, shoes and all. And I have a more than healthy need for others to like me. Luckily, the writer of that evaluation saw through some of that. She reminded me to self reflect more—easy to avoid when I am the one in charge, wielding the grade book and also wanting to be liked. She reminded me that I must always remind myself to identify my interpersonal indulgences and privileges, and the way I deploy them in my classroom.

One of my favorite professors in college had a sparse office: mostly white walls. Across from him at his desk, an 8 x 10 frame hung next to me at eye level. The slightly crumpled white paper inside read "Course Evaluation." Beneath it, penciled in chicken scratch, a student had written, "Todd Lieber is a fucking asshole." Todd Lieber was an outstanding professor. Nevertheless . . .

I did not know how to interpret that evaluation on the wall, back then. I think I do know now, though.

Our evaluations can be funny, not necessarily helpful at all, and they can also be

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instructive. Whatever they are, they stick with us, and we do what we can to make sense of them, whether it be by hanging them up on the wall or, even, writing about them six years later.



Dear Professor Walker

Debbie Axelrod*

I currently work as a substitute teacher in San Diego County. This year I have most often worked as an assistant teacher with special needs children. This job required a significant shift in my consciousness regarding my approach to dealing with disruptive behavior.

Last month I worked full time with moderately and severely challenged children at a modest public school in Escondido. I had yet to experience a child whose emotional challenges included the use of assaultive language and having that language leveled at me. I must admit I was taken aback and did not know how to respond. Beyond feeling shocked and angry, I tried to compose myself in a way that included compassion and a professionally grounded comprehension. I recognized that special needs children are designated as such because of physical and/or emotional deficits, yet when I was confronted by an eight-year-old in such an in-your-face manner, it required much effort to restrain my initial impulse to express punitive outrage.

In many more situations with the children that initially evoked conflicted feelings of confusion, annoyance, sorrow, and concern, I learned not to judge, in large part due to the wonderful influence of "Mr. E." Judging a child or her behavior was not useful and only led to further trauma. I came to understand that providing alternative behaviors for the children works to diffuse a potentially volatile situation. I learned that the quicker and more often I could model compassionate, non-judgmental choices, the more I would engender trust and respect, and could therefore more positively impact the life of each child whom I encountered.

In the weeks I worked at Miller Elementary, Mr E's patience and grace seemingly knew no bounds. In every difficult situation, he quietly spoke with the child, reviewed the parameters of acceptable behavior, and thereby created safety and returned sanity to the classroom. Even when physical restraint or removal of the child became necessary, Mr. E maintained calm control.

As with all children—but most particularly with special needs children—I frequently wonder what the future holds for each because the world will not abide out-of-control, rude, aggressive behavior. Too often special needs children are the victims of abuse, extreme poverty or neglect. Their home lives are chaotic and unpredictable. The time these children spend with us in our classrooms can be the only time they have an equitable,

* *Debbie Axelrod was recently accepted into the Special Ed Credential Program at San Diego State University. She is a single parent of a beautiful fifteen-year-old daughter whose goal is to become a doctor.*

non-threatening environment in which fairness, tolerance, and relative harmony prevails.

I am inherently drawn to the all-encompassing nature of teaching children. Working with Mr. E served to strengthen and deepen my desire to work with children whose daily challenges require profound assistance. Alongside him, I discovered my identity, a temperament at ease and at peace with summoning up unconditional respect, kindness, acceptance, and gratitude.



Burnishing the Bruises

Margo Wilson*

I am sitting in my hotel room in Denver at the annual conference of the Association for Writers and Writing Programs. It is a beautiful day, and soon I will hear colleagues offer tips on how to teach writing, how to teach with enlightenment. I, too, am to speak on writing pedagogy, on how to touch souls. I am familiar with some of the traditional solutions for reviving one's spirits—religion, family, friends, sex, drugs, rock'n'roll, exercise, food, meditation, volunteer work, creative endeavors. Yet regardless of how much soul-polishing one does, how do we continue to maintain our equanimity, our balance, our sense of purpose and love when day after day, we leap like captive cats through so many ego-deflating hoops? How can we be both selfless and yet so focused on, in touch with, ourselves that we can be useful mentors to our students?

In the pack of papers I brought along to grade, I find this student poem:

Poetry Class

You have to get my pain,
Poetry class is such a drain.
We sit in circles like little kids,
And sit in uncomfortable chairs.
We are forced to write on the spot,
And share with the class our bad works of art.
The books we read are dry and dull.
Old men must have written them.
You would think this class would be sublime.
In fact, it is a waste of time.

—Christopher Raleigh (used with permission)

The poem is funny and sad. It hurts me that I haven't reached this student. It rankles that he not only didn't follow or understand the assignment (avoid rhyming; work on your meter), but also that he just doesn't like me. I'm not Mother Theresa. How do I brush this off and the many similar daily insults one faces as a teacher? They get under

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one's skin like a burning rash. I don't want that to happen. I want to be like the cool light of reason and love, a slow-burning flame.

"Turn the other cheek," Jesus would say.

I do, and there at a corner in my Pennsylvania borough, I see Marty (not his real name), just grooving to the sunshine on his way to a coffee house. He's not my brightest student, but he's one of my favorites. When we needed help publicizing our literary magazine earlier this spring, Marty dutifully posted fliers in every building on campus, in every bathroom. Everywhere I look on campus, there is a sign that Marty loves doing a thorough job. Everywhere I look, there is a sign of the hard work, and yes, love that my students put into our literary magazine.

There is love in hard work. By working at something we value, we demonstrate love. The act of teaching demonstrates love. We complain when love is spurned; we feel like jilted lovers, misunderstood. And yet we must get over it: move on, teach on.

My initial reaction to the poem was anger and dismay, coupled with ironic laughter that I, the purveyor of pedagogy, can't teach in this student's eyes. As I muse, though, I see how I can honor the student's dissatisfaction, yet honor myself at the same time by seeking his permission to publish his work in this essay.

So I ask him for his okay and, at the same time, tell him I felt hurt and angry about the poem, as well as amused. "It was a joke," he replies earnestly, seemingly surprised by my reaction. He quickly signs his name to the permission slip. We are talking to each other; that is good for both of us.

We are all related; all that we do is related. We learn through our working, our doing, our love for our doing and for each other. We learn through our talking. Last year, I wouldn't have thought about asking to publish my student's poem to alleviate the sting the poem created. Next year, I may think of an even better solution for handling scratches to my ego. I am learning that I need to remain open to the idea that sometimes when frustrated with teaching, a third path may reveal itself, somewhere that is my joy to discover and grow.



Jimmy

Catherine M. Nelson^{*8}

"Jimmy may have a hard time in class. His mom is dying."¹

I thank my administrator for the information and move on down the sidewalk. His teacher from last year sees me and says, "Oh. Do you know about Jimmy? His mom is dying." When Jimmy and I finally meet, I see a quiet student with a gentle spirit. He is struggling academically. I work with Jimmy as much as is possible in the classroom, but it

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1. Name changed to protect student privacy.

is not enough as we move forward at our third grade academic pace. My principal tells me his mom's prognosis is not good; they are preparing for her death within the month. Jimmy starts to get into trouble on the playground. I talk with our assistant principal: "He needs to be held accountable." She mentions that his mom is dying. I leave the office frustrated. Jimmy's mom isn't the only one dying. We are losing the soul of a nine-year-old.

I voice my concerns to a colleague: "When he is in high school and can't read, is the excuse still going to be, 'Well, his mom died.'? When he beats the crap out of someone on the sidewalk because he didn't like the way they were looking at him, will his excuse be, 'Well, my mom died'? How are we helping Jimmy by excusing his behavior? I am deeply sorry his mom is dying. We are not helping him deal with death. We're helping him die too."

We have no school counselor. Jimmy tries in class, and I try to connect with him. Some days I see in his eyes the recognition of care; other days he is in his own world.

The phone call has come. Someone is on the way to take Jimmy home, and we need to find him on the playground. "Oh God!" my heart screams. I ask to be the one to tell him. Jimmy is standing alone by the low brick wall. He knows, but I tell him anyway. My hand on his shoulder is left in mid-air as he takes off running toward the office. He is gone.

Two months later, the principal and vice-principal tell me Jimmy will be back in class that morning. They aren't sure if he has been at another school and are pretty sure he has not received counseling since his mother's death. I am at a loss for words.

I see the students on the playground and spot Jimmy. He has the same alert, searching eyes, and we make eye contact. He runs over to me. "Hi, Jimmy, it's good to see you." I give him a hug, and he stands rigid.

Jimmy continues to work at his academic pace in the classroom, still gets in trouble on the playground. I speak with his grandma. She tells me of other situations happening at home.

Jimmy is placed in fourth grade. I really didn't see how retention would be in his best interest. His fourth grade teacher tries to work with him, but finds the same frustrations with the system I had struggled with. Jimmy moves to another school in the middle of the year.

My colleague, the fourth grade teacher, is in the grocery store. A young boy runs up to her with a huge smile on his face, gives her a hug. She is startled at first, then recognizes the child. Jimmy talks, and laughs often in his conversation. Just as soon as he is there, he is gone.

When she tells that story, I smile. Maybe, just maybe, time is helping Jimmy. Maybe others have helped him find his gentle spirit again. Maybe he is that quiet, thrilled, excited child again. Run, Jimmy. Run with the wind.



Lead by Example

Liang Zhao^{*10}

I teach foundation courses in a teacher education program. I teach teachers, as some people put it. School teachers at the K-12 level have the responsibility to help their students

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with character development. To be able to assist their students, teachers must develop their own character because they need to lead by example. As a professor in a school of education, I need to help my teacher candidates with their character development, so I must work on my own.

To this end, I started an experiment three semesters ago. I began consciously working on my morals, values, and character traits. I have been using a Confucian text as a guide, *Standards for Being a Good Student and Child*. In addition, Benjamin Franklin's daily self-examination has been a second source of inspiration. What follows is a discussion of some highlights of what I have been working on. I emphasize my efforts and struggle, not my accomplishments.

Respect. I have been trying to come to class 5 to 10 minutes before class starts. I ask my students to be punctual, and I do it myself. I also try to use both hands to pass papers back to students and to receive papers from them. I try to respect student opinion in class discussion.

Sincerity. One definition of sincerity in the Confucian tradition is to put in 100% of one's effort. When I tend to slack off in my preparation or grading, I ask myself this question: am I putting in 100% of my effort?

Universal Love. According to Confucian standards, I should love all my students. The challenge for me has been those students with some issues: some repeatedly come late to class, some work on their cell phones in class, and others show signs of dishonesty. I am doing better than before; I am mindful of what I *should* do, which prevents reactive behaviors on my side.

Sexual Ethic. I try to think of my female students as my daughters, and I want to look at them as I would look at my daughter.

When I have a free moment, I reflect on things that have happened during the day. If I have violated any rules, I think about how I should act in the future. As I look at my experiment, I can see some changes over the semesters, and it seems like the better I behave, the better my students behave.



Works Cited

Confucius. *Di Zi Gui, Standards for Being an Good Student and Child*. Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia: Pure Land Learning College Assoc., Inc., 2002.

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Jeff Wilhelm is author of seventeen books and over 200 chapters and articles on teaching the English language arts. His *You Gotta BE the Book: Teaching Engaged and Reflective Reading with Adolescents* (1997/2nd edition 2008) won the NCTE Promising Research Award as well as the Brown University Distinguished Contribution to Teaching Award. He has won the David H. Russell Award for Distinguished Research in English Education.



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