

Qualitative Inquiry

– *in daily life* –



David D. Williams

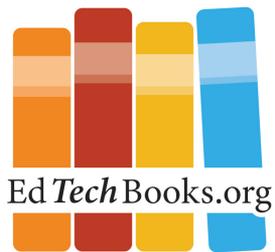
Qualitative Inquiry in Daily Life

David Dwayne Williams

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Preface

Teacher as researcher, action research, school-based research- these ideas have been discussed and proposed in education for many years. Some of the earliest efforts to encourage educators to gather information to enhance their work came out of Great Britain (e.g., Lawrence Stenhouse). The notion is logical. It makes sense that people who teach or administer teachers in schools would want to learn from their personal experiences, evaluations, *and* research and would then make improvements based on what they learned.

However, although action research and internal evaluation may be more frequently practiced in some schools, the predominant focus of inquiry in education continues to be by people from outside of schools- by professional researchers and external evaluators who use schools as their data sources and write to one another about what they find. Though they sometimes share the results with school people in abbreviated form, external evaluators and researchers usually focus on testing theories, building models, or completing evaluation studies for external funders.

For research and evaluation to have a lasting influence on educational practice, educators have to be involved in *doing* studies too. They have to be asking questions and completing a variety of tasks to answer those questions. Although a few authors seem to agree with this idea, the dominant practice in education is still for teachers to teach, administrators to manage, external evaluators to evaluate and researchers to research.

Most good educators naturally inquire is part of their pedagogy, which provides excellent starting points for encouraging them and others to become fully engaged in inquiry in their settings. Teachers and other educators are better learners if they are also working

toward being good inquirers. This book is intended to substantiate and expand that claim.

The book is organized around stories about several teachers, student teachers, public school students, administrators, and a university professor (the author) who explore the idea of educator as learner, using qualitative inquiry concepts and strategies, while engaged in various activities of education. These stories are intended to demonstrate that there are many different ways to use qualitative inquiry while conducting studies and simultaneously doing the work of schooling. All of the participants (teachers, students, administrators, and others) are learners, teachers, evaluators and researchers at the same time. Their activities in these four dimensions are compatible and actually enhance their performance in all three areas. It is obvious that they are learning to combine these roles as they go. This should inspire confidence in readers that they too can learn and inquire *while* they educate!

1

Overview of qualitative inquiry and general texts on this topic

A School Story of Qualitative Inquiry

January 31

Brrrrr! I roll from my face to my side, groping for something to hang onto and finally hunch from sitting to a squat, trying to center my cross-country skis under my soaked flannels. This is my fourth face plant in the last half hour and the strain is beginning to show. After bussing up to Park City at seven this morning, skiing up the North side of this mountain for two hours and lunching in the snow on this snowy ridge near Guardsman Pass since before noon, all 55 of us have been anticipating the thrill and danger of the nine-mile descent we are now making down the South side into the Heber Valley. The high school students seem to have varying abilities. Many have skied for years, but not on these narrow skis. Others have no prior experience. All are adventurous, in my opinion; I glance nervously over the edge of the cliff to my left and plunge my head into a snow bank to keep from falling off.

About half way down, it begins snowing and blowing. I wish I had my goggles so I could see better! I am with the teachers (Sid and Cheryl) now. They have been up and down this mountain many times in the decades Unified Studies has been in operation but they look like they are having fun, trying out some new telemark skis in this wet snow. As a university professor interested in innovative programs that last, I am taking this year to experience the class first hand. But I didn't know this could mean sweat and broken bones!

Suddenly I realize that all the students are in front of us, heading down to the bus at varying speeds. Sid, Cheryl, Jack (a student teacher) and I have stopped for some reason and are standing around

talking about how great this day has been. Sid is still ecstatic. Cheryl agrees that it has been a great day but a problem with Steve Wilson has come up. Jack says he saw him smoking and thinks Steve knows it. Bruce (another student) was with him; but Jack didn't see *him* smoking. The class rule is that there will be no smoking, drugs, or alcohol during school related activities; and if there is, then the student is out of the program. They note that Steve has not been attending his other classes at all and is frequently absent from Unified. He had a meeting with the principal and his father on Monday, and it was decided that if he messed up again he would be out of the school for the year. They debate these facts against the point that they want to do what is best for Steve and what is best for the rest of the class. They are sure that other students know about what Steve is doing, and others may be doing it too. Sid comments that during the first few years they had a lot of trouble with kids drinking alcohol on their outings. They combated that and the bad image it gave the program for quite awhile. There has not been much of that sort of thing in the class during the last two years; but this group seems more prone to it. The teachers have been concerned more than usual about dealing with the problem this year.

Cheryl suggests that Jack talk to Steve and tell him that he saw him and make a deal with him to stay with Jack all the time because they have been building some rapport. I ask if that might be a little rough on Jack! Then Cheryl says that she just doesn't feel right about doing that. Sid is anxious to be skiing on down the trail with the rest of the class but Cheryl keeps asking what he thinks they should do. After about 10 minutes in the blinding snowstorm, we finally decide to confront Steve on the next day the class meets about the whole thing and then turn it over to the principal to see what he will do. Sid and Cheryl want to support Steve and not cut him off if there is a chance that he might come around.

Three hours later, we are back at school and most of the students have left. The two teachers, four student teachers and I are talking

things over with regard to Steve. Jack says he smelled more smoke on both Steve and Bruce when he met them at the bus and he also notes that Steve was one of about 11 who came to 7th period the previous Thursday, was marked present, and then took off for the rest of the day. He wonders if Steve just isn't trying enough to do well in the class for them to keep supporting him? The teachers also bring up the other students and the message that overlooking this problem might send to them. A major point they have been trying to convey to this class has been acceptance of the reality of consequences. They reviewed the rules at the beginning of the class; it should have been clear to Steve that this was a blatant violation. Dahrl (another student teacher) pointed out that Steve had lied to her, saying he had turned in the budget assignment when he hadn't even been there.

Feb 4

I just spent some time listening to Sid and Cheryl talking with Jack and Steve as they said they were going to do during our visit in the snowstorm last week. When I came in, they had been talking for quite awhile already. Sid was talking at his desk; Cheryl was at hers; Jack was on the couch and Steve was in the chair facing the three of them. Here is most of what I heard them saying:

Sid: I want you to be healthy, and so I can't stand by and not tell you that too many of my friends are dead or very sick from addiction to nicotine, and other drugs and it is not a good thing to be stuck to.

Cheryl: I don't expect everyone in Unified to like me, or Sid. With 75 people out there and our being people, some are bound to not like all of what we do. I don't just go for all of the kids immediately either. But I expect them and me to try to get to know each other. If they don't invest in other people, or if I don't, we are the losers because we miss out on what others have to offer us.

Steve: I don't feel that way. I really like this class; in fact it is about all

I come to high school for. There are lots of sub-groups in the class, and some of them really don't like the way you lecture so much. But anyway, I think I deserve the punishment for what I did that you set out at the beginning of the year. You really ought to kick me out.

Cheryl: That is up to the principal. It is a school policy.

Steve: Why are you leaving it up to him?

Cheryl: That is the school's policy. We are not dumping it on him; this would be the same thing we would do if you or anyone were caught smoking here in the school. I like the way you are open with us, and you seem to get along well with the other people in the class. You have been in here because we felt you could make a great contribution to them. That is true for everyone in the class. They know that you have been missing a lot of school and that you smoke and so on. It is good for the straight A kids to get to know people like you and the contributions you can make to them. They can learn from you.

Jack: Does this experience seem similar to Hawaii to you? (Steve nodded). I can see you are trying. I think maybe you ought to go back to Hawaii and have some more of the experience there (I talked to Jack later. He said that he worked with kids like Steve in pineapple plantations of Hawaii for about three years and feels anxious that he and Sid and Cheryl aren't going to be able to influence Steve at all now because he is out of their class and their sphere of influence).

Cheryl: Do you know what you want, Steve?

Steve: To be happy.

Cheryl: How do you do that? Do you see how?

Steve: Some days I just have a good time and then set about to have a better time the next day. The only thing I can't figure out is religion. I need to find out if there is truth in religion, and if there is, I need to

get on the right path.

Cheryl: That question can be a struggle for a *long* time. I struggle with some things *now* that I used to think I had figured out. Can't live all your life doing what your parents want. Somewhere inside of Steve Wilson there is a place where you can recognize the truth for you. You may always have questions about these things, but there are some bottom line places you can get to and hold tight to. I just don't want this to be a negative experience for you. This decision has nothing to do with liking or not liking you' like Sid said. I would do the same for everyone in the class. We searched for options but felt we had to do this to be fair given our policies for the class. You think about it as you go talk to the principal.

Sid: I struggle all the time to know if what we are doing is a service or a disservice to you and the other students.

Steve: Like Cheryl quoted from Dr. Belt' some things only have to be decided once and I don't think you should make an exception for me.

Cheryl: Selfishly, I just don't want to miss the relationship we were developing with you.

Steve: Maybe we can still have a relationship outside of Unified?

Cheryl: I appreciate your genuine openness with us. I hope you can see how we feel about it, too. Do what you can the rest of the day to help your group. They have been counting on you to do your part for the World Appreciation Day presentations. Also help others be open with us; if they have things they are unhappy about, we want them to feel free to come talk to us about those. So go help your group until the principal comes back and calls you to visit with him.

As Steve leaves, Cheryl talks to Sid and Jack a minute about how happy she is that Steve accepted responsibility for what he had done; but it seemed a little strange to her too. Why didn't he argue with

them about staying in the class?

Feb 5

Tape recorded interview with Sid and Cheryl about the Steve Wilson decision

Dave: I came in late on your conversation with Steve last time. Did I miss anything?

Cheryl: Well, he didn't hesitate at all to admit that he had been involved in smoking. He came in and just shook my hand, and that's what he said he wanted to do' to be dropped from the program. He said, 'I'd just like to shake your hand, and I appreciate what you've done for me.' And I said, 'I really don't want *not* to see you again. When you're writing or you're drawing or stuff like that, I really wish you'd come share your work with me.' He said he would like to do that.

Dave: So do you guys feel good about that decision?

Sid: What do you mean, feel good about it?

Dave: Do you think it was the right thing to do?

Cheryl: Yeah, I do. I felt like we had enough time to think about it before we made it. He kept saying that when he gets up in the mountains or away from the school, he doesn't even think about it as being school and just lights up. Even so, he's still not dealing with the fact that he never would have chosen to smoke in front of me. If he wasn't concerned, why do it behind the water tank?

Dave: How successful would you say this class has been in doing what you wanted for students like Steve who aren't doing too well in high school generally?

Sid: I think it's been really successful. To deal with this thing with Steve, that's a hard problem because Steve's exactly the kind of person that we want to have in the class for a number of reasons. There are just as many reasons why I want to have Steve Wilson in the class as I do any other person at the other end of the continuum, an AP student. But at the same time we won't accomplish anything if the class just becomes a pooling for kids who say, 'Yeh, we can get away with things. When we go on a trip, we can go behind the water tanks and light up or take a flask with us and drink on the trip.' It's a real hard thing. We must deliver the message that we don't tolerate that and you'll be out of here if you do. But at the same time, we've got to say, we want you because this is an arena you could be successful in and you can impart things to other students that are worthwhile. That's why I'm more worried about the reaction the class is going to have to this than I am about feeling bad about Steve leaving.

Feb 6

I am visiting Unified today. Cheryl is talking to the students about what happened with Steve and telling them that she wants to air it out and get things out in the open. Sid is talking about how the class is built on trust and how they are bending district policy not to keep the students all within their line of vision. 'There is no way we could keep that policy and do all that we are trying to do in here. So if we find that we can't trust you, then we will have to change what we do. That could make the experience completely different for future students.' He is giving lots of examples from rock climbing and belays and other outdoor situations that are built on trust.

On the day Sid and Cheryl met with Steve and agreed with him that it would be best for him to leave, many of the students were very upset. Some were crying. Some claimed that Steve was not the only one breaking the rules. Some worried that he would not get into school anywhere else. But Steve left without any accusations against Jack,

Sid or Cheryl. He told his mother later that he was glad they stuck by their decision because if they hadn't, he would not have trusted or respected them.

An Analysis of the Story

What was going on here? What did the participants learn from this experience? What questions were they asking? What was each person hearing, seeing, thinking? How aware were they of what was going on from their own and others' perspectives? What records were kept about this experience? What was there to share about this experience with others? Under what assumptions were the participants operating? What standards did the participants have for judging the quality of their experience?

Of course, there are many possible answers to these questions and several other questions that could be asked about this event. But in this book, I would like to point out that whatever else they were doing, the participants were conducting a form of qualitative inquiry while they were learning and teaching. We were not consciously following a linear process, but all of us - Sid, Cheryl, Jack, Steve (and the other students, though we will not examine them as closely just now), and I - were all conducting our own inquiries, learning from the process, and sharing our learnings with others.

I used to believe that people needed to be taught a process and certain activities for conducting inquiry using a qualitative orientation. But experiences like the one described in this story have convinced me that most learners are already engaging in many inquiry activities naturally. And I believe that teachers who are busy learning in natural ways are going to exemplify that learning for their students and find better ways to share what they are learning through their inquiries. I would like to support teachers and other educators in their inquiry efforts by inviting you to expand your natural learning activities to include more of what are commonly known as qualitative inquiry activities.

Qualitative Inquiry Process

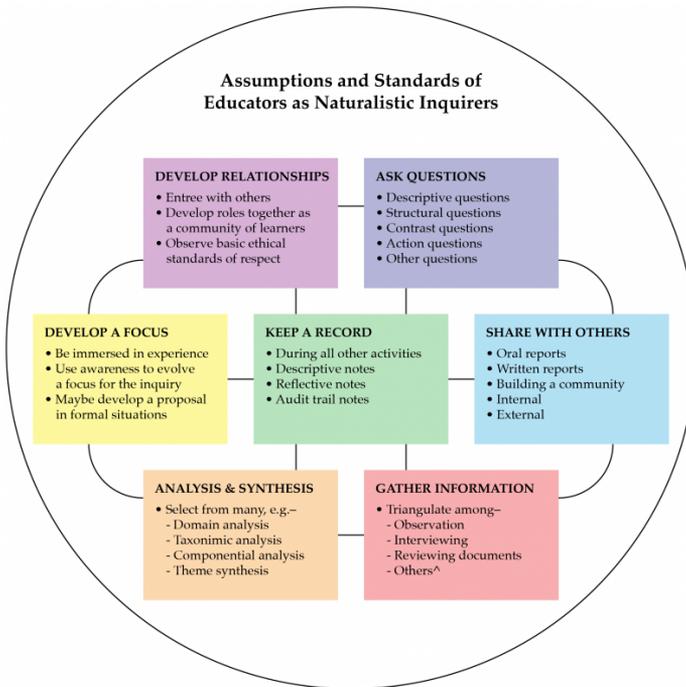


Figure 1 is a simplified representation of some of the activities often used in qualitative inquiry which were also used by the participants in this story. These activities can be used by teachers, administrators, researchers, evaluators, or anyone interested in learning using their natural skills in lived situations. The figure is a simplification, because in reality, all the activities listed are going on simultaneously in the experiences of the inquiring participants.

- Assumptions- See [Chapter 2: Assumptions](#)
- Develop Relationships- See [Chapter 4: Inquiry Relationships and Roles](#)
- Ask Questions- See [Chapter 6: Questions and Focus](#)
- Keep a Record- See [Chapter 3: Keeping a Record](#)
- Develop A Focus- See [Chapter 6: Questions and Focus](#)
- Sharing with Others- See [Chapter 9: Sharing through Story Telling](#)
- Analysis and Synthesis- See [Chapter 8: Story Reading through Analysis, Synthesis, and Interpretation](#)
- Gather Information- See [Chapter 7: Gathering through Observations, Interviews, and Documents](#)
- Standards- See [Chapter 5: Standards for Judging Qualitative Inquiry](#)

The Reality about the Process

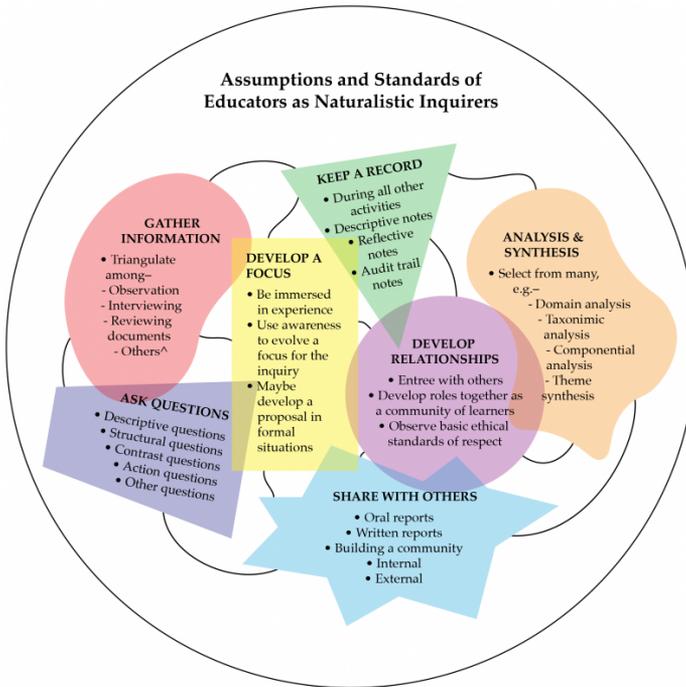


Figure 2 is an attempt to emphasize this point about the simultaneity of all the inquiry activities. All the same activities are presented there but they are represented in many different combinations in an attempt to suggest that the reality of inquiry is not simple or linear.

One useful metaphor for the qualitative inquiry activities is holomovement. In his book *The Third Ear*, Berndt reviews the discovery of holography as follows:

The discovery of laser beams in 1965 led to a new kind of photographic representation called a hologram. If you produce a full-length photograph of someone and then discard all but the head and shoulders so as to enlarge the face, the new picture will once again contain the entire person rather than just a blown-up head. In holography, you cannot eliminate anything. Anyone who works with holograms is directed back to the whole whenever he tries to separate off any partial aspect. David Bohm coined the term holomovement. The word hologram alone implies something static and immovable, but the world is constantly in motion. The totality is in motion. A hologram, like a photograph, is only, as it were, a fixed image of a single process of movement 'an abstraction of the entire movement, of the whole. (pp. 107-108)

Qualitative inquiry is a *process*, which includes the various activities illustrated in [Figure 1](#) to yield both experiences and products. But any subpart of those outcomes contains the whole process and is not static but constantly 'in process.' The point is that the whole experience is more than just the parts that go into it. Learning through qualitative inquiry is a holistic experience that involves several experiences occurring together harmoniously. It does not make sense to pull the various activities associated with doing qualitative inquiry out in isolation, just as parts of holograms cannot be isolated. The processes work together and each activity a qualitative inquirer might engage in contains the essence of all other activities.

The story told earlier is an illustration of two high school teachers, a student teacher, several high school students, and a university collaborator conducting qualitative inquiry as a means of enhancing their learning and teaching experiences. To clarify the qualitative inquiry process as applied to learning and teaching and its holistic nature, let's further examine the story in light of the summary in [Figure 1](#). This figure shows several kinds of activities that have been grouped together to facilitate this discussion; but please keep in mind that these activities can and do combine in many different

quantities and configurations. Their order in the figure is almost arbitrary.

As a point of clarification, Sid and Cheryl (the two teachers) were not on this ski trip explicitly to conduct research or evaluation. Among other purposes, they were there to teach high school students how to ski, to help them integrate their experiences in the out of doors to their lives and several related disciplines (science, social studies, recreation, art, and English), and to help them learn responsibility. They were in the thick of this experience and probably did not even think of themselves as inquirers.

But the claim of this book is that they were very much conducting inquiry and were learning while teaching. They were also inviting the people associated with them to do the same' the student teachers, the high school students, and me as a representative from a nearby university. Together, as a community of learners, we were engaging in several inquiry processes.

Although all the qualitative inquiry activities combine in a holistic experience, several groups of activities will be isolated for the discussion below. Keep referring back to Figure 2 to remind yourself that this is an artificial isolation for purposes of discussion only.

Beginning with the 'Develop a Focus' box on the left of [Figure 1](#), it would be fair to say we were immersed in the ski trip experience with no common explicit inquiry *focus* as the day began. Each participant came into this day with different **assumptions** about themselves and the others, about their purposes for being there, about their roles as learners, teachers, and inquirers, and different **standards** for judging the quality of their inquiry efforts. Each participant also came having different **relationships** developed with others in the setting, with different perceptions of the possible roles they and others could play, asking different **questions** about the scene, using different skills for **gathering** information to address those questions, with different

ideas about how to **analyze and synthesize** what they would be learning, and with different ideas about the communities with whom they might **share** what they learned through this experience.

These differences and many others based on the participants' backgrounds, personalities, beliefs, and experience lead to vast differences in *awareness*, initial *focus*, and openness among the participants. For example, Cheryl and Sid are often focused on matching their class activities to the weather when they go out on such trips. They are asking themselves how to keep the students safe while having an adventure. They are watching to see how the weather changes and how the students are responding to the experience and how they can help them see what they are experiencing and what is around them. Cheryl is particularly interested in getting to know a few of the students better on these trips because they are more open with her on an individual basis in these settings.

As the trip progressed, Steve and his actions precipitated an opportunity for all participants to *re-focus* their individual inquiries and attention to a common project, which became the focus of the story told here. No *proposals* were written as part of this inquiry, though they could have been and may yet be if any participants find that this focus merits the acquisition of funds or formal review.

The 'Keep a Record' box in the center of [Figure 1](#) is associated with activities that facilitate keeping a record of what we are learning through our inquiry. Sid and Cheryl did not keep notes or any other kind of record on *this* experience. They knew that I was doing so, and we collaborated in this inquiry. Jack and Steve may have kept a journal and written about this experience. In later years, all student teachers and students have been encouraged to keep such records. But in this case, my record formed the basis for the account that was presented here. This record is probably more elaborate than most teachers' accounts of their school experiences but some record is usually kept of some of the lived experiences of people in schools. The

richer that account, the *better the inquiry*.

I included records of relationships formed and forming, questions participants were asking, focuses that were forming, analyses and syntheses that developed, information that was gathered; in other words, *notes on all the other activities* that were going into this experience. I tried to *describe* what I was seeing and hearing as well as what I was thinking, feeling, and *reflecting* about during the experience. I also kept an *audit trail* or record of inquiry decisions that I was making throughout this experience.

In reference to the 'Develop Relationships' box in [Figure 1](#) , it is clear from the story that Jack had a closer relationship to Steve than did any of the other 'authority' figures in the story. He felt that relationship was jeopardized by the knowledge he gained through the relationship; but Steve didn't think so. The whole experience strengthened and clarified the relationships between Steve and the two teachers, facilitating the inquiry they were trying to make and the inquiries I, and the student teachers were making too. Although it appears that the relationships with Steve were terminated, they were actually resumed the next year when he returned and completed the full year in the Unified Studies program. Sharing this experience together influenced how all of us were able to interact with one another and with the other students also.

As a university person, I was attempting to *develop a role* in this scene that would allow me to be trusted by the students so they would talk to me about their experiences in this program. I found that because I was not one of the teachers and not a student teacher and certainly not a high school student, many of the students and teachers didn't know what to do with me or how to treat me. But after sharing this experience with them, they were willing to give me a place in their program and many more of them could talk to me about their feelings about the Steve story as well as other aspects of their experience after I *gained entree with them* in this way. The

relationships we all shared grew and changed throughout the study, allowing us to shift from learning to teaching and back throughout our inquiries. We all understood that these relationships were dependent upon our treating one another *ethically* (as Sid and Cheryl treated Steve, in this case) over the entire school year, as well.

The 'gather information' box in [Figure 1](#) indicates several ways in which participants may assemble information from their experiences for use in contemplating the experiences and in clarifying what other sources might add to their experiences. Simply being involved and having experiences is certainly a way to collect or generate information. We usually select aspects of our experience to focus attention on through our senses' we see (*observations* and *document* or artifact reviews), hear (conversations, *interviews* , eavesdropping), touch, smell, and taste (through all these collection procedures). *Triangulation* , using several different methods of gathering from several different sources, strengthens this activity considerably. The teachers, student teachers, students, and visiting professor used all their senses and the natural data generation facilities associated with those senses in creating data around their experience in the story told here. The record used for the story is necessarily told through the sense experiences *I* had. But I attempted to include the perspectives of others as much as possible through quotations of their words and detailed descriptions of their actions.

The 'Ask Questions' box in [Figure 1](#) identifies several types of questions inquiring educators might make in their studies. It should be apparent from the story that Sid and Cheryl were asking what would be the best *action* to take in this situation for Steve and for the other students. The student teacher, Jack, was asking what his ethical response should be to a student with whom he was slowly developing rapport and with whom he hoped to have long-term positive influence. I was asking *descriptive* questions about how this program and these people teach students to take responsibility for their own actions and learning. Steve seemed to be asking *structural* and *contrast* questions

about how far he could push his mentors and the institution of school in learning to take responsibility for his own decisions. These were some of the broad questions being asked in this inquiry situation. Many other questions about the context of the story, the nature of the participants, and so on could be asked and may be as the inquiry continues.

The 'Analysis-Synthesis' box in [Figure 1](#) suggests that participants are constantly interpreting their experiences and the information they are gathering. This may be done through on-the-spot analyses, such as during the meeting in the snowstorm when Sid, Cheryl, and Jack were attempting to understand Steve and interpret his actions in light of their larger purposes for the class. When they returned to school and talked further, they elaborated upon those interpretations, asked more questions, and gathered more information. During the interview with Steve, they refined those interpretations further, refined their relationship with him, asked more questions, and gathered more information as they made a decision. They explored the implications of their interpretations for the other students in the class too. As the recorder and visiting professor, I made interpretations by what I chose to write down during the experience and how I chose to write the story. In subsequent chapters, I will illustrate several other types of analysis (*domain, taxonomic, componential*) and synthesis (*theme*) that may be helpful in developing even richer interpretations of experiences such as this. The results of these interpretations may be helpful to educators trying to make practical decisions and should also be informative to others who make decisions in other similar settings.

The 'Share with Others' box in [Figure 1](#) is a reminder that we learn best what we share with others. Inquiry is enhanced as we report and expose our experiences and interpretations with fellow inquirers and other interested audiences. It involves significant personal investment and risk because your perceptions (interpretations) are constantly open to challenge and inquiry by others who are involved. Sid and Cheryl *orally* shared what they were learning with one another and

with others *internal* to the program, such as the student teachers, the school principal, their students, and me. They have also agreed to allow me to share their experiences and insights in this book and other *written* publications as a means of inviting others *outside* the program to join in an ongoing dialogue with us and *build a community interested in how to teach and learn through ongoing qualitative inquiry*.

*The circle forming the outer boundary of the entire [Figure 1](#) represents our 'Assumptions' about learning, teaching, and particularly about inquiry. Sid and Cheryl and the other participants made certain assumptions about their relationships with one another and the values they shared. For example, they assumed that to understand Steve and what to do about his decision, they would have to interact with him and be influenced by him. They could not remain immune to his values. They were not 'objective.' They also assumed that people have values which help influence what they do and say and that *their* values as teachers and as inquirers would influence not only what they did themselves but what they interpreted Steve and others to be doing. A major value they seemed to demonstrate was the importance of students being responsible for their own actions.*

As a participant in this experience, I assumed that whatever I would say about this experience might apply in other settings but could not be generalized blindly beyond situations with similar contexts and time frames. I also assumed that the reality of this experience was partially defined by the shared experiences of the participants but also was constructed in slightly different ways for each of them. Thus, I was interested in understanding each person's interpretation of what was going on, from their unique perspectives. In reaching conclusions about what happened here, we clearly could not conclude that there was a simple linear causal relationship between what Sid and Cheryl did and Steve's decision to leave the class. Rather, what he did shaped what they did and what the rest of the students might do and what Jack was doing. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to this kind of causality

as 'mutual shaping' which is what most of us assume goes on all the time in human experience. As will be discussed in the next chapter, there were many other assumptions at play in this story as there are in all human stories. Thus, the circle of this hologram must be broad and encompassing.

The circle in [Figure 1](#) also suggests that there are acceptable 'Standards' for conducting qualitative inquiry in ways that will encourage readers to find the conclusions credible and useful. Adherence to some of these standards was subtly indicated in the story through reference to the multiple sources of information used, the comparison of interpretations from multiple sources, the length and depth of participation by the inquirers, and other activities which will be explored further in chapter three.

This review of the qualitative inquiry process in light of an example from a school setting suggests that many teachers, principals, and students probably are involved in inquiry as part of their work already, as were the participants in this story. But with a little more focus on inquiry as a basis for educating, they might not only obtain more valuable insights into helping their students but could also make discoveries about learning and teaching from their privileged positions inside the student-teacher relationship to share with others.

In this book, I hope you will find that by thinking of yourself as an inquiring teacher, administrator, and/or student, you can further develop some of your natural inquiry skills. Perhaps you, like these teachers and their associates, can learn more about yourselves and your needs, as well as those of others. This may be important in helping you modify your practices in ways that will shape the attitudes you develop toward life-long learning and inquiry.

Organization of this Book

The rest of the book is organized around the overview presented in this chapter. The inquiry process being advocated is not meant to be linear because all these activities must go on simultaneously, as they did in the story and figures above. Although the conventional use of chapters seemed most convenient, every attempt will be made to relate each chapter's focus to the whole qualitative inquiry process to emphasize this point about holism. The chapter topics associated with several of the activities that typically compose qualitative inquiry may be read in any order you prefer.

Each chapter will be organized as follows:

- a. Stories from the appendices illustrating educators learning to be inquirers and building on their natural inquiry processes will be told to illustrate the points of each chapter.
- b. A discussion of key points that can be drawn from the stories will be given, with ideas about how the participants (and by implication, the readers) could strengthen their inquiries through development of specific skills.
- c. Questions for consideration in reviewing the concepts of the chapter will be asked.
- d. Suggested activities the reader should engage in to apply the concepts of the chapter to their own inquiries will be set forth, including a call for questions the readers have about the readings and their own projects (these might form the basis of a discussion among people who are learning to conduct qualitative inquiry together in a class or cohort setting). If you conduct all these activities, you will conduct a qualitative inquiry in the process.

Conclusion

References

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Questions for Consideration

1. How is qualitative inquiry similar to a hologram or holomovement?
2. Why is the relationship of qualitative inquiry to holomovement so important to consider?
3. What other metaphors fit qualitative inquiry? How about jazz music, particularly improvisation?
4. How is qualitative inquiry related to teaching?
5. How is qualitative inquiry related to learning?
6. Were Sid and Cheryl really doing qualitative inquiry in this story?
7. What would you change in their actions, if anything, so they would consider themselves more rigorous researchers or evaluators?

Suggested Activities

Now that you have seen other educators in action and have read my analysis of how similar their learning and teaching activities were to a qualitative inquiry process, think about yourself as a learner, teacher, instructional designer, administrator, evaluator, or in your personal

life and respond in writing to the following assignments:

1. Review a particular learning event that posed an anomaly for you. Review Figure 1 and write some thoughts about how each activity presented there was involved for you in your learning event.
2. Respond to this question 'How might inquiry as described in this chapter enhance the learning in your life if you were more aware of these kinds of activities?'
3. If you would like to do a qualitative study as part of the experience of reading this book, think of specific occasions in your practice that gave you pause, or that left you with pressing questions. Describe one of these in a vignette. Tell its story.
4. What questions did this chapter raise for you?
5. Citations throughout this chapter and the rest of the book are not current. They were included in the first edition and have been retained because of their relevance to the discussion. But when using this resource with classes, the author involves the students in studying current resources as well and encourages the reader to search for other literature that expands upon the ideas presented, that is more current, and that is relevant to the reader's particular interests.

2

Assumptions we make in doing qualitative inquiry

Some Common Assumptions

Assumptions and beliefs of inquirers and the people they study influence all our inquiry activities and interpretations. As you think about your own inquiry interests, you should examine your assumptions and beliefs, as well as those of the people you are trying to understand, and how they might shape your studies. To help you, this chapter explores some assumptions commonly made by educational inquirers and the people they study.

Several of these assumptions are illustrated in a teacher preparation project I was involved with at Orem High School's Unified Studies that was mentioned in Chapter 1. A report based on the qualitative inquiry I conducted at Unified Studies is presented in [Appendix A.1 - A Sample Study \[https://edtechbooks.org/-JBW\]](#). This report illustrates one way of sharing what is learned through qualitative inquiry with others and some of the many associated assumptions made by the participants in the study.

Before turning to the example though, some of the assumptions traditionally made by qualitative inquirers from several fields are presented briefly.

Some Common Assumptions

Qualitative inquiry is *not* a new idea. This methodology has a long history in several disciplines and has a variety of names.

Anthropologists have developed their **ethnographic** methods for many years, into a rigorous and well'accepted science. Sociologists have likewise combined surveying techniques with qualitative approaches to develop the **participant observation** approach of fieldwork. Folklorists, psychologists, linguists, ethnomusicologists,

and many others have likewise used and improved this approach to understanding and knowing, using terms such as **case study, interpretive inquiry, and phenomenology** to label their approach. In literature, **hermeneutics, constructivism, and narrative** are terms used to reflect this same paradigm.

Although, interest in this approach has developed slowly in educational inquiry, over the last 3-4 decades, discussions regarding the relative strengths of **qualitative** and **quantitative** methods have gained enough interest to affect the practice of researchers and evaluators. Teachers and administrators have also used some of the activities associated with qualitative inquiry without thinking they were doing *research*. More recently, though, educators have begun to realize that the distinction should not be between qualitative and quantitative methods, but between paradigms for inquiry. Paradigms represent conceptualizations of the nature of reality, the relationship between the person trying to know something and the thing they are trying to know, the role of values in inquiry, and other issues. They go far beyond the mere distinction between the description and definition of qualities (qualitative inquiry) and the quantification of those qualities (quantitative inquiry).

In addition to qualitative inquiry, we will investigate the concept and associated methods of **naturalistic inquiry throughout this book**. This is a broad term, which describes a variety of approaches developed by many disciplines (ethnography, participant observation, etc.) and includes both qualitative and quantitative methods. Simply put, naturalistic inquiry is **disciplined inquiry** conducted in natural settings (in the field of interest, not in laboratories), using natural methods (observation, interviewing, thinking, reading, writing) in natural ways by people who have natural interests in what they are studying (practitioners such as teachers, counselors, and administrators as well as full time researchers and evaluators).

The term, disciplined inquiry was coined by Cronbach and Suppes

(1969) to encompass several different types of paradigms which may differ significantly in the methods they use and the conceptualizations of reality they represent, but which meet certain critical standards. Some of these characteristics are summarized by Smith and Glass (1987), page 25 as follows:

- a. meaningful topics are addressed [not trivial];
- b. the researchers employ systematic, clearly described procedures so that the reader can closely follow the logic of the study and assess the validity [credibility] of the conclusions;
- c. the researchers are sensitive to the errors that are associated with their methods and seek to control them or consider how the errors influence the results;
- d. empirical verification and sound logic are valued; and
- e. plausible alternative explanations for results are sought.

It is difficult to argue with any of these points. Most qualitative inquirers want to meet these standards to produce results that are disciplined. Criteria have been developed for conducting a qualitative study so that it addresses these standards (discussed in Chapter Three). However, each inquirer must decide how closely they will follow these criteria in light of their circumstances and other assumptions.

Please read the report in Appendix A: A Sample Study and then return to the remainder of this chapter for a discussion of some of the assumptions participants made in that study and that qualitative and naturalistic inquirers regularly make.

An Analysis of Assumptions

What key points can be drawn from the story of this research project? The participants in the story demonstrated many of the assumptions someone wanting to use naturalistic inquiry ought to consider. Some of these will be discussed but many more are viable.

But here are some of the assumptions participants in this study were making and you might think about regarding yourself and your own inquiries:

1. Good teaching involves many of the same skills as good inquiry. Some of these skills include asking questions of our experience, being perplexed about events we participate in, being interested in the views of others and working skillfully to tap those views sensitively, attending to others with our ears, eyes, and other senses, thinking about our experiences in new ways, relating our experiences to other events and thoughts from other contexts to see what insights those relations bring to us, being fully awake to what is going on around us, and on and on. Other similarities were identified in Chapter One.
2. Naturalistic inquiry by educators involves participation in the education activities, while observing, questioning, thinking. It is possible to participate in some teaching activities without really thinking about what is going on; but when teachers are looking for better ways, putting their own ideas on trial, looking for feedback on their projects, and putting students' interests at the top of their priority list, they are doing the same thing participant observers do in sociology or what ethnographers do in anthropology. They are immersed in the culture of the school while trying to understand it from several points of view.
3. The focus of these participants was on meaning' what did the experiences students and educators were having in Unified

Studies mean to those participants? What values did they associate with those experiences? What implications did their experiences have for their continuing lives? Interpretation of lived experience and the clarification of meaning are central goals of qualitative inquiry.

4. The records presented in this chapter of the participants' experiences were essentially descriptive and exploratory. They represented attempts by the writers to discover what was happening to them in this interesting setting and to entertain a variety of interpretations of those happenings. Qualitative inquiry is more focused on discovery and exploration than on confirmation and testing of conclusions. The focus shifts too, as the discovery proceeds; it is not centered concretely on issues decided in advance.
5. The focus of these participants' inquiries was more on interactions, complex settings, and processes than on isolation of 'critical variables,' testing of products, or summaries of the bottom line. Qualitative inquiry is most often used in this way too.
6. The participants in this story appear to agree with five axioms set forth by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as central to naturalistic inquiry:
 - a. Regarding the nature of reality, the naturalistic paradigm holds that realities are multiple, constructed, and holistic rather than single, tangible, and fragmentable.
 - b. Regarding the relationship of the inquirer and the thing being inquired into, the naturalistic paradigm holds that the knower and the known are interactive, inseparable rather than independent, a dualism.
 - c. Regarding the possibility of generalization from a study, the naturalistic paradigm holds that only time and context-bound working hypotheses are possible rather than time- and context-free generalizations.
 - d. Regarding the possibility of establishing causal linkages

through research studies, the naturalistic paradigm holds that all entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects, rather than claiming that there are real causes, temporally precedent to or simultaneous with their effects.

- e. Regarding the role of values in inquiry, the naturalistic paradigm holds that inquiry is value-bound and not value-free (p. 37).

By way of illustration, the story told earlier in Appendix A described the Unified Studies program from several different points of view 'mine, a teacher's, and several student teachers'. Although there was considerable overlap, it was clear that each of us was constructing a view of reality and that we accepted the fact that each person could see some things in very unique ways and that the whole of our interpretations was of more importance and value than to find one 'true' definition of everyone's experience.

The discussion of Parker Palmer's views regarding the relationship of the knower and the known illustrated our acceptance of the second axiom. Teachers cannot really understand their students until they are willing to share themselves with those students. I learned much more about Unified and about the teachers and other participants there as I shared my views and concerns with them. A qualitative educator-inquirer cannot remain aloof and antiseptic. One must get into the experience full-heartedly to gain the most from it. And we must be willing to change based on what we learn during our inquiry.

Although you who are teachers may resonate to the stories that have been told in this book, you must be the judges as to whether the claims I am making apply to your situations or not. You must take your contexts into account. The statements Cheryl made about her experiences with Unified were time and context bound statements. But shared contexts assure applicability to other times and places if

you want to make that transfer. That is the invitation offered by qualitative inquirers as they share their experiences and thoughts with others.

Cheryl's journal entries illustrate vividly that her teaching efforts were as influenced by the students and Sid and the environment she was working in as these people and objects were influenced by her teaching. This is an example of mutual simultaneous shaping. Naturalistic inquirers decline to isolate single causes and effects because there is so much going on that everything is influencing everything else in some way.

Finally, a basic claim of this chapter is that the assumptions we make as educators about inquiry and our place in the world have tremendous impact on what we do here. This is an open acknowledgement that our values are central to all we are and do and that our inquiry is tied intricately with those values. Levinas' focus on the ethical as undergirding the methodological, or even the metaphysical, is a reminder that the use of qualitative inquiry methods and the naturalistic paradigm are subsidiary to our values and beliefs about the importance of the other people in the world with whom we share our inquiries through teaching and other forms of sharing.

The participants in this story illustrate the point that naturalistic teacher-inquirers use natural settings (their classrooms and field trips) as the principal sources of information; they collect the information directly through their own natural senses (seeing, hearing, and experiencing personally, etc.). This is a very appropriate means of investigation for educators who are in ideal positions to conduct naturalistic inquiry as part of their normal work.

Common Questions about Qualitative Inquiry

There are many questions commonly asked about qualitative inquiry. Answers clarify some of the other characteristics of the approach. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) address several of these on pages 39-44. As you read these, consider how you feel about their questions and answers in light of your own inquiries in your school setting.

1. Can qualitative and quantitative approaches be used together? Although qualitative and quantitative data can certainly be used together and some people do use data collection designs and procedures together that are often considered to be qualitative (such as naturalistic inquiry) and quantitative (such as surveys), Bogdan and Biklen recommend that beginners not try to do both in the same study. Lincoln and Guba would say that the question of greater importance is whether or not naturalistic and positivistic paradigms can both be used in the same study. A review of the axioms would suggest that they cannot.
2. Is qualitative research really scientific? If scientific inquiry is defined as rigorous and systematic empirical inquiry or disciplined inquiry, then naturalistic/qualitative inquiry is certainly scientific. This is a much broader and more realistic definition of science than many people use, however. It is not scientific if a narrower definition (such as randomized control treatments to conduct deductive hypothesis-testing studies) is used.
3. How does qualitative research differ from what other people like teachers, reporters, or artists do? Although a qualitative inquirer may do many of the same things these people do (interview, observe, create, write, etc.) they would do their

work for different reasons and they would follow the principles of disciplined inquiry.

4. Are qualitative findings generalizable? As indicated above, if generalization means time- and context-free generalizations, which are commonly sought by people using positivistic paradigms, then naturalistic inquiries are not meant to be generalizable. However, if one means that the results of a study may be read by some one and used in their own setting (transferable), then the answer is yes. Qualitative inquiries should be conducted and written so readers can intelligently use the information from them in other settings.
5. What about the researcher's opinions, prejudices, and other biases and their effects on the data? Qualitative inquirers acknowledge that they are subjective by nature, as are all people, including all researchers. They claim that our subjectivity is necessary to understand the subjectivity of the people being studied in an inquiry. However, they use a variety of disciplined inquiry controls (discussed in detail in Chapter Five) to attempt to account for their biases and control for their prejudices.
6. Doesn't the presence of the researcher change the behavior of the people he or she is trying to study? The problem of observer effect exists in all social research (and probably in the supposed hard sciences as well). Qualitative inquirers seek to overcome this influence by interacting with the people they study as naturally as possible, over long periods of time, without manipulating the situation any more than possible. They also study themselves as the research instrument to try to account for the influence they may be having on the setting.
7. Will two researchers independently studying the same setting or subjects come up with the same findings? Although there would be some concern if two researchers found conflicting results which could not be resolved through negotiations between them, qualitative inquirers expect that two independent researchers would probably look at different

things, talk to different people, ask different questions, use different theoretical constructs, and therefore produce different studies altogether. Therefore, they are not likely to come up with the same findings.

Some Additional Beliefs and Assumptions Regarding Human Inquiry

Assumption #1

The knower and the known must interact to generate knowledge for the knower about the known; therefore, the interaction should be part of the focus and should be enhanced to generate the most useful and valuable knowledge. Interactions may range from very direct, as in developing a friendship with someone who can help you understand their world, to very indirect, as in observing someone through a hidden camera or giving a test or questionnaire to someone (in social science) or measuring heat in a chemistry study. But none of these interactions allows the knower to have no impact whatsoever on the known.

In my qualitative study of Unified Studies, I have had to develop some kind of trusting relationship with every student, teacher, or other person I wanted to learn from and part of that trust building involved sharing my interests in the program and what they could do to help me understand the program better.

In my historical study of my grandmother's life, I had to build trust with her and other family members to give me access to documents; and some documents are probably still unavailable to me because of those relationships. What I can ask of her and of the documents was also both enhanced and restricted by who I am.

In my survey study of Unified Studies graduates, I built the questionnaire out of interactions I had had already with some

graduates and with current participants in the program; so the instrument was shaped by those interactions. Those who met only the questionnaire were clearly influenced by that encounter in different ways (some responded, some ignored it, some partially responded; but all had a 'relationship' with me through the instrument and relationships have some sort of influence on both parties).

In my experimental study on test-wiseness, I set up an artificial situation in which I was able to randomly distribute instruction booklets of two types (a treatment booklet teaching some principles of test-wiseness and a control booklet with stories and poems in it) to a group of students who were preparing to take an important test. Then I assessed the test-wiseness skills of the two groups and compared them. This was clearly a case of the knower interacting with the known. I had to tell them something of what I was doing but not too much, at least not before administering the booklets. The booklets and the test of test-wiseness, as well as my invitations to participate and my instructions to them, were all part of my influence on them and on how they responded to the experience I set up for them; thus influencing the way they responded to the materials and the results I obtained from the study.

Assumption #2

Although some Truth is absolute and therefore some realities or knowledge about that Truth are not negotiable, our knowledge or views of reality are rarely absolute. We are struggling as human beings to clarify what we really know and what we must take on faith. We do this in 'learning communities' and 'socially construct' many of our realities through interactions with others, putting forth our conceptions and seeing how others respond to them.

I believe that God can be part of my learning community if I will accept and seek him and hearken to what he would teach me. He is actually part of that community anyway; but I can learn much more by

acknowledging that and acting upon it than I could ever do by ignoring or denying his existence and his knowledge. So studying God's revelations to humans, listening to His prophets, and praying to Him regularly seem a very natural part of my efforts to be an inquirer.

Yet, I also believe we have had a veil of forgetfulness drawn across our minds and it is not always clear what God would say about a given field of inquiry. We have to struggle and seek, many times it appears, 'on our own' to know. So faith is a big part of inquiry and learning to live with ambiguity as well.

Very few time-free or context-free generalizations are possible to make when drawing conclusions about people. Building 'time- and context-bound working hypotheses' is a much more appropriate goal in educational research theory building. The closest we can come to generalizations is through the accumulation of findings across many studies in diverse contexts, across time, by multiple inquirers using multiple methods. But even the generalizations thus generated are open to contradiction through discovery of counter evidence. We need to be humble about what we are 'discovering.'

There are many different stories I can tell about Unified Studies based on my inquiry over several years. But whatever I might say about what they are doing in this program, I have to be tentative because there are continual surprises and nearly always an exception. And even if I do reach a conclusion that seems to apply across all years of the program, next year's student body may surprise me and the teachers; and similar programs elsewhere may yield very different results.

I'm struggling to get my Grandmother's story straight but she changes parts from time to time during revisions. Also, her children point out alternative interpretations of experiences they had in common with her which modify my conclusions. Even if I do get it straight as far as she and her children go, other readers are likely to interpret her life

and the context in which she lived differently than I have because they bring different questions and assumptions to the experience. Yet, over many life histories and other histories, some consistent patterns are likely to emerge across many interpreters (but not all, I'll bet).

My survey of graduates identified many similar evaluations of their experiences in Unified Studies. But not all graduates agreed completely on any one conclusion.

Most of the students who participated in the test-wiseness treatment group did better on the final test than did those in the control group. But not all of them did. This could have been because some were already test-wise or because my measures of test-wiseness were flawed or because my instruction was ineffectual for some students, or because of many other reasons. My one study does not yield conclusive evidence. But combined with many other studies of similar purpose it might lead to some findings that people would trust enough to act upon (would that make them true then?).

Assumption #3

Similarly, I am skeptical about the facility of establishing credible causal linkages between variables through educational research studies. As Lincoln and Guba suggest: all entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects. This isn't to say that there are no causal connections but showing them as indisputable facts is very difficult if not impossible to do, at least in human affairs.

It appears from stories many students tell me that Unified Studies is having a major impact on their high school education and their views of themselves as life-long learners. But they all have so many other things going on in their lives at the same time that it is impossible to separate out the impact of Unified from all the other influences. It is even difficult to isolate just where Unified starts and where it stops in

the life of any given student.

My Grandmother believes she became a teacher instead of a librarian because her father asked her to quickly finish her teacher certification process and help the family financially instead of continue her education. But what caused her to heed her father's request? What lead her father to make that request? What stopped her from turning to librarianship later (she actually was a librarian for many more years than she was a school teacher). And which causal linkages we might define in her case would be applicable across all girls and their fathers?

Nearly all the graduates interviewed claimed that Unified Studies had made a positive difference in their lives since graduation. But not all of them made this claim. And each positive claim was about a slightly different kind of influence they felt the program had had. But these are all opinions of people who have had millions of other experiences in their lives too. So how can we be sure what Unified actually caused?

I tried to conclude that my test-wiseness instruction helped some of the participants in my study become more test-wise. But what about the others? If it didn't work equally well for all of them, how can I say there is a causal link between my instruction and their performance?

Assumption #4

I believe inquiry is value-bound and not value-free (Lincoln and Guba, p. 37). In other words, researchers or inquirers ask questions and design their studies based on particular assumptions, beliefs, and/or values. Therefore, their studies are guided by their values and the results, conclusions, and interpretations are also shaped by those values, just as their values are shaped by what they find. Values from different groups of people can (and usually should) be counterbalanced by values from others if the results of inquiry are

going to be credible or at least worth considering by others. But no value-free studies are conceivable by people who have values (and we all do).

I began doing my study of Unified because the idea of integrating several disciplines into a common course for high school students and conducting much of the class out in the environment and not just in the school building appealed to me. It felt right. But I've met many people who feel exactly the opposite. If they were to do my study, they would probably want to show that these people are harming their students while I've spent most of my time wanting to find out what was good or laudable about their work.

I love my Grandmother and want to tell her story to the rest of the family and anyone else who might be interested in the time and places she lived. I wanted to help her tell her story and so I give priority to her version of things over versions her children suggest might be more accurate. I could take a very different approach if it weren't for these powerful values I keep bumping into in myself!

The survey of graduates is shaped by the same values I used in designing the participant-observation study. I invited others to join me in developing the questionnaires and conducting related interviews. We argued about the questions we were asking and about the conclusions we should reach once the answers came back. So my values and theirs have been combined to some extent in doing this study. But I hired those people to help me and they haven't (or won't eventually) spend nearly as much time examining the results as I. And if there were others who were to join the project now, they too would have an influence. So a combination of values is at play here.

In the test-wiseness study, I was trying to meet a class requirement to do an experiment. I sort of believed in test-wiseness as a concept but I felt really uncomfortable manipulating people to participate in my study just so I could get credit and a good grade. I could have had

very different values and probably would have modified my instruction, the tests I gave, and even the relationship I developed with participants accordingly. That certainly would have impacted the results.

Assumption #5

Humans inquire. We are always asking questions, seeking answers, sharing what we learn with others, reshaping our answers based on their responses, acting on what we think we know, changing directions when we discover our errors, and so on. Some inquiry is very formalized while most is informal and essentially taken for granted. I believe that thinking about who we are as inquirers can enhance all our inquiry efforts.

Conclusion

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Questions for Consideration

1. What is naturalistic inquiry?
2. How is naturalistic inquiry different from qualitative research' why make a distinction between the two?
3. What is disciplined inquiry?
4. Can naturalistic inquiry be disciplined? Why should it be?
5. How compatible are disciplined inquiry and naturalistic inquiry with your assumptions?

6. What does each of the following axioms mean to you personally?
 - a. Regarding the nature of reality, the naturalistic paradigm holds that realities are multiple, constructed, and holistic rather than single, tangible, and fragmentable.
 - b. Regarding the relationship of the inquirer and the thing being inquired into, the naturalistic paradigm holds that the knower and the known are interactive, inseparable rather than independent, a dualism.
 - c. Regarding the possibility of generalization from a study, the naturalistic paradigm holds that only time and context-bound working hypotheses (idiographic statements) are possible rather than time and context-free generalizations (nomothetic statements).
 - d. Regarding the possibility of establishing causal linkages through research studies, the naturalistic paradigm holds that all entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects rather than claiming that there are real causes, temporally precedent to or simultaneous with their effects.
 - e. Regarding the role of values in inquiry, the naturalistic paradigm holds that inquiry is value-bound and not value-free.
7. How would you use these axioms to help you decide if a potential research problem you wanted to study could be approached using naturalistic inquiry?
8. What is your stand on these axioms or beliefs as they relate to the research problems (the perplexities or anomalies) you are thinking about in your own work?
9. What are some of the distinguishing characteristics of qualitative inquiry?
10. How would you describe the general process for conducting a qualitative study?

11. How would you answer the following questions about qualitative inquiry:
 - a. Is it scientific? Rigorous?
 - b. How can teachers use it to help them in their work?
 - c. Are findings from this kind of inquiry generalizable?
 - d. Isn't it more subjective than other kinds of research?
 - e. When would you use it instead of other kinds of research?
 - f. Is it reliable?
 - g. How is it different from quantitative methods?

Suggested Activities

1. Look at the vignette you wrote for Chapter One, Activity #3, describing an event in your practice. Ponder the assumptions underlying what you observed and your observation of it. These questions might help:
 1. What did you expect to see?
 2. Of all the things you could have seen why was your attention drawn to this way of seeing it?
 3. What was your agenda?
 4. What were the other participants' agendas?
 5. Why did you do what you did?
 6. Why do you think the other participants did what they did?
2. Work your way through these issues in writing. Designate this as being separate from the observations in your field note record. [I use OC for Observer Comment.]
3. What questions did this chapter raise for you?

3

Keeping a record, writing fieldnotes

A Story

The major way in which a qualitative inquirer keeps track of what she or he is seeing, hearing, thinking, feeling, learning, and so on is through regular creation of field notes. Therefore, high quality field notes are an important key to successful qualitative studies. The readings and activities described in this chapter will help you learn to take good field notes. Inquirers keep their own unique kinds of records of their experiences, the information they gather, and their thoughts. Each person needs to feel his/her way, a personalized system that is comfortable and useful. I will share my way; but know that many ways are possible.

As a visitor from the university to the high school (See [Appendix A.1 \[https://edtechbooks.org/-JBW\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-JBW)), I was free to take extensive notes during the class on a laptop computer. I also tape recorded and video taped sessions for later analysis. I had much more flexibility than Sid and Cheryl for keeping notes; though they also kept some records in journals, as did the student teachers and the students.

In addition to their journals, the teachers kept files of reading materials, class activities, some of the better student products, and an extensive slide library. They also memorized certain moments for future use. They tried to remember the feelings, sights, smells, sounds, and other details associated with particularly memorable experiences so they could relate them to other students and relive the experiences themselves. Cheryl talks of these moments as her celebrations.

About the second year I was doing my study with them, Sid and Cheryl decided to take more extensive notes themselves and they invited their students to expand the one page journal entries they had been taking after various activities into ROCs or 'Records of

Celebrations' to include details about what they were seeing, hearing, feeling, and thinking. They have continued this process in subsequent years, of taking notes and requesting students to do the same. As indicated in Appendix A, the student teachers have also kept field notes as an integral part of their experience each year.

Although it was difficult for teachers to continue writing as much after they left their student teaching internships, several were able to take a few notes after hours on school computers, tape record their comments while driving home, video tape their classes and take notes while watching the video tapes after school, or write about their experiences in letters to friends and family. They shared these tapes, notes, and letters with me on a regular basis and I wrote responses and questions in reaction. One of these teachers noted that just being able to talk to someone who had read about her experiences and concerns helped her sort out many of the issues that she was not able to voice or probably would not have taken the time to think about otherwise.

Several examples of field notes student teachers, a cooperating teacher, and I wrote are presented in Appendix A. The story in Chapter One came almost directly from my field notes as well. Other examples will be presented throughout this book to illustrate various points. I want you to see that there are many different ways to keep records of inquiry activities and that keeping a record is an integral part of doing the other inquiry activities such as developing relationships, asking questions, narrowing a focus, analyzing and synthesizing, collecting information, and sharing what one learns with others.

Keeping a journal or field notes may seem overwhelming to some educators. Meeting 200 to 300 students a day in the upper grades and just keeping up with 20-40 children all day in the lower grades seems like a big enough challenge for most people. When would they ever find time to keep notes on the experience? Yet I and several other

teachers and administrators have found that keeping such a record brings rewards that make the extra work more than worth the effort. The story written by Marné Isakson about how valuable journal keeping has been for her is presented in [Appendix B.1](#) [<https://edtechbooks.org/-YKy>] to illustrate these points. Please read her account before continuing on with the analysis and discussion in the rest of this chapter.

An Analysis

What can we learn from Marné's piece? I am sure you noticed dimensions of her experience that related to some of what you are already doing in your practice. Does it appear that she is super human? Or could you imagine keeping a journal of thoughts and experiences in your classroom and thinking about what you had written using tools such as Spradley's analysis procedures or others?

Let's look more closely at what this high school teacher was doing when she kept her journal. She did not write descriptions of everything that happened every day. She sometimes wrote only one or two observations about one student. At times, she wrote more; but her focus was often on the anomalies, the perplexing questions, the concerns she had. So, it is not necessary to take 'exhaustive' notes that capture the entire experience for all participants. That would be impossible even if you didn't have your educator role to worry about. Everyone filters what they are seeing and hearing, what they are thinking about their experience, the roles they are willing to play in a given social situation, what they are willing to share with others. Filtration of experience into your record is a given; how you filter relates back to the assumptions you make about your inquiry purposes and possibilities which are discussed in Chapter Two. Your major obligation to yourself as inquirer, as well as to your potential audiences, is to be as clear as possible about your assumptions and your filtration processes. You need to reveal yourself as inquirer through your writing. Marné does this throughout her paper and the list of assumptions she discovered she was making while analyzing her journal makes many of these assumptions explicit.

What about the quality of Marné's journal and subsequent analytic field notes? She uses some concrete language, quotations from students, and details, which make the scenes she is describing rich

and realistic for the reader. She does this better in her later writing, indicating that she has improved with practice and increased attention to including specifics in her accounts that will not only communicate better with readers but will remind her more powerfully of her own experiences when she returns to the journals in later years.

Marné's writing contains descriptions of some of what she saw and heard and experienced, as well as her thoughts, feelings, and reflections on those experiences. She is present in the accounts but does not obliterate the others by only presenting her views on what was going on. The reader can almost imagine being with the people Marné describes, seeing and hearing what she saw and heard in addition to reading what she thought about during her participation in these scenes. She does not often describe the physical settings and contexts associated with the people and activities she relates. That would be a helpful addition at times but is not always necessary.

Marné summarizes some conclusions she made about her experience but does so in a context of describing how she conducted her inquiry. She leaves an 'audit trail' of her activities while being a teacher-researcher that allows the reader to independently assess her filtration processes, her sampling, relationship building, question asking, analysis, synthesis, and information collection strategies, her thinking, her blind spots, and her biases. She is not trying to hide anything behind a method. It is clear to the reader that she was simply learning all she could from the experiences she was having with students in several classrooms.

Kinds of Fieldnotes

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1982), field notes usually consist of two broad kinds of writing: *descriptive* and *reflective*.

Descriptive field notes constitute the longest part of most inquiry journals. These are detailed and accurate descriptions of what the inquirer sees, hears, and experiences. Detailed, concrete and vividly specific words should be used instead of abstract, superficial, summary, or evaluative language. Quotations are included when possible. It may be helpful to think of your making of this record as the creation of a library about your experiences as a teacher, administrator, a parent, or whatever roles you play. You want the richest library holdings possible to fill your record so you have access to these details when you want to interpret your experience, share it with others, or otherwise learn from your ongoing inquiry. Include as many of the following types of descriptive field notes as possible or necessary. You would rarely include *all these kinds of notes in any one day's entries and you may discover other kinds of field notes you would rather include.*

Descriptions of the **people** involved with you in your inquiry and the nature of your relationship with them. You might want to include what you have learned of their history, details about their appearance, mannerisms, style of talking and acting and so on. Your working relationship with them should definitely be documented, at least from your perspective but also from theirs if they are willing to share that information with you. Thorough portraits should be made at least once for each person involved in the social situation and then brief update descriptions may be made in later sets of field notes as people and details about them change. An example of a description Marn' made is of Tom as she observes him barely being able to sustain three minutes reading at the beginning of a seven day period and ending when he

bursts into her room to announce that he stayed up until 3 A. M. reading.

Descriptions or representations of **communication** which include direct verbatim quotations of **verbal** statements you hear people make, literal transcriptions of interviews and informal conversations you have with people, as well as paraphrases in your own words if you were unable to obtain the exact quotations. The more you can get in their own words, the better. Do not translate the words and actions of others into your own personal 'professional' language when recording them into your field notes or you will lose much of the information you need to interpret their experiences.

These notes also include **non-verbal** communications you observe people making (such as body language) which will provide important context for understanding the emotional and circumstantial settings for interpreting the content of oral dialogue. Most people pay close attention what people say; but how they say it with their emotions and bodies in holistic communication is mostly noted at a subconscious level. The task of the qualitative inquirer is to bring these details to their own conscious awareness so they can interpret what is said more openly and accurately. The use of video tapes can greatly facilitate this work. But educators, such as Marn' are in excellent positions to develop their sensitivity to the intents and meanings students are communicating along with the words they speak. She listened to what Tom was saying about reading and not only wrote down his exact words but also his facial expressions, intonation, and perceived emotional state to help her make sense of what he was really saying and to help her share this understanding with her readers (actually only herself when she first wrote these notes).

Descriptions of the **physical and historical setting** include drawings, maps, photographs, videotapes, and verbal descriptions of the settings in which you are participating and learning. Such descriptions provide important contextual information that may not

have to be repeated every time you observe in the same setting. Of course, settings do change from time to time and particular physical or historical changes most likely influence the events and experiences participants have. The inquirer should be sensitive to these changes and include descriptions of them in the record. As noted earlier, Marn' did not include descriptions of physical settings in her report. She doesn't have such a description in her field notes and apparently didn't feel that was a critical detail to include as she was sharing her learning with readers. However, the historical setting is of central importance to the story she is telling about her use of journal keeping over a five year period. It would have helped to know more about the historical context during each of the periods from which her sample journal entries were drawn.

Accounts of particular **events and actions** in the setting including listings of who was involved, what the event was, how participants were involved, the nature of their actions, historical details that provide context for the event, etc. Marn's notes were essentially of this type, though the short excerpts she included in this report lack a lot of the detail readers might want. The story that began Chapter One is another example of this kind of descriptive account. Events, activities, and particular actions of participants in a classroom, school, or any setting reveal how people live their lives; and the meanings they attribute to their behaviors are implied by those actions. Combined with what participants say about their activities, descriptions of the events they experience provide helpful insight to the inquirer about the value and nature of those events in participants' lives.

Description of the **inquirer's behavior, actions, and experience** in relation to the experiences of others. As an active participant in the social settings you explore, your own behavior, words, relationships with others, assumptions, and physical presence in relation to all else you are describing should be made apparent in your notes to help you and others understand how you have helped create the information

you collected and conclusions you reached. In a very real sense, you are the inquiry instrument through which all other information will be filtered through your recordings and into your sharing about your experience. So it is critical for others to understand the nature of your presence in the settings you describe. These notes form an **audit trail of details about how you are doing the inquiry**. These notes may include descriptions of adjustments to the design of the study (could include the design itself here), sampling decisions, problems to be dealt with in conducting the study, etc. They also include comments on how well you are developing relationships with other people in the social situation, reminders of things you need to do to continue the study, ideas you are having about how to solve problems and the eventual decisions you make. If these method notes are recorded regularly, they provide an excellent account of how you conducted the inquiry and may form an audit trail that would allow you or anyone to audit or review your study. Marn' included an audit trail in her study as well as a critique of how well she met certain standards for doing qualitative inquiry (these are discussed in detail in Chapter Five).

Reflective field notes build on the descriptive field notes to reflect your personal account of what you are learning. These notes go beyond the descriptions presented above, to include your speculations, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions, prejudices, analyses, plans for future inquiry, clarifications, syntheses, connections, and other ideas about what you are learning in the inquiry.

Recording your reflections may be therapeutic for you and should also help you clarify what you are thinking and experiencing during the inquiry experience, as Marn' said the keeping of a journal was for her. This written record of your reflections also provides a contextual framework for interpreting your descriptive field notes. Understanding you as the learner through your reflective notes will help readers (including yourself) better understand the descriptions, analyses and conclusions of your study. All field notes must

necessarily reflect the influence of the inquirer who created them. Reflective notes provide a way to take into account that influence by clarifying who you are, how you think, where your ideas came from, etc.

Reflective notes may be set apart from the descriptive notes in your record through the use of notations such as 'OC' meaning 'observer comment', through the creation of separate sections of your field notes for more extensive analyses (such as memos, essays or draft reports), or they may even be kept in a separate 'field diary.' Though you would rarely include all these kinds of notes in any one day's entries, some of the different types of reflective notes include:

Analyses and syntheses that include your speculations about what you are learning, the themes that are emerging, patterns that you may be seeing in participants' experiences, connections between experiences, your new ideas, your interpretations of the meanings of events and people's comments, etc. These may be short notes written during participation in an event, or afterward while reading through a particular descriptive field notes; or they may be longer 'analytic memos' which incorporate information from many descriptive and reflective field notes. They may be reports or articles developed to communicate to others what you are learning (such as the reports in Appendices A and B). Analyses and syntheses constitute the ongoing process of clarifying meaning and interpreting the information being gathered in light of the relationships being developed between the inquirer and other participants, in light of questions being asked, and in light of stories the inquirer wants to share with others about the inquiry. Marn' used a particular approach to analysis and synthesis that Spradley (1980) recommends. She could have used several other approaches (some will be discussed in Chapter Eight of this book); but whatever approach is used, the record of how the inquirer interprets his or her experiences and those of other participants in the study should be kept in the field notes.

Reflections on your **frame of mind and feelings**. Everyone has a point of view and a fairly unique way of seeing what is going on around them. You should record your preconceptions, prior experiences, opinions, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices, changes in perspective, moods while conducting the study, etc. as they relate to the people and situations you are studying. These reflections should be initiated before you even begin the data collection activities and should continue throughout the study to help you clarify how you are reacting to the experiences and people involved. This type of reflection will not only help others understand your perspective but will also help you sort out how your views differ from those of other people. Marn's poem about Crowther tells the reader much about her emotional involvement and frame of mind at that point in her study. She revealed her personal involvement through many other entries as well, facilitating her interpretation of her experience in the paper she wrote and in other settings in which she has shared her inquiry with others.

Selections from the two kinds of reflective notes described here can be combined with the descriptions of the observer to form an audit trail, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five. The intent of the audit trail is to document how the study was conducted, methodological decisions the inquirer made along the way and the involvement of the inquirer as he or she shaped the study.

It isn't likely that any educator-inquirer could take all of these kinds of field notes during a single session of qualitative inquiry. There is just so much going on when you are participating in a social situation that you will have to focus your attention on certain parts of the experience. But over time, you should look at what you are writing and ask yourself if you are including all these types of field notes or if you are systematically ignoring some of them. Gathering information in all categories during subsequent visits will strengthen your field notes and make them richer, more insightful, and useful to you in your learning activities.

Example

To illustrate the points made above, the following excerpt is included from a set of field notes I created as part of the study of Unified Studies. I have labeled the entries with codes to indicate the kinds of field notes they are. I don't usually do that when I take the field notes because it takes extra time to think about what kind each entry is. I do often label the two kinds of reflective notes while I am writing them though, using the code presented below. Other qualitative inquirers use different systems for categorizing their work. For instance, see [Appendix B \[https://edtechbooks.org/-YKy\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-YKy) to review how Marné Isakson did it.

DP- Description of a person in the situation

DV- Descriptive reconstruction of verbal dialogue (quotation if person's name is followed by a colon, otherwise it is a paraphrase)

DN- Description of non-verbal communication

DS- Description of the physical or historical setting in which the action is taking place

DE- Description of events and actions

DO- Description of the observer (me) and my relationship to what was going on, including audit trail notes on methods of doing the study

RA- Reflective analysis or synthesis note, searching for patterns and relationships

RF- Reflective notes on my feelings and frame of mind as the inquirer

Aug 31, 1989

DS This is the first day of class in the Unified Studies program this year. We are going to begin with introductions. The 70 or so students are coming into the double classroom with the accordion divider latched open. The co-teachers, Sid and Cheryl, are in their adjoining office making last minute preparations. This is the 16th year of this program. It combines several different disciplines into a holistic experience that lasts all day every other day for juniors and seniors who must apply for admission. They spend at least one day per week on outings into the surrounding mountains, museums, places of business, the state legislature, and other learning settings.

DO I sat down about 7:55 and four of the student teaching interns sat with or around me. Teresa is sitting with students at a table nearby and Tim is at another on far side of the room. They are the other two interns.

RF I wish I had done that. I feel weird all gathered together in this corner of the room with the people I already know while all the students are over there waiting to be known.

RA I wonder if the students are feeling the same sort of thing that I am feeling just now? Do they feel nervous and so they are gathered in groups with the people they already know or are they wishing they knew someone so they could do that?

DO I probably won't take notes most of the time today, just so I can really get into participating with everyone.

DE 8:03 We're starting!

DV Cheryl: It already feels like we're into the year with our planning. There is nothing I would rather be doing than this, the short summer not withstanding. I like working with Sid. Let me know if you want to

be called something else. . . .

DE Cheryl began to call roll by calling out the students' names while they stood briefly so everyone could see them.

RA RF Knowing these people will be together all day makes it feel like we can really take our time getting to know each other.

DP Dahrl (an intern) is sitting by me. She is my younger sister by nearly 13 years. She is going to spend this year learning to teach in this setting and also in an AP history class setting. She has told me how nervous she is and how excited too. She can't decide whether to quit her night job so she can dedicate all her time to this experience or not. Her hair is curly and dark brunette. She looks older than the students for sure (her judgment as stated to me several times) but attractive (judging from the comments from some of the students who have talked to me' I added this entry September 15). She is dressed semi-casually in denim jeans and a dark forest green cotton blouse. Her white Rebocks look brand new.

DN The students are all very quiet. There is a little nervous laughter now and then when someone stands up to be introduced but almost no one is really talking, except Cheryl. I see a lot more long hair on the guys than I am used to seeing. At least half of the guys have hair to their shoulders or longer. Nearly all the guys have high top boots or shoes.

RA I thought long hair had been out for awhile.

RA Wonder how they decided where to sit?

DE 8:12 Cheryl is still reading roll.

DV She just asked: Hey guys' shhh please.

RA This is the first time she has said anything about noise' 9 minutes

into the class.

DE She finished reading the roll and now Sid is starting to talk.

DV Sid: There is no text for this class and if you miss a day, you can't read up and make it up. Missing a day will kill your opportunities, you're out the experience. It is a whole day's worth of time. I would make a commitment now to participate; if you don't, you will be in a bad situation.

DV 8:18 Cheryl: We're starting a new program this year and you dang well better make it work. This program has been going for 16 years. At the beginning we were going to include social studies, but we didn't find anyone who really wanted to do the work without a text. This year we are going to include social studies because some of our student teachers are specialized in that area. Sid and I hate failure, so we will do whatever we have to make it work. Another teacher here at the school is going to help.

DV She talked briefly about Ted Sizer's ideas and the district's interest in this program.

RA I remember that the principal said Cheryl is involved with the committee on Shift in focus.

DO I need to follow up and find out what that entails and if it has anything to do with what is going on here.

DV Cheryl: Let's talk about the calendar.

DE Sid looked and discovered there is something wrong with the calendar. He sent Tim to fix it.
Cheryl launched into a talk.

DV Cheryl: You have to be doing. Can't wait for Cheryl and Sid to entertain you. We are facilitators, providers. Aides will be involved in

this too and you should let them and appreciate it. They are being asked to help us; so don't even think of asking them not to mark you late or whatever' don't compromise them. They are your same age, but they have different responsibilities. We try to operate on a person to person basis in here, not on position to position. We treat people really well in here. So you do the same with the aides. I don't mean to be negative, but if any of you are doing very negative things, we will ask you to go somewhere else. Not because I don't like you but because we don't want to sacrifice 75 other people because of a negative draw. Rub silver and gold together and they get embedded with each other. Same with people. So I do all I can to be around positive people. Hope you felt this room was different than most when you walked in here. I like being in such environments. Same with being outside' that perspective puts things into a better way of seeing things. I hope you will do the same. Think about your friends. Are they taking you up or down. What are you doing for them.

RA This sounds like a statement of her philosophy. Sounds very much like what I have read in the disclosure document she and Sid give out and also like the presentations I have heard them make to students at BYU who were thinking about doing their student teaching in this program. Some of the themes I see being mentioned here that I want to follow-up on and document are: teachers as facilitators, students responsible for their own learning, respecting one another and each other's responsibilities, developing person-to-person relationships rather than a position-to-position orientation, the importance of a positive environment for learning, using settings other than the classroom to expand learning perspectives, and the use of mini-lectures or pep talks to communicate the teachers' values and expectations.

DS The students are sitting around 12 groups of tables (3-4 tables have been pushed together to form these groups) in plastic chairs. The carpet in the room is a dirty green, torn in several spots but freshly vacuumed. All along the North upper wall of the room are

several mounts of animal busts' mule deer, antelope, mountain goat, etc. There are three dividers (about 7 feet tall and 10 feet long) on rollers along the West end of the room that are covered with colorful posters showing people skydiving, sail boarding, skiing. Some show scenes from nature with no people in them. The dividers seem to be blocking the view in from the double doors that are built into the West wall. The South wall of the room is a really a movable wall that could be opened to include a neighboring room. There are several blackboards on all the other walls. There are no desks. There is a door in the East wall that is opened now to let in the cooler air from outside.

Some Ideas about Record Keeping

Doing qualitative or interpretive inquiry is a systematic way to learn about the world we live in. This process builds on the natural ways most of us learn already. As indicated in Chapter One, the inquirer participates in several activities repeatedly, simultaneously, and continuously throughout the learning process. The inquirer:

1. participates in a social situation (the world) and develops relationships with others there;
2. asks questions about what is going on in that social world;
3. collects information to address those questions (using observation, conversations, etc.);
4. makes sense of the information gathered in order to ask deeper questions, collect more information, interpret that information, and so on; and
5. shares with others the experience of being involved and learning, often through writing.

Keeping field notes or an inquiry journal is a common way to maintain a record of the qualitative inquiry experience. These notes are most commonly written records; but they may also be video or audio tapes, drawings, student work, memoranda, minutes from meetings, or any other artifact that contains useful information. Field notes should be kept consistently up to date because any experience you may have could be relevant to your interpretation of any particular event or idea.

Mechanics of Fieldnotes

The form your field notes take will vary as you choose. Each person should organize their own inquiry journal in a format that suits his or her personality, interests, resources, and needs. For example, I write most of my field notes on a laptop computer, which allows me to insert later reflections directly into files that contain the original descriptions and reflections I took while participating in particular events. However, I have also used note cards, small notebooks, video and audio tape, paper napkins, and even the back of my hand. Marn' keeps her journal with her at all times and writes in it during class breaks, while students are writing or reading, right after school, at home in the evenings, etc. She occasionally expands her notes onto computer files but usually sticks with paper and pen. Sid and Cheryl are beginning to use a laptop computer and have also used a written journal but the majority of their record is kept in their heads!

Whatever the means of recording you choose, a few suggestions on mechanics should help you keep track of and improve the quality of your notes:

- While you are actually observing, interviewing, participating, etc. take brief notes that may consist of a few hastily jotted key words and longer notes if the situation is such that you can take them during collection without disturbing the people you are with. Video or audio taping is also a way to hold information for later analysis. It may be that you are unable to take any notes during a given session, but make sure your descriptions and reflections on the experience are recorded in your brain so you can recall them onto paper as soon as possible.
- No matter how the field notes may have been initially recorded during data collection times, they need to be formally expanded and recorded in your field notes. This is where the key words jotted down during the earlier experiences may be expanded

into full sentences, reflective notes may be added, electronic recordings may be partially (usually recommended unless you have access to a secretary) or fully transcribed, etc. New insights may emerge during this expansion phase and these should be recorded along with the information which stimulated the new insights. Some ideas about how to organize these notes are adapted from Bogdan and Biklen (1982):

- Begin each day's notes with a header stating where and when these notes were originally taken and the date they were expanded into the field notes (hopefully on the same day they were taken).
- Write a series of paragraphs containing all the different types of field notes (descriptive and reflective) described earlier. Whenever a change occurs during a session (due to changes in the event being observed, in the topic being discussed, in the person talking, in the reflections of the inquirer, etc.), a new paragraph should be begun. Occasionally writing the time at the beginning of a paragraph will help you fit the entire experience into a time context.
- Margins and spaces could be left in the field notes pages to allow later addition of detail as you review your notes many times throughout the study. This step may not be necessary if using a word processor to record the field notes³ but it is probably a good idea anyway because eventually the notes will be printed out, and even then additions may be needed.
- Do not procrastinate between having an experience during which you initially record field notes and the formal expansion of those notes. The sooner you expand, the better. If you do not take the time for full expansion of your initial recordings, give precedence to descriptive notes. If you have those observations written down, the reflections will come when you read those notes later; but the reverse is not always true. Nevertheless, don't

worry about recording everything during any one session; you can always add things when you remember them later.

- It is often better not to talk about your collection session before you record it because most people tend to think that if they have told someone about what they saw or heard or experienced, it isn't so important to write it down. Thus, though they get it off their chests, it never gets repeated into their notes. On the other hand, sometimes talking your experience out can be a great way to initially make a record, especially if you were unable to take written notes during the experience. If you do this, be sure to make a tape recording of your conversation so you can either transcribe it or take field notes on the recording. Also, this is often a good practice after you have recorded your field notes' to talk about the experience with someone else and record the new insights you obtain through that discussion on tape or in new field notes entries.
- Once initial recordings are expanded into a formal data record, they constitute a working field record of your experiences. However, as the research proceeds, new experiences will shed new light on these earlier experiences. Therefore, you should regularly review your inquiry journal already created and as you do, new insights will come, details may be recalled, analytical categories may come to mind. These should all be added to your field notes too. Rather than create new field notes that are physically separated from the original expanded notes, which inspired the new insights, most inquirers write their new insights into the margins of the field record, with dates to show when they had the new ideas. This process could be modified if the expanded record were made using a word processor; however, the association of new ideas with original records should be

maintained.

- You should plan to take at least three times as long to expand your field notes as you took to initially record them during a data collection activity. Included in this expansion time is the addition of analytic hunches and insights you will have as you are writing up a session. This is the time you are interpreting the experience and even sharing it through writing or talking to someone about it.

Taking all these notes probably sounds impossible or at least like very hard work for people who are already busy teaching or administering a school. In fact, it is hard work; but so is thinking. And taking field notes is really just a way to help educator-inquirers be more thoughtful about what they are doing and learning. Take heart in knowing that the more you work at keeping a good record of your inquiry experiences, the better you will get at doing so and the more rewarding it will be so you will eventually get hooked, like Marn' did, and not want to stop.

Conclusion

References

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Questions for Consideration

1. What are the purposes of field notes?
2. What should be included in field notes?
3. How can you learn to take detailed field notes, especially while continuing your practices as an educator?
4. Why is it so important to use detailed and specific language rather than summaries in your own words of what you see and hear?
5. What are the differences between descriptive and reflective field notes? Why are both types of field notes needed?
6. What are the different types of descriptive field notes? What do you think about using them?
7. What are the different types of reflective field notes? What do you think about using them?
8. What types of field notes have you already begun taking?
9. Now that you have explored the notion of recording more specifically, how do field notes complement the other activities in the holomovement view of the qualitative process outlined in Chapter One?

Suggested Activities

1. If you haven't already, set up a field notes book (on paper or in a computer file) in which to keep descriptive and reflective field notes.
2. After your first day of writing field notes, expand them. Read through them. Find an example of vivid description in which you used specific, concrete language. Can you also find an example of a vague, general description? What can you do next time to avoid the latter?
3. Find a condensed account of a conversation you heard during your study. Write an expanded version, trying to recreate that conversation in full. Compare the two versions. Do you have any reflective notes to add to the descriptive account (personal reactions, biases, analysis ideas, methodological ideas for following up on the conversation to get more information)?
4. Try to label the types of notes you made. What coding system is evolving for you? Does it include all the kinds of notes described in this chapter? If it is different, why are you using your system? Justify it.
5. What questions did this chapter raise for you? List these in your field notes (the audit trail section if you have one designated would be ideal).

4

Relationship building to enhance inquiry

An Article-Based Story

Qualitative inquiry is human inquiry– humans trying to understand other humans in natural settings. How inquirers interact with the people they study and how they use their own human traits (such as feelings) is very important in coming to understand the perspectives of others.

This chapter is designed to guide you through some of the issues to be considered in fieldwork relations. The chapter begins with an story about teacher research and an elementary school teacher who conducted qualitative inquiry in her third grade. Please also refer to an abbreviated introductory account in Appendix C: An Elementary School Example. Her experiences with field relations will be discussed after her story has been introduced. As you read this article and the teacher’s story, think about parallels with your own inquiry setting.

The point has been made repeatedly that educational research and evaluation findings are seldom used by practicing educators (Bell, 1975; Borg and Gall, 1983; Goodlad, 1984; Osguthorpe and Johnson, 1981). One of the common reasons given is that practitioners are not involved in identifying research and evaluation issues, gathering data or interpreting results; so they see little value in the information provided by others. Anthropologists, responsive evaluators, and others who advocate the use of qualitative forms of inquiry (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982; Spindler, 1963; Yoder, 1981) have suggested that teachers are ideally situated to study their own settings qualitatively; therefore, they should be encouraged to participate directly in the research and/or evaluation processes.

For example, in a brief article to composition teachers, Hoagland (1984) made the following claim: “How do you feel about research in the field of composition? Does the research you read make you feel

passive? Disinterested? Are you ever the unwilling receiver of another's findings? I invite you to join a growing number of teachers who are becoming active researchers. Every writing class, including yours, offers research opportunities - why waste them? The methodology that taps these chances is qualitative research, Researchers in composition now recognize that much of the needed research can be done best by the person most familiar with the context of school-sponsored writing — the classroom teacher. These case studies serve two purposes: first, they are learning experiences for the teacher-researchers, and second, as they are published, they become a storehouse of knowledge about the teaching of writing from the perspective of the classroom teacher." (pg. 55)

If teachers could gather information themselves, they might value that data and be motivated to use the results to improve their practices. Also, the results they obtain would be extremely valuable to other researchers who want to discover how educational variables interact in natural settings. Many research objectives could be met if teachers were to conduct qualitative studies while they teach.

Yet, even the advocates of qualitative approaches caution that it could be extremely difficult for a teacher to simultaneously teach and gather feedback as a participant observer. As Bogdan and Biklen (1982) suggest, most teachers usually conduct many of the inquiry activities qualitative evaluators and researchers employ but less rigorously and for different reasons:

"Many intelligent laypeople are astute observers of their world, do systematic inquiries, and come to conclusions. Good teachers do this consistently. What they do is like naturalistic research, but it is different in a number of ways. First, the observer's primary duty is to the research; he or she does not have to devote time to developing curriculum, teaching lessons, and disciplining students. The researcher can thus devote full time and energy to taking it all in. Also, researchers are rigorous about keeping detailed records of what

they find. They keep data. Teachers keep records too, but these are much less extensive and of a different sort. Further, researchers do not have as much of a personal stake in having the observations come out one way or the other. The teacher's life, career, and self-concept are always intimately tied to seeing what he or she is doing in a particular way. This is not to say that teachers cannot transcend this to do research or that researchers do not also have a stake in their studies. But for the researchers, success is defined by doing what certain others define as good research, not seeing what the teacher does in any particular way. Another way that the researcher and the teacher differ is that the researcher has been trained in the use of a set of procedures and techniques developed over the years to collect and analyze data. Last, the researcher is well-grounded in theory and research findings. These provide a framework and clues to direct the study and place what is generated in a context." (pg. 40)

This list of differences could be discouraging to those who believe that teachers and other practitioners must participate in the inquiry process if research and evaluation efforts are to be truly fruitful and if the lessons learned from such investigations are to be put into educational practice. A useful first test of this belief would be to see if teachers could be taught to use qualitative assumptions, procedures and techniques while teaching and to assess the usefulness of the results to them and to the research community in light of the difficulty and costs involved in doing the study.

To explore these assumptions empirically, a class in qualitative inquiry methods was offered to practicing teachers. During the first 2-3 weeks of a 15 week semester, participants read extensively about qualitative methods and identified a site in which they could conduct a study. The rest of the course was spent doing the studies, discussing the experience in weekly class meetings and writing a final report. This summary describes the inquiry experiences of one teacher, "KL", who used her third grade class for this experience (see Appendix C: An Elementary School Example for an introduction to this report).

The Process

The research methods KL used were essentially qualitative. She observed one student's (Jimmy) study habits and interactions with her and with his peers daily for over three months. She maintained a detailed set of field notes, logging her observations, interview results, feelings as the teacher and her evolving analyses of the data.

Beginning purposes

KL's major purpose was to explore the possibilities of using qualitative methods to obtain rich feedback on her performance as a teacher and the needs of all her students. Related objectives of the study evolved during the study:

1. to better understand a student's attitudes and behavior, and
2. to discover ways to help a student improve his work, study, and social skills.

Selecting a student

The school was an open school using a team teaching philosophy in which the students were grouped according to abilities and needs in reading and math. Jimmy was assigned to KL's classroom throughout the day. She chose him as a focus for her study because he had demonstrated signs of having difficulties in school and because of easy accessibility to him in her class.

Through her casual "pre-study" observations, KL judged Jimmy to be "bright." But, she also found he had poor study skills (e.g., he rarely finished his daily assignments and spent inordinate amounts of time keeping to himself, staring at nothing in particular and playing with

little bits of paper, erasers, etc.). More seriously, Jimmy was becoming more and more disruptive to the other children. She often noticed him bouncing in his chair, humming or making slurping and beeping noises with his mouth. In an interview with Jimmy, KL asked what he least liked about school. His response showed how easily distracted he was, "When people disturb me when I'm busy. When people just start talking out and I just can't work."

He also had poor social skills. He had few friends and even the children he played with were usually unkind to him. In response to KL's questions about who he liked to play with, he gave two boys' names but then said, "I sometimes play with them cause I don't have anyone to play with. . . . I don't like playing with them too much . . . cause they're bothering me. They're just teasing me Sometimes when I come by, they just run. I just don't want them to run away from me if they are playing with me. . . ."

His problem had been diagnosed the previous year by the school guidance counselor as a slight attention deficit. But he had not been tested any further and no action had been taken to solve his problem. Given these preliminary observations, KL hoped to discover ways to help Jimmy improve his study and social skills by observing him closely, analyzing the descriptions obtained and then designing and implementing plans for improving his skills.

Data collection

The first attempts at gathering data proved to be ineffective. KL tried to take field notes on Jimmy's activities while the students were doing seat work. However, the students demanded her time and attention then and she could not concentrate on taking field notes. She then discovered the school had a video camera that was rarely in use. So videotape became a major resource for gathering observations, on which she could take field notes after school hours. The video equipment disrupted the class at first, but within a few days the

students seemed to forget it was there. Even though she had to spend several hours before and after school viewing the tapes, KL found this was an excellent method of observation. She could replay the tapes several times for more detailed and accurate field note expansion.

In addition to depending heavily on about ten hours of videotape to capture dialogue, facial expressions, student interactions, and so on, KL capitalized on the fact that she had been in the room too, while the tape was shot, by including her perceptions, feelings and thoughts in her field notes while she reviewed the videotapes. Likewise, she used the more traditional field note taking processes on the playground, in the cafeteria and in the music room, where the video equipment could not be used as unobtrusively.

In spite of the many advantages associated with the videotape process, KL began to suspect that her field notes were developing a detached quality because she was removed from the observed situations while viewing the tapes. She worried that her objective to discover and understand Jimmy's attitudes and behavior could not be accomplished completely by observing him on a screen. So, she decided to triangulate with interviews.

On several different occasions, KL interviewed Jimmy regarding his feelings about school, school work, his own abilities in school, peers, parents, siblings, and his likes and dislikes outside of school. Some of his peers were interviewed, too, so Jimmy would not feel singled out. These interviews were conducted informally on the playground and in class, as well as formally (students were invited to KL's desk for brief conferences). She took notes during most of these interviews (or shortly after the interview ended) and tape-recorded some of them, as well.

In one instance, KL wanted to obtain the student's description of what happens to him on a typical day at school. However, because he spent his entire day in *her* classroom, she worried that she would guide or

otherwise influence his responses. So the principal, who had taken a keen interest in this study being conducted by one of his junior faculty, willingly conducted the interview with Jimmy.

As the study progressed, KL began to wonder what additional insights the parents could provide from their perspective. She also worried that they might be upset that she was focusing so much attention on their son. After much deliberation regarding the best way to proceed, she decided to turn a scheduled parent/teacher conference into an interview. She invited the parents to interview her about their child, which made it natural for her to interview them about Jimmy at home and historically. The interview was taped with the parents' permission for later reference. The parents responded so positively to this approach (they found it very professional and creative) that all the other parent/teacher conferences were conducted as interviews.

The school guidance counselor was interviewed, also. Though KL was not given direct access to Jimmy's files, the guidance counselor did review the testing done by herself the previous year and by another counselor three years earlier. This interview was also tape recorded for further reference.

Other teachers were informally interviewed and their experiences with and opinions of Jimmy were solicited. Several of these teachers later reported that through their exposure to the study done by KL, their understanding of Jimmy increased.

In addition to these qualitative procedures, KL further triangulated the data sources and findings by developing and administering two questionnaires, which she administered to the entire class. The first was used to construct two socio-grams. The questions were designed to reveal who would choose whom as friends. She wanted to see if any of the students would choose Jimmy as a friend. The results of the socio-grams amplified KL's concerns about his lack of friends and social skills. She found that many students thought Jimmy was nice,

but still didn't choose him as a friend or someone they would play with.

The second questionnaire elicited background information from the children about their family and home life, feelings and attitudes. This questionnaire was also administered to the whole class to minimize noticeable special attention on Jimmy.

Data analysis and reporting

Analysis began almost as soon as data collection. As she viewed the video-tapes and reflected on her experiences with Jimmy, KL discovered patterns in his behavior. These initial insights were written into her field notes and became part of her database. Likewise, as she wrote down Jimmy's responses to her interview questions, the parents' and counselor's ideas and her thoughts on observed interactions between Jimmy and his classmates, she began to develop a clearer understanding of this student's world, his feelings, his fears, and so on.

After watching each video taped session and taking field notes on them, KL then expanded her notes and wrote comments in the margins regarding additional insights and connections between parts of the growing data record. These notes helped her begin the analysis of the data while she was still collecting it and aided her in making decisions about how and when to access other data sources.

KL tried some of the more formal qualitative data analysis procedures such as pattern coding, memoing and context charting (these will be discussed in Chapter Eight of this book). Through a series of such analyses, extending throughout the three month study of Jimmy, KL reached several conclusions about his challenges and what she could do to help him. She included a summary of these insights, along with extensive descriptions of Jimmy's school experience in a final report for the course. She also provided an "audit trail" (See Chapter Five in this book for more on this topic) documenting the methodological

decisions she made throughout the study.

Results and Conclusion

A major finding of this experimental class was that KL was able to accomplish her objectives in spite of several difficulties she encountered. As a result, she not only learned valuable information about herself and the student (and tangentially about other students); she also learned to value research and evaluative feedback more highly. However, there were several difficulties as well as benefits associated with this experience.

Difficulties

KL encountered some problems in conducting her study. Taking field notes during class, even while the children were busy with seat work did not work. The video camera helped tremendously; however, each time Jimmy left his desk, he also left the camera's view. Having to stay after school many nights to review and analyze those tapes and to create and expand her field notes was often a grueling ordeal. It was also difficult to have to write all the results and conclusions from the study into a final report, though she eliminated this part of the process as she conducted other inquiries on other students for her own evaluative and diagnostic feedback.

When she first contemplated interviewing Jimmy's parents, she worried they would be upset that she was focusing too much attention on him and that she may find problems during her study that *they* wouldn't want to deal with. When she finally decided to interview all the parents (which was also more work than she anticipated), she was surprised to discover that nearly all the parents appreciated the attention she gave to their views and to their child in this way.

Although KL had been fairly observant of her students before the study, she had to admit she probably neglected some children in order to focus extra attention on Jimmy during the three month study. However, the experience was so positive she has continued focusing attention on other individual students in a series of mini-studies. The information obtained through this study helped her realize how much more there might be to learn.

Benefits

In spite of these difficulties, the results of the study were essentially positive. The most obviously positive outcome for KL was a change in her attitude and feelings toward Jimmy. Through the several hours of observation and interviews, she better understood the reasons for his inappropriate behaviors and her concern and genuine interest in him as an individual increased. Other teachers and students had difficulties accepting Jimmy. They often expressed their annoyance with his disruptive and what they considered to be “strange” behaviors. KL found herself defending him against cruel comments from others who did not understand him and his needs as she felt she did.

Even though she focused more attention on Jimmy than on the other students, KL was surprised to discover that the other students did not seem to suffer, while she felt the effect of her focused attention on Jimmy was very positive.

With this change in attitude, KL identified several ways to help Jimmy improve. She began by giving him extra praise when he stayed on task and by finding opportunities for him to discuss topics he was interested in during class. Through the interviews with Jimmy, his parents, and the guidance counselor, she found other needs she and other school personnel could address. His disruptive and inappropriate behaviors could be curtailed through guidance counseling as well as positive feedback from other teachers for

appropriate behaviors. Also the guidance counseling would help him improve his social skills through positive contact with his peers in a “friendship group” under the direction of the guidance counselor. In the classroom, KL could draw on his knowledge and experiences in front of his peers, to help them gain an appreciation for his strengths.

Another positive outcome of the study was an improved relationship between KL and Jimmy’s parents. Although she had worried that the parents would not understand her intent in studying their son in depth, by referring to the parent/teacher conference as an interview, KL found the parents opened up and gave her valuable information which helped her identify other ways to help Jimmy. Also because of the hours of observation she had done, she was prepared to share useful information with them.

Not only did she gather useful data about the student she was observing, but also about herself and her own teaching techniques. This experience helped her realize how few one-on-one interactions she was having with children in a typical day in the classroom. Her field notes also helped her tally the positive and negative reinforcements she was giving to students. She discovered that she gave more positive reinforcers than negative ones to the group as a whole, but the negative outnumbered the positive for individuals. These findings led to a renewed effort to practice the principles of reinforcement she had always intended with each individual student.

There were several other benefits from the study aside from the insights KL gained regarding Jimmy. For example, the principal took an active interest in her project and interviewed Jimmy for her to see what additional information Jimmy would reveal to a different adult. As a result, the teacher-principal and student-principal relationships were improved (as was the principal’s opinion of the teacher). Also, as she reviewed the videotapes for data on the student, she saw herself as the teacher and was able to note strategies she was using that worked well and areas in which she could improve. Although the focus

was not on self-evaluation, such information flowed naturally and usefully to her as she learned to be a better observer.

Since the study

As a result of this study, KL has made some permanent changes. She learned by experience that a teacher is one of the most natural people to be an observer in a classroom. Teachers have constant access to the classroom and students. Unlike outside researchers, who must take time and care to develop rapport with new informants every time they enter a new classroom, teachers are not strangers to the school setting. Teachers have ongoing opportunities to develop strong and fruitful informant relationships with students, parents, and other participants in school life.

Though her first experience with qualitative inquiry methods in the classroom took three months and many hours of work and only directly benefitted one student, KL discovered how these techniques could also be used realistically to benefit all of her students. Although she has not found it feasible to conduct formal, detailed studies on *each* of her students like she did with Jimmy, KL has begun to conduct periodic mini-studies, focusing on one child at a time. She continues to use the video taping equipment, to keep a field note journal, to interview students and parents, and to administer questionnaires. Taping all the students in the classroom enables her to view the tape several times, each time focusing on a different student. Even though each student is not necessarily observed, all are benefitting from her efforts. KL has continued discovering needs of the students with the most severe problems through analysis of the information she gathers through all these procedures. She hopes all the students will benefit from her associated efforts to improve the learning environment.

So far, the field notes from these mini-studies have not been analyzed to be written up as formal reports. Rather, KL reviews and analyzes

them to obtain formative evaluation feedback and then maintains them as reference files on the students observed for herself and others who may want to collaborate with her to conduct related research.

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An Analysis of KL's Experience

Please refer back to [Figure 1 \[https://edtechbooks.org/-ruW\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-ruW), which illustrates a process commonly used by qualitative inquirers. As discussed there, conducting inquiry necessarily involves the inquirer getting to know people and developing rapport and relationships of trust with them so they will share their perspectives on their experience with the inquirer.

The stories shared in this book also illustrate the importance of relationships to the entire inquiry process. Looking closely at the relationships KL developed with Jimmy, the other students, the counselor, the parents, the principal, and other teachers, it is clear that all the other inquiry activities shown in Figure One were involved in her relationship- development activities. While she was asking questions, gathering information, keeping a record, interpreting information and experience, and even sharing her interpretations, she was developing relationships and that interpersonal interaction facilitated all the other activities. It should also be clear that all these activities of inquiry are also essentially *teaching* activities. Let's explore these claims further.

Traditionally, qualitative inquiry, as developed through anthropology and sociology, has been performed by outsiders in social situations. For example, anthropologists visited cultures to which they were strangers in an effort to make the strange familiar to members of their own culture back home. In such a situation, one of the inquirer's major challenges is to develop productive working relationships with people in the culture under study as quickly as possible so they will be allowed to conduct the study, participate in various cultural events, and talk freely with informants. Developing a role in the setting that is mutually acceptable to all involved has been a critical part of that challenge.

Bogdan and Biklen (1982), Georges and Jones (1980), Williams (1981), and many others suggest ways qualitative inquirers who are strangers to a setting can develop such working relationships. Some of these seem relevant to a teacher or principal who wants to conduct inquiry in his or her own school setting; but others seem unnecessary because practitioners who are inquirers are not strangers to the cultures they are inquiring into. They are usually already deeply involved in working relationships before they even think of themselves as inquirers, *per se*. A review of the points these and other authors make in light of the stories told in this book may help you plan to develop fulfilling inquiry relationships in *your* setting. Suggestions from the literature include the following activities:

- a. Gradually change from formal to more informal relations over time by interacting with people in a variety of settings. This may involve stages of gaining access to an inquiry site, getting oriented to the site and people in it, getting more and more familiar with these people as they inform you about their culture, and finally taking leave of the people and exiting the site.
- b. Build trust with each other by listening and using the information people give you in ways they perceive as positive. You may have to identify and work through “gatekeepers” to gain access to certain people.
- c. Do not disturb the people you are studying. Be unobtrusive and fill natural roles that are acceptable to you *and* to the people you are working to understand. This may involve some negotiation as relationships deepen, are broken, are renewed, etc.
- d. Join your hosts in what they do in a jointly defined role that allows you to remain detached enough that you can reflect on what they do and say without becoming so involved with them that you become one of them (“going native”). You want to be able to use *your* perspective to think about theirs.
- e. Learn from them- they are your teachers, not your students or

your subjects.

- f. Learn how they think without necessarily thinking like they do. Learn what it is like to be them; but you usually will not want to actually *be* like them. Use your subjectivity, feelings, and humanity while participating with them to gain insights into their experiences from their subjective point of view. This may involve the following:
 1. Use the feelings you have to guide the questions you ask (maybe the informants have had similar feelings and will talk about them in ways that will help you understand).
 2. When informants begin to understand your feelings, they will be more willing to share theirs and to accept you in their relations.
 3. Use these feelings to generate research hunches- then follow up on them by gathering more data- not just accepting your initial reactions (that would be bias!).
 4. Experiencing some of the same feelings the participants have will help you develop empathy, which will give you greater insight into their experiences and meanings they attach to them.
 5. Rather than pretend you don't have feelings or try to ignore or restrict those feelings, describe them in your field notes and reflect on them to decide if they are helping you understand the people you are studying or if they are distorting the experience and biasing your study.

Teachers, other educators, and other practitioners who also see themselves as inquirers have to be concerned about these same issues but in rather different ways. Unlike the typical anthropologist, they are already “insiders,” with reputations and responsibilities in the settings in which they want to conduct inquiry. They already have teaching or administrative roles which shape the inquiry roles and associated relationships they can develop. Because they aren't there just to do research but to improve their practice through inquiry in

that setting, the notion of developing inquiry relationships is different for educators. But they still have to focus on developing relationships that will encourage others to give them feedback and help them see the world through more than just their own eyes.

Let's look at KL and the roles and relationships she was developing in her school study in light of the suggestions to "inquirers" summarized above.

a. Move through relationship stages from formal to informal. KL had already established a teacher-student relationship with Jimmy before she began thinking about studying him as part of this project. Their relationship was fairly formal and studded with expectations from both of them and from his parents, the principal, and other staff and students in the school. They all had expectations of her as a teacher and of him as a student. But their relationship and expectations began to change when KL paid more attention to Jimmy. She talked to him more frequently inside and outside of class than she would have normally. She already had entrée to visit with him but she hadn't taken advantage of that access until she focused her inquiry on him. Unlike an outsider anthropologist, she did not have to exit the setting because she was truly a natural part of it. She did not have to introduce herself at the beginning and obtain access to Jimmy or the others in order to conduct a study. All these arrangements were already part of the educational setting. But she did have the challenge of deepening relationships beyond the expected levels common between teachers, students, parents and peers.

b. Build trust in an ethical relationship. This recommendation for qualitative inquirers is such a fundamental characteristic of good teaching that it matches perfectly with the teacher as researcher stance. KL did obtain information about Jimmy that could have devastated him if she had presented it to other students or even to his parents, inappropriately. Likewise, she had to build a trusting rapport with Jimmy, his parents, the counselor, and with other students in the

class before they would talk to her. She maintained that trust throughout the study and beyond by disguising the identities of participants and the school in which she was working in her report.

c. Be unobtrusive and fill natural negotiated roles. KL was a relatively new teacher at this school. So it was not too unnatural for her to be trying some different kinds of activities. Asking the principal to interview one of her students, using a video camera in her classroom, administering socio-grams, conducting interviews with parents during parent-teacher conferences, and asking former teachers and the counselor about Jimmy might have been considered unusual by these other participants. But they were not outlandish or inappropriate given her status as a new teacher. These were legitimate activities for a teacher. She also did not simply impose these roles on others. With some anxiety, she asked the parents if they would interview *her* about Jimmy and let her interview *them*. They were thrilled with these new roles for themselves and for the teacher. She brought the video camera into the classroom and by implication invited the students to let it be there and not disturb their normal activities. She invited the students to fill out socio-grams and to talk to her in short informal interviews. These were not entirely new roles for them or for her; but they were variations from the norm, which students could have refused to explore.

d. Be involved, yet detached enough to use *your* perspective to think about theirs. This recommendation seems a bit more challenging for the educator who *is* involved already as an educator in a setting in which they want to conduct inquiry. KL was able to maintain a certain degree of detachment from Jimmy and his problems by using triangulation (obtaining information from several different sources, using several different methods), by keeping a detailed record of what she was hearing and seeing, as well as her thinking and feelings about what she was learning, and by maintaining her teacher role throughout the project and not just becoming another one of the students or taking the parent role upon

herself. The standards discussed in [Chapter Five \[https://edtechbooks.org/-Rkx\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-Rkx) are intended to help practitioner-inquirers share experiences with the people they are trying to understand without giving up their role as an inquirer.

e. Learn from them. This recommendation can also be very challenging for educators because they often see their role as being the teacher, and it becomes easy for those in authority to forget that they don't know everything and that they can learn from their own students or subordinates. In her case, KL was frustrated as a teacher with Jimmy because he didn't seem to be learning and he was disturbing the rest of the class. Instead of assuming that she understood what his problems were and simply applying some preset "discipline action" on him, she asked what she could learn from Jimmy about this problem. She also asked what she could learn from his peers, his parents, his former teachers, the school counselor, and from a careful review of her interactions with him during classroom events. She was open to being taught by Jimmy and these others; and as a result, she learned a lot. She was willing to ask questions as a teacher. This seems like one of the most critical elements of a good inquirer.

f. Use your subjectivity to gain insights into others' experiences from *their* point of view. Related to the previous point, good inquirers do not pretend they are objective with all subjectivity controlled out of their inquiries through the use of particular methods. Instead, they use their subjectivity to develop empathy with the persons they are trying to understand. This is another powerful characteristic of good teachers that can be used to help them be better inquirers as well. KL began to feel the frustrations Jimmy was feeling as she took a closer look at his experiences, heard him telling her how much he needed friends, saw other sides to him through the eyes of his parents and the school counselor, and saw how unfairly she herself was treating him when she watched herself on video. She began to see the world through Jimmy's eyes and her compassion for

him grew. She could relate his feelings to similar feelings she had experienced during her life. She could only do this because she was willing to *use* her feelings to gain insight rather than deny them or get lost in the experience of them.

Both Peshkin (1985) and Smith (1980) provide helpful insight into the value of subjectivity. The notion of neuro-linguistic programming, set forth by Nagel, Siudzinski, Reese, and Reese (1985) and elaborated by Robbins (1991) provides technical guidance on ways to develop rapport between teachers and students, interviewers and interviewees, counselors and counselees, and other human situations that involve using one's subjectivity to understand, learn from, and influence others. These authors claim that by mirroring or imitating the behavior of another as unobtrusively as possible, one can begin to establish a rapport that will facilitate understanding and increase the influence the teacher or inquirer might have on those they are mirroring. Although KL was not explicitly using all these sources and their guidelines, she was certainly developing rapport with Jimmy and using that rapport to understand him better.

In the field of educational evaluation, several authors reached a common conclusion- unless the inquirers become part of the community of action, their research and evaluation results have very little meaning, and therefore, very little impact, on practice. Guba and Lincoln (1989) presented evaluation as negotiation, with the evaluator facilitating the presentation and negotiation of various views, values and concerns among people who have competing stakes in the outcome of the evaluation. Cronbach and Associates (1980) presented a similar notion of the policy shaping community and the need for the evaluator to be an active member of that community before other participants will listen to any evaluation study results. More recently, Patton (2011) has returned to these conclusions by promoting Developmental Evaluation as a way to promote utilization of results by evaluation clients.

Educators are already part of the community that can make a difference in the practice of education. They are insiders, whereas professional researchers and evaluators from private institutes, universities, and government funded research projects are outsiders. Educators already have relationships developed with the people in their settings who can share their experiences in ways that may lead to change, such as KL and Jimmy achieved. If educators can expand their roles to include qualitative inquiry, they will not only be better informed with a strong basis for making better educational decisions; but they will be in position to invite their associates to do the same. KL's story shows that qualitative inquiry and the associated development of inquiry relationships is a natural extension of what teachers and other educators are doing in their communities already.

Conclusion

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Questions for Consideration

1. What is rapport and how can you develop it?
2. Why do you have to be concerned about field relations throughout the study and not just at the beginning? So what? Why make such a big deal about relationships at all?
3. How do you decide how much to participate and how much to observe?
4. What do you think about using your subjectivity and feelings rather than pretending you can stamp it out or simply feel victimized by it? How are you dealing with your subjectivity as a practitioner? As an inquirer?
5. What do you think about the idea of researcher as instrument—your eyes, ears, thoughts, interests, etc. as the filters through which all data are gathered and processed. What are the implications for the quality of data you collect? What filters do you think you have?
6. What *differences* do you see between yourself as an insider inquirer in your practitioner setting and how you would perform as an inquirer in a setting in which you were an outsider (such as an unusual culture in another part of the world)?
7. What *similarities* do you see between yourself as an insider inquirer in your practitioner setting and how you would perform as an inquirer in a setting in which you were an outsider (such as an unusual culture in another part of the world)?
8. What relationships do you see between the relation-building activities discussed in this chapter and the other activities described in the qualitative inquiry process?
9. Why is development of the inquirer role better described as a negotiation than as an inquirer decision?

Suggested Activities

1. Write in your field notes (audit trail section might be a good place) a description at this point in your study of your existing relationships with specific people in your inquiry setting.

Address the following:

- How conducive or limiting are each of these relationships to your learning and inquiry?
 - How protective are people around you of what they are about?
 - How isolated are you and the others there?
 - What are you doing to create a community of trust and sharing?
 - What roles have you already negotiated or assumed?
 - What other roles are possible and what would be the implications for your inquiry and for your educating responsibilities of taking on those roles?
 - What will you need to do in terms of developing relationships and roles to really get at the inquiry issues that are developing for you in this project?
2. What questions did this chapter raise for you?

5

Standards and quality in qualitative inquiry

A Self-Critique Story

The circle in [Figure 1 \[https://edtechbooks.org/-ruW\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-ruW) represents standards for conducting qualitative inquiry as well as assumptions the inquirer makes. Assumptions were addressed in [Chapter 2 - Assumptions \[https://edtechbooks.org/-oLg\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-oLg). Now let's discuss standards. An understanding of standards should not only help you in conducting your own inquiry but in judging inquiries others may share with you, particularly in the literature. Educators have standards they use in judging how they are doing as teachers and how their students are doing as students. People in most fields have standards and qualitative inquirers also have standards they use in judging how well they conduct their studies. This chapter suggests that you ought to examine several qualitative inquiry standards to see how compatible they are with *your* inquiry and other standards. You may find them helpful in doing inquiry in your educational setting that is more credible and useful to others.

In the Appendices are several examples of qualitative inquiry reports. In [Appendix B.1 - Another Sample Study \[https://edtechbooks.org/-YKy\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-YKy), Marné Isakson presents her inquiry and what she learned from it. In [Appendix B.5 - A Critique \[https://edtechbooks.org/-fhP\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-fhP), she also critiques her work against the standards presented in this chapter. Her critique is the story around which this chapter is organized. Please review Marné's study in Appendix B and the self-critique she made in Appendix D in preparation for the discussion of standards for qualitative inquiry.

An Analysis

As discussed in [Chapter 2 - Assumptions \[https://edtechbooks.org/-oLg\]](#), qualitative inquiry should be “disciplined inquiry.” To make sure qualitative inquiry *is* disciplined, several standards have been proposed by various authors. Although no single study is likely to adhere to all these standards, the more standards that *are* met or at least addressed, the more believable and influential the inquiry is going to be to people with whom the study is shared. Consumers of qualitative studies can use these standards to judge the quality of the inquiries they read.

Although standards have been suggested by several different authors, the ones presented by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and by Guba and Lincoln (1989) provide an excellent core of criteria for a beginning. They suggest four types of standards or criteria be used to ensure the *trustworthiness* of qualitative inquiries: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. They also recommend several techniques for conducting studies so they meet these standards.

The rationale for trustworthiness as the central objective of these standards is centered on the desire most people have for truth. As was discussed in [Chapter 2 - Assumptions \[https://edtechbooks.org/-oLg\]](#), qualitative inquirers agree that most claims people make are based on their constructions of reality. A major objective in sharing our findings from inquiry thus becomes the persuasion of others that our constructions of reality are of value and should be considered in *their* constructions. Whether or not these claims are “True” in any ultimate sense can only be tested over time through many different experiences in a variety of contexts (this is the ultimate kind of generalization). But for any given study, the objective is one of persuasiveness—providing evidence that is compelling enough that audiences are willing to listen and consider the claims made. In other

words, the more the inquirer can do to make the inquiry trustworthy, the more likely it is that readers will be persuaded to read on.

Credibility

The credibility standard requires a qualitative study to be believable to critical readers and to be approved by the persons who provided the information gathered during the study. Lincoln and Guba recommend several techniques inquirers may use to enhance the credibility of their research: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, progressive subjectivity checks, and member checking.

Prolonged engagement means being present in the site where the study is being done long enough to build trust with the participants, experience the breadth of variation and to overcome distortions due to the presence of the researcher in the site. This may mean an entire year or longer for some large studies; or it could mean as little as a month or so for smaller studies. There is no set amount of time a qualitative inquiry should last; but the proper length can be estimated by the inquirer once they have spent some time in the site. If it is apparent that the inquirer was on the site long enough to see the range of things to be expected in such a site, the results produced will be more credible.

Persistent observation is a technique which ensures depth of experience and understanding in addition to the broad scope encouraged through prolonged engagement. To be persistent, the inquirer must explore details of the phenomena under study to a deep enough level that he or she can decide what is important and what is irrelevant and focus on the most relevant aspects. If it appears that an inquirer learned very little detail about any particular aspects of the phenomenon under study (they just spent a lot of time in one place without ever developing a focus and persistently learning more about it), the results will be less credible to a reader of the final report.

Triangulation means the verification of findings through 1) referring to multiple sources of information (including literature), 2) using multiple methods of data collection, and often 3) acquiring observations from multiple inquirers. In other words, if a conclusion is based on one person's report, given during one interview to only one interviewer, it is less credible than if several people confirmed the finding at different points in time, during interviews and through unstructured observations, in response to queries from several independent researchers, and in the review of literature. Although all three forms of triangulation are not required for every conclusion, the more the better.

Peer debriefing involves meetings by the inquirer with a disinterested peer (someone who is willing to ask probing questions but who is not a participant in the setting where the study is being conducted) in which the peer can question the methods, emerging conclusions, biases and so on of the inquirer. This technique is meant to keep the researcher honest by having someone else independently point out the implications of what he or she is doing. If a researcher can provide evidence of having done this and show the reader how the report was modified through the influence of the peer, the conclusions will be more believable.

Negative case analysis is an analytical procedure that is meant to refine conclusions until they "account for all known cases without exception." The process involves developing hypotheses based on extensive fieldwork and then searching for cases or instances within the site under study, which contradict the conclusions represented by the hypotheses. If no contradictory cases are found after extensive searching, the hypotheses are considered more credible because no evidence has been found to negate them. If such evidence is found, the hypotheses are modified to account for the new data associated with the negative cases. This process continues until the hypotheses have been modified to account for all negative cases and no new negative cases can be found. If an inquirer completes such an

extensive process, the resulting qualitative inquiry report is considered very credible indeed. It is rare to find extensive use of negative case analysis in single studies; but it is expected in series of inquiries on the same subject by the same inquirers.

Progressive subjectivity checks involve archiving the inquirer's changing expectations for the study (*a priori* and emerging constructions or interpretations of what is being learned or what is going on). "If the inquirer 'finds' only what he or she expected to find, initially, or seems to become 'stuck' or 'frozen' on some intermediate construction [interpretation], credibility suffers." (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p 238) The inquirer is responsible for revealing his or her biases and preferences in reports, field notes, and the audit trail.

The emic or folk perspectives of the participants should be highlighted in the study. It should be clear to the readers that the inquirer discovered something of the viewpoints held by the people he or she studied. If *only* the inquirer's perspective (often referred to as *etic perspective*) is present, the study lacks one of the most critical characteristics of a qualitative study, although the inquirer's perspective is also necessary. Likewise issues should emerge during the study and discoveries should be made. If the inquirer's original hypotheses are simply confirmed, qualitative inquiry probably is not the appropriate approach to use.

Member checking is one of the most important techniques for establishing the credibility of a qualitative inquiry. In this process, the data record, interpretations, and reports of the inquirer are reviewed by the members or participants who provided the data- the natives. If they agree that their perspectives have been adequately represented and that the conclusions reached in the report are credible to them, the reader of such a study is likely to be convinced that the qualitative inquiry itself is credible. When the "members" are children, the inquirer may have to find alternative ways to share what they are concluding with them; but often asking people to read segments of a

report and then give oral feedback and reaction is sufficient.

Transferability

This criterion refers to the applicability of findings in one context (where the research is done) to other contexts or settings (where the interpretations might be transferred). Whether findings can be transferred or not is an empirical question, which cannot be answered by the inquirer alone. The target context must be compared to the research context to identify similarities. The more similar, the more likely it is that the findings will be transferable. Persons reading the qualitative inquiry reports have to make this decision.

This transferability analysis is facilitated by clear descriptions of the time and context in which working hypotheses are developed by the qualitative inquirer. **Thick description** of the phenomena under study and as much of the context in which the study took place as possible is the most powerful technique for facilitating transferability decisions. But the transfer must be made by audiences to the report, not by the author.

Dependability

This is the third standard for judging qualitative studies and refers to the stability or consistency of the inquiry *processes* used over time. To check the dependability of a qualitative study, one looks to see if the researcher has been careless or made mistakes in conceptualizing the study, collecting the data, interpreting the findings and reporting results. The logic used for selecting people and events to observe, interview, and include in the study should be clearly presented. The more consistent the researcher has been in this research process, the more dependable are the results. A major technique for assessing dependability is the *dependability audit* in which an independent auditor reviews the activities of the researcher (as recorded in an audit trail in field notes, archives, and reports) to see how well the techniques for meeting the credibility and transferability standards have been followed. If the researcher does not maintain any kind of audit trail, the dependability cannot be assessed and dependability and trustworthiness of the study are diminished.

Confirmability

A fourth standard is confirmability, which refers to the *quality of the results* produced by an inquiry in terms of how well they are supported by informants (members) who are involved in the study and by events that are independent of the inquirer. Reference to literature and findings by other authors that confirm the inquirer's interpretations can strengthen confirmability of the study in addition to information and interpretations by people other than the inquirer from within the inquiry site itself. The *confirmability audit* can be conducted at the same time as the dependability audit and the auditor asks if the data and interpretations made by the inquirer are supported by material in the audit trail, are internally coherent, and represent more than "figments of the [inquirer's] imagination." (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p 243) If such an audit attests to the confirmability of the study, it is more likely to be accepted by readers. Details on how to maintain an audit trail and conduct an audit are presented later.

Other Criteria

In addition to the criteria discussed above, several others suggested in the literature should be considered:

Meaningful. Clearly, unless a study addresses a meaningful problem or issue, it is not worth doing. This holds true for all research, not just qualitative inquiry. There should be a rationale providing justification for the study. Deciding whether a problem is meaningful or not is a subjective process; but the inquirer can provide evidence and logic to support his or her decision. And the readers can judge quality of the argument independently.

Qualitative inquiry appropriate. Obviously, not all inquiry is or should be qualitative. If the information needs call for it and the inquirer can justify the application of a qualitative or interpretational approach to the research situation, then the qualitative inquiry activities discussed in this book are appropriate. Proposals to conduct qualitative inquiry should present this justification.

Natural conditions. The study should be conducted under the most *natural conditions* possible. Manipulation of the participants through random assignment, submission to unnatural measurement instruments, or exposure to unnatural treatments should be avoided. The inquirer should be as unobtrusive as possible so participants are acting essentially as they would if the inquirer were simply another participant in the setting and not also conducting inquiry.

Ethical treatment. Participants in the inquiry should be *treated ethically*. They should be given the opportunity to react to the data record and have their disagreements with the inquirer's interpretations taken seriously. They should be given anonymity in any reports. There should be no indications that participants were

treated with disrespect or cruelty.

Reports should be well written to include description, analysis, and synthesis, and to reveal the author. Attempts to share what the inquirer is learning should be communicated clearly. The descriptions should develop a sense of “being there” for the reader. The analyses should be logically presented. The audience for the report should be identified and the report should address the concerns of that audience. The grammar and use of language should be of the highest quality.

Although the balance between description, analysis, and synthesis will vary depending on the length of the report and the purposes of the inquiry, readers need to have some raw description of scenes from the research site to use in judging the conclusions that are reached and to make their own conclusions independently. They also should see some syntheses of results by the inquirer in which all contradictions in findings are analyzed and/ or resolved. Although there are paradoxes in the world, a report that presents conflicting pieces of evidence without discussing them and trying to discern their nature (whether it is a true paradox or whether one side of the issue is erroneous) needs to be improved.

Relevant characteristics of the inquirer should be clearly revealed so the reader can understand the context from which the study emerged more completely. This may be done either *explicitly* in an appendix, in the forward, or in the body of the text. Or it may be done *implicitly* in the text as the inquirer describes his or her methods, decisions, reasons for doing the study, and so on.

A Checklist

The criteria discussed in this chapter are combined in the checklist presented here. This checklist may be used to guide consumers of qualitative inquiries in their critiques of qualitative proposals and reports. Clearly, availability of a good audit trail and access to the inquirer's field notes would facilitate the use of this checklist in judging the quality of a study. However, audit trails and field notes are rarely available for most studies found in the literature because they take up too much space. The checklist may also be used to plan and conduct qualitative studies.

1. Is a meaningful topic addressed?
2. Is qualitative inquiry appropriate for the topic?
3. Are people treated ethically?
4. Are natural conditions maintained as closely as possible?
5. Is the report well written?
 - a. Does it communicate well?
 - b. Does it address conflicting results?
 - c. Does it include descriptions of the researcher, the data gathered, and the conditions under which data were gathered?
 - d. Does it include analysis and synthesis of the data?
6. Is the study **credible**?
 - a. Is prolonged engagement adequate?
 - b. Is persistent observation adequate?
 - c. Is triangulation adequate?
 - d. Is peer debriefing adequate?
 - e. Is negative case analysis adequate?
 - f. Are progressive subjectivity checks made?
 - g. Is the emic perspective highlighted?
 - h. Are member checks adequate?
7. Is thick description adequate to make **transferability** of the

study likely?

8. Is the study **dependable**?

- a. Is an adequate audit trail maintained?
- b. Was an audit conducted? Do results support dependability?
- c. Are data collection and analysis procedures adequate? Has the researcher been careless or made mistakes in conceptualizing the study, sampling people and events, collecting the data, interpreting the findings, or reporting results?

9. Is the study **confirmable**?

- a. Is an adequate audit trail maintained?
- b. Was an audit conducted? Do results support confirmability?
- c. How adequate are the findings? How well are they supported by people and events that are independent of the inquirer?

Audit Trail

The notion of audit trails was introduced in [Chapter 3](#) [<https://edtechbooks.org/-Vby>] and the need for audit trails was emphasized earlier in this chapter. Audit trails are simply records kept of how qualitative studies are conducted. The audit trail should include all field notes and any other records kept of what the inquirer does, sees, hears, thinks, etc. The “Descriptions of the Observer” field notes described in Chapter Three should contain most of these details or at least an index to documents that contain them. These notes not only describe where the inquirer is in relation to what she or he is observing or participating in, and what is being learned; but they also describe the inquirer’s thoughts about how to proceed with the study, sampling decisions, ethical concerns, and so on. Each inquirer is free to create an audit trail that fits the study being conducted. The audit trail may be used by the inquirer to review what has been done, and to consider alternative plans, in addition to serving in the dependability and confirmability audit functions described earlier.

Often, the audit trail is the field notes; and if those notes are kept current and are easily accessible, no extra audit trail may be necessary (although some people like to keep a separate computer file or paper file for audit trail documentation). To help an auditor, many inquirers create a brief chronological index to their study. They list choices they made each day of the study, actions they engaged in, and some of their thoughts about how the study is going at that stage. The auditor can go from this listing to the field notes, audio and video recordings, and other files associated with the inquiry to reconstruct how the study was conducted, how conclusions were reached, and to make the dependability and confirmability judgments described earlier.

An example of an audit trail index (the actual audit trail was 54 pages

long) is included in an appendix to Marné's study in Appendix B of this book. Refer to it there as an illustration of the elements of an audit trail. As you can see there, Marné has simply listed what she did each day she engaged in this particular inquiry. The detailed audit trail is in the field notes, which could be made available to the auditor.

Conclusion

References

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Questions for Consideration

1. What questions or comments do you have over the materials presented in this chapter?
2. Which of the standards are most important? Would you add others?
3. Why are standards for critiquing qualitative inquiries needed?
4. How can all these standards be met in a given study?
5. How can the meaningfulness of a research problem be determined?
6. Do you agree with Marné's self critique? Why or why not?
7. How can you use the checklist presented above in your inquiry setting?
8. What are you planning to do (doing) to ensure that the standards for qualitative inquiry presented in this chapter will be met in the qualitative inquiry you are conducting?
9. What is an audit trail?
10. Why is it important to maintain an audit trail?
11. How are you keeping an audit trail of your inquiry?

Suggested Activities

1. Using the standards described in this chapter and any others you feel are relevant, critique one of the completed studies reported in the Appendices of this book (besides Marné's in Appendix B).
2. In your field notes, critique your own study against these same standards. For each standard, explain how you are meeting the standard or propose how you will revise your inquiry to meet any standard you are not currently addressing in your own inquiry. If you think some of these standards are irrelevant or too hard to achieve in your situation, explain your rationale in your field notes. Discuss any additional standards you want to use.
3. Review your field notes to make sure you are keeping the details you need to have an adequate audit trail. Begin a new file that will serve as an index to your audit trail that has an entry for every day you do anything associated with your project.
4. What questions did this chapter raise for you?

6

Focusing the inquiry

A School's Superintendent's Story

Questions and question asking are at the heart of the qualitative inquiry process and the practitioner as learner idea. The questions the inquirer is asking at any given moment determine the focus and direction of the inquiry at that moment. And as Heisenberg (1958) said so long ago about the interrelatedness of the observer and the observed in quantum mechanics, “we have to remember that what we observe is not nature in itself but nature exposed to our method of questioning.” (p 57, cited in Knoblauch and Brannon, 1988, pp 17-18) Questions are shaped by and shape all we do and are, as inquirers in all dimensions of the qualitative inquiry process discussed throughout this book and summarized in the figures in Chapter One:

- who the inquirer is, including assumptions about inquiry, learning, and teaching,
- field relations and roles under development,
- information that has been collected and is to be collected,
- analyses, syntheses, and interpretations that have been constructed and are planned,
- any sharing of learning that the inquirer anticipates and is doing, and
- what has been recorded about the inquiry experience to that point in time.

Questions are definitely at the heart of this holo-movement process. This chapter will illustrate the claim that who you are as an inquirer powerfully shapes the questions you will ask. Likewise, who you are impacts the field relations and roles you develop, which likewise shape the questions you *can* ask in a given inquiry situation. In turn, while the questions you ask impact the information you will collect

and the interpretations you make of it, the data you have and the analyses you make of them affects the subsequent questions you may ask. Finally, what you write in your field notes and what you consider sharing with others are both shaped by the questions you are asking, and the questions are reciprocally formed out of your considerations of audiences for related writings. In spite of the fact that none of these activities is independent of the others, we will focus in this chapter on the questioning activity.

A School Superintendent's Story

All the stories shared to this point in the book have been at the classroom level. Obviously, teachers and students are not the only learners in educational settings. A study conducted by Garry McKinnon provides an example of a superintendent as inquirer and learner. Garry's initial question was shaped and modified throughout his study to yield his focus on the central question: "What is the change process in an educational setting." After reading his report in [Appendix E: An Example Study by an Administrator](https://edtechbooks.org/-Bzr) [<https://edtechbooks.org/-Bzr>], please consider the following analysis of this example in terms of questions and focus as they relate to the rest of the qualitative inquiry process.

Garry's story provides a backdrop for a discussion of several key points about asking questions and focusing an inquiry. Before he officially began his study, he had been exploring alternatives to what he saw in the schools around him while he certified, began teaching high school, worked as a guidance counselor, a vice-principal, a school principal, a deputy superintendent, and the superintendent, and earned a masters degree. At each stage, he asked new questions and sought answers through his study of the literature and by observing people he was working with in the schools. His focus for the study reported in Appendix E developed after he had been a superintendent for ten years and had begun a doctoral program, which led him to "develop an interest in the relationship between

learning and teaching and the change process.

Garry began this particular inquiry with a concern about reform within his district. He states in his portrayal of himself, "As superintendent, he spends a significant amount of time in developing relationships with trustees and Department of Education staff. At the same time, he has found it essential to maintain open lines of communication and a positive working relationship with teachers, administrators, students, parents, and community members in the school system. ... he has been able to have some influence on educational issues at the provincial level, but he sees a need for a new approach. He has found that much of what is taking place in education in Alberta, is perceived to be beyond the control of the local school jurisdiction. He is concerned that many of his fellow educators have concluded that there are few opportunities for input which have an impact."

In other words, Garry's experiences as a teacher and then as an administrator and a doctoral student studying the thoughtful work of educators at the local level lead him to ask what change was and how he might influence more powerful change in his local district. A review of his audit trail, and the dissertation version of his study, reveals the fact that his questions changed regularly, as did his focus, throughout the life of the inquiry itself. And he ended the study with recommendations for further research, which indicated new questions he had developed from a review of his experience conducting this study. This is not unusual for people who are constantly searching for new insights and trying to improve the world around them. It is a natural characteristic of learners.

An Analysis

Garry's experiences illustrate several points that others who want to conduct inquiry as part of their work might consider, particularly as they think of questions they want to ask and as they refine the focus of their inquiry throughout its evolution:

Point #1

A basic assumption of this book is that educators want to do their work better. Garry certainly did and this led him to keep asking new questions as he moved from setting to setting and interacted with the people in the discussion group he formed.

Point #2

It is also assumed that improvement involves learning— hence the notion of educators as learners. This may be done particularly well through qualitative inquiry as described in this book but all other ways of learning should be considered as well. Garry is a good example of an administrator who knew he didn't have all the answers and was interested in exploring, wondering, seeking new insights from the people who worked for him. He used a qualitative approach to obtain information from them but also studied the literature, administered questionnaires, and was trying out an experiment of sorts to see what he could learn from a volunteer group of people from across the district.

Point #3

Educators **learn** by asking questions and we only get answers to the questions we **ask**. The questions we ask determine the focus of our inquiries. It should be obvious that if Garry had asked why the people in his district didn't follow a particular change model that could be selected from the literature, he would have learned very different lessons than the ones he learned by asking how they *did* change and view change. Both questions would have been legitimate but would have lead to very different answers.

Point #4

Questions come from many sources. Garry's came from the literature on change and thoughtfulness, from his many years of experience in the Alberta school systems, from interactions he had with people in the discussion group he assembled for this study, and from his experiences sharing what he was learning with colleagues while writing his dissertation. There are limitless sources of questions and Garry probably accessed even more than this list suggests. Some question sources inquirers might consider as they focus their inquiries are summarized briefly below:

- a. The *foundational disciplines and traditions* that guide educators ask certain questions which should be considered by inquirers. Philosophy, psychology, sociology, political science, anthropology, and others ask critical questions about how people learn, teach and grow which can help an inquirer explore their own educational experiences fruitfully. The literature on change from several fields influenced Garry in his focus for this study.
- b. Likewise, questions asked by the various *subject matter disciplines* in which educators specialize may provide useful guidance. For example, a history teacher might ask how

political and socio-economic forces in the lives of her students have formed and influenced the students' performance over time. Garry asked questions from the field of change agency in trying to understand how educators in his district were performing as change agents.

- c. *Educational theorists and researchers ask questions* about learning and teaching in the many journals and handbooks on teaching and teacher education. Often educators believe these sources are irrelevant to their work because they are based on studies done by people who are removed from the classrooms and schools. However, the questions they raise are often based on careful examination of schools and could be a valuable source for field-based inquirers. Garry was particularly sensitive to the views of educational reform theorists in his study.
- d. *People participating in our studies raise some of the best questions.* The students and their parents ask questions through their behavior, if not explicitly. When students are not learning, the implied question is, "What can be done to help me learn?" Businesses and citizens ask questions of the schools increasingly which educators should capitalize upon rather than defend against. Accreditation bodies and other evaluation audiences ask particularly questions about how well educators are performing in relation to their various sets of criteria. Colleagues are constantly asking how to teach or administer better. Any and all of these might be considered as sources for questions in a given study. Garry's study was built squarely around discovering the questions his colleagues were raising about change in schools.
- e. *Our own lives raise questions* from many dimensions: Our experiences and background, our awareness of and responsiveness to questions asked from all other sources, our need for change, our theoretical perspectives on how the content we teach is best learned, our beliefs about what can be known and how we can know, about our freedom to ask

questions, about the importance of information versus people, about knowledge and knowing, and so on. Garry's brief overview of his own life suggested that his background led him to ask about the importance of change at the individual level in the creation of institutional and societal change. His beliefs about the power of the mind and the individual's freedom to change made the questions he asked possible.

Point #5

Qualitative inquiry often focuses on the questions raised by participants' lived experiences. The qualitative inquirer is often asking, "What is the nature of this experience from the others' points of view?" or "What is really going on here from the various perspectives of the participants, in contrast to what the literature, my theory, or any established interpretations say is going on?" And these questions imply, "What can I become aware of by listening to others that might help me in my search for how to help them?" For example, some of the questions that have been asked in the examples given in this book have been:

- a. What is the right thing to do for Steve (Sid, Cheryl, and Jack asked this in [Chapter One \[https://edtechbooks.org/-qpj\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-qpj))?
- b. How do teachers make ethical decisions regarding students (David asked this in [Chapter One \[https://edtechbooks.org/-qpj\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-qpj))?
- c. How should candidates be prepared to teach (David and the student teachers asked this in [Appendix A \[https://edtechbooks.org/-JBW\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-JBW))?
- d. How can I learn to teach better through journal writing (Marné asked this in [Appendix B \[https://edtechbooks.org/-YKy\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-YKy))?
- e. What is going on with Jimmy and how can I help him (Kyleen asked this in [Appendix C \[https://edtechbooks.org/-azf\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-azf))?
- f. What is going on with change in my district and how can I encourage positive change (Garry asked in this chapter and

in [Appendix E \[https://edtechbooks.org/-Bzr\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-Bzr)?

Point #6

Various interpretive frameworks used within the general qualitative inquiry approach raise useful questions. This point reinforces the general theme of this book that none of the qualitative inquiry activities is independent. The analysis, synthesis, and interpretive procedures discussed in Chapter Eight employ particular questions which guide and influence the focus of the study at all stages. Some common and useful interpretive frameworks are:

Spradley's Developmental Research Sequence

Spradley's (1979, 1980) developmental research sequence, which includes many different questions. He discusses three, which should be used at all stages in the sequence:

1. *Descriptive* questions which allow the researcher to collect ongoing samples of the participants' language while looking at a social situation and trying to record as much as possible without any particular questions in mind except the **general descriptive** question: "What is going on here?"
2. *Structural* questions help the researcher focus further descriptive questions to discover **similarities** among the things described and how participants organize their knowledge.
3. *Contrast* questions help the researcher focus further descriptive questions to discover **differences** among the things described and how participants distinguish objects and events in their experience from one another so the researcher can note the dimensions of meaning the informants employ in making such distinctions.

Spradley also suggests that a study should begin with a very wide descriptive focus and then be narrowed over time with structural and

contrast questions focusing on a few selected “domains” or categories of descriptive information. He outlines a procedure for identifying domains called domain analysis, which will be discussed in Chapter Eight. He believes that the domains for focus and further questioning should be selected from all that are identified by asking the following questions:

- What interests *me* as the inquirer? Which of the domains do I want to pursue?
- What focus do the people I am studying suggest I pursue?
- What focus does my theory or the literature suggest I pursue?
- What do social conditions or contractual agreements I am under dictate I pursue?
- What central themes or “organizing domains” appear to determine the focus that should be taken?

Spradley notes that almost all social situations in which inquiry might be conducted consist of several elements about which questions ought to be asked to obtain a comprehensive description. These may be asked by an observer during a grand or mini tour of a social setting or they could be asked of interviewees or of documents (artifacts) under study. The use of grand and mini tours will be explored further in Chapter Seven but the key questions asked are these:

1. **Space:** What is (are) the physical place or places involved?
2. **Objects:** What are the physical things that are present?
3. **Actors:** Who are the people involved?
4. **Activities:** What is the set of related acts the actors do?
5. **Acts:** What are the single actions that people do?
6. **Events:** What are the sets of related activities people carry out?
7. **Time:** What is the sequencing that takes place over time?
8. **Goals:** What are the things people are trying to accomplish?
9. **Feelings:** What are the emotions felt and expressed by actors?

Spradley created a matrix of questions using these nine questions in

both the columns and the rows of the matrix and asking what questions would be appropriate at the intersections (e.g., what are the physical things (#2) in the physical place (#1), etc.). Other questions from Spradley as well as the many other sources discussed in this chapter could be combined into such a matrix to generate a set of questions that would take any inquirer a lifetime to address.

Garry used some of the ideas from Spradley in conducting his inquiry. He looked for domains and asked the associated descriptive questions. But he did not ask all that were possible in Spradley's matrix. He selected among them according to the other interests that he had in doing the study (e.g., he was not particularly concerned about the physical setting or objects involved but was very concerned about goals and feelings of the people participating in his discussion group.

Hunter and Foley's Filters

Hunter and Foley (1975) discuss the many different filters people use to sort through information and focus their attention. They identify several questions that are asked differentially across ethnic cultures, claiming that people from certain cultures tend not to ask certain questions that might be very helpful to ask. They note that all of us are selective but in different ways and so one question we should ask ourselves regularly is, "what am I missing?" They suggest that most Westerners focus on verbal information and ignore the meaning-bearing contextual details surrounding that information (including time, space, and nonverbal information). They identify the following questions to be added to any others you might be asking during an observation or throughout an entire inquiry, just in case they may have some relevance to the experiences you are learning more about:

1. Where is the scene you are observing?
2. Where are you in relation to the scene you are observing?
3. Why did you choose the kind of scene you chose to observe?

4. Why did you choose the particular scene you are observing?
5. What is your train of thought- both about your self and the scene you are observing?
6. Where are you located in the scene? Are you moving around? Staying still? Why?
7. Are you interested in the scene? Easily distracted? Both? Why?
8. What are the implications for what you are seeing?
9. Are you bored? How might that affect your observation?
10. Stop a moment. Think about the scene you are in. Do you notice the:
 - o time?
 - o temperature?
 - o weather conditions?
 - o materials of which things are made?
 - o colors of materials?
 - o clothes people are wearing?
 - o sounds in the background (e.g., cars going by)?
 - o persons speaking each phrase?
 - o people's positions in relationship to one another?
 - o ways people move their bodies?
 - o gestures?
 - o spatial arrangements of people and objects?

It isn't clear that Garry attended to all these details. Given his membership in Western culture, it is likely that he did not, unless he consciously made an effort to do so. It appears from his conclusions and themes that he focused on the verbal information the participants in his group talked about rather than on the nonverbal information they were sharing. That focus still yielded a lot of data to explore. But Hunter and Foley make a good point that much of the contextual details that would help Garry interpret the verbal information had to be processed by him subconsciously as well because he probably didn't make it explicit. That is one approach educators as learners will likely take; but you ought to consider taking explicit note of these details from time to time as well.

Smith's Foreshadowed Problems

Lou Smith (Williams, 1981) begins his study with “foreshadowed problems” as his focus. He is constantly reading and thinking about how to do schooling more effectively in light of whatever experience he is able to have in schools. Whenever he goes into a new setting, he brings with him the accumulation of these thoughts in the form of questions or problems that he wants to ask in the context of a new setting. Thus, the exact set of questions is constantly changing. Garry appears to have been doing something similar to this, although he probably wasn't doing so as explicitly as Smith does. He used his experiences as a teacher, principal, superintendent, and doctoral student to generate the questions for his dissertation.

Walker's Approach

In contrast to Smith, Rob Walker (Williams, 1981) is not accumulating data across sites but instead asks what he can find that is positive and uplifting about education in any given site. He also asks what role the participants want to assign him, as a means of obtaining insight into their lives and meanings they attach to relationships and events in their lives. Garry did this to some extent too. He invited the teachers and principals in his district to join him in a discussion group and then let them help define his role in the group rather than assert his right as the superintendent to set the agenda. He not only learned more about their own agenda by keeping his quiet, he also learned how they viewed him in this unique role and setting.

Tesch's Approach

Tesch (1990) reviews 50 different qualitative analysis techniques she identified in educational, psychological, sociological, anthropological, and other fields and notes that every analytical stance is generated by a theory or a set of questions about the world and people. The list of possibilities is practically endless, as this growing list indicates and as

Tesch's analysis shows.

Story Telling and Narrative Inquiry

Knoblauch and Brannon (1988), Clandinin and Connelly (2000), and others claim that story telling and narrative inquiry are the most appropriate forms of inquiry in which educators might engage. The main question these people seem to be asking in anticipation of telling a story is "What is life like for the person about whom the story is to be told?" They then bring the full power of the story-telling arts to bear on this question and address a myriad of questions such as these identified by Knoblauch and Brannon: "scene, situation, action-in-time," (P 23) and questions about "the phenomenal reality of the classroom [or any educational setting], what it looks like, the objects that define it as a material and social space, how the people in it look, talk, move, relate to each other, the emotional contours of their life together, the things that happen, intellectual exchanges, social understandings and misunderstandings, what the teacher [and other actors] knows, plans, hopes for, and discovers, how different students react, the subtle textures of the teaching experience, the subtle textures of the learning experience." (P 25) These inquirers are most interested in questions associated with giving a voice to the lived experiences of the people they are inquiring into. Garry approached some of the story-telling questions in the portrayal section of his dissertation but none of that shows up in the article version that is found in [Appendix E \[https://edtechbooks.org/-Bzr\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-Bzr). This kind of question asking takes more time and space to address than most journals in education are used to dedicating. But oral story telling and perhaps electronic journals and literary journals provide hopeful outlets for educators who want to share their stories.

My Basic Approach

My basic approach is to experience the setting as richly as possible, asking myself what is going on from as many perspectives as I have

time, relationships, resources, and interest to consider. I know that I will never ask all the possible questions and that whatever questions I do ask will lead me in directions that facilitate some follow-up questions and discourage the asking of others. I know too that who I am and my experiences play a major role in what questions I select among the millions of possibilities.

Point #7

Each inquiring educator must thoughtfully ask their own questions in any given situation. There are lots of theories of education that suggest certain questions as being the essential ones. And there are probably an infinite number of excellent questions that have never been conceptualized, let alone asked. So, this book cannot tell you the key questions to ask in *every* situation. We can only make the point that asking good questions is central to good learning and to good qualitative inquiry.

It is also apparent that any given inquirer cannot be asking all possible questions at once. As humans, we have to focus our attention on one question at a time or we don't get answers to any questions. And whatever questions we focus on restrict the asking of other questions, especially as we pursue questions to deeper levels. However, an assumption of qualitative inquiry is that all questions are connected holistically and answering of any one question has implications for any and all other questions that may be raised.

To be a learner, particularly a learning educator, is to be continually searching for better and better questions to ask and to do our best to answer those questions within the frame we find ourselves. The best product of such questioning and answer-seeking will be better questions, in addition to our tentative answers. And the context in which those questions and answers are created and explored needs to be clearly documented too. Details about what questions were asked and why those were the best questions the asker could come up with

at the time should be recorded (in an audit trail) so the readers and inquirer can interpret more thoughtfully the questions and answers.

Ideally, the questions asked would be couched in terms of the experiential context of the inquirer. That context would include all the other qualitative inquiry activities and products discussed throughout this book using the holo-movement metaphor: the literature read, the problems most immediately or powerfully faced, the resources available, the relationships and roles that seem most relevant, the anticipated sharing of learning with others, the information collection procedures available, the analysis, synthesis, and interpretation frameworks being considered, the philosophical stances being taken, etc.

Obviously, the context of any given question-asking activity for any given inquirer is infinite. And no one is likely to be aware of all the contextual details that yielded the questions they are asking. But the more you can say about these details in your field notes and any writing you generate will help others and you better understand and interpret the answers you come up with during your study.

Conclusion

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Questions for Consideration

1. Do you agree that different people will ask different questions

in any given inquiry situation? What are the implications of your answer?

2. How do the questions you ask influence your learning?
3. How does your background context influence the questions you ask?
4. If your background influences the questions you ask and your questions influence your learning, does your background determine your learning?
5. How is question asking different for educators as inquirers in contrast to educators who do not see themselves in this way? In contrast to professional qualitative inquirers who are not educators?
6. What are your reactions to the claims made in this chapter regarding the importance of question asking?

Suggested Activities

1. Identify and write down questions you have in your work situation right now and questions from both within your setting (from people and events or problems there) and from without (from the literature and other experiences you have had) that you might like to address in your ongoing inquiry. Review this chapter to see if any other potential questions are provoked.
2. Explore how these questions could influence your learning (or lack thereof) and what you plan to do about that.
3. Clarify your focus for the inquiry you are doing as of right now, with the understanding that it can change dramatically.
4. Write in your field notes a description at this point in your study of the questions you are asking and the context you are operating under that helped lead you to ask those questions. Address the following:
 - What was your initial question that got you into this inquiry situation?
 - What other questions have come up?

- How did these questions come up?
 - What questions, if any, have you decided *not* to consider in this study? Why?
 - What are some of the contextual details in your life that you think have lead you to ask these questions in this inquiry?
5. What questions, if any, did this chapter raise for you?

7

Data collection

Gathering Through Observations, Interviews and Documents

You have probably already conducted some interview or observation sessions for the study you are doing in connection with your reading of this book, because you cannot help doing so if you are involved at all in doing a study. Gathering information is what most people normally think of as doing research. Hopefully, by the time you read this chapter, you will agree with the theme of the book, that none of the inquiry activities stands alone. The acts of observing, interviewing, and using documents or artifacts involve all the other activities too-

- asking questions,
- interpreting experience,
- sharing what is learned with others,
- building on relationships with others,
- keeping a record,
- acting out assumptions and beliefs about the nature of the world, and
- developing your unique inquirer's role.

This presentation will focus on the explicit data collection activities of observing, interviewing, and reviewing documents. But please keep the holo-movement metaphor, outlined in Chapter One and rehearsed in every other chapter, in mind as you read this chapter.

Many authors have written about ways of collecting information in schools and other educational settings from "outsider" and professional researcher perspectives. Books by Gay (1987) and Borg

and Gall (1983) include chapters on the use of questionnaires, tests, and experimental design, in addition to observation, interviewing, and document review. Their audiences are usually evaluators and researchers. Other authors (e.g., Bogden and Biklen (1982), Lincoln and Guba (1985), Spradley (1979 and 1980)) have focused on the latter three gathering approaches which are more “qualitative” but they too have rarely assumed that the teachers, principals, or other “insiders” who are not professional researchers in the school where the research is being done would be the main inquirers.

There has been an increasing number of authors (see Boody, 1992 and Burgess, 1985 for several references) who have promoted the notions of “action research” and “reflective practice,” which are very compatible with the practitioner-as-learner approach to inquiry being promoted in this book. These authors seem to agree that practitioners should use data gathering techniques that are compatible with their regular activities and which will yield information and experiences they can use to improve their practice. Although many of the methods reviewed by general texts on research *could* be used by practitioners to yield useful information, the need for specialized skills in test and questionnaire design and selection, statistical analysis, and manipulation of curriculum and instruction are often prohibitive for busy educators and other practitioners. Therefore, the focus of this book is on those procedures that seem most natural for practitioners—observation, interviewing, and review of documents.

The challenge for many practitioners is to translate the good ideas for collecting information that professional researchers promote into procedures that are workable for practitioners-as-inquirers, in concert with all the other activities they engage in. We will take this challenge by showing an example of one educator who used her position, relationships, and purposes as an assistant principal to invite others in the school to join her in conducting a research study. This study, in conjunction with the others illustrated throughout the book will be used to note several practical ways educators and other practitioners

can adapt the data collection procedures of qualitative inquiry by full time researchers to their unique purposes. I hope you will see these as possibilities, not boundaries on ways you could collect information in your own setting.

An Assistant Principal's Story

An assistant principal, Judith Hehr (1992) conducted a study in her elementary school for a doctoral dissertation. As in the other stories told in this book, her study was an outgrowth of questions and experiences she had before the study was even proposed. She mostly interviewed students, teachers, and parents associated with retention of children in first grade. She also observed the students in various activities throughout the school and examined records and school work produced by the students. An article-length version of Judy's study is presented in [Appendix F - An Example Study by an Assistant Principal \[https://edtechbooks.org/-ImJ\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-ImJ), along with selections from her dissertation that give more details on the gathering procedures she used. After you read her story there, please continue in the remainder of this chapter to consider an analysis of her experience in terms of information collection issues.

What can we learn from Judy's experience about observing, interviewing, and reviewing documents? What can you use from her experience in your own setting? We will examine her study for some general lessons and for specific guidance on observing, interviewing, and reviewing documents.

General Lessons

One of the most obvious lessons to be learned from Judy's experience is that her *data collection activities* and those used by other inquirers reviewed in this book *used natural human skills* such as talking, listening, seeing, and thinking that were tailored, focused, and *combined differently for particular purposes*, depending on the nature of the situation under study. The customized nature of data collection procedures in qualitative inquiry makes it difficult to discuss information-gathering techniques in a standardized way. But keep in mind that you should tailor your collection activities to the requirements imposed by the questions you are asking, the relationships you are developing with people in your study, the kinds of records you are keeping, and by otherwise meshing collection with the other inquiry activities.

For example, Judy spent more of her energy *interviewing* because she wanted to understand the experience of retention from the viewpoints of the participants. And she interviewed the children differently than she interviewed their parents and the teachers. She also *observed* the children in classes and at recess to confirm what they were telling her. In terms of *document review*, she used students' products (e.g., artwork, writing) and documents the school kept (e.g., report cards, cumulative files, exams) as supporting evidence. She also used journals kept by the teachers to confirm what she was learning through other means. This was not an observation study like K's was (see Appendix D) and it was not a document review study like Marné's was (see Appendix B). It was essentially an interview study that used other sources of information and means of gathering to confirm what was learned through interviews.

Another obvious lesson from Judy's experience is that she recognized and welcomed the fact that *she could not conduct this study alone*.

She needed the help of what she called a “research team” and involved teachers in the school with her in collecting and interpreting information about the lived experiences of the children targeted for this study. Clearly, each of these inquirers had different interviewing styles. They played very different “participant-observer” roles, and they had access to different kinds of artifacts produced by students to use in making sense of what they were hearing and seeing. As she says in the article, “The researchers were constantly interpreting, thinking, and acting as members of a learning community.” (p 101) Judy was thrilled to have alternative perspectives to compare to her own perspectives as she worked with the teachers in making practical decisions about advancing the students after retaining them and in interpreting the experiences of the participants for her dissertation work.

Judy understood that *any given inquirer cannot see and hear everything!* As humans, we learn to focus our attention and disregard sights and sounds that we believe are less relevant to our focus. We often don’t notice temperatures or body language or colors or other details because we are concentrating on the implications of what someone is saying or on the time we have left to talk or on a person’s accent or on how we are looking as a teacher, observer, or interviewer. Just recognizing our limitations doesn’t solve everything. We will still miss a lot of what is going on; but at least admission of this fact makes us humble and more teachable, which enhances the likelihood that we will learn something- the whole reason for being inquirers in the first place. Judy demonstrated this realization by inviting the teachers to join her in a team of researchers so she could learn from what they might hear or see. She also acknowledged throughout her reports that what she was concluding was tentative and based on this limited experience. She was willing to go to the literature to see if others could help her. She made it clear that the students and their parents could teach her a lot about the experience of retention.

Judy demonstrated that whatever inquirers see or hear is filtered through their experiences, dispositions, biases, energy levels, relationships, roles, time, other resource restrictions, and on and on. We do not just take reality in but create our version of reality through the hearing and seeing experiences. Judy provided some details about who she was and why she was doing this study that could help us understand something about her filters. She acknowledged that she has dispositions and roles that affect what she sees, hears, and thinks. It is easy to imagine that her study would be very different if she were Garry, Marné, or Kyleen. Her story about these five students and the adults associated with them is *her* story.

Judy's study is an example of the fact that the inquirer's presence makes a major difference in what it is possible to hear or see in others while you are there listening and watching. The roles you are developing with people and your relationships with them have something to do with this, but the roles they are playing and the nature of the situation you are in makes a big difference too. If Judy had been a graduate student from a neighboring university, she would have developed very different kinds of relationships with the participants in this study; they would have told her a different story, and she would have heard a different story. Likewise, if she had been a fifth grade teacher or a district curriculum specialist or an interested citizen and *not* the assistant principal, she would have had a very different experience. The roles she and the others played together would have changed. She would have heard and seen different things and come up with a different story.

As an administrator, Judy was able to *spend some time hanging around, getting to be part of the world she was inquiring into* before she asked any specific questions. Give people a chance to get to know *you* so they will be willing to let you get to know *them*. This involves evolving a role in the situation that is legitimate from the participants' point of view and that also puts you in a position to learn from them about their ways of experiencing the world. Judy had a

legitimate role from the beginning. She had been a teacher and a assistant principal before she began this particular inquiry. She *had* been “hanging around” the school and was trusted by people with whom she was working. When she talked to parents, they knew that she would be influential in retaining or promoting their children. The teachers knew that she could move children from their classroom to another if she chose to do so. Her role was legitimate and inside the organization she was studying. This is generally the case for educators who decide to become qualitative inquirers. They are already insiders. Certainly, they can choose to conduct inquiry outside the situations in which they are already insiders. For example, a teacher could investigate the principal’s office and activities or the experiences of another teacher, even within the school and that would involve some adjustment while they became part of the “world” outside their normal context. A good place to begin doing qualitative inquiry is within your world as it now exists so you can build from the relationships and roles you have already established.

Although it is difficult to discern from her report, it is likely that Judy *recorded as much detail as possible*. Particulars are essential to understanding and interpretation. As Hunter and Foley (1976) note, the statement: “The woman behind the drugstore counter was angry,” is a *label*, while the statement: “The woman behind the drugstore counter became red in the face, began to tremble, gestured back and forth with a clenched right fist, spoke quickly and much more loudly than she had been speaking,” is a better *description*. (Pp. 46-47). Rather than filter details into highly abstract labels for readers and for your own later review, record the particulars in as much concrete detail as possible. Such records will be much more useful to you and others in the long run. Also be very explicit about the questions you are asking at each step of the inquiry since these questions reveal much about the filters you are using to sift the particulars from the experience into your inquiry. It is difficult to see how well Judy did this from the materials included in Appendix F. A review of her field notes would help considerably. The detailed stories she tells in

Chapter 4 of her dissertation are evidence that she did gather lots of particulars. She also presents there the specific questions she asked. These details are rarely presented in written reports because of space restrictions. But each inquirer can certainly answer these questions about detail and particulars in their own inquiries. Doing so will enhance the quality of insights into the objects of study.

Observing Lessons

As others (Berendt, 1985 and Dillard, 1985) have noted, *good observation includes all the physical senses* (particularly hearing and seeing, but also touch, smell, and taste), *empathic human sensitivities, mastery of the language, and spiritual awareness* you are capable of using. Observation is a whole person activity. We listen and watch for signals we can relate to our experiences, words, thoughts, and feelings. Anything we cannot relate to will probably be ignored. Do not discount any of your abilities to perceive or be attuned to the experiences you are having and the experiences of the people you are trying to understand (such as students, parents, other educators, etc.). Whatever you can do to develop and strengthen your sensitivities, observation, and listening skills in all these dimensions will enhance your abilities to take in valuable information quickly. Judy's first theme about the vulnerability of the educators on the inquiry team and their responsiveness to the plight of the children they were studying is evidence that she and they used their humanity to develop an empathic understanding of the children. They were able to see more deeply into the experience of the children as they listened to them and their parents, watched them with a desire to understand, and reviewed the children's records with a desire to hear messages that were written between the lines of those records.

Observing as a participant-observer is different than observing as a participant only. Spradley (1980) notes several differences between an ordinary participant (like a teacher) and a participant observer (like a teacher-as-researcher). For instance, he claims that participant observers not only participate in the appropriate activities for the scene they are in, they also observe themselves and others engaging in activities and note the context of the setting in which these activities take place. The participant observer works carefully to overcome habits of inattention, bias, and simplification so their

awareness is greater than a regular participant. The participant observer is also more introspective and thoughtful about the experience and goes to the trouble of writing about what he or she is thinking.

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) discuss a continuum from total observer to total participant and note that each inquiry requires the inquirer to find an appropriate role to play along that continuum. Most educators who see themselves as inquirers begin from the “total participant” end of the spectrum. But taking the inquiry seriously means you will have to change your role and associated relationships with others somewhat. You are not only a teacher or administrator in the school, you are someone who wants to stand back from that experience in various ways and at different times to take stock of what is going on and to comment on what you observe. The people you work with may resist. You may find that this takes a lot of extra work. It is so easy to stay in our patterns of behavior.

Judy found that as an assistant principal, she and others in the school agreed that her participant role included lots of observation activity. She didn't look much different from a regular “participant” assistant principal who walks around and watches and listens. But Judy added several of the participant observer habits to her style. She used that base to include teachers as part of her research team and built on their natural opportunities to observe. She invited them to join her to do a lot more writing than they normally would have done as full participants, moving them more and more toward the observer end of the participant-observer continuum.

Interviewing Lessons

Although much of what has been said about observation applies as well to interviewing, most observation can be done without ever explicitly asking another person to answer a question generated by the inquirer. The teacher can listen to the students ask each other questions and learn much. Or an administrator can observe faculty members conversing and sharing their insights without asking them anything. But sometimes educators are in excellent positions to ask questions of one another and of students, parents, or other participants in the inquiry setting. This is when interviewing becomes useful. In the course of a qualitative study, researchers usually conduct several interviews with many different participants. These interviews range from formal, tape-recorded interviews (sometimes following a pre-defined format) to informal “conversations” in which the researcher takes no notes and does very little to direct the format of the interview. It is through interviews that participants’ perspectives are gathered most directly. Asking questions that will help them express those views requires the several skills reviewed in this chapter.

Similar to the participant observer use of the natural participant role, *the inquirer builds on natural conversational experiences to create a new kind of conversation, the interview*. Spradley 1979) lists several differences between a friendly conversation and an interview, suggesting that, “It is best to think of ethnographic [qualitative] interviews as a series of friendly conversations into which the researcher slowly introduces new elements to assist informants to respond as informants. Exclusive use of these new *ethnographic elements*, or introducing them too quickly, will make interviews become like a formal interrogation [like the typical structured interview]. Rapport will evaporate, and informants will discontinue their cooperation. At any time during the interview it is possible to

shift back to a friendly conversation. A few minutes of easygoing talk interspersed here and there throughout the interview will pay enormous dividends in rapport.” (Pp. 58-59) Spradley then notes that unlike a typical friendly conversation, the inquirer has more explicit purposes in carrying on the interview, asks most of the questions, encourages the interviewee to do most of the talking, expresses interest and ignorance more freely, repeats what is said to clarify what was meant more often, invites the interviewee to expand rather than abbreviate, and pauses to let the interviewee think about what to say.

As you think about teachers interviewing students or administrators interviewing patrons, it should be clear that doing an inquiry interview is very different than the typical conversations educators have with people they need to understand (like their students and patrons). The inquirer cannot be defensive about what is being said; you must be open and willing to hear their views. It is not clear from the material we have from Judy that she used all these elements in her interviews. But her findings suggest that the people had a chance to tell her what they really thought and that indicates that she probably used many of these tactics.

Interviewing adds a different kind of social dimension to observation that goes beyond listening to them in their own conversations to asking people to talk in response to your direct questions. Work your way into this new activity by initiating the questions around common experiences you have shared during observations. Ask your questions in the language you have heard your interviewees using. Invite them to talk about the experiences without putting *your* boundaries around their responses so they are able to define the questions they think ought to be answered first. Spradley (1979) suggests you build rapport with interviewees by letting people talk about whatever they want at first, then moving into an exploration of the relationship and what questions are okay to ask, then shifting into a cooperation phase in which the interviewee values the inquiry as much as the inquirer

does and they are working together to teach the inquirer about the interviewee's world and the interviewee helps originate questions rather than only respond to the inquirer's questions.

For example, if Judy's first interview with a child had been a formal affair with a tape recorder, sitting in chairs at a table and based on questions like, "How did it feel to be retained a year?" or "How would you like to be advanced to second grade next term?" I would predict that she would either get confused responses from the students or they would simply say what they thought she wanted to hear. On the other hand, if she were to watch them interacting in the classroom or out on the playground and then informally talk to them in those same settings about what she saw them doing there, they would be much more likely to talk to her from their own perspectives and in their own ways and language. She would get information that comes from the participants rather than getting them to simply give her what they think she wants.

Keep asking for more details and other insights from your interviewees without "putting words in their mouths." Let them know both directly and by your non-verbal communication that you really are their student when it comes to their own experiences and interpretations of those experiences. Listen attentively and be interested. Let people say what they want to say in the ways they want to speak. Watch how they are expressing themselves so you can pick up on the 80% or more of their message that is communicated non-verbally. Never presume to understand them before they have a chance to really explain themselves. You may want to ask them to give you overviews or grand tours of their experience (e.g., Judy might have asked the parents to give her an overview of their child's life to that point) and then mini-tours (see Spradley, 1979 and 1980 for extensive use of these procedures) to delve into issues discussed during the grand tour in greater detail (e.g., Judy could then follow-up on a particular experience in the child's life to probe into it for information regarding their grade retention experience). You may ask

them to give you examples and then ask more questions based on those real life situations. The intent is to get them to do most of the talking and you do most of the listening. They are the experts!

Judy's whole study was organized around the belief that the children and their parents knew more about their experience of retention than did the educators who made the decision to retain the children in first grade. She wanted the teachers and administration of the school to be silent in their professional authoritarian roles and to listen to the people involved. Once again, the material in Appendix F does not provide the details that demonstrate how this was done, but the preface to her dissertation reveals the fact that Judy and her colleagues changed their views of retention dramatically based on this experience. They learned something they did not know. They did not just find confirmation for their own beliefs. They were willing to hear that they were wrong.

Document Review Lessons

In addition to participant observation and interviewing, Bogdan and Biklen (1982) have identified several other sources of information in educational settings that are commonly used in qualitative inquiry. There are usually a large number of documents written by participants that are available to an educator in the school setting. The main task for an educator turned inquirer is to identify, locate, and gain access to such materials.

Be on the lookout for artifacts, documents, photographs, records, and so on that are available in your inquiry setting or that you, students, or others at your site could generate as part of their normal activities. Consider anything that might be used to explore a different perspective on the questions your inquiry raises and the tentative answers you are reaching through observations and interviews. Examples include journal entries by students and other staff members, records of attendance and performance on assignments and exams, video tapes and photographs of classroom interactions (produced by the inquirer or by the participants the inquirer is trying to understand), letters sent home to parents, portfolios of students' work, grade reports, logs teachers or others keep, official statistics, and so on. These "documents" can provide independent checks on your own perceptions and readings of what you hear and see. They are not necessarily more accurate or correct than your observations and interviews. But when they confirm your hunches, you will usually be more confident that you were listening and seeing insightfully. If the conclusions you draw from existing records or documents counter your ideas from other activities, you are more likely to look harder and listen more carefully before making final choices. As an insider in your school, you are likely to have access to many of these documents as part of your responsibilities there. Be sure to ask students and others for permission to read and share journal entries and other

private documents, even if you have access to them as a staff member.

Judy read journals kept by the teachers for her project, looked at assigned work the students were generating during the period of the study, and reviewed the children's cumulative records. She could have been more open in discussing how she used these documents in this case; but she seemed to be reviewing them to see how closely they independently supported her conclusions.

Any literature on the topic you are interested in can be viewed as documents to include in your review. The documents do not have to be produced by people at your site. Often, other teachers, administrators, or educational researchers are dealing with some of the same issues as you. When you read accounts of their inquiries and recommendations, summaries should go into your field notes as you make mental connections between the academic and practical worlds. Conducting your own research in your educational setting can make you much more inquisitive about what others are doing and saying about the same issues as you. Relating what you read to what you are finding is a satisfying way to build confidence in your own inquiries. Judy had reviewed the literature extensively in preparation for conducting her dissertation. This literature turned out to be very relevant to what she observed and heard during data collection. She also became aware of other literature sources during data collection and responded to them in her reports. Using the literature is not often thought of as a data collection activity; but it serves that purpose well.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) note that other important sources of information, which are often overlooked, are "*unobtrusive informational residues*" which accumulate without anyone's intent that they be used as data. These can be collected in the absence of the person(s) who created them (as archeologists collect artifacts left by ancient cultures). The main challenge you face is discovering residues in your own particular setting, which might provide useful insight.

Lincoln and Guba give some examples of such traces that might be used by inquiring educators: “shortcuts across lawns as indicators of preferred traffic patterns, . . . worn and smudged condition of books as indicators of their use, number of discarded liquor bottles as indicators of the level of alcoholism in an apartment complex, number of cigarettes in an ashtray as an indicator of nervous tension, amount of paperwork that accumulates in the “in” basket as an indicator of work load, number of books in a personal library as an indicator of humaneness, presence of bulletin board displays in a schoolroom as an indicator of the teacher’s concern with children’s creativity, and many others.”

Conclusion

These ideas about how to collect information apply to teachers as well as administrators, to teacher educators as well as student teachers. Any educator who wants to be a better inquirer or learner can use their role as insider participant to gain access to activities and people that outsider researchers would have difficulty even knowing about. Likewise, educators-as-inquirers can conduct informal and formal interviews and use creativity in identifying artifacts, literature, and unobtrusive indicators that will be serve as information sources.

Looking back to Chapters One through Six, it should be clear now that all the questions discussed in Chapter Six can be asked in different ways through these various gathering approaches. And the collection procedures you use will vary depending on the level of trust you have developed with people you want to observe or interview, as discussed in Chapter Four. What you choose to record, as discussed in Chapter Three and your assumptions about yourself as an inquirer and your relationship to what you are inquiring into also shape what and how you collect. The point is, that you are designing your own study as you make all these choices and as you act out your beliefs as a person. Remember to keep track of all these decisions in your audit trail so others can decide how credible your work is.

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Questions for Consideration

1. Why is it important to observe yourself as the observer as well as to observe the situation you want to study?
2. Do you agree that no two observers can ever observe exactly the same things? What are the implications of this statement?
3. Do you agree that observing is a creative rather than a passive act? What are the implications of this statement?
4. If we are selective in what we observe and in what we record based on those observations, is there any such thing as objective data? What are the implications?
5. How can you discover the patterns of selectivity that you use in observing and recording data?
6. Do you agree that information taken out of context is meaningless? What are the implications for doing a study?
7. How can you pay more attention to context?
8. What is the difference between labeling and describing? How can you learn to describe rather than label when recording your observations?
9. Why is nonverbal information just as important as verbal information? How can you obtain both?
10. Why is emic information just as important as etic information? How can you obtain both?
11. How do ordinary participants and participant observers differ from one another? What are the implications for your own research project?
12. What are the different levels of involvement in which a participant observer can engage?
13. Why does this presentation concentrate on descriptive observations?
14. How are observations and questions related?
 - a. If you are observing, rather than interviewing, of whom do you ask questions?
 - b. What kind of questions should you ask?

15. What are some differences between grand tour and mini tour observations and questions?
16. When should descriptive questions be asked in a qualitative inquiry?
17. How often should a particular informant be interviewed?
18. How can interviewers encourage informants to reveal their emic perspectives rather than use the researcher's etic views?
19. Why is it important to pay attention to the rapport process during interviewing? Can't rapport be taken care of through gate keepers before even meeting with the informants?
20. Why should a qualitative inquirer try to go beyond interviews and direct observation to gather the other kinds of data described in this chapter?
21. What are some possible documents, records, artifacts, etc. that might be available to qualitative researchers in educational settings?
22. How would you go about gathering such materials?
23. How would you combine the information gathered from such materials with the observation and interview data you collect?
24. How could photographs and/or videotaping be used in studying educational problems?
25. Are the suggestions made in this chapter regarding photos and videotapes feasible or would the people under study be too distracted by the equipment?
26. Are the ideas presented in this chapter applicable in your situation?
27. How are you using or planning to use the ideas in this chapter in your own qualitative inquiry project?

Suggested Activities

Activity #1

This activity is adapted from Hunter and Foley (1976) As part of your

study, observe a social situation in the following ways:

During a 15 minute period, do not take any notes or attempt to record the situation in any way.

During another 15 minutes, record your observations using paper and pencil while you continue observing.

Based on this observation exercise, answer the following questions in your fieldnotes:

- a. Where was the scene you observed?
- b. Where were you in relation to the scene you observed?
- c. Why did you choose the kind of scene you chose to observe?
- d. Why did you choose the particular scene you observed?
- e. Attempt to recall and describe in writing your train of thought—both about yourself and the scene—during the first 15 minutes you were observing (when you weren't taking notes).
- f. Did you move around? Stay still? Why?
- g. Were you interested in the scene? Easily distracted? Both? Why? What are the implications for what you saw?
- h. Were you bored? How might that affect your observation?
- i. Stop a moment. Think about the scene you observed. Did you notice the:
 - o time?
 - o temperature?
 - o weather conditions?
 - o materials of which things were made?
 - o colors of materials?
 - o clothes people wore?
 - o sounds in the background (e.g., cars going by)?
 - o person speaking each phrase?
 - o people's positions in relationship to one another?
 - o way people moved their bodies?
 - o gestures?

- spatial arrangements of people and objects?
 - Answer these questions. Then try to think of other items to which you now know you did not pay attention. Include these items with the list above.
- j. What things about the situation can you remember now that you didn't record in writing during the second 15 minutes of your observation activity? Make a list of those items too.
- k. Carefully review the two lists in "i" and "j" above. What kinds of things are on the lists. What kinds of things do you tend to overlook when you are observing? When you are recording your observations? Why do you think you didn't record or observe these things? What similarities and differences there are in your observation and recording selectivities.

Activity #2

Select one situation you want to study as part of your project and write out a series of questions that will lead to both grand tour observations and mini-tour observations for that small project. With these questions in mind, conduct a period of participant observation in which you make both grand tour observations and mini-tour observations. Write an expanded account of these descriptive observations in your field notes.

Activity #3

Review the examples given in this chapter of the various kinds of descriptive questions and prepare several of each type for informants in your project setting.

Activity #4

Conduct an interview with an informant, using descriptive questions and taking condensed notes during or immediately after the interview.

Activity #5

Expand the condensed notes taken during the interview into full fieldnotes.

Activity #6

Write about this interview in your audit trail.

- a. Did the interview have an explicit purpose? What was it?
- b. Did you give any explanations to the informant regarding the purpose of the interview, the fact that responses were being recorded, that native language was needed, the kinds of questions that were being asked, etc.?
- c. Were descriptive questions asked? If so, which of the five types described in this chapter were used and how useful were they?
- d. Did you do most of the asking and the informant most of the answering? Who did most of the talking?
- e. Did you express interest and/or cultural ignorance in what the informant was saying? How?
- f. Did you repeat back what the informant was saying to show understanding of the responses?
- g. Did you repeat questions several times to give the informant plenty of opportunity to say all they wanted?
- h. Did the informant expand or abbreviate what he or she was saying? What did you do to encourage expansion?
- i. Did you ask friendly questions, especially at the beginning of the interview? Were the greetings and ending comments appropriate?

Activity #7

You should think about the qualitative project you are conducting in terms of the ideas presented in this chapter to identify existing documents, records, or unobtrusive residues you might use to gather

data. Make a list of such artifacts, pick at least one item from the list that you need, and obtain access to it. Summarize information from that data source into your fieldnotes.

Activity #8

You should also think about how you might appropriately use photographs, audiotapes and/or videotapes in your project. How would you use these techniques and for what purposes?

8

Data interpretation

A Graduate Student Story

To do this, you are invited to read a story in [Appendix G - An Example Study by a Graduate Student \[https://edtechbooks.org/-qRM\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-qRM) in education (another form of educator we have not visited yet) about a teacher. In this story, Rob Boody (1992) tells a “dissertation” story based on his “reading” of a story he interpreted Dave Jensen as telling through his practices as a high school teacher. Rob uses about 25 pages of a 159 page dissertation to tell the story in a familiar story form– as a descriptive portrayal of Dave Jensen at work. Then he identifies six themes or patterns of interpretation *he* believes highlight Dave’s work. One of those theme stories (6 pages worth) is included in Appendix G as part of Rob’s story.

After reading this story, you will be invited to look more closely at three ways Rob used to interpret or “read” Dave Jensen’s story: 1. Using an explicit interpretive stance through reference to the work of others, 2. Using an implicit interpretive stance through narrative description, and 3. Discovering the participants’ interpretive stance by using processes such as Spradley’s (1980) domain, taxonomic, and componential analyses.

Finally, you will be invited to look at your own work as an inquiring practitioner to examine how *you tell stories* of *your* experiences and how *you read stories* others are telling you of their experiences. You will then have a chance to expand your *story reading* skills through a qualitative inquiry application. In Chapter Nine, you will have a chance to expand your *story telling* skills.

Story Reading Through Analysis, Synthesis and Interpretation

In her excellent review of qualitative inquiry and analysis, Renata Tesch (1990) reviewed 26 different approaches to qualitative research she identified in the literature. She organized these approaches around four research interests: exploration of characteristics of language, the discovery of regularities, the comprehension of the meaning of text or action, and reflection. She noted that although there is overlap among these approaches in terms of how the inquirer interprets or makes sense of information gathered, there is not a consensus on how to analyze, synthesize, and interpret information. In fact, as new assumptions about what knowledge is and how we learn are employed, as different kinds of questions are asked, as different purposes for doing inquiry evolve, and as different people participate as inquirers, more and more kinds of interpretation are developing. This fact can be discouraging if you were hoping to find the one right way to make sense of information you are gathering. But it is also very liberating to know that inquirers can come up with their own interpretive procedures to fit their particular study needs.

Another way to think about these issues is in terms of stories. Storytelling and story hearing or story reading are some of the most ancient of human activities. When someone is telling a story, they are interpreting or making meaning of some event, activity, or experience. The telling of a story involves “making sense” of experience and making sense could involve analysis, synthesis, and/or interpretation. These story-telling interpretive activities can take infinite forms. For example, a child sitting on the back row of a classroom with filthy clothing, who is disruptive or seems depressed and is not involved in

the class activities is telling her teacher a story about her background, needs, and challenges. Students tell stories about their interpretations of life, school, subject matter, etc. through their test performance, homework completion, social behavior, artistic expression, writing, the books they read, responses to questions, and on and on.

In Chapter One, Steve (the student who was expelled from the high school program) was telling his teachers and student teachers a story through his smoking behavior on the ski trip as well as through his comments to them in their office after the trip. Jimmy was telling Kyleen a story through all of his activities, which she documented in the study reported in Appendix C. The first graders who were held back were trying to tell their stories to the administrators and teachers described by Judy in her report in Appendix E. Marné was trying to read stories of several students and herself as a journal-writing teacher in Appendix B. Gary was doing the same thing as a school superintendent by reading stories being lived out by teachers and administrators from his district in his report in Appendix F.

Thinking even more broadly, we find that living and all experience generally can be usefully thought of as interpretation. If I respond to people brusquely or kindly, I am expressing an interpretation of them and my relationships with them. If I stay in bed all day or get up and work hard when I have a cold, I am interpreting that malady differently. Almost anything one does or says or *is* can be considered an expression of meaning or point of view by the actor. We are telling our stories by our presence, our aura, our clothing, our physical stance, how we locate ourselves in a group, by our faces, by all that we are. If this is so, everyone is constantly telling stories or expressing interpretations of all their experiences. And anyone who is interested in hearing those stories has more than enough to listen for. Educators face many storytellers daily.

In a slightly more restricted sense, there are many different ways we *actively* or *deliberately* interpret experience “reflectively” or

“thoughtfully” (as opposed to simply living out our interpretations of life’s events). Some of these interpretations are done in relative solitude while others are interactive. Interactive interpretations can be with people we are close to or with relative strangers. Thinking about these deliberate interpretations as “readings” of the stories people are telling us through their lives or readings of our lived experience may open up some new ways of making sense of qualitative inquiry activities. Some examples of deliberate forms of interpretation, which allow the interpreter to get a new “reading” are:

- Letting an experience or idea “sink in” to our sub-conscious and seeing where it leads.
- Literally reading others’ writings and letting their interpretations spark new connections in the reader.
- Writing (journals, memos, letters, poetry, field notes, and others) helps the writer to clarify *her or his* thinking and perspective.
- Making summary statements about an experience, receiving critical feedback from others regarding those summaries, and defending the summaries with an open mind.
- Responding to a request to summarize the key learning or insights obtained during a study.
- Therapeutic talking with a counselor, a friend, or a support group about experiences.
- Meditating in various forms (while running, dreaming, engaging in martial arts, practicing Zen, praying, and so on) allows the participant to step back from the experience and get a different reading.
- Using any of the common art forms (such as painting, drawing, dance, music, and story telling itself) can help the artist to “read” an experience in a different way, to interpret it.

Educators who think of themselves primarily as learners are constantly seeking for better and better ways to read the stories others are telling through their lives. This is deliberate interpretation.

Teachers face entire rooms full of students who are telling stories that may be very foreign to the teachers' experiences. They face the challenge of helping the students integrate parts of those stories into a coherent classroom story that everyone can share, but which does not threaten or destroy the story elements unique to each member of the class. And of course, teachers have their own stories to merge with the students' and class's stories. Administrators face the same challenge at building and institution levels. Part of the challenge of qualitative inquiry and of education generally is to learn to read the stories others are telling, to understand them, to have compassion for them.

In a sense then, this whole book on qualitative inquiry is about helping educators invite the people they work with and themselves to tell their stories more powerfully. It is also about helping educators find better ways to hear or "read" those stories and to share what they learn through those readings with people they want to help. Chapter Nine focuses on the sharing of story-readings. *This* chapter provides an opportunity to look in more depth at a few of the many ways of reading or interpreting people's stories to give you a sense of what is possible. You are invited to take this closer look by:

1. exploring how you are already interpreting or telling stories of *your* experience through the way you are living,
2. exploring how you are already reading or interpreting others' interpretations or stories, and
3. considering some additional ways you might read others' stories through qualitative inquiry and various associated approaches to analysis, synthesis, and interpretation.

An Analysis

Although there are probably many more, there are at least three kinds of interpretation or story reading modes Rob or any qualitative inquirer could use:

1. Exploring an experience with explicit attention to a particular interpretive stance, theory, or literature that is chosen as a touchstone for thinking about the experience,
2. Examining an experience as descriptively as possible while using, but leaving implicit, the interpretive stance, and
3. Examining an experience to discover the emic or folk interpretive stance of the participants.

Rob appears to have tried to use all three of these approaches in his dissertation. Let's explore his story in terms of all three to clarify your thinking about these various interpretive approaches.

Explicit Interpretive Stance

Rob studied the literature on reflective teaching and synthesized it in Chapter Two of his dissertation. He used that literature in the generation of some of his themes in Chapter Four (the first of these was included in the excerpt from his study included in Appendix G of this book). This is a common approach inquirers use to interpret or read experiences they have- they ask how their experience compares to the experiences of others as related in the literature and other outlets. Lou Smith (in Williams, 1981) uses the term, "foreshadowed problems" to represent issues and questions he brings from various sources to any new inquiry experience.

Many of the approaches to qualitative inquiry and analysis described

by Tesch (1990) are built around particular theories, questions, and worldviews. These can serve as explicit interpretive stances for all kinds of inquiry, including qualitative studies. For example, if Rob had begun his study with a particular interest in characteristics of language used by Dave and others in his school and what those characteristics could tell him about the school as a culture, he could have used the questions generated by ethnoscientists, structural ethnographers, symbolic interactionists, and ethnomethodologists to guide his inquiry explicitly. If he had been more interested in the discovery of regularities in terms of cultural or social patterns, Rob could have been guided by the work of holistic and educational ethnographers.

In fact, it seems that Rob was interested in the meaning of teacher reflection as manifest in the life of one teacher. The work of phenomenologists (searching for patterns or themes in a given phenomenon), life historians, and hermeneuticists (searching people's experiences as students of literature search texts) was useful to Rob in planning and conducting this study, as he indicated, "We saw that the notion of a reader's making of meaning with a text is analogous to the notion that teacher research is the making of meaning with students." (p. 61)

You may find it useful to look at these categories of analysis Tesch (1990) has created to see if your particular interests, questions, and readings of experiences in your setting can be enhanced by the methodological work of others. You should also read the substantive literature associated with particular questions you have so see what others are asking and concluding relative to your particular questions. This is an ongoing part of qualitative inquiry that continues throughout your life as a thoughtful, learning educator. Whatever you are reading, television shows you watch, lectures you hear, and many other sources of information can figure into your ongoing thinking, and thus into your reading of the experiences you and the people you work with are having. Connections you make between what you are

learning from the literature and work of others to what you are experiencing in your educational inquiry setting may be formally addressed in reports. But it is more likely that you will make these connections on the run in your field notes or journal. Anything you hear or think about can be relevant. But if you don't write the information and your thoughts about it down, you might forget about them before they can guide your inquiry.

Implicit Interpretive Stance

In the excerpt in Appendix G, Rob spends nearly a sixth of his dissertation (25 pages) painting a picture or portrayal of the world Dave Jensen and he shared during this study. His rationale for sharing this story was that he wanted to establish a context for later discussion of what Rob called "Dave Jensen's reflections." He wanted to give his readers a chance to read the story of Dave Jensen without being too overwhelmed with Rob Body's agenda. As Rob said, "This chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part is primarily descriptive, to give a feeling for how Dave Jensen teaches and how he thinks about teaching. This description is valuable in its own right. . . . even though [like a similar book on schooling] it presents little in the way of theory or explicit analysis." He goes on to point out that "these results are only part of what I recorded, which is in turn only part of what I saw, which is in turn only part of what was there to be seen [and] even what seems to only be description is also interpretation. There is no neutral or objective seeing, and an observer interprets a research situation by how he or she acts within the scene- by attending to one thing instead of something else, by what he or she thinks, records, and feels- as well as by later analytical processes." (p. 74)

Then Rob presents an account of Dave's teaching, his students' responses, Rob's interactions with him, Dave's thoughts about his teaching, and so on. In some ways, this narrative account seems like a

story with no interpretive stance. The reader can almost see Dave teaching and can certainly hear his voice and the voice of the students, in addition to hearing Rob's voice as the storyteller. However, it is equally obvious that Rob used an interpretive stance in choosing what parts of the story to tell. In fact, he was using this story telling opportunity to *read* the story of Dave Jensen he had been experiencing for nearly two years, in a particular way, a way related to Rob's overall questions about Dave as a reflective teacher.

The literature on narrative and storytelling is extensive. One useful resource that applies these concepts directly to improving teaching is Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) *Teachers as curriculum planners: narratives of experience*. As Elliot Eisner says in the forward to this book, the authors "provided a narrative built upon the premise that experience is the primary agency of education." (p. ix) He goes on to explain that "experience is slippery; it is difficult to operationalize; it eludes factual descriptions of manifest behavior. Experience is what people undergo, the kinds of meanings they construe as they teach and learn, and the personal ways in which they interpret the worlds in which they live. Such aspects of life are difficult to relegate to a technology of standardized observation schedules or behavioral measures, yet what people experience in schools is central to any effort to understand what schools mean to those who spend a major portion of their lives there." (p. ix) Eisner applauds Connelly and Clandinin for helping teachers convey their experiences and the experiences of their students through stories by stating, "this book provides us with a reminder that it is more important to understand what people *experience* than to focus simply on what they *do*. We need not only to *see* what we look at, we also need to *interpret* it. This interpretation requires a willingness to listen deeply to what people have to say, to see beyond what they do in order to grasp the meanings that their doings have for them. One of the strongest aspects of *Teachers as Curriculum Planners* is the use of teacher narratives. The metaphors by which teachers live, the way they construe their work, and the stories they recount, tell us more

profoundly about what is going on in their lives as professionals than any measured behavior is likely to reveal. One must be willing to understand by participating sympathetically in the stories and in the lives of those who tell them. One must be willing to vicariously participate in scenes that one cannot enter into directly. The use of narratives, and the epistemological frameworks through which these narratives embody and convey meaning, not only provides an important way to think about curriculum and teaching, but also is vital to understanding what goes on at school.” (pp. x-xi)

Connelly and Clandinin have invited teachers and others involved in creating curriculum and learning experiences to listen to stories told by others who have been doing the same things and to stories from their students. These stories provide a rich rendition of the tellers’ experiences. They are interpretations of their experiences, which can influence the readers as no other kind of story can. The qualitative approach to “reading” people’s stories is clearly in line with their theme. As an inquiring inquirer, you have many opportunities to invite people around you to tell you stories of their lives in narrative form and to listen to those stories or “read” them. Doing so will allow you to get deeper into the meanings people have for what they are experiencing.

Discovering the Participants’ Interpretive Stances

Rob read Dave’s stories using an implied interpretive stance by observing him, by listening to him tell stories about his past and current experience, by asking him questions based on what he saw and heard. Rob also asked questions based upon his explicit interpretational stance as set forth in the literature he was reading. But in addition to these ways of focusing on Rob’s interpretive stances, he also made some attempt to discover Dave’s interpretive stance without forcing his observations through his own interpretive

screens. He used a procedure proposed by Spradley (1979, 1980) to look at Dave's language, his activities, and other dimensions of his experience and to dissect that experience into components that revealed Dave's meanings and interpretations atheoretically. Although Rob is not explicit in his dissertation about how he applied Spradley's procedures, we can examine a part of the story he tells (the one in Appendix G) and present those procedures for illustrative purposes in this Chapter.

In addition to Spradley, several other authors provide suggestions for mapping out various dimensions of people's experiences to discover their interpretive stances without imposing an *a priori* interpretive framework. Miles and Huberman (1984) identify a host of ideas for visually illustrating interpretive patterns in qualitative descriptions of people and their activities and settings. Strauss (1987) provides several excellent examples of ways to interpret participants' interpretive stances through careful analysis of their behaviors.

Spradley's Approach to Interpretation

The remainder of this chapter will be spent looking closely at the process Spradley recommends because it is fairly comprehensive and also relatively easy to understand. The reader is cautioned though against thinking that all qualitative inquiry should use Spradley's processes. They simply provide a useful place to start in discovering ways to "read" stories people are telling by their lived experiences.

Spradley identifies several analytic steps, which follow a particular sequence but should be repeated many times during the course of a study. These steps are discussed and illustrated from Rob's study in the remainder of this chapter:

1. Making domain analyses
2. Making focused inquiries
3. Making taxonomic analyses
4. Making selected inquiries
5. Making componential analyses

Overview. Domain analysis is a process for reviewing field notes containing the inquirer's summary of observations, interviews, document reviews, and inquirer thinking to discover the domains of meaning associated with the lives of people being studied and specific details of those lives categorized within those domains (included terms). Focused observations are subsequent visits to the field notes and/or to the field of inquiry itself to expand the list of details or included terms associated with domains selected for further scrutiny. Taxonomic analysis is a search for ways included terms within selected domains may be organized. Selected observations are subsequent visits to the field notes and/or to the field of inquiry to

expand and verify the taxonomic analysis. Componential analysis is a search for ways of distinguishing among the included terms in each selected domain, as a means of understanding why participants distinguish among the terms. The rest of the discussion of Spradley's analysis process will use examples from Rob's dissertation excerpt in Appendix G.

Domain analysis. Domains are made up of three elements (examples are taken from an analysis of the story beginning on page 75 of Rob's study):

- a. a **cover term** or name for the domain (e.g., student roles, Dave's role, see page 76)
- b. several **included terms** or names for all the smaller categories inside the domain (e.g., summarizer, predictor, clarifier, question-asker, connector, language appreciator, and teacher are all included under the cover term "student roles", see page 76), and
- c. a **semantic relationship** linking the cover and included terms (e.g., "is a kind of" is the semantic relationship that links the cover term "student roles" with the included terms listed above).

There are six steps in making a domain analysis, which will be followed to illustrate the generation of the example presented above.

- a. **Step one:** *Select a single semantic relationship* to start with. There are nine "universal semantic relationships" which Spradley has found useful in a wide variety of studies. He suggests the first and seventh in the list below may be the best for beginners. But all of them should be useful in most studies. You should probably try to find at least one example of each kind in your field notes. X stands for the included terms and Y stands for the cover terms in each form:
Semantic

Relationship Form Examples from Rob's study (page #'s)

1. Strict inclusion - X is a kind of Y - A summarizer (is a kind of) student role (76)
 2. Spatial - X is a place in Y - Dave's office (is a place in) the school (79) X is a part of Y Dave's room (is a part of) the school (90)
 3. Cause-effect - X is a result of Y - Dave's change to whole language teaching (is a result of) his reflections on teaching (87)
 4. Rationale - X is a reason for doing Y - Not feeling he is meeting his goals of helping readers (is a reason for) Dave to search for a better way to teach (89)
 5. Location-for-action - X is a place for doing Y - Dave's room (is a place for) eating lunch (90)
 6. Function - X is used for Y - A loud, forceful voice (is used for) helping students hear while Dave reads and add drama to pull in students who don't like to read and are not used to listening (82)
 7. Means-end - X is a way to do Y - Retelling a story (is a way to) be a Summarizer (77)
 8. Sequence - X is a step (stage) in Y - Reading passages aloud (is a stage in) studying a piece of literature as a class (77)
 9. Attribution - X is an attribute of Y - One semester in length (is an attribute of) (characteristic) of Dave's reading classes (79)
- b. **Step two:** *Prepare a domain analysis worksheet* like the one below for each cover term. Although you may prefer to use the margins of your field notes for the domain analysis activities to follow, using the worksheet while first learning to identify domains is helpful. It is simply a way to visually summarize the semantic relationship you selected in step one along with all the included and cover terms you are going to find for that relationship in your field notes.

Domain Analysis

Domain Analysis Worksheet

Semantic Relationship: *Strict Inclusion*

Form: X (is a kind of) Y

Example: An oak (is a kind of) tree

Included terms Semantic Cover

Relationship Term

Summarizer (76) Predictor (76)

Clarifier (76) Question-asker (76)

Connector (76) Teacher (76) is a kind of Student role

Writer (82) Language appreciator (76)

Meaning maker(84) Discusser (79)

Thinker (82) Reluctant reader (80)

Activity chooser (79) Listener (82)

Taxonomic analysis

Once a focus on one or a few related domains has been selected and focused inquiries have been conducted to expand and clarify the included terms in those specific domains, taxonomic analysis is used to discover if and how the included terms are systematically organized or related within a domain (or how several domains are related within a larger covering domain). This analysis activity creates a “taxonomy” which summarizes the relationships among all the included terms inside a given domain. It reveals subsets of the domain and the ways they are related to the whole domain. It may also reveal multiple levels of subsets (subsets of included terms).

Although experienced qualitative inquirers are likely to conduct taxonomic analysis as an extension of domain analysis in a single process, by following the steps presented below, the beginning inquirer can develop these skills systematically.

Step 1. Select a domain for taxonomic analysis

This should be one of the domains you selected in previous assignments for domain analysis and focused inquiry. It should also be one of the domains for which you have the most information, although you will probably discover even more included terms for the domain during the taxonomic analysis. For the sake of the example begun above, we will continue to use the domain cover term: Student roles.

Step 2. Look for similarities based on the same semantic relationship used in the domain

This involves looking at the included terms in the selected domain to see if any of them are similar enough that they can be grouped together as items in a subset of a more inclusive term. For example, the seven original roles identified on page 76 are all similar in the sense that they were *assigned* to the students as part of the “reciprocal reading” activity in which the class was engaged. In the taxonomy, they could be organized under subset term, “teacher assigned roles.” In addition, several of the other terms reflect expectations Dave had for the students in comments he made to them while conducting the class. Terms such as writer, meaning maker, thinker, discussor, and listener could be organized under the subset term, “teacher expected roles.” The included term, “activity chooser” reflects the students’ spontaneous response when Dave asked if they want to move to discussion or continue listening to him read. This term seems to be unique among the terms identified so far; but other related terms may be identified as the analysis continues and they could be grouped under the subset term, “spontaneous roles.” The term “reluctant reader” is a term Rob uses to categorize several of the

students he has seen in Dave's classes. It isn't so much a classroom role as a more permanent personality role. Other personality roles may show up and they could be grouped with this one using the subset term, "Personality roles."

Step 3. Look for additional included terms

This step is almost identical to one used during focused inquiry. Structural questions were applied there to identify as many included terms for a given domain as possible. In **this** step, structural questions are asked *for each included* term to discover additional included terms, which are subsets of the first level of included terms. For example, the first level included term "reluctant reader" actually consists of four subset terms according to the information on page 80 of Rob's story. The structural question "What are all the kinds of reluctant readers?" could be used in this step to expand the list of included terms under that category to include: a. those who read well but don't read, b. those who read poorly and don't read, c. those who read well and do read, and d. those who read poorly but do read.

Step 4. Search for larger, more inclusive domains that might include as a subset the domain you are analyzing

This step involves expansion rather than focus; yet it reveals meaning by searching for relationships between the domain you have selected for focus and other domains. It consists of asking a structural question in reverse: Is this domain a subset of something else? For example, for the domain "Student roles," you might ask, "Is the student roles domain a kind of something else?" A possible answer might be "classroom participant roles" which include the teacher's roles, the graduate student's roles, and so on. In turn, all these roles might be considered part of an even more inclusive "super domain" such as "learner roles." Combined with the subsets discovered in step three

above, the inclusive domains identified here can form part of a large organizational understanding of the relationships among the meanings participants in this setting assign to their experiences.

Step 5. Construct a tentative taxonomy

The taxonomy consists of a graphic representation of the relationships among the domains and their subsets of included terms at all identified levels. The tentative taxonomy coming from the analysis of Rob's story discussed in steps 1-4 above might look something like this:

Learner roles

1. Teacher roles
2. Graduate student roles
3. Student roles
 1. teacher assigned roles; reciprocal reading activity roles
 1. Summarizer
 2. Predictor
 3. Clarifier
 4. Question-asker
 5. Connector
 6. Teacher
 7. Language appreciator
 2. teacher expected roles
 1. writer
 2. meaning maker
 3. thinker
 4. discussor
 5. listener
 3. spontaneous roles
 1. activity chooser
 4. personality roles
 1. reluctant reader roles

1. those who read well but don't read
2. those who read poorly and don't read
3. those who read well and do read
4. those who read poorly but do read

Step 6. Make focused inquiries to check out the adequacy of your analysis

Of course, doing the taxonomic analysis described above will raise new questions about the social situation you are studying because you will be trying to find relationships you never even thought about before. So during the analysis steps, plan to return to the field (or at least to your full set of field notes) several times to collect more information (e.g., are there other kinds of "student roles" that you missed during earlier observations? What should be included in the "spontaneous roles" included term which you just discovered besides "activity chooser"? What other "personality roles" are there besides these "reluctant reader" roles? What other "teacher expected roles" are there?). As a result of searching for answers to these questions in this step, the taxonomy will be expanded into the form discussed in the next step. These kinds of focused questions are at the heart of Spradley's process for "reading" the experiences of participants and the discovery of their interpretive stances.

Step 7. Construct a completed taxonomy

Actually, all taxonomies are only approximations of the reality you study. So there is really no such thing as a "complete" taxonomy. However, when you have repeated steps 1-6 a few times for a few selected domains and no longer discover new included terms or

relations between terms or between domains, it is time to complete this analysis stage by formalizing the taxonomy using any of several types of figures and a written explanation for the figure. For example, the outline form used below may not seem as helpful to you as a more graphic figure that includes Venn diagrams, or at least lines connecting the various parts of the taxonomy. Feel free to draw pictures, create matrices, or do whatever works for you to capture the summary of your developing taxonomy. All of this analysis information should be appropriately summarized in your field notes and referenced in your audit trail too. Although the following is not a “complete” taxonomy, it is presented to illustrate how the use of focused inquiry and structural questions in step 6 can expand the tentative taxonomy presented in step 5. Page numbers for terms taken from the text are in parentheses.

Learner roles

1. Teacher roles
2. Graduate student roles
3. Student roles
 1. teacher assigned roles; reciprocal reading activity roles (all in this subset are from page 76)
 1. Summarizer
 1. retell what happens in a story
 2. Predictor
 1. thinks about what might happen next
 2. thinks about what might have happened if a character had acted differently
 3. Clarifier
 1. answers questions posed by the question-asker
 2. guesses at answers to questions posed by the question-asker
 4. Question-asker
 1. asks questions in regards to the text being

- read
 - 2. asks questions about things that are not clear in the text
 - 3. asks questions that would help explicate the text
 - 1. like wondering why someone did a certain thing
- 5. Connector
 - 1. makes connections between the reading and his/her own life
- 6. Teacher
 - 1. calls on the other students in their various roles
 - 2. records the other students' participation
- 7. Language appreciator
 - 1. notes any particularly noteworthy uses of language in the text
 - 2. explains these noteworthy uses of language
- 2. Switch roles regularly (p78)
- 3. broaden horizons in responding to literature (p78)
- 4. Alternative roles being considered (p79)
- 5. small group membership (p79)
 - 1. reader in a small group (p79)
 - 2. chorus reader (p79)
 - 3. discussor (p79)
- 6. teacher expected roles
 - 1. writer (p82)
 - 1. take notes about readings (p78)
 - 1. to get help in new assigned roles (p78)
 - 2. think on paper (p78)
 - 2. meaning maker (p84)
 - 1. responding to teacher's questions about what words "mean" (p84)
 - 1. considering what the teacher says a

- word does not mean (p84)
- 2. thinking of a substitute word (p84)
- 3. thinker (p82)
 - 1. on paper (p78)
 - 2. thinking of a substitute word (p84)
 - 3. about the literature the teacher is going to read (p82)
- 4. discusser (p79)
 - 1. of a particular reading (p79)
- 5. listener (p82)
 - 1. to the literature the teacher is going to read (82)
- 7. spontaneous roles
 - 1. activity chooser (p79)
- 8. personality roles
 - 1. reluctant reader roles (p80)
 - 1. those who read well but don't read
 - 2. those who read poorly and don't read
 - 3. those who read well and do read
 - 4. those who read poorly but do read

Selected inquiry. Data collection and analysis activities discussed earlier (descriptive observations, domain analysis, focused inquiries, taxonomic analysis) summarized ways to understand a social setting holistically while focusing on certain dimensions for deeper understanding. This section of the chapter discusses how selected inquiry is used to deepen that focus even more through the asking of **contrast** questions. **Descriptive questions** provide guidance for conducting a general *descriptive overview of domains within a study*. **Structural questions** *guide inquiry into the relationships among included terms within domains selected for focused attention.*

And **contrast questions** guide inquiry into the similarities and differences that exist among the terms in each domain (at all levels—not just among the first level included terms under a given domain cover term but also among the subsets of included terms within included terms, as will be demonstrated below. Understanding participants’ meanings requires all three types of information: holistic descriptions, clarified relationships among the parts, and clarified similarities and differences between the parts within domains.

Contrast questions ask, “How are all these things similar to and different from each other?” The answers to these questions constitute **dimensions of contrast** which reveal facets of participants’ interpretive stance and meanings and provide a basis for asking more contrast questions during reviews of field notes or while conducting more selected inquiries. Asking and answering these questions nearly always helps the researcher see that there is much more information to collect from the field.

Spradley identifies three basic types of contrast questions, which yield dimensions of contrast:

a. **Dyadic contrast questions** which compare two members (included terms or subsets of terms within included terms) of a single domain by asking, “In what ways are these two things similar and different?” For example, in the domain “Student roles,” one might ask, “What are the differences between the included terms ‘teacher assigned roles’ and ‘teacher expected roles’?” There are several possible answers to this question, which constitute possible dimensions of contrast for interpreting students’ experiences.

For example, while the two terms are obviously similar in the sense that the expectations *and* the assignments come from the teacher to the students, the teacher assigned roles are *temporary* while teacher expected roles are *permanent*. Also, teacher assigned roles apply to *specific students* in those particular roles while teacher expected

roles are expected of *all students*. Another dimension of contrast that is revealed by asking this contrast question is the fact that students can be held *immediately accountable* for filling their assigned roles while they may or *may not ever be held accountable* by the teacher for filling the expected roles. Many other dimensions of contrast could be added to these three by continuing to ask this dyadic contrast question regarding these two included terms.

b. Triadic contrast questions in which the researcher looks at three included terms within a domain at once (or among subsets of included terms) and asks, “Which two are most alike in some way, but different from the third?” By asking this contrast question many times about all the terms previously identified in a domain (and even among domains within a super domain), the inquirer can discover both similarities and differences at the same time.

For example, one of the included terms in the domain of student roles is “teacher expected roles.” Within that included term, one of the roles is “thinker.” Within *that* role, three kinds of thinking were identified in Rob’s story: 1) thinking on paper, 2) thinking of a substitute word, and 3) thinking about the literature the teacher is going to read. By asking the triadic contrast question, “Which two of these kinds of thinking are most alike in some way, but different from the third?” you might come up with dimensions of contrast such as: 1. the use of paper versus thinking in one’s head (identified by noting that the first way of thinking is different from the second two on this dimension), or 2. thinking about a specific issue versus thinking generally (identified by noting that the second kind of thinking- about a specific word, is different from the first and third kinds of thinking, on this dimension). These similarities and differences reveal some of the characteristics of thinking and the meaning behind students’ behaviors and the teacher’s expectations.

c. Card-sorting contrast questions allow the informant or the inquirer to compare *all* the identified terms (included terms and their

subset terms) of a large domain to each other to identify differences and similarities. Each term is written on a card and then the person asking the contrast questions reads through the cards asking themselves, "Are there any differences among these things?" If the items do not seem different in any way, they are placed in a single pile. When the person doing the sorting comes to the first item that appears different for any reason at all, they place that card in a new pile. Now with two piles, the sorter continues to sort the cards until they find one that does not fit in either of the piles; then they start a third pile, and so on until all the cards are sorted into piles. All the items within a pile are considered to be similar. Cards in different piles contrast with one another. The piles constitute dimensions of contrast, which the inquirer attempts to name and describe. Illustrating this use of contrast questions here is too complex; but you should try it with your own project.

It is possible that even after searching your field notes using contrast questions, you will not identify any dimensions of contrast. However, it is likely that you will have identified domains and categories of included terms within those domains. By returning to the field and using selective observations and interviews, you should begin to identify those differences. Once you have discovered one or two differences, you may still need to discover more; continued use of contrast questions while reviewing field notes and during selective inquiry should help you do this. Once you have discovered a dimension of contrast that applies to two or more terms in a domain, you may still want to find out if it applies to the other members of that domain. Again, this may involve more selected observations and interviews in addition to reviewing field notes with these contrast questions in mind.

Steps for Making Selected Inquiries

The following steps should guide you in making selected inquiries:

Step 1. Select one or more domains of interest from among those already used for focused observations and taxonomic analysis.

For the example used so far, that is the domain of “student roles.”

Step 2. While reviewing the elements of the selected domain(s), write out several contrast questions (dyadic and triadic) which juxtapose those elements

For example, “What are the differences between the included terms ‘teacher assigned roles’ and ‘teacher expected roles?’” or “Which two of these kinds of thinking are most alike in some way, but different from the third?” were contrast questions illustrated earlier.

Step 3. Review your field notes, asking the many contrast questions you have identified and writing your tentative answers into another section of the field notes.

Again, the example of tentative answers to these questions given above is illustrative.

Step 4. Write each of the terms in the domain on separate cards or sheets of paper and conduct a card-sorting contrast exercise, again writing the results of this analysis into your field notes.

Step 5. Return to the field setting in which you are conducting your study and conduct selective inquiries to answer any of the contrast questions you could not answer with field notes you already had collected. Look for additional differences among domain terms.

Componential analysis

Previous chapters and sections of this chapter have discussed several ways to gather and organize data during a qualitative study. Domain analysis helps researchers discover patterns in the descriptive detail of field notes; taxonomic analysis organizes elements in domains into cohesive structures, which are revealed through focused inquiries. Selective inquiries take another step by identifying contrasts and similarities among elements in the domains. This section of the chapter introduces componential analysis as a way to organize and represent these newly discovered contrasts to help you as an inquirer take a better “reading” of the experiences of people in your inquiry setting and the interpretations and meanings they associate with their experiences.

People’s interpretations and meanings are associated with domains, included terms, dimensions of contrast, taxonomies, etc. because these analytic categories help the inquirer distinguish among examples from various categories. For example, clarifying the differences between teacher assigned and teacher expected student roles helps the inquirer understand the experiences of both the students and the teacher in that setting much better. How the students respond to those roles will make more sense to the inquirer with this understanding.

Componential analysis includes the entire process of searching for dimensions of contrast as described above, entering this information into a chart Spradley calls a **paradigm chart** and then verifying the

accuracy of these analyses through further data gathering in the field. The paradigm chart organizes the categories of a domain with their attributes displayed across several dimensions of contrast as illustrated in figures below (adapted from Spradley):

Features of a paradigm chart

Domain name Dimensions of Contrast and categories: I II III

Domain or included term Attribute 1 Attribute 2 Attribute 3

Domain or included term Attribute 1 Attribute 2 Attribute 3

Domain or included term Attribute 1 Attribute 2 Attribute 3

Etc.

In a paradigm chart, the items in the rows associated with a given domain or included term are the attributes associated with that category. The columns represent the dimensions along which the attributes of the categories contrast with one another. This tool can be used to analyze any domains discovered in a qualitative study.

There are eight basic steps doing a componential analysis:

Step 1. Select a domain for analysis

This may consist of any domain for which you have conducted selective inquiry and for which you have some identified contrasts. However, Spradley recommends that to learn to use componential analysis, one ought to start with a domain consisting of fewer than ten included terms. As before, the domain used for illustration here is “student roles.”

Step 2. Inventory all contrasts previously discovered

During earlier analysis and through the use of contrast questions and selective inquiries, many statements of contrasts and dimensions of

contrast should have been recorded in your field notes. Spradley suggests each of these statements, for the selected domain, be written onto separate sheets of paper to compile a list of contrasts. This could also be done very efficiently with a computer word processing program. Examples from Rob's study include:

1. Teacher assigned roles are *temporary* while teacher expected roles are *permanent* (a dyadic contrast).
2. Teacher assigned roles apply to *specific students* in those particular roles while teacher expected roles are expected of *all students* (a dyadic contrast).
3. Students can be held *immediately accountable* for filling their assigned roles while they may or *may not ever be held accountable* by the teacher for filling the expected roles (a dyadic contrast).
4. Student thinking roles vary in whether they use paper and writing versus thinking in their head (a triadic contrast)
5. Student thinking roles vary in whether they are thinking about a specific issue versus thinking generally (a triadic contrast).

Step 3. Prepare a paradigm worksheet

A paradigm worksheet is a large sheet of paper (or computer spread sheet) with an empty paradigm chart, except for the domain categories, which are listed down the left hand column as shown in the Figure below.

Domain Categories: Dimensions of Contrast

"Student Roles" I II III IV

1. teacher assigned roles

a. reciprocal reading activity roles

1. Summarizer
 - a) retell what happens in a story
2. Predictor

- a) thinks about what might happen next
- b) thinks about what might have happened if a character had acted differently

3. Clarifier

- a) answers questions posed by the question-asker
- b) guesses at answers to questions posed by the question-asker

4. Question-asker

- a) asks questions in regards to the text being read
- b) asks questions about things that are not clear in the text
- c) asks questions that would help explicate the text
- (1) like wondering why someone did a certain thing

5. Connector

- a) makes connections between the reading and his/her own life

6. Teacher

- a) calls on the other students in their various roles
- b) records the other students' participation

7. Language appreciator

- a) notes any particularly noteworthy uses of language in the text
- b) explains these noteworthy uses of language

b. Switch roles regularly (p78)

- broaden horizons in responding to literature (p78)

c. Alternative roles being considered (p79)

1. small group membership (p79)

- a) reader in a small group (p79)
- b) chorus reader (p79)
- c) discussor (p79)

2. *teacher expected roles*

a. *writer (p82)*

1. take notes about readings (p78)
 - a) to get help in new assigned roles
2. think on paper (p78)

b. meaning maker (p84)

3. responding to teacher's questions about what words "mean" (p84)
 - a) considering what the teacher says a word does not mean (p84)
 - b) thinking of a substitute word (p84)

c. thinker (p82)

4. on paper (p78)
5. thinking of a substitute word (p84)
6. about the literature the teacher is going to read (p82)

d. discussor (p79)

7. of a particular reading (p79)

e. listener (p82)

8. to the literature the teacher is going to read (82)

3. *spontaneous roles*

a. *activity chooser (p79)*

4. *personality roles*

a. *reluctant reader roles (p80)*

1. those who read well but don't read
2. those who read poorly and don't read

3. those who read well and do read
4. those who read poorly but do read

Step 4. Identify dimensions of contrast that have binary values

A simple way to identify dimensions of contrast for the columns in the paradigm worksheet is to use dichotomies or binary values. For each category, the contrasts identified in step 2 can be restated so the category is either characterized by that contrast or it is not. For example, either a student role is permanent or it is not. Likewise, students may be held accountable for filling a role or not. The worksheet presented in step 3 is expanded during this step to include a variety of dimensions of contrast with “yes” or “no” in the intersecting cells as shown in the Figure below. Question marks (?) are inserted if more information is needed or a simple yes or no is overly simplistic (a shorter set of domain categories is used to save space):

Domain Categories: Dimensions of Contrast
“Student Roles” Permanent? Temporary? Accountable?

1. teacher assigned roles N Y Y
 - a. reciprocal reading activity roles N Y Y
 - b. Switch roles regularly (p78) N Y Y
 - c. Alternative roles being considered (p79) N Y ?
2. teacher expected roles Y N ?
 - a. writer (p82) Y N Y
 - b. meaning maker (p84) Y N N
 - c. thinker (p82) Y N ?

1. on paper (p78) Y N Y
2. thinking of a substitute word (p84) N Y N

3. spontaneous roles N Y N

Step 5. Combine closely related dimensions of contrast into ones that have multiple values

Step four was a simple way to begin identifying dimensions of contrast and to classify domain category attributes. However, binary dimensions of contrast can almost always be combined because they are usually related. This combination allows many more dimensions of contrast to be added to the growing paradigm worksheet. The simpler example presented in step four would be modified to look something like the paradigm worksheet in the Figure below:

Domain Categories: Dimensions of Contrast

“Student Roles” Permanence of Role? Accountable?

- 1. teacher assigned roles Temporary Y*
 - a. reciprocal reading activity roles Temporary Y*
 - b. Switch roles regularly (p78) Temporary Y*
 - c. Alternative roles being considered (p79) Temporary ?*
- 2. teacher expected roles Permanent ?*
 - a. writer (p82) Permanent Y*
 - b. meaning maker (p84) Permanent N*
 - c. thinker (p82) Permanent ?*
 - 1. on paper (p78) Permanent Y*
 - 2. thinking of a substitute word (p84) Temporary N*
- 3. spontaneous roles Temporary N*

Step 6. Prepare contrast questions for missing attributes

Paradigm worksheets quickly reveal the kinds of information one still needs to collect by graphically displaying incomplete dimensions of contrast (showing you which domain categories have incomplete attribute descriptions!). Although the example presented above is

fairly simple and all the cells are filled, it would be helpful to get more information about the cells with question marks still in them. Contrast questions could be identified to guide additional data gathering as described in step seven below. For example, one might ask, "Are there some student roles being considered for which students would be accountable and others for which they would not?" Or "What are the circumstances under which students would be accountable?"

Step 7. Conduct selective inquiries to discover missing information

As suggested in step six, the paradigm worksheet should identify areas for further fieldwork to answer the additional contrast questions. Spradley warns that few studies will answer all questions; however, the researcher will have a much more complete understanding of the domain he or she is studying by following this process, even if it is not complete.

Step 8. Prepare a "complete" paradigm

After returning to the field and revising the paradigm worksheet with new information as many times as the project requires (the researcher must decide how often this will be in terms of inquiry objectives, resources, and so on), a final paradigm chart is generated for each selected focus domain. Such charts can be presented in the final report with discussion of selected attributes and relationships. For example, the evolving chart illustrated above might now look like this (again, only showing part of the entire chart given space limitations):

Domain Categories: Dimensions of Contrast

"Student Roles" Permanence of Role? Accountable?

1. teacher assigned roles Temporary Y

a. reciprocal reading activity roles Temporary Y

b. Switch roles regularly (p78) Temporary Y

c. Alternative roles being considered (p79) Temporary N

2. *teacher expected roles Permanent Variably*

a. *writer (p82) Permanent Y*

b. *meaning maker (p84) Permanent N*

c. *thinker (p82) Permanent Both*

1. *on paper (p78) Permanent Y*

2. *thinking of a substitute word (p84) Temporary N*

3. *spontaneous roles Temporary N*

Synthesis

In addition to these “analytic” approaches to discovering the interpretive stances of the people you study, Spradley and others suggest that you can look across your field notes for broad themes. Spradley identifies several possible “universal themes” to consider; but these are couched in terms of theories and constructs used by anthropologists. Rather than restrict yourself to his categories, you should stand back from your analysis and think about synthesizing your experiences from time to time in your own words and concepts or in the words of the students, staff, and others you are working with in your inquiry. Look for patterns that speak for themselves. You may think there is too much detail to ever pull it all together. Perhaps you should only pull parts of it together. But let these patterns emerge from the experiences you have had and that you have documented from the lives of others.

In addition to these “skimming of the cream” kinds of syntheses which don’t dwell on the details, you should draw upon the results of the various forms of analysis to “tell a story” of your readings of the stories people in your study have told you. This will be the focus of Chapter 9.

Conclusion

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Questions for Consideration

1. When should analysis begin in a qualitative inquiry? Why?

2. What is analysis in the qualitative sense?
3. What is “meaning” and why is it so important in qualitative inquiry?
4. How can you get at or understand meaning?
5. What is a domain?
6. What is domain analysis?
7. What are the differences between domain, cover term, included terms, and semantic relationship?
8. What are the steps in doing a domain analysis?
9. Why is domain analysis so important?
10. How does domain analysis build on other qualitative inquiry activities?
11. What other types of analysis and collection activities should be used to follow up on a domain analysis?
12. When is it better to conduct a surface or holistic qualitative inquiry without going into any focused domains more deeply?
13. When is it more appropriate to narrow the investigation to a few selected domains for a focused in-depth investigation?
14. When is it appropriate to do both (holistic and in-depth)?
15. How can one do both when nearly all social situations are very complex?
16. How is a structural question different from a descriptive one?
17. Why does Spradley suggest you should continue making descriptive observations while you make focused observations?
18. Why should the same structural question be repeated many times during focused observations?
19. What is a taxonomy?
20. What is taxonomic analysis?
21. How does taxonomic analysis help qualitative inquirers discover meaning in human activities?
22. Why does taxonomic analysis follow domain analysis?
23. How many levels should a taxonomy have?
24. How might folk terms and analytic terms be used in a taxonomy?
25. Why should the qualitative researcher search for larger, more

- inclusive domains as well as for additional included terms during a taxonomic analysis?
26. When should focused and descriptive observations be done in relation to domain and taxonomic analyses?
 27. How can focused observations be used to “check out” tentative taxonomies?
 28. For how many domains should taxonomic analyses be conducted in a single study?
 29. When is a box diagram appropriate to use for a taxonomy? A lines and nodes diagram? An outline diagram?
 30. How do you plan to conduct taxonomic analysis in your own project?
 31. What are contrast questions?
 32. How do contrast questions relate to descriptive and structural questions?
 33. How do contrast questions help qualitative inquirers understand cultural meaning?
 34. What is a dyadic contrast question?
 35. What is a triadic contrast question?
 36. What is a card-sorting contrast question?
 37. What are dimensions of contrast?
 38. What are selective observations?
 39. How do selective observations relate to descriptive and focused observations?
 40. How would you conduct selective observations?
 41. How would you use selective observations to ask contrast questions?
 42. How would you use interviews to ask contrast questions?
 43. What is componential analysis?
 44. How does componential analysis relate to domain analysis and taxonomic analysis?
 45. How does componential analysis relate to the three types of observation: descriptive, focused, and selective?
 46. How do “domain categories”, “attributes”, and “dimensions of contrast” relate to one another?

47. How can understanding categories, attributes, and contrasts help a qualitative inquirer understand the meaning behind people's actions, settings, feelings, objects, and so on?
48. How can a paradigm chart help a qualitative inquirer analyze a cultural setting?
49. What steps will you follow in conducting a componential analysis of data in your own qualitative project?
50. How will the steps identified above fit with the other steps you are following in the total project?

Suggested Activities

1. Try out the Spradley analysis process on your field notes by doing the following:
 - a. Using the field notes collected to date, conduct a small domain analysis of a few of your expanded field notes, using the steps presented in this chapter.
 - b. Then, take a summary of 10-15 domains identified through the domain analysis and review it to ascertain possible domains for further research.
 - c. Select one or two domains for a focused inquiry. Identify a structural question appropriate for each selected domain. Explain in your audit trail how you made these focusing decisions.
 - d. Conduct another period of data collection in which you ask the structural questions and generate additional included terms to add to the growing list of terms included in the selected focus domains for your study.
 - e. Conduct a taxonomic analysis on one or more domains (identified during the earlier domain analysis and selected for focus), following the steps outlined in this chapter.
 - f. Carry out another period of participant observation using both descriptive and focused observations, to check out

the taxonomic analysis.

- g. Prepare a relatively complete taxonomic diagram of one or more domains.
 - h. After studying the materials in this chapter and the associated readings, you should select one or more domains from those identified and focused on in earlier assignments and ask yourself contrast questions to discover dimensions of contrast in these domains. You should review your field notes to answer these questions with all the information gathered to date.
 - i. Then, you should conduct another period of participant observation in the field to use selective or selected observations (to ask further contrast questions through observations and interviews) along with additional descriptive and focused observations.
 - j. Using the information presented in this chapter and the related readings (following the eight steps presented in Spradley), you should make a componential analysis of one or more domains.
 - k. Then you should conduct another period of participant observation to make use of all three types of observation: descriptive, focused, and selective.
 - l. You should synthesize 1 or 2 holistic themes, using the field notes and analyses accumulated to date.
 - m. Then, you should write statements of those themes as brief assertions.
2. How are you already interpreting or telling stories of your experience through the way you are living? Think about this and write your analysis in your field notes.
 3. How are you already reading or interpreting others' interpretations or stories? Think about this and write your analysis in your field notes.
 4. How do you think you will change how you read others' stories based on your review of qualitative inquiry and various associated approaches to analysis, synthesis, and

interpretation? Think about this and write your analysis in your field notes.

5. Do some narrative writing to tell a story about something or someone in your inquiry project. Reflect on the implicit interpretive stances you are using in creating this story as a representation of your “reading” of the situation you wrote about.
6. Discuss the kinds of interpretation you are doing without writing at all and explore how writing can enhance your interpretations.
7. If you are using literature, theory, or other explicit interpretive stances in your inquiry, describe these briefly and discuss how these concerns are influencing your study.

9

Sharing and reporting

Sharing through Story Telling

Chapters One through Eight invite you to learn to “read” the stories you and your students, faculty, and other associates are telling through the lives they live. You are invited there to refine how you develop working relationships with people, how you watch them and listen to them, and how you think about what you see and hear. Chapter Eight focused particularly on how you interpret the stories you “read” through qualitative inquiry. *This* chapter focuses on sharing stories about what you are learning from all the other activities presented in the figures in Chapter One and in the rest of this book.

Why share? Basically, sharing will accomplish two important objectives. First, as you attempt to disclose what you are learning to others, you refine your interpretations and thoughts and clarify for yourself what you are “reading” in the experiences you are studying. In a sense, sharing is another form of story *reading* that we might call story *telling*. A second important reason to share what you are learning is to help others through participation in a community of learners. Others who are asking similar questions should learn from you and you should learn from them. Sharing what you are doing is a beginning to that learning.

Sharing can range from telling a story to a teacher down the hall about your “reading” of a student’s experience to writing an article or a dissertation about your “reading” of the same thing. As in all story telling, the audience you are addressing, as well as the story you are creating, should help you determine the story you will tell.

For example, the story we told in Chapter One about Steve being expelled from Unified Studies could be told in several different ways, depending on the community of learners with whom we might share

it. When we first had this experience, the teachers shared their versions of the story with one another to help them sort out their own feelings about what had happened and what they should do about it, to confirm their values and judgments in light of the choices others were making, to persuade others to consider their ideas in making a decision, and so on. Later, a group of graduate students and the professor from the Steve story used that event as a basis for discussing ethics and the philosophical views of Emmanuel Levinas in a paper presented at a professional meeting. Furthermore, this and other stories about Unified Studies are being included in a book about this program and its teachers, with an emphasis on teaching students responsibility. Finally, here in this book, this story was used to illustrate action research and educators-as-inquirers and to introduce you to the notion of qualitative inquiry. The basic facts of the story did not change in these four stories, but the emphases, the interpretations, and most importantly, the audiences were different in each case. So the version of the story that was told changed.

Who are your audiences for the stories you are creating through the inquiry you are conducting? Are you, like Kyleen in Appendix C, hoping to share what you learn about your students with their parents? If so, you probably will want to tell rich narrative stories about these children, adding your synthesis of some of the key points you find important in those stories. You probably hope to invite the parents to join you more fully in the education of their children and you want to give them the most powerful invitation possible.

Or perhaps you are a building principal seeking funding for a new program in your school and you want to invite funding agencies to look more closely at your needs or at the pilot program you have initiated. In this case, you might want to combine some rich narrative stories illustrating the needs students have which this program would address with some statistics showing the needs from a different perspective. You might also want to pull out themes from both these kinds of stories that highlight the needs that your proposed program

is designed to address.

On the other hand, maybe you are a masters or doctoral student trying to study something of real importance to you in your school while meeting the demands of the graduate school and your advisory committee. You would find in this case that you need to include a thorough review of the literature in the story you tell to these audiences, in addition to rich narrative and subsequent analyses and syntheses of themes and implications. You would also be expected to include an audit trail documenting how you conducted the study.

In contrast, if you were writing an article for a journal or a magazine, you would want to study several issues of that publication to ascertain the kinds of stories readers are likely to read and use. You may decide to include all the elements you would include in a thesis or dissertation but in abbreviated form. Or you may decide, like Barone (1992) suggests, that you want to share your stories with ordinary people rather than social scientists and so you must provide narratives that are “inviting, even compelling, so that citizens who are fatigued from struggling to earn their daily bread will desire to read them.” (p. 19) You may want to present your story in an inviting alternate form such as a dialogue, a sketch, a personal essay, a plot outline, a poem, a diagram, a video, a collage, a tale, a drama, a series of letter conversations, a song, a map, a dance or pantomime, a game, or any other medium you deem best for communicating your message to your selected audience.

It is difficult in a chapter like this one to anticipate all the kinds of audiences you might be considering. This task is especially difficult because any experience you have had or have studied could be told to many different audiences in many different ways. To address this challenge, this chapter invites you to review three examples from the stories told already in this book that represent divergent ways of sharing with different kinds of audiences. Each example will be discussed to note the audiences addressed and the elements of the

story that seem most appropriate for that audience. Then you will be invited to think about your potential audiences given the story that you are beginning to develop through your “reading” and interpretation of your qualitative inquiry experiences. You may find that your audience matches one of the examples given here; but it is more likely that you will have to extrapolate from these examples to create a story to share that is unique to you and to the audience you select.

Revisiting Three Stories

The following stories have been told so far in this book:

[Chapter One \[https://edtechbooks.org/-qpj\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-qpj)— The story of teachers deciding to expel a student from school was *told to the readers of this book* to illustrate the real world of teaching and the use of qualitative inquiry by a variety of inquiring educators to understand that world better.

[Chapter Two \[https://edtechbooks.org/-oLg\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-oLg) and [Appendix A \[https://edtechbooks.org/-JBW\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-JBW)— The story of teacher education based on inquiry by all participants was *told to educational researchers and potential educator-inquirers* to illustrate the need for action research by teachers, supervising professors, and student teachers so they will become more vulnerable learners, and thus, more powerful educators.

[Chapter Three \[https://edtechbooks.org/-Vby\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-Vby) and [Appendix B \[https://edtechbooks.org/-YKy\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-YKy)— This story of one teacher’s journal keeping and reflective analysis of the stories in that journal was *told to her professor as a class project, to teachers in in-service sessions, and to readers of this book* to encourage them to keep a record of their experiences and thoughts and to use analysis procedures such as Spradley’s to gain useful insights into their teaching experiences.

[Chapter Four \[https://edtechbooks.org/-hCz\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-hCz) and [Appendix C \[https://edtechbooks.org/-azf\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-azf)— This story of one teacher’s study of one student was *told to her professor, to parents, and to other teachers* to illustrate the change that can come about in a teacher’s life and teaching when that teacher listens carefully with qualitative inquiry tools to the stories students are telling with their lives.

[Chapter Five \[https://edtechbooks.org/-Rkx\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-Rkx) and [Appendix D](https://edtechbooks.org/-Rkx)

[\[https://edtechbooks.org/-hhn\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-hhn)— This story of an inquirer critiquing her own work was *told to the readers of this book and the inquirer’s professor* to illustrate the use of standards for judging the quality of qualitative studies.

[Chapter Six \[https://edtechbooks.org/-JSa\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-JSa) and [Appendix E \[https://edtechbooks.org/-Bzr\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-Bzr)— This story of a district superintendent’s study of change was *told to a dissertation committee and then in an article to school administrators and scholars interested in educational change* to illustrate the value of inquiry by a school administrator and to help the audience think about change in a different way.

[Chapter Seven \[https://edtechbooks.org/-dXk\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-dXk) and [Appendix F \[https://edtechbooks.org/-Imj\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-Imj)— This story of an assistant elementary school principal seeking to understand a school policy through the eyes of children and parents was *told to a dissertation committee and then in an article to school principals and teachers* to invite these audiences to reconsider their policies of retaining children in the early grades and is an illustration of the value of retelling stories from several perspectives.

[Chapter Eight \[https://edtechbooks.org/-cUew\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-cUew) and [Appendix G \[https://edtechbooks.org/-qRM\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-qRM)— This story of a graduate student studying a teacher and his thinking for a dissertation project was *told to a dissertation committee and shared with the readers of this book* to explore what the student learned about teacher thinking and to illustrate alternative ways of interpreting people’s experiences and telling stories about those experiences.

The stories from Chapters One, Three, and Six will be discussed in some detail below. These three were selected because they represent three rather divergent stories told to very different audiences and for very different purposes. The story of Steve in Chapter One is really a story that could be told to any audience, whether they were educators

or simply members of a society in which school plays a major role. Marné's story in Chapter Three was not a thesis or a dissertation but it is a relatively concise story (a complete dissertation would be much too long to present here) that follows a dissertation format and would address the concerns of a graduate committee interested in testing a student's competency as a Ph.D. candidate. And the story of change in Chapter Six was written in an article format for people interested in that topic, particularly in the context of schooling. Please review each of these stories in the appropriate sections of this book before going on to the next section of this chapter.

An Analysis of Three Stories

Steve's Story

Audience. As stated earlier, the story of Steve and his expulsion from Unified Studies was *told to the readers of this book* to illustrate the real world of teaching and the use of qualitative inquiry by a variety of inquiring educators to understand that world better. But the story is really one that could be told to any number of audiences to illustrate a point about schooling, about young people, about responsibility, or about relationships between adults and young adults. It is a human story that people can interpret in many different ways.

Story elements. The story told in Chapter One is typical of the timeless story format. Barone (1992) notes that "this dynamic form which . . . mimics the rhythms of human experience, the ebb and flow of life itself" begins with "the discovery of a problem in whose solution one takes an interest." The story continues with "movement toward a resolution of the dilemma" and ends with "a closure, a coming to rest." Stories that follow this format invite general audiences as well as educators to read on and to "engage [their] imagination as the phases of [the story's] dynamic form are played out." (p. 20)

The story of Steve *begins* with the discovery that he has been smoking during the school outing, in direct violation of a school rule and the rules of the special Unified Studies program. His violation of the rules not only puts his membership in the class in jeopardy; it also represents a threat to the program's continuation as a program that is viewed as marginal by many members of the educational mainstream. The reader is invited to empathize with the teachers who have to make a decision about what to do with Steve and his choices. The body of the story consists of their reflections, conversations, analysis of their purposes and Steve's interests, and so on. The reader is

invited to see them in their lived experience as real people trying to deal with the realities of school. The point is made later in the chapter that the struggles of teaching are the same as the struggles of doing qualitative inquiry; but that interpretation is not obvious nor necessary in the story itself. The reader is free to make her or his own assessment of what is going on. The story ends with the decision to remove Steve from the program; but it is softened by a kind of postscript that lets the read know that he came back the next year and showed growth and maturity that helped the teachers feel that their decision of the year before was a wise one.

Several authors (Barone, 1992, Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, Eisner, 1991) have pointed out the value of story telling as a means of sharing educational issues, problems, solutions, and research findings by giving readers a vicarious shared experience with the people in the stories. Barone (1992) cites Eisner, who is the current president of the American Educational Research Association, to note several “differences between the language of social scientists and that of literary artists and critics. The former is linear, analytical, technical, denotative, while the latter is metaphorical, suggestive, figurative, evocative.” (page 19) Barone argues that story telling can be morally persuasive and promotes critical reflection “that results in the reconstruction of a portion of the reader’s value system.” (page 20) He makes a case for three major criteria for judging stories—accessibility, compellingness, and moral persuasiveness and calls for educators to tell more stories with these characteristics about schools and people in schools so the general populace will become more supportive of the good things that people are doing in schools.

Stories of this narrative type add to all other kinds of sharing because all audiences can relate to a good story that is well told. As discussed below, every qualitative thesis or dissertation should include stories that are accessible, compelling, and morally persuasive. Ideally, articles should also contain stories too; but space limitations make that goal a challenge.

Marné's Story

Audience. As noted above, this story of one teacher's journal keeping and reflective analysis of the stories in that journal was *told to her professor as a class project, to teachers in in-service sessions, and to readers of this book* to encourage them to keep a record of their experiences and thoughts and to use analysis procedures such as Spradley's to gain useful insights into their teaching experiences. For the purposes of illustration, we will emphasize here the professor as audience and ask what is included in this study and what might be added to meet the requirements of a graduate program for a thesis or dissertation using qualitative inquiry.

Story elements. Interestingly, a thesis or dissertation consists essentially of the same three elements as a narrative story— a beginning, middle, and end written into six chapters and several appendices. Typically the beginning is the prospectus, written in three separate chapters, which will be revised into the first three chapters of the final product—

1. An introduction to the setting and characters involved to set the stage for a statement of the conflict, problem, or questions to be addressed by the study and the specific purpose of the inquiry,
2. A review of related literature that clarifies the nature of the problem further and supports the need for a study, and
3. A statement of the procedures that will be used to address the problem.

The body of this story usually consists of two major chapters that illustrate the graduate student's efforts to solve the problem and deal with the complications raised by his or her experience doing the study—

4. A portrayal chapter is often included to tell a richly descriptive and engaging story of the genre described in the earlier section on Steve's story. Here is where the graduate student invites the

reader to walk with him or her in the setting where the study was conducted, to study the “thick description” that Clifford Geertz (1973) argues is an important mark of good ethnography, to tell a story, in the traditional sense of that term. This chapter of a qualitative dissertation invites the readers to generate their own interpretations of the inquirer’s experiences before going on to subsequent chapters where those interpretations are made more explicit.

5. An analysis and synthesis chapter is the climax of the story in which the graduate student makes discoveries and gathers insight from the inquiry experience and shares those insights with the reader. This is the interpretive section of the study where results of domain, taxonomic, and componential analysis (or other kinds that make sense to the graduate student) are presented and used as a basis for identifying unifying themes that address the problem or question guiding the study. The end of the story consists of a final discussion chapter and a variety of appendices, which serve to resolve the conflicts of the study into a satisfactory, though usually incomplete conclusion-
6. A discussion chapter is often included in which the graduate student summarizes the rest of the study, discusses implications, and raises issues for further inquiry while attempting to resolve the conflicts of the study to the audiences temporary satisfaction.
7. Appendices include the audit trail, which documents how the study was conducted (see Chapter 5 and Appendix D for details), and other details from the study that invite the readers to take a closer look and make their own decisions about the credibility and value of the study they have read.

Marné’s study, which was presented in Appendix B and discussed in Chapter Three, contains an abbreviated version of all of these elements. She begins the study with some brief background details about her life as a journal keeping teacher and then states her main

question or conflict in this way: "I decided to take a thorough look at my journals to determine why they were so valuable to me and why they seemed to be such a strong force in my evolution as a teacher." (p. 1)

She skips over the literature review and gives a lengthy explanation of the methods she used for conducting the study, principally the analysis of her journals and synthesis of themes she gleaned from that analysis (pp 1-7). Details from Spradley which she followed to do this analysis and synthesis are presented in Appendix H.

Although still in the methods section, Marné begins her "story telling" narrative section with a portrayal of herself as a researcher (pp 7-9). This story gives the readers important contextual background for interpreting the results section, which begins with portrayals or examples of her journals and brief statements of decisions she was making about her writing of those journals over a period of years (pp 9-11).

The longest section of Marné's piece is a presentation of the results of domain, taxonomic, and componential analyses, and theme synthesis (pp. 11-22). The latter seems to be the *climax* of the overall story, where she discovers that the main theme of her study has been that she as a teacher is really a learner and she is learning "that the act of struggling with these issues through writing was helping me realize that **teaching is a transaction with unique people resulting in change of both student and teacher**. The teaching/learning paradigm is a generative, caring act by both participants. Looking for a set answer for dealing with that delicate, unique learning moment is the antithesis of the real answer. What is the real answer? An uncomfortable, messy one: Do a 'close reading' of the student and the social/psychological/physical context. From heartfelt information generate the supportive action to take." (p. 19)

In another lengthy section (pp. 22-31), Marné reviews five themes she

has gleaned from her inquiry in light of literature she has identified while discovering these themes (see Appendix H. This is really a combination of chapters two and five as discussed above. Many of these books and articles had been part of Marné’s discourse for years before; but now she was interpreting them in a new way. Others were new to her. Although a dissertation would include much more review of literature in Chapter Two instead of putting it all in a later section, this example illustrates the fact that the review of literature is really another data gathering activity that should be integrated with all the other activities of qualitative inquiry in an ongoing cycle.

Marné’s resolution of her story comes in the final section of the paper, beginning on page 31 and titled “implications and conclusion. Here she summarizes why doing the study of “reading” or interpreting her own experience was worthwhile and why sharing that “reading” with others is valuable. She includes an appendix with her audit trail and a critique of her study to solidify that conclusion.

Although this outline of what might be included in a dissertation or thesis “story” seems fairly complete, if you are a graduate student considering writing a qualitative prospectus, remember that your primary audience is your committee. Ascertain what *their* interests and needs are and negotiate with them to include as many of the parts as they can use from the discussion here.

Garry’s Story

Audience. As illustrated earlier, this story is of a district superintendent’s study of change which he *told to a dissertation committee and then in an article to school administrators and scholars interested in educational change* to illustrate the value of inquiry by a school administrator and to help the audience think about change in a different way. Because an article-length version of the study was included in Appendix E, this story illustrates a common format inquirers use to share what they are learning with others.

Story elements. As you might have guessed, the journal article is another way to tell a story using the familiar format of beginning, middle, and end. However, the distinguishing feature of an article is that everything has to be abbreviated due to page restrictions in journals. Ideally, all the elements discussed above for a dissertation or thesis would also be included in the journal article version—introduction, literature review, methods used, a narrative portrayal, analysis and synthesis, discussion and conclusion, appendices with audit trail and other relevant information.

The example from Garry in Appendix E has most of these sections but is a bit shy on the narrative portrayal. That is a typical problem and indicates why more and more emphasis is being put on the need for story telling by people like Barone (1992) and others.

A review of articles in a journal dedicated to publishing qualitative kinds of inquiry, the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, shows that they follow much the same pattern that Garry used— they introduce their focus with some reference to a literature base (this is rarely very extensive), briefly overview the methods they used while essentially leaving the reader to assume they used adequate methods, tell lots of vignettes and include lots of quotes from participants in the setting they are studying, weave their analysis of what they think people mean in their statements and through their actions into the portrayals of those people, close up the article with a discussion and conclusion, and include nothing that looks like an audit trail.

Perhaps this is the kind of story that must be told to audiences who read journals because periodicals are so expensive and space is sold at a premium. Journals to which you might want to submit an article summarizing what you have learned as an inquiring educator will vary in the format they require. Our best recommendation is that you select a journal you think would be appropriate and study several issues of it as you prepare a rendition of your story that will be

acceptable to the editors and the audience they represent.

Quality of Writing

Spradley gives several pointers on how to write a report of a qualitative study (see Appendix H for a summary of his chapter on this topic). There are many good manuals on the general topic of writing which every hopeful writer ought to consult as well (e.g., Goldberg, 1986, Lester, 1984, Strunk and White, 1979, Troyka, 1990, and Zinsser, 1988). In addition, publishers and journal editors have specifications for the styles to be used in their publications and there are manuals detailing how to write in those styles (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.), which ought to be consulted by anyone serious about sharing what they are learning through inquiry with a wider audience.

Conclusion

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Questions for Consideration

1. What are the possible audiences educators-as-inquirers ought to share their learning with?
2. What are the different kinds of stories that you can imagine for sharing what you learn with each of the audiences mentioned in the previous question?
3. What are the various elements of a story?
4. Why are all the elements essential for a good story, no matter what the audience or the nature of the publication?
5. What are Spradley's six levels of writing?
6. Why are all six levels necessary in qualitative writing?
7. How should one decide upon the proportion of a report to dedicate to each of the six levels?
8. What are Spradley's suggested stages of report writing?
9. How do you plan to share your qualitative project?

Suggested Activities

1. Decide who your audience will be. Might you have more than one? For example, you might consider both your professor and classmates, as well as readers of a professional journal or people attending a conference.
2. With this audience in mind, what format would best carry your content and be most appropriate for your audience? Are there rhetorical demands (expectations for certain modes of sharing) from your audience? What political concerns ought you to consider? If you decide to publish, in what journal? Study one to be sure you realize content and format constraints.
3. Informally formulate your ideas based on the inquiry you have done, create a draft, revise it, ask for peer response, edit, and prepare a final draft.
4. Present your work to your audience.

10

Appendices

Appendix A.1 - A Sample Study from BYU-Public School Partnership

David Dwayne Williams

Preparing Teachers as Inquirers through a University-Public School Partnership: Responding to the face of the other

Introduction

Objectives

For the last three years, together with others in the Brigham Young University-Public School Partnership, I have been exploring an approach for helping young people become teachers that invites them to become involved in a particular learning process and to think of themselves as inquirers *and* as teachers. Connecting literatures on teacher preparation, novice teachers, and teachers as researchers, I wondered if student teachers and novice teachers might benefit by learning to do qualitative research and evaluation while learning to teach. It seemed to make sense that if they learned to learn this way early in their careers and had some success doing inquiry while learning to teach, student teachers and novice teachers might be more inclined to continue to be learners throughout their teaching

careers. This approach might even alleviate some of the problems of burnout that plague many teachers and might help them inspire their own students to be life long learners as well. It also seemed possible that cooperating teachers and supervising university teachers might learn to serve *their* students better by participating with them as inquirers too.

This study was designed to examine the experiences of several Partnership participants involved in an inquiry based teacher preparation program to explore how well the notion works and what benefits might accrue in practice. This paper briefly summarizes one key lesson I learned during an exploration of these ideas and relates this experience to the work of the post-modernist philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas. Briefly stated, the lesson is: when teachers, student teachers, and teacher educators see themselves as learners, evaluators, and/or researchers and spend some of their energy trying to understand their students and their perspectives, they become less attached to pedagogical techniques and move quickly to a responsive and reflective way of teaching that is more commonly associated with master teachers. Because they know their students better, they tailor learning experiences for them that are more appropriate than generic curriculum could be.

Perspective

The literature on teacher preparation concludes that one of the most important parts of that educational process is the student teaching or field experience. However, the pedagogical practices of student teaching continue to be criticized as being less helpful than they could be (Lanier & Little, 1986). Guyton and McIntyre (1990, pg. 518) confirm this literature in an extensive review and call for research on critical questions about the field experience such as the following: "What strategies can be implemented to encourage student teachers to be students of teaching and reflective about their behavior and surroundings?" They urge the use of naturalistic inquiry to study the

student teaching experience from the perspectives of the participants.

The literature on *novice teachers* likewise concludes that the first few years of teaching constitute one of the most crucial stages in the development of teachers (Bion, 1991). During this time, teachers are more vulnerable (Hoffman, et. al., 1986), unsure of their competence (Johnston & Ryan, 1980), and introspective (Pajak & Blase, 1982) than they are likely to be in later years of their professional lives. The questions raised by Guyton and McIntyre seem appropriate for this stage in teacher development as well.

Authors of a third body of literature have encouraged *experienced teachers* to be more thoughtful and reflective about their work by conducting qualitative research as a natural extension of the inquiries they make already in their classrooms and with their students (e.g., Fosnot, 1989; Goswami & Stillman, 1987; and Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989). Goswami and Stillman (preface) note that several exciting results accrue when teachers “conduct research as a regular part of their roles as teachers.” For example, they find that teacher-researchers:

1. become theorists regarding their own practice, testing their assumptions against their practices;
2. perceive themselves differently, forming networks and becoming more active professionally;
3. provide invaluable insights into the learning process to the profession and to other researchers because of their insider perspectives; and
4. critically read and use current research from others, being less vulnerable to fads.

These literatures call for the use of research by the participants to enhance the learning experiences of student teachers, novice teachers, and teachers in general. Qualitative research was suggested by some as the most natural for practicing educators to learn and

practice. It seemed to me that preservice, inservice, and teacher educator teachers could learn to build on their existing learning and monitoring skills to become insightful teacher-researchers/evaluators.

Methods

Procedures

This study grew out of a naturalistic investigation I have been conducting with cooperating teachers, administrators, high school students, and teaching candidates in a moderately large high school since January 1989. This school has been a “Partner School” in the Brigham Young University-Public School Partnership which was initiated by representatives of five school districts and the College of Education in 1985 with help from John Goodlad and his associates. The Partnership was formed to encourage cooperative inquiry such as this, as well as joint development of curriculum, and collaborative preparation of educators. This study addresses all three of these Partnership goals. As a university supervisor, I have worked with the teachers and administrators at this Partner School to involve several groups of student teachers during their pre-service courses and field experience in this study and have continued working with them as they have taken teaching positions. They agreed to keep field notes to share with me and with each other during the study. As part of the study, I have taught the student teachers and their cooperating teachers naturalistic inquiry skills while their cooperating teachers taught them how to teach. All our work has been in the field.

The procedures we used were typical of qualitative studies with ongoing interpretive analysis. We observed and interviewed each other (the student teachers’, their cooperating teachers, some administrators, and the associated high school students). We also analyzed documents produced by the teachers and students, such as curriculum files and student work.

Analyses of our field notes were conducted both individually and jointly by all participants, throughout the course of the study. Field notes containing observations, interview transcripts, document analyses, audit trail indices, analyses made during experiences as well as more systematic analyses made away from the school were maintained by all participants and shared with one another in weekly meetings throughout the project. Less frequent meetings and correspondence were maintained by me as the university representative with participants after they took regular teaching positions in this and other schools.

Criteria outlined in Lincoln and Guba (1985) and by Williams (1986) were followed to enhance the credibility and utility of the inquiry. Response to these criteria included such precautions as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, thick description, and maintenance of an audit trail.

Overview of the Participants' Roles and Experiences

Several aspects of these student teachers', novice teachers', cooperating teachers', and teacher educators' roles and experiences were unique as compared to the typical experiences of participants in teacher preparation programs and public schools:

1. The student teachers were involved for the whole school year, spending all day each school day in the school. Most student teachers begin after the school year is underway and leave before it is finished. This schedule gave these "apprentices" time to see the full range of experiences students have in school, just as good naturalistic inquirers hope to do in *their* studies. This full range of experience provided the student teachers a chance to develop richer relationships with the students (as naturalistic inquirers try to do with insiders who become their informants about the settings they study) and to

modify their initial perceptions over time. Of course, as novice teachers, the participants were able to spend additional full years in schools conducting inquiries as they taught. Of course the cooperating teachers and teacher educator had the full year to inquire in this same setting too.

2. Participants had opportunities to both team and solo teach while they learned about the students they were teaching and about the collective wisdom of people who write and think about education. They were part of a cohort of people learning to inquire and to teach. They spent time discussing the experience and the challenges they faced with one another, with their experienced cooperating teachers, and with me (the teacher educator). In the context of discussing the challenges of teaching, we spent time reading a variety of books and articles on learning and teaching, listening to guest speakers on novel ideas as well as historical views of education, raising issues for consideration during this year-long experience as well as in other situations, and thinking about how what we were reading fit with what we were experiencing. The readings, speakers, and associated theoretical and philosophical issues associated with learning and teaching were studied in the rich context of a complex learning and teaching experience in a school with real students. Participants earned the credits for education courses while having these teaching and inquiring experiences on site in the school in addition to taking their academic major, minor, and general education classes on site at the university.
3. Invitations were issued to graduates from this program to continue some form of dialogue as they took teaching positions within the school and elsewhere. Dialogue took place through correspondence and visits. Conversations were held with novice teachers about what they were doing, how they were applying what they learned during the apprenticeship, and what they were learning about their students, about themselves as inquirers and as teachers, and about learning and teaching.

Unfortunately, the novice teachers did not take the time for reading the sources that were discovered after they left the student teaching experience.

4. All parties involved (the student teachers, the novice teachers, the cooperating master teachers, and the university supervisor) kept field notes or journal entries on various aspects of these experiences. Often these were brief notes taken after school while participants reflected on the experiences of the day. At other times, student teachers could be seen jotting notes during conversations with students and during planning sessions with each other and the cooperating teachers. As novice teachers, there was even less time for note taking. Though some participants were able to keep notes at school or right after the school day, arrangements were made with others to tape record their thoughts and send them to me for transcription. Others photocopied relevant sections of their personal journals and letters to family and friends to share with me. In these notes, participants explored ideas from readings and discussions and analyzed how theories and philosophies fit with experiences in the classroom “laboratories.” We shared our notes both in writing and orally with one another on a regular basis, raising questions for further exploration, searching for patterns in our experience, relating these themes to the literature, and otherwise learning through writing and talking with interested inquiry colleagues. Several of the student teachers drafted articles for publication based on their experiences as well.
5. The cooperating teachers had unique roles to play too. They were willing to spend time on preparation of teachers for the full nine months of the year, even though this task sometimes interrupted their normal teaching duties. They obtained help from the student teachers but they could not simply turn the class over to them for the full year. They spent many hours before and after school reviewing their own decisions as teachers with these teacher candidates and responding to questions the students were asking based on the sometimes

- harrowing experiences they were having in their internship.
6. The teacher educator role was very different than the norm too. I did little or no lecturing to these student teachers but met with them weekly to respond to their questions, concerns, and thinking. I provided a variety of readings I thought they might learn from. I joined them in teaching the high school students from time to time. I spent a lot of time coordinating my teaching activities with the efforts of the cooperating teachers and we developed our curriculum for the student teachers cooperatively. I was doing research here and invited them to join me as full partners in inquiry about their experience and about the experiences of the students they were there to serve. I was explicitly combining my teaching and research (learning) agenda and inviting the cooperating teachers and student teachers to do the same in their own ways.

Suggested Citation

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Appendix A.2 - What Have We Learned?

To share some of what we have been learning through this community of educators-inquirers, several samples of the field notes or records kept by the participants are presented in this section. Patterns of experience across all the participants that I identified using theme analysis will be summarized after the samples.

Sample Recordings from the Participants

From the Teacher Educator. Excerpts from the teacher educator/university researcher are presented first to provide a context for the excerpts that follow. I began this study, thinking I was the only researcher and that the other participants were all my “informants” who were going to teach me about this interesting program called Unified Studies. They did that; but they also taught me that they were just as active as inquirers using many of the same naturalistic inquiry process as I was. Presented below are some of my field notes which describe Unified Studies as I was discovering it and thus reveal much about me as an inquirer.

Nov 8, 19__. Background information for the day: The 60-70 students spend the entire day in this class every other day and then take traditional classes such as shop, advanced placement physics, and so on during four other periods on the alternate days. Thus, they are earning eight credits for the year, four of them in Unified. Students have to be juniors or seniors to take Unified and they have to submit a written application to get in. The teachers select a wide variety of students ranging from those who are college-bound to some who normally enroll in remedial classes. They look for students who will complement one another's strengths and weaknesses. They want the

students to see that there are other ways of thinking and doing life than the ones they and their usual friends are used to practicing.

No day is typical in Unified Studies. But this sample of an actual day from my field notes illustrates some of the in-school activities as well as one of the many outings the class takes. A bus is scheduled approximately once per week for ski and hiking trips as well as visits to businesses, art displays, the State legislature, and many other educational sites.

8:01 AM I am sitting at the back of the classroom with the students listening to Camie and Kolbi whispering about a third student who is staying in a different house every night. They also talked about skiing and how scary it has been for them in the past. Angie (one of five teachers' aides for the class) is sitting up front taking roll. The tables are in three long rows across the room.

Tina told me that she and the other student teachers had their planning meeting last night and had a good time discussing how they were feeling about things. Wish I had been there! Tina said she took some notes though and would share those with me.

8:08 Cheryl comes to the front now saying they will need a pen or a pencil and a folder she is passing out to all of them.

Jerry and Lowell are talking about some cheat sheet notes Jerry has. I hear lots of visiting about events last night.

8:12 Cheryl: We are leaving for Salt Lake about 9:00; but until then we can get started on the Individual Book project. I am going to give you each a strip of tape. If you have extra, make sure it doesn't get left on the floor or anywhere. Don't write on it until I tell you. I want this done a certain way. Tina and Dorrie are helping. This is to tape up the sides on the folders we are passing out.

8:16 While they prepare their file folders to hold the pages of their

Individual Book, she comments on a topic many students seem concerned about because it is the last day of the term- grades.

Cheryl: I am not going to follow you around and make sure you do what I say. I know they do that in other classes but we won't do it in here. Reading your research papers, I saw direct quotes from each other and that is totally mediocre. It is your choice if you want to do it that way; but if you really want to get something out of this class, you can't do that. In talking to some of you about what you have learned, I found that many learned they can not put off doing the assignments in here. Some of you turned in things over a week late and I just turned it back. Not that I don't like you but because if you are always working on something due in the past, you won't be working on what we are doing now. If you blew it in the past, put it all behind you and get on with the present. I would love to give all of you A's....

In the middle of her sentence, Carl called out wondering what the "guy-girl" chart on the front board is about? Not flustered at all, Cheryl turned and saw it and told him that it was to see if he knew the difference! This chart was used by a student teacher earlier for something Cheryl didn't know about. But rather than get upset over the student's interruption, she went right back to explaining how they are assigning grades. She hates percentages and curves. Instead she assigns the best total score an "A" ; those who earn about half of that best score get a "C-" and so on. She uses the natural breaks between groups of scores to assign the grades in between.

Cheryl: If you want me to explain why I hate curves and percentages, challenge me.

So Carl spoke up and asked why. Jack asked if they were getting the same grade in all four subject areas. No, four different ones (one for each of the four graded subject areas that make up Unified Studies- social studies, recreation, science, and English).

Cheryl explained that use of a grading curve divides people

immediately into categories instead of giving them all a chance to earn an "A." She and Sid (the other teacher) don't give extra credit either. They feel that using set percentages of all points possible is crazy too because the breakdown is made before the class even begins. It doesn't take into account that the teacher is not infallible.

Cheryl: Grading that way assumes that teachers are perfect and write perfect tests. I know that isn't true. I had a lot of teachers who gave me tests that weren't any good or they didn't teach me well enough. Is that clear to you?

8:27 Cheryl: I want you to begin working now on your individual books. This could be the biggest challenge for you yet. She began explaining what information she wanted them to write on the folders.

Cheryl: This is worth about 1000 points for your English grades. So do not blow it. I have been impressed by the class book pages you have turned in. I am still waiting for some of you though and you will only get half credit because it is too late for full credit. Those who turned it in already have 250 points toward next term.

She began explaining the assignment in great detail, including measurements to follow in preparing the pages of the books to put in the folders.

A few people are just now coming in. Angie went around and passed out folders and tape. Some students are writing what Cheryl is saying but others are just staring at her and don't appear to understand her.

Cheryl: Your book is going to be 20-30 pages long. You can't use any subject you want- some subjects are not allowed. I don't want any satanic stuff. You will be typing your own books. I used to do it but it took a lot of time and I couldn't read your writing. It has to be typed unless you are a draftsman or can do fancy lettering. Make sure you have dark print. Have us check your spelling and punctuation first; there can be no mistakes. If you make mistakes, type or draw on

another piece of paper and tape it over the mistaken one. Has to be all in ink and not in color or it won't print out really sharp. I am printing at least 30 copies of each book so you can trade with other people or give them as gifts. Make it worth doing- first class. Are you in the back writing this down?

Cheryl asked Chuck to get a copy of some of the books created in previous years and she read some poetry from one.

I overheard one student whispering to another- "that is **so** good!"

She read another of her favorites and showed them the art work and how the facing pages worked together so well. She went on to the rest of the instructions- but I won't include them all here.

Cheryl: Regarding the topics you can write about, I want the theme to have something to do with what we do here in Unified. It doesn't have to cover all four subjects. In the 14 years we have done this, we have had people try to do humorous ones. That is the hardest- maybe 5 have succeeded. So be careful about that. If you really want to do it, make it classy. If it was hard for you to do the class book page, get started now. Do not copy or plagiarize. Many of you got nailed for that on the research projects. When I get 5 research papers starting with the same sentence, you get nailed for that. The people in this room are your audience. They will get copies of your book. Okay?

There were no more questions, so Sid took over from Cheryl.

Sid: Today we are going to the ski factory. The people there are taking time away from their business to talk to you; so even if you are in the back and can't hear, be quiet. We are going to come back from this experience and design our own skis. You will submit your designs to the people who talk to you today. If they like your art work, they may buy your design from you and pay you to use it. You could make a lot of money if they choose your design.

Jack: Have they ever chosen any from the class before?

9:20 AM Cheryl: We have never done this before. We want them to invite us back and to find this was the best group they have ever had. Be scholars about this- listen and learn what they have to teach you. This is your chance to learn from the inside how a small business is created and run. Keep your hands off of things. Okay- let's get on the bus!

2:11 PM. We just got back from our trip to Salt Lake City. We rode first to Evolving Skis. They tailor-make skis of all sorts. On the way up I sat by Sid and we visited about the mountains we were passing and about the Winter Olympics bid Utah is making. He had a lot of ideas. The four student teachers spread throughout the bus to visit with students during the 45 minute ride.

We divided into three groups to go through the ski factory. Inside the factory there was only one mishap when a plastic shaping machine was turned on and began pushing a huge cart into a group of students. The tour guide hustled to save them and cut his hand in the process. The guides had lots of information about the process and about how this business was started. A few students asked questions but it was fairly noisy in there and not super easy to hear..

After the session there, we still had nearly 2 hours before we needed to head back, so we decided to go see the Vietnam memorial recently put up at the State Capital building. There was no one available to give us a tour but that was fine. Before the students got off the bus, Sid talked to them briefly about his experiences in 1968 of having an assigned draft number and visiting with his friends about what was going to happen to them if they got drafted. He spoke pointedly about the fact that some of his friends didn't come back from there. He didn't end up having to go. It was not a long speech but set the scene appropriately for the visit to the memorial. He asked the students not to go into the capital building and to stay close.

I was moved by the statue. Many students appeared to be moved as well. Several people stood around it for 30-40 minutes and talked quietly about what they were seeing and what this war had meant to their families and other people they knew. A fairly large group of students visited the memorial briefly and then played a nerf football game on the grass nearby.

On the bus home, Sid talked to me about ham radio operations. He is getting certified and believes that could come in handy with the outings he makes with Unified. He also said he had talked with some students at the memorial about how stupid it was to be involved with local gangs. That has been a hot topic around the school lately. Several of the guys told him they felt that way about it too. Interesting what a teaching moment like this can lead to.

When we got back, people stood around and talked while waiting for the bell to ring or until they could talk to someone about their grades. I have not seen so much interest in grades yet this year. Dottie (a student teacher) told me she is excited about doing a good job with a lesson she is planning on archeology for Friday. She has really been struggling with what her teaching philosophy is. She came to Unified with some ideas about how she wanted to teach but has not felt those ideas were appropriate in this teaching setting. She has had two chances to really be in charge so far and both experiences had some positive aspects but overall they were not what she expected or wanted.

I can identify with what she is saying. I feel anxious when I think about teaching the Unified students in a traditional way. They just are not willing to go back to the lecture-text-test approaches they endure in their other classes. And to teach the way Sid and Cheryl do seems nearly impossible if you are teaching just a lesson or two- you have to do it as part of a greater whole that extends over more time. It will be interesting to see what the student teachers do during the next while as they prepare and carry out some lessons together over a several

week period. They seem ready to start doing that. It is good they have nine months to learn how to teach in this setting. So far, their teaching experiences have been individual instead of united. They need to take advantage of the holistic nature of this class instead of adapting what they would do in a traditional classroom setting to this non-traditional arrangement.

Recapping, this example of a day at Unified illustrates the fact that although the students are earning credits in four distinct areas, their daily activities are not divided up into those categories but integrate those four and many other topic areas into holistic experiences. The first part of the day was focused on a creative project (the Class Book) in which students were assigned to use art and creative writing to invent a book for their peers on a topic related to some aspect of the content of the class. There was an aside during which Cheryl talked explicitly about grades but made the implicit point that I heard repeated many times throughout the year: the students are responsible for their own learning and the grading system is designed to give them all a chance to take that responsibility instead of blaming others for what they do. The outing included a trip to a business to see how people use their creative abilities to make a living and to hear about what it takes to make a small business succeed in America. A major goal of this class is to help students discover their talents and to be creative in using them to get more joy out of life. During the last experience of the day, the students were introduced to the complex issues associated with war and the responses of young people to the particularly troubling questions associated with the conflict in Vietnam. My conversations with the teachers and the student teachers about the experiences I was sharing with them helped me understand their interpretations of these experiences too.

As this sample day narrative demonstrates, by holding class for the entire day every other day, a wide variety of activities and topics is possible in Unified Studies. A summary of the projects and activities for the first quarter of the 1990-91 school year elaborates that point

somewhat:

August 30- Introduction to the class and melodrama by the principal to reinforce that the students can't take the opportunities of this class for granted; begin memorizing names; view and discuss the video "Discovering the Future: the business of paradigms"; introduce plant collection project; prepare for the first hike.

September 4- Take first hike up Scott's Hollow; gather plants for plant collections.

September 6- Begin plant identification; introduction to Celebrations and fieldnote journals; pre-test and introduction to hypothermia.

September 10- Discuss details for the Christmas Meadows overnight hike; detailed discussion of hypothermia; work on plants; begin water coloring; visit South Fork to identify "private domain" where students will visit throughout the year to observe, meditate, write, and water color.

September 12- Musical chairs botany; more work on identifying and preparing collected plants; training for the elementary education activities so students will be prepared to teach second to fourth graders without adult supervision; review and test on names of class members; writing in insight journals.

September 14- Christmas Meadows hike all day; many of the class goes up the night of 13th for a campout.

September 18- Plants; final test on names; introduction and initial work on drawing and writing poetry for the class book page (each student, teacher, and student teacher creates a page to include in a book that will be published for the whole class to keep).

September 20- First elementary education day (students go on buses with 300 children from nearby elementary schools and teach them

various skills such as knot tying, art, plant and animal appreciation, etc. in the out of doors. The elementary school teachers will be there but will let the high school students run the entire activity).

September 24- Introduction to art criticism; Park City visit to view and critique various forms of art.

September 26- Journal writing; second elementary education day.

September 28- Training on how to create a slide show in preparation for taking slides all year for a final project to show to the class; third elementary education day.

October 2- Work on class book page; more plant identification; begin learning Esperanto, an international language invented to encourage world peace.

October 4- Bring art materials, lunch, and field note journals for a solo experience (each student alone to think, water color, write, etc. for two hours) in the mountains.

October 8- Last day to work on class book page; more Esperanto; introduction to the research project; one-on-one exercise in which each student interviews another student.

October 10- Class book page is due; outing up Bridal Veil Falls tram for class picture (for yearbook); visit to the private domain to write and paint.

October 12- No class due to Utah Educators Association meetings.

October 16- Visit Rock Canyon to learn bouldering techniques and to water color& Hear presentation there by botanist who is organizing activists to save the canyon from development planners; group art activity to summarize what was learned from the botanist.

October 18- Write opinion paper on the Rock Canyon issue; guest speaker to talk about nutrition, health and allergies; last plant identification day; another one-on-one exercise; introduction to the social studies projects to be done in groups on various “hot” issues.

October 22- Work on social studies projects; Esperanto; fly tying; plant collections are due.

October 24- All day trip to go rock hounding for geology study; bring a lunch.

October 26- Work on social studies projects; session on health and making health contracts proposing things you will do to improve your health habits.

October 30- Follow-up on health contracts; introduction and begin work on individual books (a project for each student to create their own book with illustrations and prose or poetry which will be copied and bound for distribution to all other students); Social studies project presentations.

November 1- Grade evaluations (Each student self-evaluates on the assignments they had for the quarter. These will be compared to the teachers’ evaluations and discrepancies will be discussed individually in preparation for final grade assignment); outdoor cooking in groups in the West desert (each assigned group decides what they are going to cook together and who will bring what).

From A Teacher. Two excerpts from one of the teacher’s field note journal illustrate some of the thinking, creating, and inquiry that go into the Unified Studies experience. Cheryl helped invent this class in 1974-75 with another teacher who died just a few years later. She collaborated with others for 2-3 years and has been working ever since with Sid. As these excerpts indicate, she is constantly searching for ways to improve the class; but she does it in a way that is revitalizing to her too. She looks for learning experiences in the

natural world that are interesting to her and searches for ways to help the students join her to experience the joy of learning with as little artificiality as possible. The first excerpt is taken from notes written during a solo experience in which everyone in the class spread out on a mountain side and spent an hour or two alone with water coloring and writing materials. The second excerpt was written during a field trip to study rocks.

SOLO Oct. 4, 19__

I am always concerned about this day because I am not in contact with each student all of the time. I want them to be able to feel this day into their souls so that years from now a part of them will remember and still feel the peace that was part of this day. One of the major keys to long term learning is the emotional involvement of the learner. If assignments don't require them to tie into their emotional reactions to the information, they will forget it. Unified is a learning experience they will remember not only for 5 or 10 years but maybe for the rest of their lives. Maybe not every day in Unified does that but they have experiences that provide them with reference points that determine values, create better citizens and better life styles, and make people's lives and communities better.

I talked to them in class about how valuable trust can be and exactly what our expectations of their behavior should be. I am excited right now. I don't know if they're all asleep or if they are really doing what they are supposed to do; but I cannot hear them. I walked around and took pictures for an hour, and it was so impressive to be in this place with these people and know that many of them were responding to the total experience. I do love capturing moments of beauty- I am anxious to create a slide show.

One of the best parts of this day was a short conversation with Dave (the researcher who is also working with the student teachers). Somehow there has been a "spirit-melt" between the three of us. I

can't believe or understand exactly how this has happened, but we are so one in philosophy and understanding so much of the time it's exhilarating. Sid and I have been this way for a long time, but to have someone come in and become part of that is really unusual. I've decided that I cannot call what I do work — it's living.

Anyway, I tried to explain this to Dave in 15 words or less, and I don't think I succeeded very well, but I could feel the emotion he was feeling about being with these kids and in this place and what a difference it can make in a person's life. It changes your perspective about what you are doing and it creates clarity of values. It frustrates me that these relationships are so time limited. That was and is the greatest sadness I experience every year with the students. It almost makes me hesitate to move too close. Of course, I have obviously made a choice, but it is still difficult for me. I work with such great people in such outstanding circumstances I wish I could rise to their level as a teacher. Inadequacy is a real pain.

Rock Hounding Oct. 24, 19__

This has been a glorious day again. It always amazes me how much there is to be gained when we leave the "normal" classroom behind and come to reality. I know that I talk about it, but it still hits me every now and then.

Norm and Darla (two student teachers) just came up and said they thought it would be fun for Norm's birthday to bring cupcakes for the class, have show and tell and have everyone take a nap! I suggested that we have everyone bring blankets and pillows; read to thee from Fulghum (Robert Fulghum, who wrote **All I Ever Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten**), have every person bring some object that they are proud of or that represents something that is an important part of their person, and explain why. We could play some Yoga music and have the students literally take a nap. What a novel idea — plan a day just for the joy of being so that the students walk

away feeling better than they did when they came. Now where's the education in that?

Back to this day — we got away from the school at 8:15 a.m. It is so difficult to leave right on time. I think that that is our fault, but it's difficult to think of leaving so many people behind and there are always some who are late.

It took us 2 and 1/2 hours to get out to the topaz beds. I see beauty in the desert and in the starkness that surrounds this area. There seems to be nothing for miles except sagebrush with mountains circling it. When we got into it and started walking around, there was so much more to it. The formations and lava flows and the topaz and the black garnets were wonderful to discover. When the bus finally stopped, I'm sure that the students felt the same way I did — relief.

I knew that Joni (a student teacher) was going to give the students their assignment, so I took a few minutes with them first to set the stage for the type of learning we were going to be providing for them today. How can I get them to realize what they are having an opportunity to do while they are having it? The best way to get students to learn is to devise essential questions and work from them; this is how we do life, except school. From the time we were born we have been filling up card catalogs full of things we have been learning because we asked the questions as they came to us and then solved problems and found answers. Why isn't school designed this way more? It will be interesting to see what the students come up with; they may need to be trained in how to ask questions that structure learning activities. It would require them to personalize their education.

Joni arranged for a student from the university who is getting his masters degree in geology to come with us to show us where the beds of topaz are. He was very good with the students. When we got off the bus, Sid and I and several of the students went up a wash that

produced no topaz. We were discouraged and I was very concerned that none of the students would find anything. Not to worry. The ones who had gone in the opposite direction were very successful. So when we got back to the bus and were supposed to leave, I couldn't stand it. I had to go to the beds that they had found. Pretty soon everyone was back off the bus and looking for topaz. Ned found a large one and Sally and Ruth were going crazy& I called them gem-dogs. They just had a nose for finding where they were. Anyway, we all found some good samples before we left for the garnet beds. It's interesting to me that Sid and I are the last ones to pull ourselves onto the bus and away from something like this. We decided to bring our families out here on a Saturday or Sunday. Most of the students were involved and willing to look, but a few can't seem to handle something if it requires more than a marginal effort. They passed the time sitting on a rock yodeling back and forth across the canyon. It must be true that it takes all kinds. We've got them in here and I wouldn't have it any other way. I need about 20 lifetimes to begin to learn all about the things I want to learn. I hope someone can arrange that.

I spent some time with Sissy. She has come out here with her family, so she knows what she is looking for. She is so bright and intelligent. I think she saw a different side of me also. It was good to laugh and look and share discoveries. This is so much more valuable than a new set of textbooks. What would they tell me about Sissy?

On the way home Sid and I talked and asked Andy (the graduate student in geology) questions. Sid was right next to him and he really picked his brain. He is just like me, always wanting to learn something else. People are so great to be willing to come and be with this class and not receive any pay for it — just a big thank you.

Last night I went to part of a department meeting to watch a video of a speaker on education. His philosophy was great. He talked about how education has gone in some of the wrong directions as far as reaching students and providing what they really need. He said that

our schools should be set up in such a way that they are a place where students will want to be because school provides them with such a good feeling about themselves. What a novel idea! He said that the “I can” idea needed to be emphasized rather than spending so much time finding out what students cannot do or rather what they are not masters of yet. He refuses to accept the idea that some students are not capable of learning and he hates the terms “If it’s worth doing, it’s worth doing well.” Well according to whom? Doesn’t this imply that if you can’t already do it well, don’t do it? No wonder, we think we can’t sing, can’t dance, can’t do sports. (I’m going to go to the dance class with Sherrie next week. I have really missed it. I can’t believe I’m not even hesitating. I really never think of myself as not being able to do something because of my age or ability, and I really don’t seem to care too much what someone else thinks. Anyway, it’s street dancing).

I’m going to go wrap up two deer tonight that we got last weekend. That was quite an experience. We left on Friday so that we wouldn’t have to set up camp in the dark. It seems that I am always doing that. However, because of the rainstorm we got across the state, we got there in the dark, and it was pouring rain. It’s great. No one else knows how to set up the tent but me, and the others weren’t even going to set up a tent. I had to set up two, and then off course, no one else brought any food but junk food for the night. I cooked all our stew for everyone else and gave them hot chocolate. The training I’ve received in Unified Studies has really paid off. That little whisper light stove works so well and especially with everyone and everything wet. I knew from working with students in weather intimidating circumstances that everyone needed something warm. It seemed to work. Spirits rose.

It is so exciting to have such a difficult time doing something and to succeed. I think that the point of life is not to have it easy and die, but to succeed at the difficult and live. I wonder why the edge is always so much more appealing to me than the sure safety. What has made me this way and why do I constantly seek the edge in my life? What

makes me think and believe and even know that I can survive at the edge? I know that someone telling me that I can't do something is a sure way to get me to do it. I do not like imposed limitations from any source. More and more I am demanding the freedom and the right to establish not limitations but personal incentives and goals. I liked the idea that Paul expressed when he told the students to be producers rather than consumers. I think I am extending the metaphor to a larger range than he intended, but I know that I am a passionate consumer of what is around me. I am probably intimidating to some because of it. I would like to transform what I consume into production of life and lifestyle. I hope that becoming the best teacher I can possibly be is as much of a production as writing the perfect poem, painting the Mona Lisa, building a business empire. It is not as showy, and I know that if I directed all the energy I am putting into that aspect of my life into something else, I would succeed. However, I believe in its importance and value for myself and for others. The weather today was the best. The company couldn't have been better, and the environment was stimulating. I think I'll keep on living.

From Some Student Teachers. During the four years of this study, 25 different student teachers have joined Sid and Cheryl in Unified Studies. Many others have participated over the years, of course. In fact, Sid was a student teacher there over 10 years ago. But during these two years, most of the student teachers participated in a special program which involved them there for the entire nine months of the school year. This is how the teachers prefer student teacher involvement because they don't believe anyone can really catch the vision of what they are doing in the program in less time than that. As Sid has said, "Some of the students don't catch on to what we are doing until the end of the year or even later. And if student teachers are here only until Christmas, they never see some of the most dramatic changes." It often takes the student teachers that long too to realize that this kind of holistic education is not as simple as what they were brought up on as education! During these four years, most of the student teachers have kept field notes which document their

attitudes, their developing inquiry skills, and their growing desire to teach school in the Unified way. Quotes from some of these notes illustrate:

1. I love this class. First relaxation exercises and then aerobics today-in what other class would we relax for a block, then kick it out with some cardiovascular exercise for another block. This class is great at helping us discover possibilities for passions. Of course, the gamut of passions we discover in Unified Studies is biased by Sid and Cheryl (for instance, we haven't learned to skate board yet and we haven't studied Oingo Boingo, either), but fortunately, the two of them are open for new ideas and suggestions. I think this open mindedness comes from a history of successes. I've learned that most people are afraid of new things because they are afraid of failure. Sid and Cheryl are both very successful people, perhaps not in areas where the world cites success, but in life.
2. My idea of what learning is has been strengthened by being involved with Unified Studies. I have learned that grades aren't really important, one can learn without worksheets, and the world is full of limitless things to learn. I personally feel more excitement about learning now. I'm excited to explore things I would have never dreamed of exploring before. I feel like I learn almost every day in Unified. Real teaching is providing opportunities for learners to learn. I don't think teachers should only present information the students know they like learning. I think it is good for students to be challenged as well as exposed to things they might not initially like. Teachers should be learners as well. Sid and Cheryl are great at this I think. They were more than willing to try my ideas even though they had never been tried before. They were willing to participate in all and to learn themselves.
3. In answer to the question, "How does Unified teach?", Suzanne, an intelligent, college bound blonde who spent three months on her own in Europe, said "By going out and doing things like

elementary education, skiing, hiking, etc. It's just the same way you learn lessons in life-through experience, then trying to improve each time." Unified Studies exposes students to many of life's lessons in an outdoor setting. Mountains teach people that they can do much more than they ever expected because success is the only viable alternative. When things get tough in the classroom and the frustration levels rise, students can quit. So they get an F—who cares? They have received F's before. "I can't do any better" is a common attitude. One day in class when we were supposed to be studying mammal facts in order to play a trivia game I noticed that Hank was not doing anything. When I asked him about it he said, "I can't learn that stuff. I'm in resource." The material was not difficult but as easy as it was to learn, giving up was easier. Giving up on a mountain trail is not easy. The bus drops us off on one side of the pass and drives around to wait on the other side. When the trail gets tough and frustration levels start to rise, quitting is the least favorable alternative. Returning to the bus is not an option because it is gone. Refusing to go on really is not an alternative because somehow, someday the participant still has to get off the mountain, besides, what would friends think? Death is possible but that does not seem very appealing. And so they go on, step by step, until they reach the top and realize they have done something they never dreamed possible. Nataline, a petite, delicate blonde, said, "They teach us not to be afraid to try new things. The hikes, ski trips, etc. aren't easy. There's no turning back, no quitting." Cheryl tells the story of an over weight, slightly slow student that started the Windy Pass hike. About two miles in, before the trail had started to ascend, he sat down and defiantly pronounced his intention to go no farther. For the next several miles, in Cheryl's words, "I tried everything to get him up that mountain. I coaxed him. I cajoled him. I threatened, I yelled, everything. Finally I told him that I couldn't wait for him anymore, that I would meet him at the top, and I left. Of course I didn't completely leave him but

he didn't know that. I'd hike ahead, wait by the side until I saw him coming, and then I'd continue. Once I sat concealed on the trail's edge and watched him as he passed. He was mumbling something and..." Cheryl smiles and her eyes get a bit misty at this point, "when I made out his words I learned a lesson. He was saying 'I think I can, I think I can, I think I can...'" He could and he did. Quoting Cheryl again, "Hopefully they'll remember that [that they accomplished something of which they did not dream they were capable] and will transfer it to other aspects of their lives."

4. Unified student involvement in learning is not limited to participation in outdoor escapades; they are active in the classroom as well. Consider World Appreciation Day. The students served not only as participants, they were also managers, directors, coordinators, and producers. Just before a visit to the state capitol, Unified students participated in an in-class mock legislature. In the session a student, elected as Speaker of the House, directed debate between student representatives about student generated bills. On Elementary Education day Unified students supervised 200 first and second graders. Regular teachers stepped aside while Unified participants taught a series of science related workshops, coordinated rotations between workshops, and directed lunch and playtime activities. Imagine, if you will, working with 200 six year olds and it is easy to see that Elementary Education Day is a participatory educational experience.

Appendix A.3 - Patterns of Experience

Looking across the experiences related in these samples of records kept by the participating educator-inquirers, there are many possible themes that could be supported by their stories (Techniques for identifying themes and other forms of analysis will be discussed in Chapter Eight). Taking these examples and hundreds of pages of additional records of inquiry experiences noted by these and other participants, several patterns that emerged are presented briefly below:

1. All the student teachers began their apprenticeship year confused about most everything they were going to do and they reflected their concerns clearly in their field notes and in their conversations with me as their university supervisor, with the cooperating teachers, and with each other. They were concerned that the students would not respect them. They were concerned about the ways the cooperating teachers were organizing the classes. They wondered about the disruptive behavior of some of the students. They wondered what role they were to play since they were not the regular teachers and they were not students. Their concerns are reminiscent of the anxieties ethnographers experience when they are seeking to establish working field relations. The novice teachers had many of the same feelings as they began their school year all on their own without the security of cooperating teachers, a university supervisor, or a cohort of colleagues they knew already who would support them in the immediate situation.
2. About two months into the school year, the student teachers were feeling fairly confident about their abilities to conduct naturalistic inquiry and they began taking on more of the

teaching role too. Their field notes reflected an increasing ability to describe what they were hearing and experiencing. They included more concrete and insightful descriptions of the physical and historical settings involved, the participants, the activities and events, the verbal and non-verbal communications of the participants, and their presence and involvement as participant-observers. Their reflections about the experience grew richer with time too. They more freely included their own feelings as participants in this experience and there was marked improvement in the quality of the inquiry as well as the teaching being done over the entire nine months. Their field relations grew richer with time and the quality of questions they were asking increased. Instead of worrying so much about how to keep students on task or orderly, they asked instead what the relationships were between students' experiences outside of school and their interest in the school topics. They were willing to meet students where they were in terms of their interests and motivations rather than demand that the students "rise to the level of the set curriculum."

3. Although they had moments of insight that alleviated their initial feelings of confusion during the first few months, the greatest increments in understanding about what was going on came when the student teachers attempted to *writesummaries* about what they were learning about the program and their experience in it. The synthesis writing process helped them see patterns that made sense but which they had not seen while deeply involved in the more descriptive kinds of field note writing. For example, one student teacher had almost decided she was *not* going to teach in the innovative way she was observing when she had her own class. But in February, when she began writing a synthesis paper for a university assignment and was asked to defend it before external reviewers, she discovered that although she would make some modifications\$ she was very pleased with the approach being taken in this program and intended to use it as the basis for her own

programs. She and the other student teachers agreed that they needed the whole nine months to really understand the innovative program they were involved with as well as the regular classes they taught in and the process of naturalistic inquiry which they used. The notion of prolonged engagement on site which is so critical to good qualitative inquiry was also essential to good student teaching.

4. The novice teachers found it difficult to continue taking field notes as frequently as they did while student teaching; however, they were able to find ways of reflecting upon and recording their experiences even during the time-demanding first year. For example, one teacher tape recorded her field notes while driving home from school or at other moments away from the school setting. Another used a computer at the school after hours to record her notes. Another sent copies to me of personal letters and diary entries, which dealt with issues at school for inclusion in the study. None of the novice teachers' notes were as rich and insightful as their writing had been during the apprenticeship. This was a disappointment to me. But in talking to them about the experience, at least one of the novice teachers said that writing about her experience to any degree and then having a chance to talk to me about what she had written and even more about the experience helped her sort out many issues that she had been confused about. It gave her a chance to talk about issues at a deeper level than she was able to do with most of the teachers and administrators assigned to assist her during that first year in her school. Perhaps this depth was achieved because we referred to her writing as a basis for our conversations and her interactions with colleagues in the school were based on orally shared concerns about the day-to-day activities of teaching. Writing requires the writer and reader to consider the issues more deeply.
5. The cooperating teachers benefited from their involvement in preparing teachers with this inquiry focus too. They

participated in many of the reading and discussion sessions and kept field notes at least part of the time. They both noted several times that they clarified their own thinking and intentions through this process. They found that their level of thinking about schooling, learning, and teaching grew deeper and deeper through this process. They made many modifications to their program in response to this thinking. They also involved their principal and other colleagues in more serious dialogue as they considered what they were reading and what they were seeing the student teachers learn.

6. As a teacher educator, I had my eyes opened to the value of studying theory in a practice setting with a focus on inquiry rather than on knowledge acquisition. I found that the participants had a greater stake in this whole activity than they do in traditional teacher preparation roles. The student teachers had serious questions to discuss each week based on their inquiry and teaching experiences. They saw me as their helper and advocate rather than as a grade giver who issued requirements as students normally do in college classes. The cooperating teachers saw this as “our” program rather than something the university was paying them a pittance to do or as a long-term substitute program. They also got excited about doing inquiry themselves and improving their own teaching. I will go into other ways my eyes were opened in the discussion section of this paper.
7. Finally, together we discovered several insights into education through a review of the field notes and reports written by these student teachers and novice teachers that will be shared with teachers and researchers through articles we are preparing for joint publication. For example, one participant identified what she called the preconditions for learning that she discovered through this inquiry process- conditions that should be met by teachers before students are willing to learn. Another participant explored the role of freedom and responsibility for students and how a new teacher can build on students’ views of

themselves to overcome many of the challenges faced by novice teachers who rely too heavily on classroom management and other techniques commonly taught in education courses. A third novice teacher shared ideas he learned during his apprenticeship with his administrators and colleagues at his new school and helped expand their vision of educational reform. As a result, they have begun discussing ways of implementing such reforms.

Some Related Literature

I also changed as a result of conducting naturalistic inquiry with these colleagues and particularly through consideration of the readings I discussed with the other participants. In the remainder of this paper, I will summarize one particular lesson I learned and implications for the notion of teachers as researchers by using the work of Levinas, a post-modern philosopher and Parker Palmer, a thoughtful educationist.

Emmanuel Levinas is a French philosopher who has critiqued modernist thought as well as the post-modernist critics in a unique and arresting way. Andrius Valevicius (cited in Packard and Warner, 1992, page 4) claimed that "In contemporary continental philosophy there is no name today more popular than that of Emmanuel Levinas, and in France, especially since the death of Jean-Paul Sartre, no thinker held in higher esteem. Emmanuel Levinas has already been the inspiration of two generations of French intellectuals."

Levinas (1987) argued that Heidegger did not go far enough in his critique of the metaphysics of modernism and that ethics (the responsibility of the same or oneself to the others of the world) and our social relationships actually precede metaphysics (the branch of philosophy that deals with first principles), ontology (the branch of metaphysics concerned with the nature of reality) and epistemology (the study of the nature of knowledge) in terms of importance in

philosophy and in our modes of being in society:

To conclude, the well-known theses of Heideggerian philosophy- the preeminence of Being over beings, of ontology over metaphysics- end up affirming a tradition in which the same [or oneself] dominates the other [any other], in which freedom, even the freedom that is identical with reason precedes justice. Does not justice consist in putting the obligation with regard to the other before obligations to oneself, in putting the other before the same?

Experience, the idea of infinity, occurs in the relationship with the other. The idea of infinity is the social relationship. This relationship consists in approaching an absolutely exterior being. The infinity of this being, which one can therefore not contain, guarantees and constitutes this exteriority. It is not equivalent to the distance between a subject and an object. An object, we know, is integrated into the identity of the same; the I makes of it its theme, and then its property, its booty, its prey or its victim. The exteriority of the infinite being is manifested in the absolute resistance, which by its apparition, its epiphany, it opposes to all my powers.

To be sure, the other is exposed to all my powers, succumbs to all my ruses, all my crimes. Or he resists me with all his force and all the unpredictable resources of his own freedom. I measure myself against him. But he can also — and here is where he presents me his face — oppose himself to me beyond all measure, with the total uncoveredness and nakedness of his defenseless eyes, the straightforwardness, the absolute frankness of his gaze. . . . Here is established a relationship not with a very great resistance, but with the absolutely other; with the resistance of what has no resistance, with ethical resistance. (Pp. 53-55)

Levinas does not apply his arguments directly to the issues of this paper. He is writing to philosophers about the basic tenets of philosophy. Yet, the implications of his discourse run deep into the

very foundations of what we are about in the pursuit of knowledge and in the practices of education. His reference to the “same” fits well with my view of myself as a teacher educator, with the student teacher as apprentice, with the cooperating teachers, and with the novice as teacher. The “other” in each case could be considered our students. And we have our projects we are trying to achieve with these others- to teach them and prepare them and shape them in curricular ways that we value. But they present themselves to us as resistant to our projects, as people who are beyond our absolute understanding and therefore beyond our control. We can have a relationship with these others but we can not consume them into being part of us. As people, they resist being reduced to our products. Levinas would say that to view another as simply a student would be to do violence to him or her\$ to totalize the other. Instead we can recognize the exteriority of the infinite other (we can not actually consume the other into our projects and categories) and respond to the other in the ethical relationship we are already in.

Packard and Warner (1992) apply Levinas’ thesis in a critique of film writing and analysis in a way that closely parallels the theme I have begun to discover in the educator as learner experiences discussed in this paper. This is the idea that learning to relate to students as infinite others in Levinasian terms through the use of naturalistic inquiry helps teachers resist a negative focus on “totalizing” students and teaching methods; thus, they may become responsive and thoughtful master teachers more quickly. The participants I have worked with in the BYU-Public School Partnership have been diverted from the typical educational project of coming up with the ideal teaching method by the “faces” or perspectives of the students they have tried to understand by being naturalistic learners *as* teachers. As Packard and Warner say:

The difference between the responsible and irresponsible image [teaching method] is whether you are loving or resisting others in seeing and describing the world. In the one case you are building your

own world, resisting the obligations to others as you do so, turning yourself and your world into stereotypes. In the other case, you are open, responsive to others in building your world. You aren't building it simply for yourself. You are building it for others. As Levinas put it, this is possible "only as responsibility for the other, as substitution for him." It is the difference between shaping another for the sake of your world and shaping your world for the sake of another. Your world is open and responsive to others, not simply "in opening to the spectacle of or the recognition of the other, but in becoming a responsibility for him."

If you want to hold things together, be thrilled by the harmonious beauty of your stereotypes, excited about your detached existence, you have to feel disgust for the mundane, disorganized world of your ordinary perception. You must keep up the need to resist ordinary perception [the emic view discovered through qualitative inquiry]. The more thrilling the imaginary [the etic or the methodologies of teaching] world, the more disgust you must feel for the ordinary one [focusing on relationships with students as people]. Charles Darwin wrote that the more elaborate and orderly his scheme of evolution became, the less he could enjoy the ordinary pleasures of life. This is the dismal fate that the irresponsible imagination [focus on teaching technique] holds for its disciples. (Pp. 1, 3)

The continuing emphasis on a science of teacher preparation and of teaching itself is toward what Packard and Warner are calling irresponsible imagination. From this viewpoint, to become a teacher, one is invited to learn teaching techniques which can be applied to learners in learning situations without ever having to face these learners as individual and ultimately uncontrollable persons. This whole process can actually close people off from other people. It closes teachers off from knowing the students as they are. It closes the student teachers off from knowing what teaching and learning can be. It prevents us all from enjoying these "ordinary pleasures of life."

The student teachers and novice teachers involved in this project began exploring what teaching and learning can be by learning to observe and listen to the others (student teachers, teachers, and students) they worked with and by being open and responsive to them. They did this by using naturalistic inquiry to immerse themselves in the lives of the students and others they were there to serve. I did the same thing as a teacher educator trying to see the world through the eyes of my “students” and colleagues in the high school. This process helped us avoid the trap of using techniques from educational theory to assign these people to predetermined learning categories or “images.”

Our experiences as inquiring educators suggest that by encouraging educators to be learners who try to see the world through the eyes of others (such as students, other teachers, and parents they may encounter) they may better avoid stereotyping and learn to enjoy the pleasures of learning and teaching rather than worry so much about creating their educational theories to their loss and to the loss of the students who face them with their “defenseless eyes.”

The combination of readings, visits, discussions, writing of field notes, and other activities engaged in by the participants in the pre-service and in-service experiences described in this paper encouraged all of us to be inquiring about our experiences with students. The process of learning through naturalistic inquiry has opened us up to new possibilities and has encouraged us to try new approaches in response to student needs. This approach to teacher preparation and improvement has been in contrast to the common approach of assuming that each teacher should have certain teaching or pedagogical skills and training them in anticipation that they will use these skills some time in an educational setting.

Parker Palmer (1983) critiques the more common approach as objectivism that “is institutionalized in our educational practices, in the ways we teach and learn” and proposes an alternative that

resonates with Levinas. Palmer speaks of the knower and the known which parallels Levinas' "same" and "other."

The teacher is a mediator between the knower and the known, between the learner and the subject to be learned... The way a teacher plays the mediator role conveys both an epistemology and an ethic to the student, both an approach to knowing and an approach to living.... As a teacher, I teach more than a body of knowledge or a set of skills. I teach a mode of relationship between the knower and the known, a way of being in the world.

To know something or someone in truth is to enter troth with the known, to rejoin with new knowing what our minds have put asunder. To know in truth is to become betrothed, to engage the known with one's whole self, an engagement one enters with attentiveness, care, and good will. To know in truth is to allow one's self to be known as well, to be vulnerable to the challenges and changes any true relationship brings.

Truth requires the knower to become interdependent with the known. Both parties have their own integrity and otherness, and one party cannot be collapsed into the other. But truth demands acknowledgment of and response to the fact that the knower and the known are implicated in each other's lives.

In truthful knowing we neither infuse the world with our subjectivity (as pre-modern knowing did) nor hold it at arm's length, manipulating it to suit our needs (as is the modernist style). In truthful knowing the knower becomes co-participant in a community of faithful relationships with other persons and creatures and things, with whatever our knowledge makes known. We find truth by pledging our troth, and knowing becomes a reunion of separated beings whose primary bond is not of logic but of love. (Pp. 29-32)

Palmer goes on to critique specific kinds of teaching that are typical of our schools and argues that such teaching continues to dominate

our educational systems because:

. . . it conveys a view of reality that simplifies our lives. By this view, we and our world become objects to be lined up, counted, organized, and owned, rather than a community of selves and spirits related to each other in a complex web of accountability called “truth.” The conventional pedagogy pretends to give us mastery over the world, relieving us of the need for mutual vulnerability that the new epistemologies, and truth itself, imply.

We want a kind of knowledge that eliminates mystery and puts us in charge of an object-world. Above all, we want to avoid a knowledge that calls for our own conversion. We want to know in ways that allow us to convert the world — but we do not want to be known in ways that require us to change as well.

To learn is to face transformation. To learn the truth is to enter into relationships requiring us to respond as well as initiate, to give as well as take. If we became vulnerable to the communal claims of truth, conversion would be required. . . But we find it safer to seek facts that keep us in power rather than truths that require us to submit. Objectivist education is a strategy for avoiding our own conversion. If we keep reality “out there,” we can avoid, for a while, the truth that lays the claim of community on our individual and collective lives. (Pp. 39-40)

The alternative approach to teacher preparation that we have been exploring in our Partnership school has encouraged teachers, student teachers, and myself to be more vulnerable to the needs of those we are trying to teach. Conducting naturalistic inquiry to understand others and to respond to them has helped create a community that questions the objectivist milieu in which we all grew up and which is predominant around us. This experience has been an invitation to be vulnerable ourselves as we want the people we are to teach to be vulnerable to us. This is not the controlling approach of “modeling” so

people will follow us. Rather, it is a matter of becoming humble enough that we really are willing to change ourselves and our projects, in the face of our students and their needs, interests, and concerns. This is the point Levinas makes in saying that the ethical relationship or responsibility to the other is primary and the ways of knowing and teaching that are the focus of so much of modern instructional theory are secondary.

Implications for Teacher Education and Teaching

This process of involving student teachers and teachers as naturalistic inquirers works. They can take field notes, do qualitative analyses, write brief summary reports, and learn to think critically about educational issues while they learn to teach and improve their teaching. It is also a helpful way to prepare teachers, help cooperating teachers do their job better, give the university supervisor an immense wealth of information about the experiences of student teachers, and help novice teachers get through their initial experiences more professionally.

More importantly, involving teachers at all stages of their development in inquiry helps them understand their students better, helps them exemplify learning processes for their students, makes them willing to change themselves so they are more flexible in the face of others and their needs, and involves them in the research community so we all benefit from their insights.

This process of preparing and supporting teachers could be used by other investigators, and we could study it longitudinally with cohorts of student teachers and novice teachers to see what they do with the skills developed during these reflective field experiences. If the findings of this study can be elaborated and confirmed in other settings, the implications for teacher preparation are profound. The focus in pre-service teaching majors as well as the education classes might shift from content acquisition and pedagogical technique to the

study of key questions and inquiry processes used by the various disciplines and to the development of naturalistic and other interpretive inquiry skills that would help the teachers understand their students and their school settings more deeply and usefully. Certainly, the call for ethical responsibility to others voiced by Levinas and Palmer suggests that teacher preparation should involve many naturalistic inquiry kinds of encounters between those who are preparing to teach and the people they want to teach. Teaching techniques within that context may be helpfully taught but they cannot take precedence over relationships between teachers and learners.

The questions for us in teacher education to consider are these: Are we as teacher educators and as educational researchers willing to respond to the faces of these teacher researchers and welcome their insights in spite of their different views, perspectives and credentials? Are we willing to be vulnerable too? Are we willing to join in true inquiry partnerships as well as student teaching and curriculum development partnerships with cooperating teachers, teacher candidates, novice teachers, and public school students so we all learn and teach together in true learning communities? If we at the universities are willing to do this, we will all do our jobs better.

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Appendix B.1 - Allowing Space for Not-Knowing: What My Journal Teaches Me, Part 1

Accepting the Challenge

Marné© Isakson

One day in the fall of 1985 I was pumping a colleague for answers to questions about my teaching. She stopped me and said, in essence, "Marné, you are the one who has to make sense of what is going on in your classroom. Write what you see happening." Some suggestions she gave were: "Be as specific and precise as you can. Look back at those observations and reflect on what you are learning. Think about what the events mean for instruction" (Marjorie Siegel, personal communication, September 21, 1985). I took her advice and thus began my odyssey as a kid watcher. For five years I kept teaching journals.

During the last two years I did not keep a journal because journal writing was time consuming. Instead I experimented with alternative ways to record kid-watching. I have not been as pleased with the results. Though I found ways to record observations, mainly on seating charts, the reflection part of the journal process had no counterpart. I missed the journal keeping very much and began to ponder the effects of writing upon my teaching practice.

I decided to take a thorough look at my journals to determine why

they were so valuable to me and why they seemed to be such a strong force in my evolution as a teacher.

In this article I share the results of an in-depth analysis of ten pages from two journals written five years apart, a 1985 journal and my 1989 journal. My initial plan was to contrast the two journals to see how I had changed as a teacher. I was surprised to discover how strongly my current theories of teaching were in evidence in my actions as early as 1985. A main difference between the two journals is my improved ability to record observed events. Another difference is that some of the questions I asked in 1985 had answers by 1989. For example, in a journal entry written in 1985 I had asked myself if it would be all right to allow Tom to tell Marty something about his book during Sustained Silent Reading. My response to reading this entry in 1992 was:

TN (*Theoretical Note*) **85F2-p6-9/26a** (year [1985], semester [Fall], period [2nd], page [page 6], date [September 26], section of page [a=top quarter of page])

Of course it is okay! I see that I was wondering about breaking "the rules" for SSR that the reading time be individual, uninterrupted, and sustained. But I was also seeing the support of community and the natural bent to share something interesting. I certainly should not discourage such interaction. On the other hand to verbally "encourage" it might kill it also. An overzealous, over-enthused teacher is not what these kids need. They need to see the sharing as their discovery not as "doing what the teacher wants." Just let it happen naturally.

As I revisited the two journals, I saw that I am still struggling with many of the same frustrations and seemingly unanswerable questions I was then. So maybe all the work of taking notes has been for nothing? I want to stamp my foot and say "Certainly not!" I decided to go exploring using methods of naturalistic inquiry (Williams, 1992) to

see what meanings would surface without imposing a focus at the outset. This article shows this journey.

Methodology

The basic method I followed was to make fieldnotes while reading the journals and then to analyze those fieldnotes in four different ways: domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, componential analysis, and theme synthesis (Spradley, 1980). I describe each process below.

Fieldnotes

Below is a list of the codes used:

Key to Codes Used in Fieldnotes and Tables

Actual Entry: AE italicized

Paraphrase: PP

My reflections: PN Personal Notes are those notes which explained the situation as I remembered it, providing more background to it, or giving my feelings and reactions to the events then or now.

My reflections: TN Theoretical Notes attempt to explain why I did what I did, guess the reasons behind my actions and those of my students, try to provide theoretical perspective on the incidents, and otherwise reflect on the meaning of those happenings.

My reflections: MN Methodological Notes are where I talked to myself about what I was doing, the inquiry process I was going through, and the resulting products.

Methodological Notes became part of my "audit trail" which serves as a record for review by others in establishing the quality of this study.

In Table I is a sample of my fieldnotes from a journal entry on page 3 of the 1989 journal. In this sample and in all examples given throughout this paper, ONLY the Actual Entry is from my journal, and it is printed in italics to stand out. All the other fieldnotes were made later to make sense of the entry.

How did I go about making fieldnotes? I started to copy an entry from my handwritten journal onto the word processor. When something

occurred to me that I wanted to say about that part of the entry, I summarized that part (PP), and wrote my thoughts about it, labeling these reflections as mentioned above either as PN (Person Notes), TN (Theoretical Notes), or MN (Methodological Notes). I continued copying from the journal and trying to react fully to what I had seen in the entry. Some of these reflective notes were very short while others were a page or more; the personal notes and theoretical notes sometimes became quite long as I grappled with the meaning I was making of the journal entry.

Table I

Sample Fieldnotes

AE - (89F2-p3d-8/22) *Carolyn came early to class to tell me she had already finished her first book. "I read 90 minutes last night." She told me about questions she had as she read: "Why did it have that title Three Mile House?" She told about how she figured out the answer. "The author told where four miles was on his jogging route and later that the house was about a mile closer than that." In other words, she had made an inference. She also told about sticking with the book until it was finished.*

PP - Carolyn came in early to tell about her reading experience the night before and to tell some of the thinking she did as she read. She had completed the book in one night.

PN - She had read a high interest, low vocabulary, short book of 60 pages by Bestseller, a publisher of books for struggling adolescent readers.

TN - She wanted to celebrate this accomplishment. She was not only pleased with having read an entire book in one evening but especially in being aware of how she figured things out. Other seniors and other peers may have thought this no big deal, but it obviously was for her and she "needed" to share it. It is important that teachers support these little celebrations. She is coming to value herself as an active, thinking reader. I wonder if she came to the class determined to make sense and to progress, after all this might be her last chance for instruction because she was a senior or was there something about the first day's activities and climate that made her decide to jump in with both feet and take on the challenge of reading. Another remarkable thing about this event is that she did it on the second day of class! Had I so soon built a trusting relationship or was she trying to brown nose me? Either way I think this was a remarkable risk on her part.

PN - The year showed Carolyn to be a reader who could become completely involved in what she was reading. She earned all A's in my class. Why had she struggled so much with reading in her previous high school classes? She proved to be a determined meaning maker in mine.

Note. **AE** = Actual Entry is italicized. **(89F2-p3d-8/22)** = identifying information (year, semester and class period—page and which quarter of the page—date) e.g., 1989, Fall semester, 2nd period, page 3d on the 4th quarter of that page (*a,b,c,d* designate the quarter of the page where targeted information is found), August 22nd. **PP** = Paraphrase. **PN** = Personal Notes. **TN** = Theoretical Notes.

For the purposes of the present study, which was to experience the processes of naturalistic inquiry, I limited myself to five hours of fieldnote making for each journal. This resulted in covering six pages of the 1985 journal and four pages of the 1989 journal. I quantified some contrasts of the two entire journals by tabulating such things as numbers of long entries and numbers of pages filled for the fall semester of the two years.

Domain Analysis

Domain analysis (Spradley, 1980) was the first analysis I did. This procedure involves looking for items in the fieldnotes which fit within a particular semantic relationship. I started with Spradley’s relationship of “Strict Inclusion” (p. 93), i.e., something that is a kind of something else (X is a kind of Y). I noticed in the first entry in 1985 how vague the descriptions of the events were. So my first domain became “X is a kind of vague description.” I listed about six included terms (the X’s), such as “good discussion,” “smooth day,” and “they.” I again looked at Spradley’s list of relationships and realized that the included terms were more “examples” than “kinds of” vague descriptions, so I changed the heading for the semantic relationship to Examples (X is an example of Y).

I had Spradley’s list of semantic relationships in front of me as I read through the fieldnotes. From five of those relationships fifteen domains surfaced for me. See Table II below.

Table II

Sample Semantic Relationships used in Domain Analysis

Domain	Relationship
Attribution	1X is an attribute of my role as a teacher of reading. 2X is an attribute of my theory of teaching reading made manifest.
Strict Inclusion	3X is a kind of participant written about in the journal.
Actions	4X is a way to collaborate.

	5X is an example of something I wish I'd done at the time
	6X is an example of a question I asked in the journal
	7X is an example of a contrived task
	8X is an example of an observed classroom event
Examples	9X is an example of my taking cues from the student(s)
	10X is an example of impassioned reflection
	11X is an example of something I'd like to consider doing again
	12X is an example of a vague description
	13X is an example of an anomaly--something that I can't figure out
	14X is an example of an instructional decision
Functions	15X is a use of the journal for me

Some of the domains no longer interested me, so I stopped looking for their included terms, i.e., **12x** is an example of a vague description.

After I had combed all the fieldnotes looking for included terms for the semantic relationships I had chosen, I felt ready to select a focus. I based the decision on two criteria: the domain intrigued me, and it seemed to have a substantial number of included terms. Four domains emerged. I reformulated these into questions:

1. What is my role as a teacher of reading? (from **1x** in Table II above)
2. Which student acts captured my interest enough that I recorded them? (from **3x**)
3. What examples are there that I'm taking my cues from the students for what I do in the classroom? (from **9x**)
4. What are the uses of the journal for me? (from **15x**)

I went back to the original journal entries to do focused observations looking for more included terms for these four domains. I rephrased some included terms into more general statements. For example, instead of "Matt dissented but when he found out he could work on his own, he decided to join the forces" I put the following into the domain of my-role-as-teacher-of-reading: "let students vote but don't force consensus; let dissenters go their own way." I also put this same Matt-event into the domain of student-acts-which-captured-my-

interest: “Students who don’t want to accept the class-voted decision.” I was surprised how many more included terms I found by the time I had completed the second domain analysis.

I now needed to limit my study further and I stewed over which domain to choose for further analysis. I finally selected “The Uses of the Journal for Me” for several reasons: what I saw surfacing through the domain analysis fascinated me; it had one of the smaller lists of included terms and so seemed more manageable in light of time constraints of the current project; and I am wanting to promote teachers as researchers and thought that such analyses might provide some insights for me to share with colleagues.

With this focus, which by the way came five weeks into the study, I went back to the journals for “focused observations” (Spradley, 1980) searching for more included terms. The list expanded to 31 included terms.

Taxonomic Analysis

To perform a taxonomic analysis, I took each of the 31 included terms and placed it into a group of similar terms. I worked through this process until I felt comfortable with the arrangement. The terms within each group were further sorted into sets and subsets. I then asked the superordinate question “What is ‘The Uses of my Journal’ a subset of?” I continued to ask that question of each answer until I stopped with “Making the world a better place.” The resulting taxonomy is shown in Table IV.

Componential Analysis

Componential analysis (Spradley, 1980) helped reveal contrasts among the terms of the taxonomy and showed the unique attributes of each of the categories. An performing componential analysis, I went through five steps:

Step 1: I selected two terms in the taxonomy and asked the dyadic contrast question, “How are these two terms in the taxonomy different?” For example, “How is ‘confronting my fears’ (3.2.1) different from ‘justifying my actions or concerns’(3.2.2)?” In this particular case, three answers came to mind:

1. I placehold my fears at a conscious level, in writing, so I can force myself to deal with them vs. I justify something I did and then am done with it (I know what I did and why, fine; tuck it away and move on). The first is a **demand for action** where the latter is more of a **validation to myself**. I labeled these dimensions of contrasts as *Placehold for Reflection* and *End Thoughts*.
2. Whereas the first is written **to cause change** (“Deal with this fear, Marne!”), the second is written so I can remember the situation in order **to repeat the process** if a similar circumstance should arise (“This is what you did, and this is why you did it. Learn from this experience and let it impact future practice subconsciously.”) I labeled these dimensions of contrast as *Understand to Cause Change* and *Understand so It Can Be Repeated*.
3. The fears are **forward-looking** because I must deal with them now, tomorrow, or soon; the justification is primarily **backward-looking** because I am reflecting on events in the past and pondering why I did what I did. I labeled these contrasts *forward-looking* and *backward-looking*.
By asking this contrast question of several terms on the taxonomy, I derived six dimensions of contrast.

Step 2: I set up a matrix to see what would be revealed about each term on the taxonomy if I thought about it with each contrast dimension. The six dimensions of contrast were placed across the top of the matrix. Down the left side of the matrix I listed the terms of the

taxonomy. See Table IV.

1. I proceeded systematically through the taxonomy, deciding how each term fit with the dimensions of contrast. For example, I looked at 1.2.1 "Focus on the anomalies" and asked: Is this more *placeholder for reflection or end thoughts?*, more *understand to cause change or understand so can be repeated?*, and more *forward-looking or backward-looking?* I put the answers on the matrix.
2. When I had finished, I noticed that sixteen of the twenty-eight terms in the taxonomy had the same configuration of contrasts along the entire row as did one other term. This fascinated me. How could they look the same when they were so different? For example, the uses of the journal 1.3 "pull out buried assumptions and verbalize underlying theory" and 4.2 "react to my participation as a language user" showed identical dimensions of contrast. I solved this by asking the dyadic contrast question again for each of the terms having a matching configuration. The answers revealed five new dimensions of contrast. In this case, the dyadic question "How are these two uses of the journal different?" evoked these new dimensions: *discovered while writing vs. discovered later*; *outgrowth of the situation vs. student initiated*; *overall vs. specific*.
3. I added these new dimensions to the matrix and did the analysis again for all terms on the taxonomy. Table V has the completed matrix showing results of componential analysis. By the way, I was curious about the meaning of the name of this analysis and searched Spradley (1980) for an explanation. "Components of meaning are discovered by a systematic search for attributes associated with the categories" (p.130). This now made sense. Componential analysis is indeed a way to see various components of meaning or attributes for each of the terms in the taxonomy.

Theme Synthesis

The value of finding themes is based on the assumption that “every culture, and every cultural scene, is more than a jumble of parts....[consisting] of a system of meaning that is integrated into some kind of larger pattern” (Spradley, 1980, p.132). Themes are not found physically, actually, in the fieldnotes. I could not read the notes and underline or point to the themes. Themes are a synthesis of all the meaning made from the fieldnotes and their analyses. For some people the themes “jump out.” For me, discovering these themes was not an easy task, certainly not as straightforward as performing the three earlier analyses. I approached the finding of themes in the following ways:

1. I concentrated on the meaning and uses of journal writing for me and tried to come up with some themes. It helped to ask, “What are the major principles underlying the uses I made of journals in my teaching” and “What are the larger patterns at work here?” Eight ideas came to mind.
2. I did not feel as if I had found the overriding themes yet, so I did a componential analysis of the cover terms of all fifteen of the original domains. Refer to Table II. From the resulting dimensions of contrast, I discovered eight additional themes.
3. I was intrigued with the results of the above process and decided to go further by looking at the dimensions of contrast shown in Table V. I looked at the list of contrast statements from a more global perspective than I had before to see if any themes could emerge. Five did.
4. I tried to put into words the essential principle that surfaced from the above three procedures. I boiled the many themes down to one, the core of what my journal signified for me. I decided upon a statement that was the overriding theme of the present study.

The results of initial theme synthesis is in Appendix D.

Some Other Aspects of Methodology

While doing this study I kept a detailed audit trail in which I recorded methodological decisions, confusions, sources I went to for help, dates, and time involved. (See Appendix A.)

All the parts of the journals and all the other journals which were not analyzed have been kept for referential adequacy checks, so in future analyses, I can see if my conclusions hold for the other journals as well.

Some peer debriefing was done when I spoke to colleagues about what I was doing and asked for their points of view. It was valuable for me to talk through what I was seeing and to have them ask me questions and make comments for me to consider.

A complete analysis of procedures used to establish the trustworthiness of this study (credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability) are found in Appendix E.

Portrayal of the Researcher

This portrayal does not quite belong in the methods section because it is about the person being studied, yet neither does it belong in the results section because it is about the person doing the study. The research not only looks at my teaching journals but I am the one who is looking at the journals. For this reason, a special section has been created. This unique condition of data maker being data-gatherer is strong reason for the reader knowing who I am in order to put what I say into perspective.

I have taught English, reading, or both since 1968 in junior high schools, an elementary school, private practice, a university, a community college, and now a high school. I have presented inservice courses on reading, thinking, and writing and have done some writing

for professional journals. I have a B.A. in English, a MSED in educational research, and am working on a Ph.D. in Literacy Education. All along I have sought out professional supportive communities by attending inservice and professional conferences, being active in professional organizations, reading professional literature, and finding colleagues to talk to.

My life outside of school is full also. I belong to an active and loving family. My husband is a counseling psychologist. We have two daughters and two sons. We have lived in the East, the Midwest, and now the Intermountain West. I am active in my church, usually in a teaching capacity. My favorite leisure-time activities include jogging, walking, swimming, biking, hiking, going fishing but not fishing, writing poetry, visiting relatives and friends, canning, and reading biographies and young adult literature.

From being around me, one might see that I love to read and write and that I wonder about things all the time, feel compelled to make a difference in this world, and am “weird” according to my seventeen year old.

But who am I in the classroom? What guides my practice? I will share some major turning points for me in this regard:

1. While teaching reading in a junior high school, I finally heard the voices of my students, “But Mrs. Isakson, I hate to read.” What did it matter if they could master skills at 80% or better if they would not read? I realized much to my dismay that we had been so busy learning skills that we had only read out of “real” books twice the entire year and then only for thirty minutes!
2. In 1974 I stayed up all night reading a most intriguing book, *Reading Miscue Inventory Manual: Procedure for Diagnosis and Evaluation* (Goodman & Burke, 1972). This gave me a new way to think about the reading process. I tried some things but had many questions. Until 1984 I could find no one

who knew much about the procedure nor could I see its far-reaching implications for instruction. However, I was searching and wondering. I now find it unbelievable that I did not for a moment consider writing to the authors with my questions. I suppose that says that, like many of my students, I did not connect a flesh and blood person with the “author.”

3. In 1982 I heard Frank Smith speak. Everything he said made sense and yet was diametrically opposed to what I was doing in the classroom. When I asked him what I should do, he said that he couldn't tell me, but that I could figure it out for myself. I took that challenge.
4. In 1984 I saw an advertisement about a ten-day workshop by the authors of the *Reading Miscue Inventory Manual*. I traveled to Tucson to study with Ken and Yetta Goodman and Dorothy Watson. This was undoubtedly the biggest turning point for me. I came home a new person.
5. I joined a support group mentored by Marjorie Siegel. She and the members of the group have had a powerful impact on my thinking. In those monthly meetings we meshed practice and theory, discussed classroom anomalies and suggested strategies, socialized and developed professional relationships. Marjorie challenged me to keep a journal and furthermore to write a professional article that first year. I did both. I also met with her individually every month one spring to study her ethnographic dissertation on semiotic theories applied to reading (Siegel, 1984).

In 1989 I attended an IRA Special Interest Group on teachers as researchers. I left convinced that I would like to find a collaborator to come into my classroom to help me make sense of what was happening. I found a professor who was interested. One of his graduate students became a participant observer in my classroom. This association resulted in much thinking and growth for both of us and a dissertation for him (Boody, 1992)

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Marné Isakson



Marné has been involved in literacy education since 1969. She earned a BA in English, an MSED in Educational Research, and a Ph.D. in Literacy Education. Her dissertation was awarded the Outstanding

Dissertation of the Year 1997 by the International Reading Association. She has taught reading at all levels: Elementary, secondary, community college, university, and professional development. She was named Reading Teacher of the Year three times. She has conducted research on college reading since 2006, developed two academic reading courses, wrote handbooks, helped produce videos and PPT demonstrations of the strategies, and developed a tutoring program for college-bound high school students. After retirement she and her husband started Isakson Literacy, LLC, which offers an online course in academic reading and promotes effective academic reading practices in colleges. She has four children, ten grandchildren, a dog Alfie, and enjoys hiking, swimming, doing family history, and reading, of course.

Appendix B.2 - Allowing Space for Not-Knowing: What My Journal Teaches Me, Part 2

MarnÃ© Isakson

Results

Portrayal of the Journals

The basic format of the 1985 journal was to put the date and to write what I saw happening. I kept a separate journal for each class period in a spiral-bound 8 1/2"x 11" notebook. I wrote in ink as I do any journal or daybook, because they are who I am and I want to save them. I tried to write daily but that did not always happen. To give a flavor of that journal, I provide four complete entries:

85F2-p3-9/23c:

Tom-came tardy-his 4th. During 15 min. of SSR: Fiddled with his art supplies, pens, markers, putting them in bags. I whispered a question to him, "Do you know what you are to be doing now?" "Yes, I know." — 2 more min. of fiddling. Then he started reading. He read 3 min. - looked around, at the clock, did not disturb others-but no reading. Got up 5 min. early to put book away. "That's stupid. I'll leave it out then," when I told him he couldn't but had to stay in his seat until the bell. — He didn't put it away either. He didn't write in his journal for the 5 min. He had made a note earlier, ___? ___ lines. Oh, the book he had selected was C. Sandburg's Complete Poems. I would infer that he

wasn't interested.

Forgot to mention Yellow sheet. All Vocab. people don't have supplies.

85F2-p4-9/24d:

Tom read orally from *Black Boy* into the tape. He didn't want to do it in the hall where the others preferred to do it. He recorded right in the class — at my desk. He set it up. He thought about what to write for our classroom. He said, "You mean like the lie that guy wrote about the steer?" (I was excited. He had been listening.) During reading time — he read 13 min. and 25 sec.!

85F2-p6-9/26a:

Tom was reading *That's Incredible*. He had to tell Mark about something from it. Do I encourage or discourage this during SSR? Semantics didn't go well because I didn't introduce it right.

85F2-p6-9/30c:

Tom came to tell me before being excused for a senior career day that he'd stayed up until 3 A.M. reading *Rambo*.

In succeeding years I kept all the journal entries together and labeled the entries according to class period. This worked better because the overall events for the day were often similar, and I did not have to repeat myself. The format was a three-part entry: description of the overall literacy events, observations of specific students in those events, and reflections on the significance of the observations, i.e., what I was learning about the students, conditions, interactions that might help me support the learners in my classroom.

The 1989 journal could best be characterized as a notebook filled with longer, more specific observations and more pointed reflections than the 1985 journal. Also by then my reflections had become interspersed throughout the observations. If an idea occurred to me while I was describing an observation, I did not wait until the "Reflections" section because I might forget the thought. So I put OC (Observer Comment) and wrote my thoughts immediately.

To give a view of that journal, I provide an example from later in the semester than the entries analyzed:

89F-p68-11/28:

Literacy Events: Book share three young adult books, read literature study books.

Observations: (OC) Quite by accident I stumbled on something that I plan to try again.

5th Hour-I didn't want to take the time to write the names and authors on the board so as I finished sharing a segment of a book, I passed it to Cora; she wanted to know the names of the authors. But then she kept passing the books around. They read the jacket, flipped through, started reading parts. Jed pointed to the song of one of this favorite rock groups. He asked how he could get the book *Rock and Roll Nights*. Terri stayed after class to talk about child abuse — *Secrets Not Meant to be kept*. Her friend had been sexually abused as a three year old by her brother and his friends — gang rape. She had blocked out the memory until her brother came back recently — the scars and memories are coming to light [as they did in the book]. Winn and Erin spent quite a bit of time looking in *Rock and Roll Nights* together.

(OC) Touching good books is a good idea it seems.

An analysis of the 1985 and the 1989 journals shows that I wrote about the same number of entries each time but that the 1989 entries were longer. See Table III.

Table III: Contrasting Journals of Fall Semester 1985 with Fall Semester 1989

1985-1989 equivalent number of pages	91-118	equivalent number of entries	52.7	56
number of pages with 3 or more entries (short entries)	24	2	number of	

pages with 1 or more extended entries (long entries) 41 97

I found time to write because I came to value the process. I considered it some of the best time spent preparing for teaching. I found time to write when the students wrote in their journals, between classes, during my planning period or lunch break, after school (the usual time), and in the evenings. If I did not write the observations immediately, some wonderful stories I could feel in my bones would elude retrieval. After a while I did not let that bother me because there were plenty more stories where those came from—any class period on any day. Since immediate recording was usually impossible, I tried memory jogging strategies with varying degrees of success: recording notes on a 3" x 5" card in my pocket, the seating chart, or in the margins of my journal; pondering the events of the day and writing what is salient; and looking at the list of names in the roll book at the end of the day to stimulate recall of events.

Three general rules of thumb for deciding what to write became:

1. Accept that I could not see everything so select something that interests me and go with that.
2. Write what I actually perceive with the senses. Concentrate on writing enough detail so the situation could be saved for future reflection and insight.
3. Try to see the situations from the point of view of the participants. This involved several procedures, namely, interviewing them, studying documents produced by them, and talking to important others (parents, other teachers, classmates).

Following these principles, I wrote the stories in as much detail as time would allow. If I had only five minutes, that is what I would spend. If I was waiting for a ride, I would write. If something happened during the day that I felt compelled to explore, I would make the time needed and sometimes that exploration for connections

and insights took several pages. Sometimes I did not have time to reflect, but I did try to capture the event so I could think about it later — such as now, seven years later!

“Is it worth it? Does writing in a journal make a difference in your teaching?” my colleagues ask. My intuitive feeling is an overwhelming yes. The analyses of the fieldnotes also shows a strong case for this practice.

Results of Domain and Taxonomic Analysis

I narrowed my focus from fifteen domains (see Table II) to one domain: the uses of the journal for me. Through a taxonomic analysis of the 31 included terms in this domain, I generated five main uses of journal-keeping for me:

1. DETECTIVE—to help me make sense of what I am seeing in the classroom,
2. BOOKKEEPER—to keep track of what was done and what needs to be done,
3. CHEERLEADER—to cheer me up and keep me going,
4. PEER-LEARNER—to be a place where I can record my thinking as I transact with texts as any reader might, and
5. MENTOR/FRIEND—to explore what I am learning about individual students so I can support their learning.

The initial domain analysis is in Appendix B, the focused is in Appendix C, and the resulting taxonomy is in Table IV.

Results of Componential Analysis

The matrix in Table V shows the results of the componential analysis. Doing this analysis evoked some strong moments of insight for me. To show an example of what this analysis revealed, I supply a journal entry and its accompanying fieldnotes, followed by a discussion of the

dimensions of contrast in terms of that specific entry. For the discussion I focus on Domain 5, which is MENTOR/FRIEND. Example from Fieldnotes: (See Methodology for explanation of abbreviations.)

AE (Actual Entry) - 89F-p4/a-3rdPer-8/22. Sharlene, Cal, and Brent were the drunken driving group. They decided after the whole class discussion of possibilities to find out more about S.A.D.D. Cindra had shared with the class some very strong experiences about this group's impact in Las Vegas where she had lived. Cal had also known of S.A.D.D. in Canada and had a contract he had signed there. He said he would find it and bring it tomorrow. In their group they thought they could find information about the group from Mr. McKay, Mr. Bolander, or the phone book. Brent said he'd research that out.

PP (Paraphrase/Summary) - Two boys and a girl decide to find out more about Students Against Drunk Driving. Two people in the class had personal experiences with the group in locations out of state. They thought of some resource people in the school who could give information. Two volunteered to look for information, Cal a contract and Brent some local resources of information.

PN (Personal Note) - Looking at this entry, I can see that I learned much about these students and also that I should have had focused questions about them.:

Overall — Why did each choose to join this group? What in their backgrounds led to such intense interest on their part? They are resourceful people, brainstorming some excellent sources of information.

Cindra — She can listen to several things at once. She was involved in her own group on capital punishment, contributing to that discussion, but she heard what this group was talking about and had something so important to say that she left her own group for a few minutes.

— She used to live in Las Vegas. Why the move here?

— She knew a lot about Students Against Drunk Driving. Why? What led to her involvement? She feels so strongly that maybe she has had some personal experiences. I ought to be open to her if she wants to share.

Cal — He used to live in Canada. Why the move here?

— He had signed a contract with S.A.D.D. It seemed to mean more to him than just a signature because he had brought it with him from Canada. What preceded his signing this document?

Brent — He seems to be confident in that he volunteered on the second day of class to research information that would involve interviewing people. Impressive.

Sharlene- No comment about her; however, I knew her family and thus knew her better than anyone in the class. For this reason I probably focused my observations on the unknown students first. I hope I realized the great probability that she could be very different with her peers than with her family. I should not assume I know her well.

TN (Theoretical Note) - The collaboration and intense discussion probably came about because of deep personal concern for a problem affecting their lives directly or the lives of their friends. We do not need to contrive problem-solving exercises to get students thinking. We just need to open the doors and let their real world in. Look at all the effective language use going on in the above scenario: reading an article, relating to something they know, getting ideas from someone else, deciding where to go for information, deciding who will do what, sharing personal experiences. At this point the best support I could give would be to stand in the shadows and let them go full steam ahead, perhaps asking a question to prompt their thinking if roadblocks arise. It is obvious they have the ability to pursue their

own course. The best support I could give is not to take this ownership away or dampen their enthusiasm. I also could support this effort by sorting out my own mental obstacles and being sure this is not a contrived task but a real and relevant one. I must be willing to let them take it as far as they want. — scary stuff for me at that time.

PN (Personal Note) - I respect their privacy and will not probe into their private lives. I will not press them whatsoever to share (unless I have reason to worry, then the talk should be private and probably for purposes of referral). On the other hand, it is important to build a trusting, warm relationship so they can feel comfortable sharing with me and class members if they think it would benefit themselves and others.

Example from Taxonomy:

5 MENTOR/FRIEND-help me see students as individuals so I can support their learning

5.1 record specific observations (timings, behaviors, attributes) so I can learn about students and how to support their learning.

Example from componential analysis:

1 2 3

A in-coming purpose for discovered while discovered later writing writing

B obvious underlying

C puzzled, confronting celebrating hard issues

D student-centered me-centered content-centered

E describing hypothesizing categorizing

F where to start place hold for end thoughts tomorrow reflection

G understand to cause understand so can continued change be repeated

H understand teaching understand learning

I student-initiated outgrowth of situation teacher-initiated (intentional) (unplanned)

J forward-looking backward-looking

K overall specific

Cells A B C D E F G H I J K											
5.1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	2

In order to explain the componential contrasts, I have selected on row of cells from the taxonomy, category 5.1 (record to learn about students and how to support their learning), provided a specific classroom event (in the fieldnotes given above), and then tell what each of these cells in the above matrix means given this specific context.

Cell 5.1/A: I usually start writing my observations of particular students for the purpose of understanding them better. The reason I did not tell anything about Sharlene, for example, is because I already knew her. However, as I wrote I also discovered some things I may not have noticed if I had not been writing. As I reread the notes later, additional insights came. Nevertheless, I have categorized this as primarily an in-coming purpose for writing (#1) as contrasted with discovered while writing (#2) or discovered at soee future time when rereading the entry (#3).

Cell 5.1/B: What I recorded gave obvious (#1) understanding about the students — such as where they had lived, their opinions, their physical appearance. Some underlying characteristics may also have

become apparent over time such as Cal's drug abuse problems. This is in contrast to something hidden or underlying (#2).

Cell 5.1/C: The act of recording the information for this entry was an act of celebration(#2), one of appreciating each person's unique qualities and contributions. Notice how much happened that was worth celebrating: the collaboration, the sense of community, the willingness to share, the brainstorming, the decision-making, the volunteering, and the evoking of prime resources to answer group-generated questions. This is in contrast to my being puzzled or confronting hard issues (#1).

Cell 5.1/D: This entry involved close kid-watching and was therefore definitely studentcentered (#1). I was trying diligently to see the situation from their point of view and to obtain a feel for their backgrounds and skills as contrasted to my being introspective (#2) or being mostly concerned with the specific content (#3) of the article they were discussing.

Cell 5.1/E: The mental process used in this journal entry was the process of describing(#1). Notice the descriptions: focus of study (drunken driving), decisions made (find out about S.A.D.D), experiences shared (by Cindra and Cal), make-up of group (the three members + Cindra), and volunteered assignments (by Cal and Brent). Distinguish this from hypothesizing (#2! or categorizing (#3).

Cell 5.1/F: The main use of the information was to decide what to do tomorrow in class(#1), how to support the learners, as opposed to placeholder for future reflection (#2) or to looking at the events with interest and then being done with my involvement (#3). The type of information given in the entry would be noticed day by day throughout the year and would often have immediate impact on my interactions with students the next day. In this particular case, I changed my entire plan for the next day, which had been to play a get-acquainted game and to discuss the purposes and expectations of the course. Instead, their excitement and involvement deserved to be nourished and set free. As it turned out, projects developed and evolved into much authentic language use: letters to the mayor, phone calls, surveys, library research, and interviews.

Cell 5.1/G: The purpose for understanding these events was to supply data from which future instructional decisions would be made. I wanted to understand what was going on with Sharlene, Cindra, Cal, and Brent so I could think about the conditions that nurtured this quality encounter; I wanted to orchestrate such conditions again so that this type of engagement would be repeated (#2). If I could understand this, perhaps I could position myself to be of service to the learners. This is in contrast to understanding it so I could change something that needs changing (#1) or to continue something without attempting to orchestrate events or change anything (#3).

Cell 5.1/H: The focus for understanding these events was to understand learning (#2). The quality of this collaboration and the degree of interest was far beyond what I had hoped or had planned for. Something about the situation was ripe for learning. I wanted to probe the implications of this event for what it said about language learning. This is opposed to my trying to understand what my teaching (#1).

Cell 5.1/I: The immediate cause of the event was an outgrowth of the situation (#2). It was unplanned. Certainly I had initiated the process (#3) by my brief sharing of enthusiasm for their letters the day before and suggesting that they take their ideas beyond the classroom to make a difference. But these instructions could not account for the snowball effect that grew from that little suggestion. Furthermore, the students did not plan that this would happen either (#1), but were captivated by a concern important and timely for them. The situation grew out of hand quickly in a very positive way.

Cell 5.1/J: The predominant direction of focus of my writing this event was forwardlooking (#1). I was wanting to keep the magic, yet learn how to support the learners tomorrow. Of course, I would have to look backwards (#2) for data to try to understand the situation in order to offer effective support, but the purpose is forward-looking.

Cell 5.1/K: The scope of this entry was specific (#2). I was focused on four kids around one table for a discussion on S.A.D.D. I am not looking at an overall, general picture (#1). Nevertheless, my probing this story for implications for instruction should certainly impact a

larger audience of my students. But that is true for everything I do, i.e., I hope I can learn from each specific incident so I can be more effective as a facilitator of learning overall.

The above insights came to me as I used Componential Analysis to make sense of the journal entries.

Results of Theme Synthesis

The three procedures described in the methodology section under Theme Synthesis helped me discover the belief statements or assumptions in Table VI.

The essential principle to surface from this list was this: TEACHER AS LEARNER. This is the core of what my journal signifies for me. This, I decided, was the overriding theme of the present study.

Table VI. Assumptions Surfacing because of Theme Synthesis

- Respect the learners in my classroom, including myself as a learner of how to teach.
- Teach people not subjects.
- Make collaboration an integral part of the classroom process.
- Write to learn to teach.
- Use reading as a tool for students to meet important personal needs, interests, goals, rather than as the subject of study
- Foster the learner stance in students through choice and ownership — force and manipulation, if they work at all, dissipate after a short term impact.
- Realize that good teaching is a never-ending journey.
- Probe why I choose to do what I do in the classroom.
- Be in a constant mode of inquiry and encourage such in my students.

- Recognize that learners have to find their own way, although teacher instigated experiences, demonstrations, and expectations can help.

- Reduce my controlling behaviors in favor of behaviors which liberate students.
- Realize how much better students learn when the reasons for doing so are authentic rather than contrived
- Take cues from the students rather than strictly adhering to the expectations of tradition; I need to find my own way, too.
- Facilitate learning in others rather than making decisions they could be making on their own.
- See myself as a mentor rather than as a director.
- Realize that real learning is a generative process rather than stenciling someone else's learning into the mind.
- Share the stories of my own learning and solicit such stories from other learners in the classroom.
- Use "child as informant" to see individual personalities rather than a class conglomerate.
- Realize that learning is messy not orderly.
- Give up wanting to feel comfortable and accept the frustration of uncertainty.
- Do more researching for truth with the students than disseminating of it.

I

A. The quest is to discover the right way to handle every situation (go to experts to find out)

VERSUS

B. The quest is to act ethically and responsibly (go to the participants' hearts, values, and experiences to find out)

II

A. The quest is to find the right techniques to make good things happen

VERSUS

B. The quest is to uncover assumptions and theory so these can be thought through and accepted or rejected and then because of this process of significant change, good things will happen

III

A. My lived theory VERSUS B. My espoused theory

The answer to my colleagues' question now becomes clear: "Is it worth it? Does writing in a journal make a difference in your teaching?" Most certainly, but not in finding the one right answer (which was probably my purpose in starting the journals). Remember all the questions I was throwing at Marjorie Siegel in 1985? Remember Frank Smith's refusal to give me the answers but his "you can figure it out for yourself"? I discovered that the act of struggling with these issues through writing was helping me realize that **teaching is a transaction with unique people resulting in change of both student and teacher**. The teaching/learning paradigm is a generative, caring act by both participants. Looking for a set answer for dealing with that delicate, unique learning moment is the antithesis of the real answer. What is the real answer? An uncomfortable, messy one: Do a "close reading" of the student and the social/psychological/physical context. From heartfelt information generate the supportive action to take. The overall theme of TEACHER AS LEARNER has two features which seem to fit as underlying themes in nearly all the journal entries:

THEME ONE: A reflective teaching journal can help me learn how to teach better by making visible my assumptions, thereby helping me close the gap between lived theory and espoused theory.

THEME TWO: A journal of observations and reflections of what goes on in the classroom and the meaning of those events can impact instructional decision-making and my ability to nurture the learners in my care (including ourselves).

I have selected two examples from the fieldnotes to discuss in light of these two themes, one entry from the 1985 journal and the other from the 1989 journal.

85F2-p6-9/27b:

AE (Actual Entry) - **Smooth day. They [Tom] wanted me to keep reading. Tom, "Why not keep reading? It's Friday!" Tom read the entire 15 min. + more during SSR. Had written in journal earlier.**

We did a +, -, & wish.

PP - "Smooth day." I read aloud to the class and Tom wanted me to keep reading when I stopped. "Why not keep reading? It's Friday."

THEME ONE (My assumptions)

Reading aloud even to seniors in high school can be a pleasurable activity. Reading aloud has enormous benefits for building reading proficiency: enjoying the reading process, seeing good reading demonstrated, using the same comprehension strategies as during silent reading, having a shared experience for later reflection and connection.

THEME TWO (Learning from the events to nurture learning)

The Friday part interested me. Had he been read to by teachers on Fridays? Did he view Friday as a day to kick back and relax. Whether or not, I infer he saw "reading" as a way to kick back and relax. Was

this a new insight for him? or was he being put back in touch with pleasant memories listening to someone else read?

PP - Tom read the entire SSR time and through the journal writing time. He had written in his journal earlier.

THEME ONE (My assumptions)

Providing class time for pleasure reading is vital for introducing the reluctant to the joys of books. They certainly won't find time to read at home if I can't find time for them to read at school. Besides, my allocating this time shows how much I value reading, letting it take precedence over most other activities. Choice is important. Whenever possible, I should let students have free rein to find their own way to be successful readers and writers. The purpose of the class is not to see how well they can follow my specific instructions but how far they can come in becoming proficient, self-confident readers and writers.

THEME TWO (Learning from the events to nurture learning)

Things are really starting to happen for Tom. Sustained reading behavior beyond the "required" time is evidence that he is coming to enjoy reading. It is also evidence that he is a proficient reader, at least in this context. What was he reading, *That's Incredible*? If so, that fits what I was thinking about "the lie" earlier. (See entry 85F2-p4-9/24d discussed in "Portrayal of Journal" in this article.) I think he would rather read non-fiction rather than fiction.

What are the conditions that could help Tom find the reader within? Some possibilities: abundance of good books from a wide variety of genres, free choice, time to read in class, expectation to read at home, sharing of books and the pleasure of reading, being in charge of his reading, freedom to express his confusions and favorite parts, demonstration of other's engaged reading behavior, sharing of good books through listening to segments, discussion of reading strategies so he could learn how to deal with frustrations while reading, and his giving a good book a chance to hook him. Maybe he found out that he was smarter than he thought and that he could read better than he

thought he could.

As much grief as Tom causes by his behavior, he is willing to try. The evidence for this is that he wrote in his journal early in the period. If he had not cared, he would have ignored the assignment.

Tom wants to do things his way and on his time schedule; he wrote before reading instead of after as suggested and that he continued reading after everyone else had quit.

PP - "We did a PLUS, MINUS, WASH."

PN - A PLUS, MINUS, WISH is a means of soliciting feedback from kids about any topic. I asked for reactions about the class as a whole. I probably gave these instructions: "PLUS — What is something you really like about this class? What is helping you be a better reader and writer. MINUS — What is something you really do not like about this class? What do you feel is a waste of time or detrimental to your becoming a better reader or writer? WISH — What is something you wish we would do in here that would help you with reading or writing?" I wonder if I have their responses stashed in some file folder at school.

THEME ONE (My assumptions)

Soliciting feedback from students helps me facilitate their learning. They need a voice in the planning and implementation of instruction and in the evaluation of their learning. Voice breathes life into a class. Negotiation means respect. If students feel ownership in the activities of the class, they are more likely to engage fully and to bring their best effort to the task. All of which results in a more successful learning experience for them. The discomfort and uneasiness I feel in giving up power is worth it because the payoff can be so much greater than if I manipulate everything.

THEME TWO (Learning from the events to nurture learning)

PLUS, MINUS, WISH gives a feel for the underlying current of feeling in the class. I think good teaching requires a feel for that. Over the

years some responses have been hard to take and painful, but I'm tough. Besides from this easy survey I obtain valuable information use in instructional planning.

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Appendix B.3 - Allowing Space for Not-Knowing: What My Journal Teaches Me, Part 3

MarnÃ© Isakson

Discussion

Why keep a professional journal, a record of teaching struggles, observations, and reflections about what is occurring in the classroom? The preceding analysis was of only ten pages from two journals four years apart. I need to delve at length into more of my journals; nevertheless, this brief look revealed five uses of the journals for me as a teacher.

The following discussion takes another look at these five uses by going to the literature to see if there is support for these findings. Short of doing an exhaustive search, I found very little research on teacher journal keeping. What I found is conceptual or narrative rather than experimental or ethnographic. Furthermore, I admit to searching out scholars who have a similar world view to mine. Should I decide to share this study more widely, I will do a thorough search. Surely others have been interested in teachers as journal keepers trying to make sense of the practice of teaching.

1. Keeping a journal can help teachers puzzle through what they are seeing and why they are doing what they are doing. Journal writing makes it possible for me to refer back to some of the events in my classroom and my thinking about those events so that I learn from

those experiences over time as well as immediately for tomorrow. “Writing about what happened each day, thinking about why I made specific decisions and responded as I did, has allowed me to reflect anew” (Newman, 1991, p. 341). Writing is a way to place hold my “kid watching” for later reflection that may lead to insights about how to support learners or to revelations about underlying assumptions that deserve celebrating or that need changing or augmenting. I know from first hand experience what Henke (1990) means about the pressures of teaching too often causing us to get through the day, sometimes mindlessly. I have likewise experienced the power of the pen in helping me reflect, conceptualize, and gain courage to experiment:

Teaching is such a busy profession that it is easy to fall into the habit of “just doing” without thinking about the doing. Active learners, however, need to reflect, conceptualize, and experiment. In order to learn about teaching, then, we needed to build in time and tools that facilitate the process& The professional journal seemed an ideal place to begin (p.283).

A journal can be a conversation with my evolving self. Mary Snow (1990) wrote that we need to role-play ourselves into being the new kind of teacher we visualize. We need a period of self-regulated practice (p.277). A journal can help me work through my learning in these novice situations. Even though I have taught since 1968, situations occur daily where I am a novice, doing things for the first time. So learning and making sense is always what I am about. I suppose I will always be in a period of self-regulated practice—perhaps that is what being in “professional practice” should mean. I have other compelling reasons to write. I find myself agreeing with the following authors quoted by Donald Murray (1990, pp. 4-9):

Edward Albee “I write to find out what I’m thinking about.”

Something is under my skin about a situation in a class, such as Tom’s

phenomenal progress during that first month of school in 1985. I need to write about it to discover what it is about the situation that keeps stirring up my thoughts. **Joseph Conrad** "I don't like work — no man does — but I like what is in the work — the chance to find yourself." Writing is a chance to find myself as a teacher, care-giver, scholar, person.

Keeping a notebook is one way to keep in touch with our past and present selves. A notebook, a diary, or a journal is a form of narrative as well as a form of research, a way to tell our own story, a way to learn who we have been, who we are, and who we are becoming. We literally become teachers and researchers in our own lives, empowering ourselves in the process (Cooper, 1991, p.98).

When I feel stretched and stressed, when I am feeling dysfunctional as a teacher because of trying events, or when I flit around not knowing my purpose, I know it is time to put pen in hand—somewhat like Ismael's need "to get to sea as soon as I can":

[sailing about a little and seeing the watery part of the world] is a way I have of driving off the spleen and regulating the circulation. Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off—then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can (Melville, 1959, p.28).

Herbert Gold "I write to master my experience."

I write to make sense of my experience and to make it serve me to improve my teaching and student learning.

Wallace Stegner "We do not write what we know; we write what we want to find out."

True, entry after entry reveals that I write about the anomaly, the puzzle, the thing I most want to understand. For instance, I flipped open a journal to page 93. The date is January 29, 1990, and I see myself trying to deal with anomalies such as:

-“Where had she heard it? Who? What had they said?”

-“Steve is on his second book recommended by his father. I can’t tell if he’s enjoying them or not. I hear mixed messages. The first Trump he quit. Now he’s reading Iacocca. ‘I think he wants me to be a businessman.’ But one of his letters told how boring it was. . . .He wrote flippant letters. Why?”

-“Natalie came after lunch to ask if she could check out two books for the weekend. What is her background? Why such an avid reader [and yet does so poorly in English classes]?”

-“Jennifer went to the library and checked out a new paperback. She’s enjoying it. Is this the first book someone else hasn’t recommended to her?”

These questions were nearly all addressed later, evidence that they guided my observations.

Harste, Woodward, and Burke (1984) created a theoretically based view of the language arts curriculum, rooting instruction in theory. What is known about language learning should be meshed with what is known about the language learners in order to provide instructional support for the learner. A teacher could ask, “In light of what we know and how these language users are performing, what curricular support should I provide?”

Implicit in the paradigm is a call for conscious awareness, for meta-researching and meta-teaching examinations of what one believes about language and language learning. What a teacher or researcher believes in these areas constitutes a set of relations upon which behavior is organized. . . .The paradigm argues that all research and teaching in the language arts, whether examined or unexamined, is theoretically based, and that researchers and teachers owe it both to themselves and to the profession to lay out what they perceive to be

key relationships in language learning (p. 224-225).

These arguments tell me to think about and learn about the reading process, be a careful kid watcher to determine how the readers in my class are performing, and then decide how to support their learning. This is backwards from the usual of going in with pre-set lesson plans to thrust upon kids no matter what and then test to see if they “learned.” Nancie Atwell (1987) finally gave up her lesson plans, her marvelous “creations,” and by so doing became a learner in her own classroom:

I learn in my classroom these days because I abandoned that creation. I had to. I saw that my creation manipulated kids so they bore sole responsibility for narrowing the gap, and my students either found ways to make sense of and peace with the logic of my teaching, or they failed the course. In truth, it was I who needed to move, to strike out for some common ground. I learn in my classroom these days because I moved, because the classroom became a reading and writing workshop, a new territory my students and I could inhabit together (p.4).

Oh, this is hard to do, to break away from the security of having everything planned and to take the cues from the students. The journal becomes my security. It place holds my frustrations and my anxieties and my vacillations so I can deal with them. As I go back to the entries later, a transformation has taken place-the frustrations have become fascinations. Inquiry supplants anxiety and off I go on the adventure of another day in the classroom.

So writing about my classroom experiences extends my awareness and understanding of why I do what I do in my professional life:

This is no self-indulgent navel-gazing exercise. It is a serious exploration and examination of the roots of our beliefs and practices which has the potential to lead us to greater insight, confidence and control over our work. If we are unaware of the forces that shape our

actions, we are doomed to work within them and remain without options. If knowledge is power then perhaps personal knowledge is the greatest (and most practical) power of all. (Nielsen, 1991, p.1)

Margaret Voss (1988), a writing specialist for a school district, started keeping two journals: a classroom journal listing ideas and questions, summing up feelings, reviewing past experiences, and documenting new knowledge; and a double-entry academic journal as part of a course project with field notes on the left and analysis, reflections, feelings on the right. She studied her journals to find out what she could about herself as a learner. "My discoveries not only clarified the processes and strategies that I employ as I learn, but led me toward new processes in my teaching" (p. 669). "My journal writing not only led me to discoveries about how I learn; it helped me learn" (p.672). She gave the example of how her procedures for interviewing improved because of the reflecting and analyzing she did in her journal.

As I write about my experiences in the classroom, describing the situations and the students, the transactions come into focus, take on added meaning, and become the object of thought. "When a practitioner becomes a researcher into his own practice, he engages in a continuing process of self-education" (Schon, 1983, p. 299). Through reflection in my journal I can evaluate the events of my classroom and learn from them so I can better support learners:

...such evaluations should be providing continual feedback to the teacher's construal of the situation which, ideally, will result in modification of that construal in ways which will permit ever more successful teaching acts. This process of feedforward and feedback is characteristic of what Donald Schon (1983) characterizes as "being in conversation" with the situation "so that his own models and appreciations are also shaped by the situation. The phenomena he seeks to understand are partly of his own making; he is in the situation he seeks to understand" (p. 151, his italics). . . &What we did think we

could identify. . .was the one essential ingredient they [new teachers] would need to keep on getting better: the capacity to learn from their teaching by being in continual conversation with it....Teachers can continue to grow by inquiring into their own practice....Teachers will never be sufficiently autonomous to free ourselves from the packagers and the testers until we can demonstrate to each other and to the public that we know what we are doing. Reflective practice involving inquiry can provide the strongest possible basis for such an assertion (Mayher, 1990, p. 283).

Writing in my journal often helps me see the need for more information which at times only students can provide. (Notice how that is true for the questions I listed from my journal above- 1/29/90, p.93). "Often teachers are curious, wondering about things for which they have no immediate answers. Those answers often lie with the students — if only we'd ask them" (Huntsman, 1990, pp.40-41). Writing about answers I need often gives me the courage to be the learner and ask students to be the teacher, teaching me about them. Courage? Indeed, for I must give up "the rewards of unquestioned authority, the freedom to practice without challenge to our competence, the comfort of relative invulnerability, the gratification of deference" (Schon, 1983, p. 299).

In my reading class I desire so much to help these often reluctant readers come to the joys of books that I can become overzealous or forceful. The journal is a place to reflect upon the best way to be a subtle influence which, of course, must be an invitation and not a manipulation:

Motivation for growth and the direction of growth are the responsibility of the individual teacher/learner....What we recommend is a cycle of reflection, planning, action, and observation, which may begin with any one of these stages and continue indefinitely (Jones, 1990, p. 56-57).

2.Keeping a journal helps teachers keep track of what has been done

and what needs to be done — BOOKKEEPER.

Though important for orchestrating events and bringing about order, this is the most mundane and an obvious use of the journal³ therefore, it will be skipped as part of this discussion.

3. Keeping a journal helps keep teachers fired up and trying—CHEERLEADER.

Self-talk helps a lot. Some of my journal entries are pure pep-talks, to gear myself up for what lies ahead or to keep myself going when the going is tough. Notice the coaching and cheerleading in the self-talk of this journal entry:

89F-p2-8/21c: I'm starting this year out feeling nervous because more than ever before I'm determined to move with the students, grab unscheduled opportunities, and follow their lead. I'm also committed to more "authentic" reading and writing. It's scary because each day is an unknown. It also hold the most exciting possibilities. -Go for it, Marne'.

Sometimes things happen that I want to share, but doing so might be too strong for the delicate relationship with a particular student and an outside colleague probably wouldn't understand or be interested, so I talk it through in my journal. Joanne Cooper (1991) expresses this use of the journals for me:

Journals allow us to examine our own experiences, to gain a fresh perspective, and by that means begin to transform the experiences themselves. I was startled by the power of this process. . . .It is through telling our own stories that we learn who we are and what we need (p.99).

It is interesting to me that I gain sustenance from rereading my journals. I am not sure why. Perhaps the stories remind me what I have been through and that I can continue with renewed vigor and

confidence.

Telling our own stories is a way to impose form upon our often chaotic experiences (Grumet, 1988) and, in process, to develop our own voice. Listening to our own stories is a way for us to nourish, encourage, and sustain ourselves (Howe, 1984), to enter into a caring relationship with all the parts of our self (Noddings, 1984) (p. 97).

Writing in a journal is. . . a way to attend to the self, to care for and to feed oneself. It can be a place to dump anger, guilt, or fear instead of dumping it on those we love. It can be a place to clarify what it is we feel angry or guilty about. It can be a place to encourage ourselves, to support ourselves, in working through that anger or guilt, and it can be a place to transform silence into language and action (p. 105).

In regard to this last point, I would like to share a poem from my journal. In it I vent my anger, my frustration, my concern, my wanting out of this situation. But, of course, I stuck it out. I submit that writing this poem helped. Through writing it, I discovered how to handle the situation for the month left of school, and it worked.

Crowther

Crowther
tears me apart.

*He shouts his profanities at me
while screaming inside
at his car accident,
"This is a bull-shit class,"
"You're not fair,"
"You should do this and this
not this and this."*

*He's on the brink
of violence, wrath,*

*a semiautomatic gunning the room
and all of us.
He seethes.
He festers.*

He's going to show US though
(or himself).
He'll be vastly wealthy someday
and then...
I'll regret
asking him to remind me that he rereads,
asking him to tone down his blue language,
walking away when I can no longer take his abuse.
I'll regret all that.

*I must learn not
to take him on.
It only enlivens his explosion
and upsets me for HOURS,
DAYS.*

*I must try
to let him be invisible,
to understand his white hot bitterness
and not shovel in fuel,
and not give him one more thing to dislike about himself,
but give him a cool drink, even a doughnut of goodwill.*

*Or just let him be
because he'd probably throw the water in my face
and mash the doughnut to crumbs
with a thousand pounds of his rage,
"Don't touch me!"
Crowther
tears me apart.*

*When will it end?
How can I help it end?*

Another month of this seems an eternity.

This poem, written when I was feeling crushed by frustration, helped me understand what I had to do (I had exhausted most other options). I asked him where he would most like to sit. He chose the corner of the room, off by himself. Of course, I tried not to let him see how pleased I was with that choice. Then I let him vegetate. I did not initiate any dialogue with him; I avoided eye contact; I let him be invisible, requiring nothing of him. If he made a derogatory remark, I did not hear it. He did remarkably well under these conditions, so foreign to my usual ways. He turned in his weekly reading logs, brought his book and journal daily and used them faithfully, and was always on time. Furthermore, the next fall he made a special trip to my class to show me a letter he had received from Lee Iacocca because of a letter Crowther had written to tell Iacocca how much he had enjoyed reading his book and to ask him some questions. I guess I learned that sometimes the best thing to do is go against my principles. Yet in this case my overriding principle besides self-preservation was to move with the kid, to help him to good works.

4. Keeping a journal helps teachers to react to their involvement in the language processes in the classroom and to provide a demonstration for other language learners-PEERLEARNER.

If I wanted students to write, I needed to be writing. "Something was immediately apparent: the writing [of Newman's students] was guarded and cautious. Their brief synopses lacked spontaneity and offered little insight into any connections they might be making....Something was lacking — I wasn't writing" (Newman, 1988, p.134). Part of my role as a teacher trying to increase literate behavior was to demonstrate such behavior myself. Something interesting happened. What started out for the purpose of

demonstration, became me, not something I was performing for the benefit of my students, though they probably did benefit even more so. Shirley Brice Heath suggests that the single most important condition for literacy learning is the presence of mentors who are joyfully literate people (1983). "Adolescents need teachers who demonstrate that reading and writing can bring tremendous joy to life" (Calkins, 1986, p.103).

In 1987 I had been reading *Last of the Breed* by Louis L'Amour while my students were reading silently. When it was time to write about their reading, I felt an overwhelming desire to write about what I had been reading, and I did. Up until that event, I had written with the students during that time but about my observations and reflections on the class. This time I wrote as a reader. I wrote in the form a letter to several students who were fans of L'Amour. They wrote back. The experience was so enjoyable that I began writing regularly to students in a separate journal about my reading (Isakson, 1991). I was glad to discover this naturally from an authentic need as a reader. Atwell (1987) shows herself as a reader and a writer to her students:

I put my true authority on the line from the very first day of school: 'I'm a writer and a reader. Writing and reading and teaching them to you are my life.'....My reputation as a teacher depends on the importance I place on writing and reading, how my passion informs my teaching, and how I invite kids to share that passion" (Atwell, 1987, p.48).

Reacting authentically to my personal reading and writing can have a strong effect on my students, I believe. So does Frank Smith (1990):

The development of thinking depends on the company we keep.... The development of how we think is affected by how we see people around us behave, and by the role we see for ourselves in their activities....People become thinkers who associate with thinking people, including the thinking people who can be met through

literature and art (p. 125).

If they see my thinking, if I engage them in thinking with me and with the community of thinkers in the classroom, they will be affected for good by this company they keep. Furthermore, I need to see what my students are going through from the inside out. I need to be reading the kinds of books they are, writing in genres my students are, and pondering the processes I go through in order to talk about reading and writing with insight and credibility. "The quality of teaching can only be enhanced when teachers think through the question of the nature of the learning process they want to promote in students" (Blue, 1981, p. 20).

The journals are tools for making visible my processing as well as the joys and challenges of my reading and writing.

5. Keeping a journal helps teachers see students as individuals so they can support optimal learning-MENTOR/FRIEND.

I wrote in my journal to learn from my students by trying to make sense of what I was seeing in my classroom. I had heard of Lucy Calkins who had done an ethnography studying one child (Calkins, 1983). I had heard of the Graves, Sowers, Calkins NIE project where they observed sixteen children for two years in classrooms in the process of writing in order to discover how children develop as writers and how schools can help (Graves, 1983). These folks were actually watching students and learning how to teach from them. Yetta Goodman's "kid watching" has had a big impact on me (Goodman, 1978). The notion that I could learn how to teach by watching the kids instead of leaning on "experts" or finding "programs" was an empowering idea for me.

"When I stopped focusing on me and my methods and started observing students and their learning, I saw a gap yawning between us — between what I did as language teacher and what they did as language learners" (Atwell, 1987, p.4). I discovered this also. Moreover, writing down observations helped individual kids jump out

of the crowd and into my focus. Insights would come or sometimes the opposite would happen, and I felt uncertain and confused about what to do to support a learner. I kept thinking about the situation, however. The only things I could think to do at times were to “interview” the student to try to understand events from his/her perspective and then to collaborate in coming up with an answer. Perhaps this was the best thing to have done:

We have much to learn by using the child as our theoretical and curricular informant. “The Child as Informant” is our call to the profession to go beyond kid watching to the active examination of current assumptions about language learning and instruction” (Harste, Woodward, Burke, 1984, p. xvii).

Voss (1988) learned about the learning of her students by writing down her observations of their learning. “When most of the first graders in one class suddenly began collaborating with each other on original stories, I wrote about it in my journal and discovered some of their discoveries — and became more aware of the kind of help they needed from me” (p.673). Likewise, my journals are filled with narratives about my students. Quite often these stories result in discoveries about how to support them, but always such entries help me see a real human being worth knowing and caring about—a valuable accomplishment given that I face well over a hundred students a day.

The above detailed discussion explicated the five uses I make of my journals, weaving in the experiences shared and the opinions expressed in the professional literature.

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Appendix B.4 - Allowing Space for Not-Knowing: What My Journal Teaches Me, Part 4

MarnÃ© Isakson

Implications and Conclusion

Why tell this story? First, for me to find out why I keep a teaching journal is a timeconsuming task. The act of writing this report of my inquiry has been another “write to learn” experience. Second, to share its values with other professionals, who thereby might come to view the time it takes as well spent and inquire into and reflect upon their own practice.

My results invite other researchers to look where I did and see what I saw. My ideas are candidates for others to entertain, not necessarily as truth, let alone Truth, but as positions about the nature and meaning of a phenomenon that _____ their sensibility and shape their thinking about their own inquiries (Peshkin, 1985, p.280).

Keep a reflective journal. “Just try,” Judith Newman says. Before long we can be a voice of support to our colleagues who are trying to risk a learner stance in their classrooms. We can nurture in surprisingly effective ways those we care about, our students.

A transactional theory of reading (Rosenblatt, 1978; Goodman, 1984; Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984; Siegel, 1984) has strong parallels to what my journals do for me as a teacher. Just as readers transact

with texts and both are changed in the process, I am changed by my transactions with the participants in the teaching situation and so are they. "The inferential processes we use to interpret the text/situation simultaneously change it and us" (Mayher, 1990, p.283). Change is what reflective journals help us do. Robert Boody (1992) says that teacher reflection has to do with change: "change of heart, change of being, change of actions" (p.157). It also has to do with keeping what is good and knowing why.

We teachers need to stop the "unquestioning compliance with curriculum guides, blind faith in instructional materials, impotence in the face of government and administrative edicts, guilt and anger about innovation, and lack of confidence as decision makers" (Nielsen, 1991, p.1). Journal keeping seems to be powerful way to get in touch with our professional selves, learn from our experiences, and struggle to make sense of the anomalies that surface daily.

Analyzing these journals has made it clear that I will always have something happening in the classroom that I will find unsettling and puzzling. This goes for things I think I have figured out, too. I suppose those "sure things" change inevitably as my awareness deepens and expands. But I can find my own way, just as Frank Smith told me in 1982, as can all of us who ask questions of our practice and replace the continuum from apathy to frustration and burn-out with an inquiring, observant, reflective and rejuvenating fascination for what goes on in our classrooms. Levine (1979) suggests a non-fluttered approach to all this thinking:

We're constantly building a new image of ourselves and wondering what's next. We have allowed ourselves very little space for not-knowing. Very seldom do we have the wisdom not-to-know, to lay the mind open to deeper understanding. When confusion occurs in the mind, we identify with it and say we are confused; we hold onto it. Confusion arises because we fight against our not-knowing, which experiences each moment afresh without preconceptions or expectations. We are so full of ways of seeing and ideas of how things should be, we leave no room for wisdom to arise. We desire to know in

only a certain way, a way which will corroborate our image of a rational, separate, autonomous self. When we open our minds, our hearts, not *trying* to understand, but simply allowing understanding to occur, we find more than was expected. When we let go of our ignorance and confusion, we allow our knowing mind to arise (Levine, 1979, pp. 38-39).

Jane Birch (1992) puts forth the hard reality that we must face in order to be the kind of teachers we want to be:

Could there be something in the kind of thought that compels us to “pause to ask” that we are afraid may require more of us as people than we are willing to give ? By pausing to ask are we not in danger of hearing something we may not want to hear? Something that may call on us to give not just our time but our souls: our care, our concern, our passion? And perhaps even more than this, our willingness to change in the face of those things we might see in ourselves those realizations we might come to when we pause long enough, not just to still our bodies, but to also still our minds and hearts? Are we perhaps afraid of something within ourselves, something we are not sure we are ready to give up and so are not sure we want to face? If so, then the problem with reflection is not technical at all, but spiritual (p.2).

If we are willing to be teachers as learners, we all too soon will come to the realization that “discovering who we are is to confront who we are not” (Julie Preece, personal communication, October 7, 1992). But then that is where learning begins. “Too often we find ourselves running away from something that we can’t progress without. To sit still long enough, and listen close enough, and care enough to “hear” the problem is to already be reaching into the solution” (Birch, 1992, p.3).

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Appendix A

AUDIT TRAIL, Summarized

June 23, 1992: Thought of several ideas to study.

June 24, 1992: Fleshed out three ideas.

June 28, 1992: Thought of six more ideas.

June 30, 1992: Listened to others ideas, talked to David about two ideas. He liked the second best: look at my journals. I listed three reasons why I like that idea also.

July 1, 1992: Read a naturalistic inquiry study. Decided what to look for as I read the journals. Read how to make fieldnotes and listed questions I want answered.

July 7th 1992: Read four pages of 1985 journal, was confused about what to look for, listed possibilities that I would find interesting, wrote

for four pages trying to find a focus. Read the entire year's entries for 4th period in 1985-86. Then started to read 1989. Expressed my fears about doing this, "I am afraid to read these journals.

Approach/Avoidance. I'm afraid of seeing the teacher in those journals. Was my first year my best year? Has it been downhill since then?"

July 8, 1992: Made decisions about how to organize the data, set up a coding system. Thought about my focus again for two pages.

July 9, 1992: Entered 14 ideas for focus onto the computer.

July 10, 1992: Decided to go into journals with no focus, but just to see what I could see. After one hour, I was surprised to see that my reflections about the entries were substantially longer than descriptions of them. I spent five hours and twenty minutes making fieldnotes. I narrowed the project from all journals to two journals then from whole journals to one month each.

July 11, 1992: Worked on the 1989 journal for five hours and covered only first two days of school! Decided to stop taking fieldnotes.

July 13, 1992: Made an appointment to interview my department chairperson about me as an example of teacher change.

July 14, 1992: Printed out fieldnotes-17 pages single-spaced. Talked to Rob as Peer Debriefing about Tom in 1985 journal, trying to understand dramatic change in him in seven days. Told David about my frustration in doing Domain Analysis-doing fieldnotes of fieldnotes!

July 16, 1992: We helped Rick find domains: this greatly helped me. Determined that I could do domain analysis.

July 19, 1992: I read and reread chapters on domain analysis and focused observations. Interviewed my husband about me changing as

a teacher.

July 20, 1992: Appointment with department chair fell through.

July 21, 1992: Reread my fieldnotes and listed a question for focus. Decided I was not ready for a focus yet. First I should do a domain analysis.

July 22, 1992: Went back to fieldnotes and inserted the actual journal entry before the fieldnotes about it. I added more fieldnotes to several. I worked 5 1/2 hours on fieldnotes. Started domain analysis, easier than I thought-eight pages in one hour!

July 23, 1992: Worked one hour on domain analysis. This is fun.

July 25, 1992: Finished domain analysis for 1985 journal in 1 hour 40 minutes. Finished domain analysis of pages 14-19 of 1989 journal in 1 hour 15 minutes. Finally understand "focused questions." Selected four.

July 27, 1992: Finished 1989 domain analysis to page 25 in 55 minutes. Did the focused questions and added to the domains for the four selected. 3 hours, 27 minutes. Used only the actual journal entries, note my 1992 fieldnotes for these focused observations. Studied how to do taxonomic and componential analysis. Reread and made notes. Finally decided the best way to learn it is to try it.

July 28, 1992: Selected a focus, then changed my mind. Decided to go with "Uses of the Journals for Me." Read through items under this domain, sorting them into groups. Hardest part was giving labels to the categories. A semantic map helped me do this. Created inclusive domains by asking "What is 'the uses of my journal' a subset of?" Asked dyadic and triadic contrast questions.

July 29, 1992: Worked on componential analysis 1 1/2 hours. Generated six dimensions of contrast. Looked at terms that matched

other terms in these six ways and asked dyadic questions again. Generated five more dimensions of contrast. Redid the analysis—another 1 1/2 hours. I really enjoyed doing this. Read how to do theme analysis. Listed a plan for doing so. Changed my mind and decided to type up the three analyses completed and to percolate on themes while doing so. Listed some ideas for themes. Read about how to write the ethnographic report. Decided I needed more models. Decided on an audience for my report—in-service teachers considering becoming researchers in their own classrooms. Came up with two major themes. Worked on tentative outline. Stayed up until 2:52 A.M. July 30. “William Andrews has been executed. I’m going to bed.” I put in over 17 hours on this project today!

July 30, 1992: Reread what a quality report should include.

July 31, 1992: Worked on report for 2 hours 15 minutes: added more references to literature review, wrote three sections of methodology. “I don’t know how specific to become in explaining what I did—I probably erred on the side of too much detail.”

August 1, 1992: Read Spradley pages 130-139 on componential analysis. Discovered why it is called that: components of meaning discovered by systematic search for attributes associated with the categories.

August 10, 1992: Wrote rough draft most of the day, revising earlier sections and hammering out the theme section. Created meaning in the act of writing. Generated more insights concerning themes.

August 11, 1992: Randomly selected one event from each journal to use as an example to analyze in terms of each of the two overriding themes. Reminded self to be sure to change all the names of students.

August 21, 1992: Reread entire manuscript. Explained what I was learning from the componential analysis. Selected two items from the taxonomy that most interested me and looked up the stories that caused the formulation of these domains. Selected one of these,

copied the fieldnotes into the body of the paper and proceeded to discuss the line of the componential analysis matrix. Strong insights evoked and had to rethink some of the contrasts. Added another component because in depth probing revealed inadequacies. Decided to do a cursory review of literature using only the sources I have at home. Worked on review for 4 hours. Is a conceptual piece acceptable in a review of literature? Found some relevant quotes but are they the "literature" I should be reviewing?

Sept. 3, 1992: Looked at literature again and was struck with how all my sources are comments, opinions, experiences; none are experimental or results of research. "So, is this a valuable 'review of literature'? I suspect not, but for me it is because it is helping me articulate what journals do for me."

Sept. 4, 1992: In reviewing Rob's dissertation, I realized an entire domain to add to taxonomy.

Sept. 17, 1992: Worked on rough draft.

Sept. 20, 1992: Worked on rough draft until 5 A.M. next day. Ugh! I am least pleased with theme synthesis and conclusions—needs lots of work yet.

Sept. 25, 1992: Worked on theme synthesis, review of literature, and discussion. Decided to arrange review according to taxonomy.

Sept. 26, 1992: Worked on revising entire report. Put references into APA format. Added more examples.

Sept. 28, 1992: Gave copy to David and Teresa for feedback. Gave copies to counseling interns as an example of learning by reflecting on classroom observations.

Oct. 3, 1992: Worked on editing the paper. Revisions occurred also.

Oct. 5, 1992: Received feedback from David and Teresa. Need to put in more examples and rewrite for audience. Don't worry about sounding so academic. The sections for a research report will probably turn off teachers. Write this article for them. Made lots of notes for changes. Sent a reminder to interns that I'd appreciate their feedback on the article. Typed up this summary of Audit Trail. Actual audit trail is 54 pages!

Oct. 6, 1992: Reread entire manuscript with audience in mind. Revised entire manuscript. Put in more examples. Rearranged sections. Gave more catchy titles to sections. Looked up some references I had questions about. Gave new draft to David.

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Appendix B.5 - Marne's critique of her own study

MarnÃ© Isakson

Four types of criteria were considered throughout this study so that its trustworthiness could be determined. Trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry is comparable to the standards of reliability and validity demanded of experimental studies. While these terms are irrelevant in a qualitative inquiry, achieving disciplined observations, quality insights, and substantiated conclusions are vital to any study. **Credibility, transferability, dependability,** and **confirmability** were the standards used. See Guba and Lincoln (1989). To show to what degree these criteria were met in this study, the checklist suggested by Williams (1992) was followed.

1. IS A MEANINGFUL TOPIC ADDRESSED?

The topic of the uses of teaching journals has certainly been meaningful to me. I came into the project knowing that journal writing was a way that I made sense of what was happening in my classroom; I came away understanding why this is so. The potential for its being meaningful to other teachers depends on them. I am convinced of the efficacy of journal writing in helping me improve as a facilitator of learning. Others might discover the power of this process to the degree they describe events in their classrooms explicitly and reflect on the meaning of those events in order to support the learners in their care.

2. IS QUALITATIVE INQUIRY APPROPRIATE FOR THE TOPIC?

Given that I went into this study of my journals cold with no hypotheses and no preconceived notions of what I would find, an experimental design was inappropriate or surely premature. Sometimes qualitative inquiry can be used as a pre-study to gather important contextual information before designing an experiment. Yet even after a focus and an overriding question was formulated, an experiment would not be appropriate for this study because of the nature of the documents, the questions being addressed, and the purposes for the study. One does not design an experiment with treatment groups and control groups to look at one teacher's journals written over a period of five years for the purpose of understanding learning and learners. The purpose of the study was to describe what was occurring in the journals and finally was refined after lengthy observations to discovering the uses of the journals in the teacher's professional life. No experimental or quasi-experimental design could answer this question from the database, five years of reflective journals. No other methodology could have uncovered the insights gained from doing these analyses. Certainly no other type of research could have lead to the same type of discoveries.

3. ARE PEOPLE TREATED ETHICALLY?

This question might not apply, as I am the only person involved, though it could be argued that I did not treat myself ethically since I made myself skip meals, skip sleep, and miss family events to involve myself in the research process. The students mentioned in the journals were not met face to face in this study but nevertheless were treated ethically when I changed their names in all the field notes and in any discussion including them.

4. ARE NATURAL CONDITIONS MAINTAINED AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE?

The original journal entries were copied in full into the field notes and then were analyzed. The journals themselves reflected the actual events in my classroom to the best of my descriptive abilities given that I knew I could not capture everything going on and so focused on some event or student who caught my attention at the time. As much as time and memory allowed, I wrote exact conversations and sensory details of what I saw and heard. I tried to draw the picture of the occurrences using words. The other “natural conditions,” held in place by the writing, were my reactions, feelings, meaning-making, and insights concerning those occurrences.

5. IS THE REPORT WELL WRITTEN?

a. Does it communicate well?

Although it could be improved through continual revision, the primary audience for this version of the report (my instructor) acknowledged that this criterion is met.

b. Does it address conflicting results?

Conflicting results in this study were not a matter of contradictions as much as a matter of unclassified data, data that did not seem to fit the taxonomy constructed. This was handled by rethinking the taxonomy to include each finding and give explanation for it. This study is also seen as a beginning. I only looked at a month and two days worth of entries out of five years of journals. I fully expect to discover more uses of the journal as I analyze additional journal entries. Thus the new findings will alter the present taxonomy also.

c. Does it include descriptions of the researcher, the data gathered, and the conditions under which they were gathered?

The journals, the journal writer, and the field notes are described in this study. A portrayal of the researcher is provided not only because the reader ought to know the assumptions the researcher has but also because the “subject” of the research, the journal writer, is also the researcher. The journals are described by showing excerpts from the journals, the actual journal entries, and by paraphrases, summaries, and responses to the entries. Furthermore, a history of the journals provides the reasons and the contexts from which the journals evolved.

d. Does it include analysis and synthesis of the data?

The in-depth domain, taxonomic, and componential analyses on the journals and their accompanying field notes are reported via text and charts. A portion of the report is devoted to a synthesis of themes that emerged from the study of the journals. Discussion and implications of the analyses and synthesis are provided.

6. IS THE STUDY CREDIBLE?

a. Is prolonged engagement adequate? The prolonged engagement involved five years of keeping journals and seven years of thinking about their value. The actual field note-taking involved seventeen hours of looking at the journals. This was adequate as evidenced by the broad results. More time can be spent but the results from this short look in the context of prolonged engagement by the journal-keeper as researcher is justified.

b. Is persistent observation adequate?

Seventeen hours of observation of only ten pages of original journal entries shows persistence and the determination to make meaning of the entries. Another thirty-eight hours was spent on the analyses, much of the time during such necessitated going back in to the journals to “observe” again.

c. Is triangulation used appropriately?

The journals were the only source of information available to answer the question, “What are the uses of the journal for me?” I submit this criterion does not apply in the study. However, my husband was interviewed and an appointment was made with the department chair, in both cases, to explore evidence of my change as a teacher over the years. Furthermore, the journal entries themselves reveal a great deal of triangulation—conversations, formal interviews, student document analysis, parent visits, other teachers’ insights, survey results, and, of course, my observations of student activity.

d. Is peer debriefing used appropriately?

I shared some of my confusions about what I was seeing in the journal with another doctoral student, a professor, and several people in a class about qualitative inquiry. However, the encounters were informal and short rather than intensive debriefings. Nevertheless, these “disinterested peers” helped me grapple with some difficult issues, and I made headway because of their input.

e. Is negative case analysis used appropriately?

Negative case analysis was performed within the limits put on the study—ten pages of journal entries. I checked and rechecked the data to see if all instances could fit within the categories. New categories did emerge, and the taxonomy was modified to account for the new data. What I did not do was look beyond the specific pages analyzed to see if there was evidence for other conclusions about how I use journals. I fully expect to find other uses; therefore, I conclude that this study is deficient in negative case analysis. To do an adequate job, I must dip into the unanalyzed journals. To do a thorough job, I must analyze all the journal entries for five years. These journals are considered archival data and at some point I can go into them to do a negative case analysis. However, I did not do so for this study.

f. Are progressive subjectivity checks made?

The fifty-four page audit trail contains an in-depth recording of my mental state as I worked through all parts of this study. I recorded my confusions, feelings, ideas, insights, predictions, and struggles to make sense of the data. The audit trail shows that I did not go into the study with the same expectations that I ended up with. I was not tied to an initial interpretation; in fact, twenty-one days of working in the project passed before I was able to decide on a focus for the study.

g. Is the emic perspective highlighted?

The emic or folk perspective and the etic or inquirer's perspective are inseparable in this study. I am the person being studied (emic perspective) through looking at the journals I wrote; I am the person doing the studying (etic perspective). So, indeed, the emic perspective is highlighted—the five years of journals are from my perspective. The field notes about those journal entries are the etic perspective. I did try to come to understand the 1985 and the 1989 self I was.

Nevertheless, over the years of journal keeping, I tried to capture the emic perspective of my students in my classroom. I did this by describing behavior, settings, conversations, and interactions. Sometimes the entries focused exclusively on one student and provided sensory descriptions of events; sometimes I wrote about interactions between students I witnessed or between students and me. I tried to see events from their points of view through observations, interviews, surveys, and document analysis of their productions.

h. Are member checks used appropriately?

This criterion does not apply in this study because I am the only member in the study. I was studying myself as a journal keeper. As far as doing member checks on the original journal entries themselves, I rarely did. If I did, the checks were usually after an extended time at a

shared moment of evaluation. I would tell the person some of what I had observed and ask for their reactions. I never did let students read my journals, and they never asked. Few if any were aware of my written observations.

7. IS THICK DESCRIPTION ADEQUATE TO MAKE TRANSFERABILITY OF THE STUDY LIKELY?

Thick descriptions were created of the researcher, the journals, the process of creating the journals, and the procedures for conducting the study. Moreover, many samples from the journals were put into all sections of the report to provide a rich context from which readers can draw their own conclusions about the value of keeping teaching journals. The transferability of the study seems obvious to me. If the reader agrees with the findings that journal keeping holds valuable information in place for making instructional decisions, the process is easily personalized at any teaching level—preschool to graduate school, dog-training to piano teaching, third-grade music to high school science. The only thing a prospective journal keeper needs to do is “Just try it.”

8. IS THE STUDY DEPENDABLE?

a. Is an adequate audit trail maintained?

A fifty-four page, handwritten audit trail was kept. In it are records of the decisions I made, the organizations of data I used, the reasons for the decisions I made, the struggles I was experiencing, and the activities I involved myself in concerning this study. Additional audit trail information is in the field notes themselves. They are labeled as MN which means Methodological Notes.

b. Was an audit conducted? Results?

Not yet. However, David Williams, a seasoned qualitative inquirer has

agreed to audit my study. A brief report of his audit will be included with this study.

c. Are data collection and analysis procedures adequate? Has the researcher been careless or made mistakes in conceptualizing the study, sampling people and events, collecting the data, interpreting the findings, or reporting the results?

Samples of journal entries were selected from the first year I kept journals and from the most recent year I kept a journal. The reason for this procedure was to see if I had changed as a teacher. Although this focus was immediately dismissed, the sample was kept. The sample size was reduced several times as time constraints impinged on the process. Initially, I had hoped to analyze all five years of journals; this was reduced to two years, then to one month in each journal, then to one month in one and two days in the other. However, within the sample, every event was analyzed. A thorough domain analysis was performed for fifteen semantic relationships followed by a taxonomic analysis, componential analysis, and theme synthesis. A report was prepared to share the results of the study with practicing teachers who might be interested in the concept of being a researcher in their own classrooms. The process of conceptualizing the study began several years before the study actually began and continued throughout the study. Evidence for the latter is how many times I changed my mind about a focus, how extensive the study would be, who the audience would be for the report, and finally the decisions about reviewing literature.

9. IS THE STUDY CONFIRMABLE?

a. Is an adequate audit trail maintained?

See response to #10a above.

b. Was an audit conducted? Results?

See response to #10b above.

c. How adequate are the findings? How well are they supported by people and events that are independent of the inquirer?

Several avenues have been pursued so the study would meet confirmability standards. One, the original journal entries, the field notes, and the records of the reasoning I went through to arrive at the analyses are available for review and were reviewed by an auditor. Others viewing these documents would likely come to the same conclusions as I did. Second, a review of the literature was made after the analyses were completed to see what other writers, theorists, and researchers have concluded about journal keeping. The findings from this review are meshed with the research findings in the discussion section of the report. A thorough review of the literature was not done but the sources searched did reveal a philosophical view similar to mine. Thus points of view expressed in the review may give an incomplete view of the issues. Therefore, readers should not conclude that a thorough review of literature would also show as much support for the findings as the more than twenty sources searched for this study. Nevertheless, the support is substantial and the reader could decide that these writers confirm my findings.

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Appendix C - An Elementary School Example: My Observations of Jimmy

K. L.

Introduction

This paper is the product of approximately twenty hours of my observations of one student in my third grade class, referred to as Jimmy in this report.

There were several questions I had about Jimmy, which initially guided this study. Being Jimmy's teacher, my questions focused on issues important to a teacher. The first two were, "How much time does he spend on and off task?" and "What are Jimmy's on and off task behaviors?" My definition for "On and Off Task" is: "On Task" behavior is doing the assignment given by the teacher at the appointed time. "Off Task" behavior would then be doing anything other than the given assignment.

Other questions were: "How does Jimmy relate to his peers?" and "Who are his friends?" Also, I was interested in the student, teacher and parent triangle. I wanted to see what types of interactions there were between the teacher (myself) and student (Jimmy). Were they positive or negative? Also, I noted interactions between teacher and parent during PT conferences. In this project I did not study the interactions between student and parent. Finally, I wanted to get to

know Jimmy better by discovering some of his likes, dislikes and views on school and home.

JIMMY - A BREF DESCRIPTION

Jimmy is a 4' 2", blonde, eight year old. He has lived in the same intermountain state all of his eight years, with one move from a small suburb to another, which is where he lives now with his family. Jimmy is the oldest of four children. He is the only boy. His father is an office worker in the city, which is located approximately fifteen miles north of their home.

Jimmy can hardly be described as typical.

Jimmy's mother: "He's a - very different, (laughs) - I don't know - he comes up with some things sometimes. I told my friend, 'He's not dumb he's just different sometimes.'"

Me: "He has a lot of real creative, different things you wouldn't even think of. He . . ."

Mrs. W. (Interrupts) "I don't know what he'll grow up to be."

Most of the time in school Jimmy displays a passive temperament, but in my interview with Jimmy he didn't describe himself as passive. I asked how he got along with his six year old sister.

Jimmy: "Let's see - we like to play. I get along with her. I used to be really mean to her and she used to be really mean to me, but I'm used to it now and she's used to it so we don't fight anymore."

Me: "That's good."

Jimmy: "Do you know what I do when I'm mad? I slam the door in my room and I throw shoes on the wall. I make noises on the door and my dad starts to come and he gets mad."

When I asked him why he threw temper tantrums he said he didn't know, but he just didn't want to do anything else so he'd keep on slamming the door.

Jimmy has varied interests. When I asked what his most favorite thing to do was his reply was Cub Scouts' and video games. He is also interested in break dancing, space, and especially dinosaurs. His parents commented on his knowledge of dinosaurs.

Jimmy's father: "Two years ago he was after us to take him to Dinosaurland and he was the guide. He told us, 'Now this is a Brontosaurus and it lived back then and it was a plant eater and it was from this age' and everything. He knows everything about dinosaurs."

When I asked him if he knew a lot about dinosaurs, he very matter-of-factly said, "Yeah I do." He said he very often has to correct the teachers because they don't know how to say the names correctly.

Jimmy is a smart boy. He usually does well on assignments if he gets them completed. His father mentioned that once you get him interested in something he really runs with it. It's getting his interest that's difficult sometimes.

Me: "What do you think about school?"

Jimmy: "It's kinda fun."

I was surprised when he said he liked math better than reading because he has a much harder time in math, but his reasoning made sense:

Jimmy: "Cause reading has more things and it's kinda longer."

This section is a very brief introduction to Jimmy. The remaining pages of this report will give a more detailed and fuller description of him, his behaviors, interactions, and attitudes.

Setting and Classroom Procedures

I am a third year teacher at Hillview (not the actual name) which is an elementary school located in a rural area thirteen miles south of the largest city in our state. This suburb of the state's capital is made up of middle and middle-upper class housing subdivisions and small farms. The suburbs are growing rapidly as more and more people move their residences away from the city, while maintaining jobs there.

The people of the community are generally very family-oriented. Thus, the job of teaching is easier than usual because the parents are very supportive. In a survey taken in my class I found that most of the students' fathers work in the city and most of their mothers are housewives. A predominantly Mormon community, the families participate in a lot of church-centered activities here.

There are currently just over 700 students enrolled at Hillview Elementary. The school was built in 1963 with self-contained classrooms. In the late 60's the district decided to adopt an open classroom concept, which was the latest trend in California at the time. Therefore, in 1971 an open pod area was added to Hillview Elementary. The self-contained classrooms were used by grades kindergarten through third and the pod area housed the fourth through sixth grades. This arrangement lasted until the district created the Middle School for the sixth through eighth grades. The growing elementary school then put grades three through five into the pod area.

The pod is a big open area. The Media Center is in the middle with the third grade to the north, fifth grade to the west and fourth grade to the south. Gradually the district is deciding that the open classrooms do not work. The open school philosophies of team teaching and sharing ideas are still the goals of the district; but now some walls are being put in. Two years ago, walls were put up to separate the fourth

grade, fifth grade and the Media Center from each other. The third grade is still open to the Media Center, but this will be remedied as soon as the district allots the necessary funds. The walls were erected to cut down on the distracting noise levels between grades. The walls have almost eliminated the problem.

Each grade's area is made up of an open space from which three rooms branch off. My classroom is the middle room. It has a front wall and two side walls but no back wall. It is open to the other two third grade classrooms. Mrs. C. is on the right and Mrs. J. is on the left. The chalkboard fills up the entire front (north) with brown Alphabet Cards above it and colorful turkeys, made out of paper bags and colored construction paper, stapled on the wall under the chalkboard and down the sides of it to liven up the dull green board during the Thanksgiving season.

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K. L.

Appendix D - Reflecting on Reflection

Jane Birch

When asked to spend time reflecting on her experiences, one woman said: “My life is so hectic I barely have time to breathe, much less reflect, and if I take time for reflection, something else in my schedule is going to have to go. There is *no way* to get everything done!”

When this person finally “schedules” time for reflection, one questions the quality of the reflection she will be able to engage in. For such a person, who embodies the modern anxieties too many of us feel, is it possible to “schedule” time for reflection? Or is it only possible to set aside time for the body to remain immobile while one allows one’s mind to race about? While many of us feel the need to take more time to think, to ponder, to reflect upon our experiences, too often we reach the end of the day so exhausted that we don’t even take the time to reflect upon the lack of reflection during our day. And too often we construe the problem in terms of limits on our time, resources, and physical strength. Do these limits define us, or do we define the limits? If the limits define us, then the answer is technological, but if we define the limits, perhaps the problem is spiritual, and the only answer, moral.

On the side that argues for technological solutions are those who resist the idea that modern man is not reflective. They assert that surely the progress made by modern man in science, technology, law, government and world order are evidence that at no time more than

the present have men and women been more anxiously engaged in thought. Of this type of thinking, one of the most important 20th century philosophy, Martin Heidegger, wrote:

Man today is in *flight from thinking*. This flight-from-thought is the ground of thoughtlessness. But part of this flight is that man will neither see nor admit it. Man today will even flatly deny this flight from thinking. He will assert the opposite. He will say—and quite rightly—that there were at no time such far-reaching plans, so many inquiries in so many areas, research carried on as passionately as today. Of course. And this display of ingenuity and deliberation has its own great usefulness. Such thought remains indispensable. But—it also remains true that it is thinking of a special kind.

Its peculiarity consists in the fact that whenever we plan, research, and organize, we always reckon with conditions that are given. We take them into account with the calculated intention of their serving specific purposes. Thus we can count on definite results. This calculation is the mark of all thinking that plans and investigates. Such thinking remains calculation even if it neither works with numbers nor uses an adding machine or computer. Calculative thinking computes. It computes ever new, ever more promising and at the same time more economical possibilities. Calculative thinking is not meditative thinking, not thinking which contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is.

The kind of thinking Heidegger criticizes in modern man coincides with the type of thinking one imagines can actually be scheduled into one's daily planner—the kind of thought one questions is really *thoughtful* at all, in the sense of having the quality of care, concern, and passion. Somehow, the words *reflection* and *thought* have been transmuted by the modifier of "calculative." This transmutation, not at all isolated at this particular instance, should be of concern to all of

us. As Neil Postman claims:

Technology imperiously commandeers our most important terminology. It redefines “freedom,” “truth,” “intelligence,” “fact,” “wisdom,” “memory,” “history,”—all the words we live by. And it does not pause to tell us. And we do not pause to ask.

And why do we not pause to ask? Is it really a matter of time? Is not “thought” in fact as inescapably a part of daily life as breathing? If so, then perhaps, as Heidegger suggests, it is the *kind* of thought that we are concerned with here.

Could there be something in the kind of thought that compels us to “pause to ask” that we are afraid may require more of us as people than we are willing to give? By pausing to ask are we not in danger of hearing something we may not want to hear? Something that may call on us to give—not just our time—but our souls: our care, our concern, our passion? And perhaps even more than this, our willingness to change in the face of those things we might see in ourselves—those realizations we might come to when we pause long enough, not just to still our bodies, but to also still our minds and hearts? Are we perhaps afraid of something within ourselves, something we are not sure we are ready to give up and so are not sure we want to face? If so, then the problem with reflection is not technical at all, but spiritual.

To the mind enamored with framing problems within a technological framework, the “problems” one reflects on are problems “out there,” away from us, public, restricted, essentially technical in nature. This “objectification” of the problems divorces us from not only the world, but from each other, and from ourselves. The ability to “schedule” time for reflection in an otherwise hectic, and anxiety-producing lifestyle, posits our ability to reflect as an essentially active, aggressive, calculative role in which one takes on the world—a role that appears to contradict the inner-transforming effect we might otherwise hope to be the result of serious, deep, and profound

reflection. Parker Palmer succinctly analyzes the problem in terms of the academician's pursuit of truth. But his point is equally poignant for a discussion of reflection:

When academics speak of "the pursuit of truth," they rightly imply that a gap exists between ourselves and truth. But there is a conceit hidden in that image, the conceit that we can close the gap as we track truth down. In [my] understanding, the gap exists not so much because truth is hidden and evasive but because we are. We hide from the transforming power of truth; we evade truth's quest for us. That is why [many ancient seekers of truth] went into the desert, into solitude and silence: they were trying to sit still long enough, in a space open enough, that truth could find them out, track them down. The truth that sought them was not an inert object or proposition. Rather it had the active quality of a person who wished to draw them into a community of mutual knowledge, accountability, and care.

By this understanding, I not only pursue truth but truth pursues me. I not only grasp truth but truth grasps me. I not only know truth but truth knows me. Ultimately, I do not master truth, but truth masters me. Here, the one-way movement of objectivism, in which the active knower tracks down the inert object of knowledge, becomes the two-way movement of persons in search of each other. Here, we know even as we are known.

Too often we find ourselves running away from something that we can't progress without. To sit still long enough, and listen close enough, and care enough to "hear" the problem is to already be reaching into the solution.

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Jane Birch graduated from Brigham Young University with a BA in History and a PhD in Instructional Science. She currently serves as Assistant Director for Faculty Development at the BYU Faculty Center. She supports the amazing faculty at BYU in their efforts to combine religious faith with their professional responsibilities in teaching, scholarship and citizenship.

Appendix E - A Study of Educational Change in Alberta

D. Garry McKinnon

Abstract

The problem addressed in this research study is that the change process in an educational setting is not generally well understood and often, therefore, attempts to bring about change are not successful.

A learning and teaching initiative involving a group of fifteen teachers and administrators and a university resource team in a rural Alberta school system, was used as a focal point for a naturalistic inquiry study to develop a better understanding of the change process.

Three major themes emerged, with each of the themes having facilitators and inhibitors. The themes involved the importance of understanding personal perspective, contextual factors and change processes. It was concluded that, as well as considering the personal perspective, the individual desiring change must understand the context for change in order to provide a supportive setting. This minimizes the inhibiting personal and contextual factors and maximizes the facilitative processes. The three themes provide a new frame of reference of educational change.

Many reform proposals have been brought forward in recent decades pertaining to Canadian education. Representative of some of the proposed reforms are Alberta's, "Vision for the Nineties" (1991) and

British Columbia's, "Year 2000: A framework for reaming" (1989). In each case, the reforms have been generated by a negative view of the quality of education currently offered students in Canada. There is an almost desperate determination to overhaul education, as we now know it. Canadian legislators and education officials base the impetus for change in the need to become more competitive with nations such as Korea, Japan and Germany which are perceived as having superior educational systems. What enthusiasm there may be for reform in education is dampened by the realities of the dismal record of reform in the past three or four decades. Gibboney (1991) documents the lack of success in a study of over thirty school reform efforts between 1960 and 1990. He concluded that in all these reform efforts, there was no fundamental reform. He observes, "There has been no pendulum swing in reform because the clock that the pendulum drives has yet to be invented" (p. 687). Goodlad (1984) concluded, in a comprehensive report on school reform of the 1980's, that reform was failing to produce an impact at the most critical level-in the classroom. Gibboney (1991) prescribes a shift in perspective, if real change is to be achieved, because as he observes: "Fundamental reform in schools is blocked by a habit of the mind, the tendency to view education from the narrow perspective of the technological mindset. The mindset is the single most important obstacle to reform that is within the power of educators and school boards to change and it must be changed if fundamental reform is ever to come to even a quarter of our public schools." (p. 683)

In this light, a number of innovative approaches have been suggested which do seem to take into account a bolder look at reform than is typically the case. Peters and Waterman (1982), for example, have proposed replacing the rational top-down approach with a social management model, which provides for ownership and involvement in the change process. Also, Deal and Kennedy (1985) and Rosenholtz (1987), have described the importance of culture and the need to build a culture for change. Other educational scholars have prescribed a knowledge of reaming and change that is rooted in

action (Petrie 1981; Schon, 1987). Petrie (1991) has described a “second wave” of reform where teachers are reflective practitioners, with a focus in reaming and teaching on meaning making and meaningfulness (p. 27). Fullan (1991), has observed, “The message to those involved in the change process is to understand the subjective world-the phenomenology-as a necessary precondition for engaging in any change effort” (p. 131).

The Study

To develop a better understanding of the phenomenology of change, a study was undertaken in a rural Alberta school jurisdiction. The project involved a group of fifteen teachers who came together to consider an Alberta Department of Education document, Teaching Thinking, as well as to consider, in more general terms, teaching practices and beliefs.

A naturalistic inquiry approach was used in examining the experiences of the teachers who voluntarily responded to an invitation to meet informally as members of what became known as the “Learning and Teaching Group.” Particular attention was given to four of the group members who volunteered to become members of a steering committee for the Learning and Teaching Group, as well as to become primary informants for the study.

The study took place in the County of Wheatland School System where the principal author of this article is Superintendent of Schools. There are twenty-one schools, 2,600 students, and 165 teachers in the rural school system, which is located 25 miles east of Calgary, Alberta.

The four primary research informants included: an upper elementary classroom teacher, an elementary teacher/vice-principal, a senior high school social studies teacher and a senior high school social studies teacher/librarian. The other teacher informants, the members of the

Learning and Teaching Group, represent a variety of teaching assignments and schools. As well, there were three school administrators and four school system administrators and consultants who participated in the Group.

In addition, the study included board of education members, school and school system administrators and a university reaming and teaching resource team. The involvement of school system administrators and trustees in leadership development programs which emphasized team building, maintaining a reaming focus and understanding the change process, provided a base of support for the Learning and Teaching Group.

Two members of a resource team from the University of Calgary (practicing teachers who had been seconded by the university) also supported the Learning and Teaching Group through their participation in the group sessions and their work with group members individually in their classrooms. In short, this was an all out attempt to foster and promote change in the face of the prevailing reaming and teaching paradigm.

Discussion

Three major themes emerged from the study. For each, there were two components; facilitators and inhibitors of change. The facilitators represent factors, which have a positive, supportive impact on change, whereas the inhibitors represent factors, which have a negative, debilitating impact on change. Naturally, the goal in fostering change is to maximize the facilitators and to minimize the inhibitors.

Theme One: Personal Perspective or “way of thinking” impacts educational change

Schelechty (1991) has described the importance of having a disposition for change and Fullan (1991) has concluded that change involves, more than anything else, a way of thinking.

Through this study, four key facilitators associated with a personal perspective or “way of thinking” about change were identified:

1. being sensitive to change through perception and intuition,
2. being aware of one’s philosophy and beliefs,
3. having confidence and being willing to take risks,
4. appreciating the power of perspective.

The teacher informants described the importance of being able to see the “big picture—being able to have a reading” of the situation and they indicated how often they know intuitively what they should be doing.

With reference to philosophy and beliefs, one teacher commented:

Before you can be a positive part of change or a facilitator of change, you have to be really sure of what you believe personally. The group has focused a great deal on the importance of operating from the essence. It is important to clearly understand and to be guided by our values and beliefs if we hope to operate beyond what could be described as a superficial level.

Frequent mention was made of the link between change and learning and the importance of building self-confidence and helping the individual become a risk-taker.

Change has been described as involving a paradigm shift or a shift in perspective. The study confirmed that one can not foster change—bring about a shift in perspective—if the perspective, the

essence of the individual, is not clearly understood.

Four key personal perspective or “way of thinking” inhibitors were also identified by the respondents:

1. having a natural resistance to change,
2. having a concern only for practical applications,
3. having an inward focus, and
4. generally having a negative response to a top-down approach to leadership.

The informants described a tendency to teach as one has been taught and to resist change, which deviates from the traditional view of the teacher as a disseminator of information.

Teachers in the study acknowledged a desire for practical ideas from staff development activities. Some decided to discontinue their involvement in the Learning and Teaching Group because the emphasis was on values and beliefs rather than practical ideas.

An inward focus describes the impact of teacher isolation, a major inhibiting factor in the study. Typical is the teacher comment:

I feel very isolated. I would like to have teachers come into my classroom to see what I am doing and I would like to visit other teachers' classrooms but it just doesn't happen.

The informants described an attitude toward change, which reflects the belief that most change is initiated from above. A common comment was, “I wonder what is coming down the tube next?”

In short, according to the respondents, understanding change and facilitating it requires an awareness of personal perspective or what

Fullan (1991) has called a way of thinking.

Theme Two: Contextual factors impact educational change

Understanding change involves an awareness of contextual factors, which include group culture and organizational structure. Two primary contextual facilitators were identified: 1. providing a supportive setting in response to a particular need, and 2. providing opportunities for exploration and learning.

One group member commented, in support of the first facilitator, “ultimately there has to be a need which is being met when people come together.” And another said, in support of the second facilitator:

What the group members are doing is searching for a validation of some of their educational beliefs, philosophies and ideas. It is a search that I think a lot of us are going through right now. I think it’s actually very exciting to be in education.

There were also two inhibitors to change in relation to contextual factors that were noted by respondents: 1. focusing on curriculum expectations, external examinations and accountability outcomes, and 2. being constrained by time.

The first inhibitor is supported by Gibboney (1991) who has argued that fundamental reform in education is inhibited by the narrow perspective of the technological mindset that is common in education today. The mindset is reflected in bureaucratic organizations which prescribe curriculum and maintain a high degree of accountability through external examinations and the monitoring of the work of teachers (p. 683).

The teachers in this study described the inhibiting impact on attempts at change resulting from a concern with “covering the curriculum” and “preparing students for the departmental exams.” They also described the defensive, negative reaction, which is common when it is perceived that a change has been imposed upon them.

A typical comment with regard to time constraint was, “I would really like to make some changes in what I’m doing but there just isn’t enough time to try anything.” And another,

“We go into a classroom and work with a teacher and so often the teacher has to rush off to a meeting or something afterward and there isn’t time for the kind of discussion and reflection, which would be so worthwhile.”

In sum, educational change seems to come about most readily when there is taken into account organizational and cultural influences and when there is a supportive setting for sharing, exploring and learning. As well, understanding change involves an awareness of the need to overcome the contextual inhibitors, which we have noted above.

Theme Three: Understanding change processes impacts change itself

Understanding change involves an awareness of facilitative processes including

1. establishing a supportive group culture;
2. providing leadership in facilitating change;
3. using a learning approach to change; and
4. making connections between the philosophical and the practical.

As well, understanding change involves recognizing inhibiting processes such as leaders:

1. trying to force change,
2. trying to control behavior,
3. establishing hidden agendas, and
4. trying “quick-fix” approaches to solving educational problems.

Sarason (1991) and Fullan (1991) have described their beliefs that most attempts to foster change have been superficial with little significant impact on what takes place in schools. And likewise, Clark and Meloy (1987) have proposed an approach to change which involves people at all levels working together with a group commitment and a consensus on what is to be achieved.

In this study, in reference to having a supportive group culture, one teacher noted,

It is important to have shared experiences and a common focus that can be built on. We have worked through some crises together and we have survived. I think that people always expect that groups will be very smooth and everything will flow along, but really, a good group is one that can survive the external pressures, stresses, and expectations that are placed on it at different times, whether it is a time commitment or external goals or whatever.

Another teacher noted with regard to the sensitive nature of providing leadership

When you believe that you want to go in a certain direction, there is a real tendency to make people want to go there with you and yet we're seeing some sort of realization that not everybody is at the same place in their educational practice or philosophy and that people

are moving at different speeds. We've learned from our experience that you can't force people to change; you can make them want to change or help them to change; you can provide the environment for change but the change process is slow. You have to accept people where they are.

And of particular interest to us was the strong notion that change comes about through learning. Typical of the comments made was the following:

Teachers can either model to students that they believe there is only one right answer to a question and only one way to do things, or they can model a search or questioning of their beliefs and a willingness to change, based on learning.

With regard to change process inhibitors, it became obvious that when individuals attempt to take a simplistic approach to change and when they fail to appreciate the complexity of the change process, change is not likely to occur. As one teacher noted, "I think leaders who want recipe cards for change are not very realistic." And another noted, "When you are asked for your input and the end result doesn't reflect any of your input, you feel something is wrong and you don't become involved."

Unfortunately, a bad experience with an attempted change tends to carry over to other situations. When people work hard to bring about a change and it is poorly handled, it becomes very difficult to rekindle any enthusiasm for another attempt at change. The attitude becomes one of, why bother.

Summary

The figure below provides a summary of the framework of change, which has been described in this article. It should be emphasized that it is a description of a perspective, a disposition for change—it is not a model. To attempt to present a model of change most often falls into a technological mindset, which has been identified in the literature as a major barrier to change.

If the dismal record of attempts at educational reform and mandating change, which is documented in the literature, is to be overcome, it would seem a new approach based on a better understanding of the change process is needed. Rather than attempting to mandate change at a provincial level, jurisdictional or school level, the findings of this study would indicate that the process must begin at the individual level.

If change is seen as being represented by a paradigm shift or a change in perspective, then one must begin with an understanding of one's personal perspective. The personal perspective can be described as the heart of the change process. As well as considering the personal perspective, there is a need to understand the context for change, and to provide a supportive setting for change, which minimizes the inhibiting factors, which were identified. On considering the personal perspective and in providing a supportive setting for change, facilitative processes, which have been identified, should be in place.

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Appendix: Audit Trail

The problem addressed in the study was that the change process in an educational setting is not generally well understood and often, therefore, attempts to bring about change are not successful.

The purpose of this study was to investigate, through naturalistic inquiry, the change process associated with the approach of the County of Wheatland Learning and Teaching Committee in dealing with a Department of Education learning and teaching initiative.

An interest in a study involving reaming and teaching was generated, during the 1990-1991 school year through a thoughtful Learning and Teaching project completed by the researcher. As a result, the researcher developed a proposal to undertake a study of prevailing learning and teaching paradigms and the change process associated with a paradigm shift.

The formation of the Learning and Teaching Group and other related activities in the learning and teaching change initiative, have been described in chapters two, three and four. Once the components of the change initiative were in place, the researcher as a participant observer, attempted to avoid interfering with the process. Decisions in regard to the change initiative were made through the Learning and Teaching Group and the Steering Committee. However, the researcher, on analyzing the data, which had been gathered and in considering his reflections as the change initiative proceeded, made decisions in regard to the study on an on-going basis. Major decisions, which affected both research projects were made collaboratively with the fellow researcher.

The audit trail inventory which follows outlines the data gathering, data analysis, and decision making process, documented in the field notes. The field notes include: transcripts from electronically-recorded audio tapes of steering committee meetings, transcripts from electronically-recorded audio tapes of informant interviews, summaries of Learning and Teaching Group sessions, observations and reflections of the two researchers, observations and other information from other data sources, such as: administrator meetings, meetings with Department of Education officials, and interactions with the university resource team.

Data reduction and analysis is also documented in the audit trail through the following: researcher notes and reflections, portrayals, code entries with date and page number, nodes and line charts, componential analysis summaries, analysis and summaries of major themes.

Although research decisions were being made throughout the study, the following would be representative of “significant events” which are documented in the audit trail.

1. decision to extend an open invitation to teachers in the school systems to become involved in the Learning and Teaching project (April, 1991).
2. decision to develop and administer a reaming and teaching paradigm survey (April, 1991).
3. decision to involve the University of Calgary team as resource persons and secondary informants (June 1991).
4. decision to minimize the use of the Learning and Teaching Paradigm survey results (September, 1991).
5. decision to focus primary informant interviews on their perspective of learning and teaching and their essence as teachers (October, 1991).
6. decision to consider the administrator perspective and role in the change initiative (November, 1991).

7. summary of experiences, domain, taxonomic, componential and emerging patterns (December, 1991).
8. summary of reflections and outline of an action plan for the remainder of the study (December, 1991).
9. decision to shift informant interviews from essence to experiences with changes in teaching beliefs and practices (January 1992).
10. decision to readminister the Learning and Teaching Paradigm survey (April, 1992).
11. sharing themes, member checking, negative case analysis with primary informants and university resource team (May, June, 1992).

Audit Trail - Summary of Events

Learning and Teaching Project overview

1. Learning and Teaching Group Meeting, April 17, 1991- 9 pages
2. Learning and Teaching Group Meeting, April 30,1991- 14 pages
3. Learning and Teaching Group Meeting, May 28,1991- 5 pages
4. Steering Committee Meeting, September 12,1991- 44 pages
5. Meeting with University Personnel to discuss analysis of the Learning and Teaching Paradigm Survey, September 17,1991- 2 pages
6. Learning and Teaching Group Meeting, September 26,1991- 13 pages
7. Meeting with Ellen in her classroom, October 2, 1991 - 2 pages
8. Learning and Teaching Group Meeting, October 7, 1991- 6 pages
9. Interview with Ellen, October 9, 1991- 40 pages
10. Summary of Reflections, October 11,1991- 1 page
11. Summary of Discussion at the Educational Issues Session at School System Staff Development Day, October 18,1991- 2 pages
12. Peer Debriefing check with Judy Kandace October 19, 1991- 2

- pages
13. Interview with Elaine, October 24, 1991 - 29 pages
 14. Fostering Change - A Formidable Task~ - Report to Dr. Shute, December 13, 1991- 32 pages
 15. Learning and Teaching Steering Committee Meeting, November 7, 1991- 25 pages
 16. Interview with Yvonne, November 13, 1991- 14 pages
 17. Jordan's Reflections on her meeting with the Consultants, November 16, 1991 - 3 pages
 18. Jordan's Reflections on the Group Process, November 19, 1991- 3 pages
 19. Notes from the Administrators' Meeting Discussion Group, November 26, 1991 - 6 pages
 20. Steering Group Committee Meeting, December 1, 1991 - 23 pages
 21. Interview with Bill, December 5, 1991 - 19 pages
 22. Interview with Ellen, December 5, 1991 - 20 pages
 23. Interview with Yvonne, December 11, 1991 - 20 pages
 24. Interview with Elaine, December 18, 1991 - 4 pages
 25. Action Plan Diagram and Summary of Reflections, and Action Plan for Further Consideration, December 20, 1991 - 8 pages
 26. Junior High Staff Team Meeting at Standard School, January 7, 1992 - 5 pages
 27. Observation of Standard School Junior High Discipline Team, January 8, 1992 - 8 pages
 28. Interview with Bill, January 15, 1992 - 14 pages
 29. Learning and Teaching Group Meeting, January 20, 1992 4 pages
 30. Reflections on the Project, January 20, 1992 - 2 pages
 31. Steering Committee Meeting, February 13, 1992- 41 pages
 32. Interview with Bill, February 19, 1992 - 28 pages
 33. Learning and Teaching Group Meeting, February 20, 1992 - 6 pages
 34. Interview with Yvonne, February 25, 1992 - 19 pages
 35. Interview with Ellen, March 4, 1992 - 5 pages

36. Analysis of Presentation on Change by Jim Graham, March 6, 1992 Teachers' Convention - 2 pages
37. Reflections on the Vision for the Nineties Document, March }2, 1992 - 1 page
38. Interview with University of Calgary Gifted Centre Teacher Collaborators March 13, 1992 - 55 pages
39. Interview with Bill, March 11, 1992 - 15 pages
40. Meeting with Reno Bosetti, Deputy Minister of Education, in regard to the Minister's Vision Statement, March 13, 1992- 1 page
41. Meeting with Jordan and Hehr - Peer Debriefing, March 14, 1992 - 3 pages
42. Interview with Elaine, March 17, 1992 - 33 pages
43. Interview with Yvonne, March 20, 1992 - 22 pages
44. Learning and Teaching Group Meeting, March 24, 1992 - Transcripts to follow
45. Trustees' Leadership Session, March 26, 1992- 6 pages
46. Summary of the Administrators' Practical Leadership Program 1990-91 School Year - 8 pages
47. Learning and Teaching Group Meeting, April 6, 1992
48. Interview with Bill, April 10, 1992 - 22 pages
49. Steering Committee Meeting, April 13, 1992 - 32 pages
50. Interview with Elaine, May 14, 1992 - 43 pages
51. Learning and Teaching Group - Teacher Interview, May 14, 1992 - 25 pages
52. Interview with Bill, May 27, 1992 - 12 pages
53. Memories on Session Lost, June 3, 1992 - 26 pages
54. Steering Committee Meeting, June 4, 1992 - 28 pages
55. Interview with Elaine, June 9, 1992 - 20 pages
56. Interview with Ellen, June 9, 1992 - 12 pages
57. Interview with Yvonne, June 9, 1992 - 11 pages
58. Interview with Elaine, June 10, 1992 -9 pages
59. Trying to Regain Thoughts from the Project, June 11,1992 - 19 pages.
60. June 9, 1992 - 12 pages

Interviews with Elaine

1. October 24, 1991 - 29 pages
2. December 18, 1991 - 4 pages
3. March 17, 1992 - 33 pages
4. May 14, 1992- 43 pages
5. June 9, 1992 - 20 pages
6. June 10, 1992 - 9 pages

Interviews with Yvonne

1. November 13, 1991 - 14 pages
2. December 11, 1991 - 13 pages
3. February 25, 1992 - 19 pages
4. March 20,1992 - 22 pages
5. June 9, 1992- 11 pages

Interviews with Bill

1. December 5, 1991 - 19 pages
2. January 15, 1992 - 14 pages
3. February 10, 1992 - 28 pages
4. March 11, 1992 - 15 pages
5. April 10, 1992- 22 pages
6. May 27,.1992 - 12 pages

Researcher's Reflections

1. Meeting with University personnel to discuss the analysis of the learning and teaching paradigm survey, September 17, 1991
2. Summary of reflections, October 11, 1991
3. Summary of discussion from the October 18, 1991 school system staff development day
4. "Fostering change - a Formidable Task" - report to Dr. Shute December 13, 1991
5. Notes from the administrators meeting discussion group

November 26, 1991

6. Action plan, diagram, and summary of reflections and action plan for further consideration December 20, 1991
7. Reflections on the project January 20, 1992
8. Analysis of presentation on change by Jim Graham March 6, 1992 Teachers Convention
9. Reflections on the Vision for the Nineties document March 12, 1992
10. Meeting with Reno Bosetti, Deputy Minister of Education in regard to the Minister's Vision Statement March 13, 1992

Reflections of Fellow Researcher-Kandace Jordan

1. Reflections on Kandace's meeting with the consultants, November 16, 1991
2. Kandace's reflections on the group process, November 9, 1991
3. Notes from administrators' meeting discussion group, November 26, 1991
4. Junior High Staff Team Meeting at Standard School, January 7, 1992
5. Observations of Standard School Junior High Discipline Team, January 8, 1992
6. Personal Reflections re: change and efficacy, June 18, 1992

Peer Debriefing

1. Meetings with Kandace Jordan and Judy Hehr, October 19, 1991 and March 14, 1992
2. Discussions with fellow doctoral students, July and August, 1992

Administrators Leadership

1. Summary of the Administrators' Practical Leadership Program 1990-91 - 8 pages

Summary of the Trustee's Leadership Program 1991-92

1. Trustees' Leadership Session March 26, 1992 - 6 pages

University of Calgary Team

1. Interview with University of Calgary Gifted Centre Collaborators March 13, 1992 - 55 pages
2. Report of University Resource Team, June 29, 1992

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D. Garry McKinnon

Appendix F - Moving Ahead: A Naturalistic Study of Retention Reversal of Five Elementary School Children

Judith Hehr

Editor's Note

This appendix contains Judith Hehr's journal version of her study, her chapter on methods, her self-portrayal, and her audit trail to give the readers enough information to get the most out of chapter 7 and to critique her article if they want in connection with Chapter 5.

Abstract

The first author conducted a naturalistic inquiry of five students who failed Grade 1, and who in the course of the next year were reunited with their chronological peers in Grade 2 and were subsequently promoted to Grade 3 with their peers. Using interviews, observations, three major themes emerged: 1) When teachers see themselves as learners they are willing to meet the learning needs of their children by taking “risks” for them; 2) Children are often innocent victims of school procedures and suffer when questionable educational decisions such as grade retention are made; 3) Parents of retained children tend either to acquiesce to school authority or to avoid responsibility for decisions made concerning their children. In addition to reporting this research, the authors have included an extensive list of related readings on grade retention for those interested in additional information.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

In North American schools, the traditional practice of using grade retention to bolster academic achievement persists. Frymier (1989) estimated that 5.6 million students in the United States (14% of the total school population of 40 million students) have repeated a grade during the past 12 years. Shepard and Smith (1990) have acknowledged the universality of the practice in the United States and estimated “that 5 to 7 percent of public school children (about 2 children in every classroom of 30) are retained in the U.S. annually” (p. 84).

Why do educators continue the practice of grade retention? Why do they fail children “despite cumulative research evidence showing that the potential for negative effects consistently outweighs positive outcomes” (Holmes & Matthews, 1984, p. 232)?

The Research Problem

The problem that invoked this study was that the traditional practice of using grade retention to bolster academic achievement persists in North American schools, despite the paucity of evidence claiming its benefit.

The Debate Goes On

From the birth of graded schools, there has been a conflict between the notion of social promotion (advancing children with their peers) and grade repetition (keeping students behind until grade-specific skills are mastered). Throughout this century, educators have debated this dilemma. From 1900 to 1930, for example, educators developed practices to handle large numbers of students efficiently, which resulted in high grade retention rates. However, over the next 40 years (1930 to 1970), the pervasive practice in schools was social promotion. And with the advent of minimum competency testing and the reforms of the 1980s, a gradual increase in grade retention returned as standard educational practice.

The Study

This study was a naturalistic inquiry of five students who failed Grade 1, and who in the course of the next year were reunited with their chronological peers in Grade 2 and were subsequently promoted to Grade 3 with their peers.

The research team, Nancy, a Grade 1 teacher, Warren, a Grade 2 teacher, and the first author, an assistant principal, spent 10 months with the five children, watching, listening, questioning, and talking. They related to these children in a manner not unlike that of parents (Van Manen, 1991). They were interested in the children's growth and learning and attempted to help them acquire insight into their own learning.

Data were collected through observations, interviews, and artifacts from the children, parents, and teachers. After each taped interview the results were transcribed and carefully analyzed.

School Setting

The school in this study is a medium-sized elementary school within the Calgary Board of Education in Alberta, Canada. It has approximately 450 students who represent many different cultural backgrounds. The school has a “high needs” designation; a **significant percentage of its population is on social assistance and comes from** non-traditional family structures. The school population is also highly transient – approximately 33% each year.

The Five Informants

Brittany, Matt, Laura, Robbie, and Mari were the foci of the study. They were chosen as a result of an invitation from the first author to three Grade 1 teachers to identify any retained children within their classrooms. The teachers were also asked to commit themselves to involvement in the study. Responses to these invitations were received at different times after the start of the 1991-92 school year.

One of the Grade 1 teachers showed an immediate interest in the study and supplied the names of three girls who had been retained. The three girls were observed for 10 months (September 1991 to June 1992). Following spring break another Grade 1 teacher wanted two boys to become members of the study. They were observed for 3 months (March 1992 to June 1992). After each child was identified for grade advancement the parents were consulted.

Most school days, there was close contact with these children: in their classrooms; entering and leaving the school; at play, at recess, and at noon; parent/teacher reporting conferences, communicating with their parents by phone and through interviews, and talking with their

teachers regularly.

Emergent Themes

Through analysis based on naturalistic inquiry (Spradley, 1980) three major themes emerged from the interviews, observations, and examination of the artifacts. They were:

1. When teachers see themselves as learners they are willing to meet the learning needs of their children by taking “risks” for them.
2. Children are often innocent victims of school procedures and suffer when questionable educational decisions such as grade retention are made.
3. Parents of retained children tend either to acquiesce to school authority or to avoid responsibility for decisions made concerning their children.

Discussion of the Themes

Theme One: Partners in Learning

As educators inquire into the experiences of children, a deep understanding of children’s needs seems to develop, giving them (educators) confidence to take risks for children. The research team immersed themselves in the research and came to understand the inappropriateness of grade retention. Their confidence in their knowledge increased and as a result they became quite firm in their willingness to take risks for these children. Knowing became a form of doing. Polanyi (1969) discussed the relationship between knowledge and activity:

Knowledge is an activity which would be better described as a process of knowing. Indeed, as the scientist goes on enquiring into yet uncomprehended experiences, so do those who accept his discoveries

as established knowledge
keep applying this to ever changing situations . . . towards a deeper
understanding
of what is already known. (p. 132)

The researchers were constantly interpreting, thinking, and acting as members of a learning community. They dealt with situations, predicaments, possibilities and difficulties. They departed from the habitual tendency to keep doing what was done before and were able to transcend previous traditional practice.

Newman (1988) reaffirmed the importance of learning from and with children and taking risks for them: "It requires that we become willing to learn from our students.

Adopting a learning-through-teaching stance involves risk. It means giving up security and complacency and consciously allowing ourselves to become vulnerable" (p. 25).

Theme Two: Children as Victims

Educators continue to allow school procedures to erect barriers for children rather than create procedures to facilitate learning. In effect, adults have become the power brokers in schools and children the pawns. Children's voices are heard as little whispers; adults tend to ignore their feelings and ideas. Even so, children continue to make sense of their world. Matt's response to the question, "Do you think if you have children you will want them to fail a grade?" is an example of someone trying to make meaning. He answered:

No, 'cause you have to do the same work and sometimes you just have to do it different. But, in a way, yes. And in a way, no. Yes, because they could get better at work and no because it's hard on them. It doesn't feel good. It feels bad.

Matt's confusion arises from his belief that teachers and parents know

what is best for him.

Educators listen only superficially to the voices of children. In every interview during the 10 months of research, the children were consistent in their declarations that they all wanted to be in Grade 2 rather than repeating Grade 1. But at the end of the previous June the bureaucracy had made a decision-Laura, Britney, Mari, Matt, and Robbie had been failed.

What was the acceptable thing for teachers and parents to do? Supporting the decision was probably not only the most convenient thing to do but it was also considered to be the only professionally ethical thing to do as well. Even those, including the researchers, who worked directly with the children on a daily basis did not support the concept of retention and yet they quietly observed and listened for 5 months before they had the courage to listen to the voices of the children. As professionals, they had observed, reflected, questioned, read, discussed, and challenged their personal views. Yet it took 5 months before they were willing to take action. The culture of the school system was powerful and it took courage to reverse a policy decision and not harm these five little ones. A decision was made. The children were moved into Grade 2. Mistrust and discomfort surfaced. Teachers commented: "Were children being allowed to make decisions?" "They just keep moving the children into different classes." "Don't they understand how much work it takes to change the data base and reorganize the files?"

But the research team heard the expressions of hurt from these children and their parents. They decided to follow Paley's (1991) "golden rule" about establishing acceptance and understanding with children so they would no longer consider themselves as victims: "Do not do to a single child that which the child in you would fear, for the chief enemy of the self is fear. Give unto every child that which we still need" (p. 156).

Theme Three: Parents' Acquiescence

From the voices of the parents it was evident that they wanted what was best for their children. Matt's mother commented:

I don't want to push Matt too hard. I don't want him to start hating school. He loves coming to school but at the same time it is in the back of my mind, I am hoping that he is doing well enough by the end of this year that he will only have a couple of months or maybe until Christmas time next year and hopefully be put into Grade 3. But, what is going through my mind right now? Hope.

The perceived authority and power of teachers unnerves parents and causes them to relinquish their responsibility as primary supporters of their children. Parents do not have the confidence to engage in a partnership with teachers with respect to their child's learning. Matt's mother again commented: "I didn't want him to stay in Grade 1. But, when you have the teacher telling you that it is the best thing for your son . . . It bothered me but I never questioned."

During an interview, it was painfully clear that Laura's parents also lacked confidence in dealing with school officials. Laura's father was asked, "If a year from now, another teacher came to you and said, 'We would like to repeat Laura this year,' would you support that decision?" He answered, "Well I would feel bad but if she had to stay, okay."

Robbie's mother reiterated her inability to challenge decisions regarding Robbie's learning. She commented:

To me it's like, you know where he is on the scale exactly. I don't know. The

school knows more. I mean, even though he is my son, I feel the school knows more. . . And to me it is like, okay if they want to put him into Grade 2

or into

Grade 3 that's fine by me because he is ready in their eyes. Points of Reflection

As a result of this experience, educators should:

1. Inquire into the experiences of children to obtain a deeper understanding of them-this may lead to taking risks for the children.
2. Examine school procedures and questionable educational decisions that victimize children.
3. Neither acquiesce to school authority nor avoid responsibility when making decisions concerning children.
4. Continue enquiring into yet uncomprehended experiences. If a discovery about these experiences is made and accepted "as established knowledge keep applying this to ever changing situations . . . towards a deeper understanding of what is already known" (Polanyi, 1969, p. 132).

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Study Notes

Interviews with child (A) 24 interviews

(B) Interviews with parents. (B) 31 interviews

(C) Meetings with (C) September 1, 1991 - June 29, learners/researchers 1992

(D) Recorded tapes from all the (D) September 1991 - June 1992 sources (researchers, parents, 575 pages and children)

(E) Fieldnotes (E) Written notes were kept from

1. from observations of June 1991 - August 1992 classrooms

2. from informal discussion with informants

3. from informal discussion with interested professionals

(F) Reflective Journal (F) Kept throughout the year;

1. personal Nancy's and Warren's were used

2. Warren's for the referential adequacy

3. Nancy's check.

(G) Collection of articles and (G) Collected throughout the year.

artifacts.

3. Data Analysis

- (A) Transcribed tapes (A) computer transcripts, portrayals
- (B) Domain Analysis (B) colour coded entries to coincide with each informant
- (C) Taxonomic Analysis (C) nodes and line charts
- (D) Componential Analysis (D) componential analysis charts
- (E) Theme Analysis (E) major themes emerged

4. Meeting Standards

- (A) Methodological Notes (A) decisions
- Journal Notes direction of study informants
- Artifacts-Report Cards, participation learner/researchers
- Cum. Files involved
- literature review
- possible themes
- (B) Trustworthiness

1. Credibility

- a. Prolonged a. 10 month involvement with the engagement children and teachers at site daily
- b. persistent b. intense observation and observation interviewing
- c triangulation c. interviews, observations, meeting with parents, learner/researchers, school resource group, administrators
- d. peer debriefing d. Eari Ann, Kandace and Gary
- e. negative case e. no contradictory cases were analysis found
- f. referential f. Warren's and Nancy's reflective adequacy check journals
- g. member check g. paraphrased comments back to

children, met with parents and teachers

(B) Transferability (B) clear descriptions, thick - description

(C) Dependability (C) Audit trail\$ transcribed tapes, archives, artifacts

(D) Confirmability (D) dated references throughout study

5. Writing up the Study

(A) dissertation prospectus (A) Chapters 1,2,3; references

(B) transcribed tapes, (B) quotes, report card comments personal notes and artifacts

Audit Trail

Listed are all the scheduled interviews and meetings. Being a member of the school community, I had the opportunity to regularly interact with the children, parents, and teachers.

August 26, 1991 Meeting with Nancy to discuss research

August 27, 1991 Meeting with Britney's mother

August 29, 1991 Discussed research with principal

September 1, 1991 Telephone interview with Mari Ann, peer debriefer

September 5, 1991 Interview with Nancy

September 9, 1991 Meeting with Doris's mother

September 12, 1991 Interview with Nancy

September 19, 1991 Interview with Nancy

September 22, 1991 Telephone interview with Mari Ann

September 26, 27 & 28 Parent-Teacher Interviews-Meeting with Laura's, Britney's, and Mari's parents to discuss research and sign permission forms.

October 2, 1991 Interview with Mari and mother

October 3, 1991 Interview with Nancy

October 3, 1991 Meeting with principal and Nancy

October 10, 1991 Nancy interviewed Mari's mother
October 19, 1991 Meeting with Gary (a peer debriefer)
October 22, 1991 Interview with John
October 29, 1991 Interview with Nancy
November 5, 1991 Interview with Nancy
November 6, 1991 Meeting with John's parents
November 14, 1991 Meeting with John's parents
November 27, 28 & 29 Parent-Teacher Conferences-Meeting with
Mari's, Britney's, and Laura's parents
December 18, 1991 Meeting with Laura's father
December 20, 1991 Interview with Mari
January 9, 1992 Interview with Nancy
January 10, 1992 Interview with Laura, Mari, and Britney
January 19, 1992 Telephone interview with Mari Ann
January 30, 1992 Interview with Britney's mother
February 4, 1992 Interview with Britney
February 6, 1992 Interview with Laura's parents
February 12, 1992 Interview with Mari's mother
March 10, 1992 Interview with Britney, Mari, and Laura
March 10, 1992 Meeting with Warren
March 19, 1992 Meeting with Warren
March 23, 1992 Meeting with Warren
March 24, 1992 Meeting with Warren and Nancy
March 25, 26 & 27 Parent-Teacher Conferences-Meeting with
Britney's, Laura's, and Mari's parents
April 14, 1992 Observed in Mari Ann's classroom
April 14, 1992 Meeting with Gary and Kandace (peer debriefers)
April 21, 1991 Meeting with Robbie and Mari
April 22, 1992 Meeting with Matt's Eother April 23, 1992 Meeting
with Nancy and Warren
April 23, 1992 Meeting with Robbie's mother
April 27, 1992 Meeting with Mari's mother
May 11, 1992 School Resource Group Meeting
May 12, 1992 Meeting with Laura
May 21, 1992 Meeting with Nancy and Warren

May 21, 1992 Interview Matt and Robbie
May 22, 1992 Dr. Shute met t`e children
May 25, 1992 Meeting with Britney's parents
May 28, 1992 Interview with Mari
June 1, 1992 Interview with Matt's father
June 2, 1992 Interview with Robbie's mother
June 2, 1992 Meeting with Doris' parents
June 4, 1992 Meeting with Britney's parents
June 11, 1992 Interview with Mari
June 11, 1992 Meeting with Warren
June 12, 1992 Interview with Britney
June 13, 1992 Interview with Laura
June 13, 1992 Interview with Laura's parents
June 14, 1992 Telephone Interview with Mari Ann
June 14, 1992 Interview with Matt
June 15, 1992 Mari Ann visits school
June 15, 1992 Interview with Robbie
June 15, 1992 Meeting with Robbie's mother
June 17, 1992 Interview with Matt
June 22, 1992 Meeting with Warren
June 26, 1992 Meeting with Mari's mother
June 29, 1992 Interview with Matt and his mother
July 6, 1992 Examined Nancy and Warren's personal journals
(referential adequacy check)

Chapter 2 - Methods and Procedures

The problem that invoked this study is that the traditional practice of using grade retention to bolster academic achievement persists in North American schools, despite the paucity of evidence claiming its benefit. The purpose of this study was to conduct a naturalistic inquiry of five students who failed Grade 1, and who in the course of the next year were reunited with their chronological peers in Grade 2 and were subsequently promoted to Grade 3 with their peers. The

study is a description of the interpretation of the meaning of conversations and observations of five retained students, their parents, and their teachers within a “lived experience” (Van Manen, 1990).

Research Design

This study was a naturalistic journey using observation and repeated interviews of five students who failed Grade 1, and who in the course of the next year were reunited with their chronological peers in Grade 2 and were subsequently promoted to Grade 3 with their peers. In addition, the parents and the teachers were interviewed.

The design of this study followed guidelines outlined in Williams’s Naturalistic Inquiry Methods (Williams, 1988), Spradley’s Participant Observation (Spradley, 1980), The Ethnographic Interview (Spradley, 1979), and Van Manen’s Researching Lived Experiences (1990). An audit trail and field journal were kept as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

The Researcher’s Personal Interest

Ten months were spent with the five children within the school community— observing, listening, questioning, and talking. As an assistant principal, the researcher related to these children in a manner not unlike that of a parent (Van Manen, 1991). Of interest were the children’s growth and learning, and attempts to help them acquire insight into their own learning.

In keeping with a naturalistic study, the research was “quest” oriented. Van Hesteren (1986) noted that this orientation is characterized by:

1. a need to question and explore the unfamiliar.
2. a need for “openness to experience” and looking beyond and

outside predetermined boundaries.

3. a need to “experience vulnerability” where one questions personal world views and does not assume that phenomena are valid or obvious.

4. a need for “quality of self awareness” in which one reflects on personal bias. (p. 211-212)

Population

The school in this study is a medium-sized elementary school within the Calgary Board of Education in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. It has approximately 450 students who represent many different cultural backgrounds. The school has a “high needs” designation; a significant percentage of its population is on social assistance and comes from non-traditional family structures. The school population is also highly transient- approximately 33% each year. More information about the school is provided in Chapter 3 under the Setting.

Sampling of Informants

Five first-grade children were the foci of the study even though six children had been identified as having failed Grade 1. They were chosen as a result of an invitation to three Grade 1 teachers. The invitation requested teachers to identify retained children within their classrooms and to commit to involvement in the study. Responses to these invitations were received at different times following the beginning of the 1991-92 school year in September.

One of the Grade 1 teachers, Nancy, showed an immediate interest in the study and supplied the names of three girls. Several weeks later she received a new student who had also been retained. He was a part of the study for the last 2 weeks in October and the first 3 weeks in November. He then transferred to a new school. In this limited time

he had some impact on the study. After having been observed and assessed for 2 weeks, he became the first child to move from Grade 1 to Grade 2 to rejoin his chronological peers. The three girls were observed for 10 months (September 1991 to June 1992). Following the spring break, another Grade 1 teacher requested that two boys from her class become members of the study. They were observed for 3 months (March 1992 to June 1992). After each child was identified the parents were contacted and consulted. Parental consent forms were signed permitting their children to participate in the study.

Warren, a Grade 2 teacher who was hired at the beginning of October, was also interested in the study. He had encouraged and supported all the activities prior to moving the children to Grade 2, and all the children moved into his classroom. As a result of Nancy's and Warren's interest and commitment, a team of researchers emerged.

Most school days, there was close contact with these children: in their classrooms; entering and leaving the school; at play, at recess, and at noon; parent/teacher reporting conferences, phone calls and interviews with parents; and conversation with their teachers.

Data Analysis

Data from the children, parents, and teachers were collected through observations, interviews, and artifacts. After each taped interview the results were transcribed and analyzed for emerging themes. Key words and phrases were identified using a domain analysis (Spradley, 1980).

Inferences and conclusions were drawn using taxonomic analysis (Spradley, 1980). A componential analysis was also performed, the third step of which identified units of meaning, which provided attributes associated with cultural meaning. The theme analysis was carried out using the procedures described by Spradley (1980) concerning the identification of universal themes. From this analysis

surfaced examples of cultural contradictions (teacher as learner, teachers' risk-taking), of social control (innocent victims), management of impersonal social relationships (parental acquiescence), and status maintenance (authority of teachers).

Trustworthiness Techniques

In this study, qualitative research trustworthiness standards, which include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, have replaced traditional quantitative research evaluation criteria of internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Credibility. Credibility requires the critical reader to view the study as believable and supportive of the people who provided the information (Williams, 1988). Information from the children was checked regularly by verbally paraphrasing their comments. Also, at the beginning of each interview with the parents, an overview of the comments to date was provided and checked for interpretative accuracy. Bi-monthly after school transcribed tapes were shared and discussed with the children's teachers. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) seven techniques were followed to enhance credibility and the participants' emic perspectives were highlighted (Williams, 1988).

Prolonged engagement. Williams (1988) commented on the need for the researcher to be present at the site of the study long enough to build trust, to engage in the diversity of experiences afforded the respondents, and to overcome distortions that may result. The interaction with the participants was maintained over a 10 month period. The three girls were observed and interviewed from September through June, and the two boys from March through June. The researcher's participation in the learning environment facilitated the opportunity for trust to be established. As a result of her observation of the children in all aspects of their learning environment, she became a

member of their “club of learners” (Smith, 1988).

Persistent observation. The children, their parents, or their teachers were spoken to or observed almost daily. Many times it was possible to feel as though one stood “in the fullness of life, in the midst of the world of living relations and shared situations” and could actively explore “the category of lived experiences in all its modalities and aspects” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 32).

Triangulation. Findings were verified through multiple sources of information and data collection. Regular contact was maintained with the classroom teachers and the parents, collecting data through interviews, observations, and artifacts. The research team kept reflective journals. All the data were regularly cross- checked and confirmed and were used to verify the findings and conclusions.

Peer debriefing. The researcher was very fortunate to be in contact with a teacher friend from the County of Wheatland who asked many probing questions. Telephone calls and personal visits provided opportunities for clarification and refocusing. The peer debriefer also had a strong belief in retention. Her comments prompted an attempt to contact the former teachers of the retained students. The conversation with one of these teachers re-emphasized the emerging theme of teacher belief systems and failure, verifying Smith’s (1989) notion on teachers’ beliefs:

If we can understand teachers’ beliefs or mental constructs about how children learn, then we will have an insight into the myriad of day to day instructional decisions that teachers make about what to teach when, how to organize lessons, and even whom to teach. (p. 132)

Negative case analysis. Hypotheses were developed from the fieldwork and searched for instances which contradicted the conclusions. No contradictions were found.

Referential adequacy checks. The data from the interviews and

observations were analyzed. The two teachers' personal journals were set aside for later analysis.

Member checks. Because of the age of the informants, portions of the transcribed material were read to the children; they were asked if they remembered having shared that information and if there were things they wanted to change. Parents were periodically contacted to corroborate the stories and comments shared by their children.

Etic perspective. Interviews with parents, teachers, and the children were relied on heavily as a source of information describing their understanding and feelings from the events of the study period. Accordingly, an "etic" perspective, rather than a purely personal one, was developed to the fullest extent possible.

Transferability. Clear descriptions of the time and context were provided. Working hypotheses were developed through "thick description" of the study. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) stated that qualitative researchers should approach generalizability with the belief that if they have carefully documented a given setting or group of subjects, it becomes the responsibility of the readers to make connections into their particular settings.

Dependability and Confirmability. To ensure dependability (quality of the process) and confirmability (quality of the results) an audit trail was maintained, all interviews were transcribed, and artifacts were collected, including writing samples, copies of report cards, comments from parent teacher interviews, and student cumulative files. The audit trail included the dates of meetings and the participants involved. The research team also kept journals with practical comments, reflections, and questions.

Other Criteria. In addition to those suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), a number of other procedures (Williams, 1988) were used to enhance trustworthiness.

The study addressed a meaningful problem, grade repetition. As the literature was examined, it became apparent that limited information was available from the child's point of view. The themes that were identified are of broad-based relevance to educators and parents.

The study was conducted under natural conditions. However, as a member of the leadership team, the role of the assistant principal carries with it the authority to have input into decisions regarding the placement of children. It is openly acknowledged that this authority was exercised at times during the course of the project. However, all decisions were made in consultation with the parents and fellow researchers.

The children were treated with respect and their anonymity has been maintained with pseudonyms. To the extent possible, they were apprised of the content of this study.

The sample was also the delimitation. The Grade 1 teachers were invited to identify all the children who had been failed, and during the study all these children were observed and interviewed.

In summary, this project was conducted in a natural setting using the techniques of participant observation, interview, and document analysis. To the extent possible, the work conforms to the standards described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Williams (1988) to ensure the trustworthiness of naturalistic research.

Chapter 3 - Portrayals

The following portrayals provide background about the five children the foci of the study and two teachers, fellow researchers.

The Researcher

Something in a river's changing does not change. The water moves but there is an unchanging that is always present for its own becoming and passing. Know that all is changing but also that the

changing is the All. Trust the unchanging in all changing. To be the changing, change. To be the unchanging, let the changing change. (Grigg, 1991, p. 123).

My life's river flows at a rapid pace. My banks are well-defined but constantly changing. My river began its flow March 10, 1951 in Lethbridge, Alberta. From the beginning my parents reared me in a strong Christian home on a farm near the town of Nobleford. One of four daughters, my formative years involved participating in tasks that society traditionally believed to be those of the male. I milked cows, fed pigs, gathered eggs, seeded, and harvested. In Grade 12, I remember being the only woman to receive special permission to be excused from school to harvest the crops.

School was very important in our family. My parents expected that I attend, show respect, and always strive to obtain good grades. However, throughout my school experience sports and friends were also very important. My need to express myself

verbally was always a menace. I recall spending time in the hall in Grade I as a reminder of the importance of listening. I decided early to nurture my independence but knew if I was going to survive I needed to learn how to play the school game. I watched my sisters. My oldest sister never did anything wrong and yet appeared under pressure. My sister 2 years older than I often attempted to achieve recognition for her individuality and yet often appeared to be in trouble. I quickly came to understand that if I was prepared to undertake adult responsibilities, privileges would not be withheld. This philosophy usually proved advantageous. However, the responsibility for providing companionship to my sister who was 5 years younger was carried out with disdain. She needed to be monitored as she wanted to tattle on me to my parents.

Living in a close-knit farming community and having 52 first cousins as a part of my extended family made life complicated. Competition

among the relatives was present and strong. Hard work was equated with goodliness and godliness. As a member of this culture, I knew I needed to strive for excellence. I was always in the top quarter of my class and excelled at sports. Keeping my marks up prevented disapproval from teachers and parents. Then came a major change. I fell in love in my last year of high school. This overshadowed all my learning. I married in the spring of that year and maintained enough focus on school to complete high school in June, meeting the requirements for university entrance.

With adulthood and marriage came additional responsibilities and a brief respite from formal education. My husband and I moved to a small town outside of Calgary and had two children, Kent and Kristie. After 3 years my husband received a promotion, which initiated a move to another small town. There I attempted to fulfill the role of principal's wife. Once again my independence was frowned upon. My tenacious spirit however, allowed me to rise above the old west's image of women (being supported by and subservient to the husband) and to earn some personal income and start a career by establishing a kindergarten program in my home.

Then came the breakthrough. I was able to return to formal studies. My husband accepted a position with the University of Calgary. I completed a Bachelor of Education with a Diploma in Early Childhood Education and accepted a teaching position with the Calgary Board of Education. During the next 10 years, while teaching full time, I completed another diploma in Educational Psychology majoring in Computer Applications and a Masters of Arts in Education, Administration. At present, I am meeting the needs of children and staff as a teacher-administrator in a public elementary school in Calgary, Alberta.

Throughout this hectic schedule my husband and children have always remained my primary focus. I am very supportive of my husband in his career as an educator and teacher-politician. My son,

age 22, and my daughter, age 20, continue to provide me with opportunities to learn. I have enjoyed being a hockey, swimming, figure skating, and baseball mom.

But there has been a dramatic change in the flow of my river. A veritable flood caused the banks to break. Life is fragile and new challenges needed to be faced.

Mount Royal College hockey player Kent Hehr, 21, was last night upgraded from critical to serious condition in the Foothills Hospital. The shooting came after a vehicle, with two occupants, chased the car in which Hehr was a passenger for 15 blocks. When the cars reached the 4900 block of Crowchild Trail south at 2:50 A.M., a shot was fired from a small-calibre handgun. The bullet went right through Hehr's neck as he sat in the car's front passenger seat, said Inspector Randy Cottrell. "The slug caught the victim in the throat and severely damaged his spinal cord as it passed through."

"This appears to be a random senseless shooting," said Inspector Ray McBrien. (Calgary Sun, 1991)

On October 3, 1991 my son became a quadriplegic. He has no use of his hands or his body below the breast line. Initially, his life was severely threatened. For 2 days following the incident Kent was able to breathe on his own without the assistance of a ventilator. However, on the third day, breathing became so labored that the doctors ventilated his lungs by inserting a tube into his nose. His vital functions were assisted by tubes and monitored by machines. There was no guarantee that Kent would be able to breathe on his own again.

But Kent is alive and off the ventilator. He is able to manipulate an electric wheelchair and with the help of special devices is beginning to feed himself.

As I wrote this portrayal I read for the first time my journal entries

since my son's incident. The importance of family support is reinforced.

October 14- Thanksgiving Day: Memories of the Past Twelve Days

The pulmonary surgeon requested the anesthesiologist insert a tube down Kent's nose connecting him to a ventilator . . . Met Rod who is ventilator dependent. What a terrific individual! But, I pray Kent may be able to breath on his own again one day . . . Dick's fatherly caring for our son who knows his Dad will always be there . . . Watching Kristie respond to Kent. Absolutely amazing. Sensitive, caring-a real sister. In the toughest moments Kent has requested his sister . . . My sister Joan for caring and beginning a new relationship with Kent . . . My sister Karen's special relationship with my children. She has a sixth sense. She helped raise our children and I believe she will stand beside us all the way . . . My sister Shirley, and her three children, David, Wade, and Cheri for understanding Kent and Kristie's world . . . Sisters-in-law and brothers-in-laws . . . My parents, prayer and unconditional love . . . Kent for being able to joke and cajole his grandparents into seeing things positively. Good news! Grandpa and Grandma said Kent smiled at them today when Grandpa joked about being deaf.

My river continued to flow. I began to understand my emotions. I knew the feelings of anger, grief, fear, and depression. I worked on relinquishing my need to feel in control. I have come to realize I am only a part of a very complex cosmos. There are the forces of God in nature. There are the actions, thoughts, and feelings of my fellow human beings. I am one small interdependent and inter-related person within nature.

This connectedness is also true of my educational environment. I am growing, changing, and facilitating learning with the students and staff. I reaffirm daily my understanding of the importance of

children's learning and development in the context of their larger biography-society. The children and staff have made it possible for me to transcend myself, to say I hope and to live with hope.

I know the five students I observed in this study have different talents and struggles. Together we tried to maximize our capabilities. We tried new ideas and took risks. We reflected.

My river continues to flow. I look forward to each new day with the understanding that some things will not change. I am thankful for the love and support of my family and friends as together we accepted the challenges that we will face. We will strive to make our world a better place for all humankind.

The Setting

The school in this study is a medium-sized elementary school of approximately 450 students within the Calgary Board of Education in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. This system is one of the largest in Canada with a population of approximately 95,000 students. The district operates over 150 elementary schools, 50 junior high, and 15 senior high schools, and employs an instructional staff of approximately 6,000 teachers. It has a yearly budget of over half a billion dollars. The Calgary Board of Education's mission statement is to ensure individual student development through effective education.

About 80% of the families in the neighborhood live in multiple-unit housing while the remaining 20% live in single-family dwellings. There are a variety of socioeconomic groups represented but 60% to 70% of the families are in economic difficulty. From an informal survey done by the school staff, 40% of the families would not be considered "traditional" (a husband and a wife together in a first marriage). There are 40 English as a Second Language students and a small First Nations population. The children attending are very transient with about a 33% turnover annually. There has appeared to be an increase

in the number of dysfunctional families because of the current recession in the Canadian economy. Parents bring their problems to the school and seek support for budgeting, prioritizing, and parenting. Unfortunately, the provincial government's social service departments are also experiencing budget restraints, the result of which is that more parents are relying on the school for support.

In an attempt to meet family needs, the school encourages outside agencies to provide support. There is a Boys and Girls Club attached to the school. The City of Calgary Parks and Recreation department offers programs in the gymnasium after school. The exceptional needs of the school population are acknowledged by the school board and provided with extra funds. A portion of these funds was allocated to cover the cost of paying an assistant to organize and oversee a breakfast program for an hour each morning. There is no charge to the parents for this program. The attendance varies.

Approximately 12 children eat breakfast daily and during the last 2 weeks of the month this number increases as food budgets at home are depleted. Private companies and charities also assist with goods and services for the school. This results in coats, hats, mittens, shoes, and boots being available for the children as needed. There are also three on-site community operated lunchroom programs. In the fall of 1992, a before and after school care program will be available.

Approximately 21 professional staff and 14 support staff work collaboratively to meet the needs of students. Staff members continuously examine their beliefs about children and learning. The school philosophy is based on the "rights of children." "Children are not there primarily for us. We are there primarily for them" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 13). Our focus is children and respect for them. Staff members are encouraged to articulate their beliefs, to actively participate in their classrooms, and to view themselves as learners. Teachers daily reflect on their knowledge of children and how they can extend the children's learning.

The children actively participate in many of the activities offered. They are given opportunities to work individually, in pairs, groups, and classes. With the realization that knowledge and learning can never be separated, activities are planned to link the children's prior knowledge to new concepts. Children are encouraged to make connections with their everyday world. They are encouraged to read, write, and talk in purposeful ways, reflect on their learning, and evaluate what they have learned.

Parents are encouraged to become involved in their children's learning. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of the parents accept the invitation and join the school in a partnership of educating their children. Because of a lack of parental involvement, the staff acting in loco parentis not only prepares children academically but is cognizant of the possible risks of abuse and shortcomings in the home surroundings of the children. The school staff seeks support. University students, social work practicum students, and work experience students from the feeder high school are encouraged to volunteer regularly. Together the staff members engage in actions and interactions that are "directed toward the child's positive being and becoming" (Van Manen, 1991, p. 18).

The Informants

Britney, Laura, Matt, Robbie, and Mari were the foci of this study. They came from diverse backgrounds and had unique interests and needs. Their commonality was being retained in Grade 1. Interspersed throughout the portrayals are anecdotes from the parents, children, and teachers and comments from official report cards that help to create an image of each child. The parents gave permission to share official data from the children's report cards. To maintain confidentiality, each informant was given a pseudonym.

Britney. Determined, cheerful, confident, perfectionist describe one side of Britney. Fragile, hurt, victimized are the other attributes

Britney is attempting to understand and resolve. A glimpse of the pain Britney was experiencing was shared when her mother arrived at the classroom one day to pick her daughter up for a therapy session.

Teacher: Can I help you?

Britney's Mother: Yes, I'm Britney's mom. I've come to pick her up early. She has an appointment. We are going to start some therapy again this week. Britney was abused by both her dad and her uncle.

Britney is 7 years old and was born in Edmonton. She has four siblings, a sister who is 5, twin brothers who are 3, and a baby brother who is 1. She began kindergarten in the Catholic system in Edmonton and transferred to a public school in Edmonton for her Grade 1 year. She arrived in Calgary just prior to the beginning of the 1991-92 school year. When her mother registered Britney she said, "She is a very good kid. She keeps to herself quite often. She doesn't like close friends. We had to move a lot to stay away from her dad."

During our third interview on November 28, Britney's mother finally explained the reason for all the different schools:

I was trying to hide the abuse from the teachers. I pulled her out of kindergarten just for that. Just because there was so much abuse. Stupid on my part. I didn't want the school to know. When she was in Grade 1, she had to be in school. There was no way of hiding it and the teachers knew what was going on. It got so bad Britney would just sit in a corner and she wouldn't do anything any more.

The partner living with Britney's mother provided some background about Britney. He commented:

I met Britney's mother last year. She moved into the apartment I was living in. We always worry about Britney and she had to check in after school. Her dad last year really hassled us and we didn't want him touching Britney. We always worried that something would happen to

her. She can play outside but she needs to come in and check.

Britney always referred to this partner as “Daddy.” Throughout the year he was very supportive of Britney. He remarked:
I can help her. She has a little book bag, a little Crayola book bag. She’s not going to lose that-my mom made that for her. I can help her in the morning to remember to bring her library book back.

A couple of days following Christmas, Britney’s mother was unsure if Britney would be able to continue coming to school. She walked into the office on Friday morning, January 17, 1992 at 11:00 a.m. and said, “I’ve got a bond on my house right now and if they don’t find him within the next four hours they will be taking us into protective custody.” She continued by explaining that Britney’s father had received a mistrial and had been seen in Calgary. She said, “I have come to pick up the two girls because I’m afraid he is going to try and take them.”

On Monday January 20, 1992, Britney did not come to school. I remember the emptiness I felt. It reinforced for me how little I really knew about Britney. But, Tuesday came and Britney’s smiling face appeared and her mother explained:

When I got home I said to my Wally, “Britney used to walk with her head down. She would never look eye to eye. Now that she is going to Grade 2 she is excited about learning.” And so, when the police came, I said, “I don’t want to pull out. Britney is doing so much better.” And I thought, “I’m not going to run. This is too important to Britney.” I was willing to take a chance. I told the police we were not going into hiding. Rather, a private detective is watching my kids go to and from the school.

The Grade 1 teacher’s comments on a report card this year emphasized Britney’s capabilities: “Britney is a co-operative student who enjoys helping others. She volunteers ideas and information during discussions. Her work is completed very well. She takes great

pride in it.”

Following Christmas vacation, Britney spent half an hour in the Grade 2 classroom. During the first week of February she was in Grade 2 for the morning and Grade 1 in the afternoon. In the first week in March, she moved to the Grade 2 classroom for the entire day.

The confidence Britney’s mother recognized continued to grow. Britney’s Grade 2 teacher commented at the end of June: “Since her move to Grade 2, Britney has acquired a lot of self-confidence. She sees herself as an active learner.... Britney continues to grow as a reader and writer. She is taking risks and is willing to use personalized spelling.”

I do not think I can ever understand the pain and suffering that Britney has endured. She was beginning to share some of her fears in her paint therapy sessions with her teacher. The story shared by Britney’s mother also indicated Britney’s willingness to continue to believe in people. Her mother reported a conversation between the two of them:

“Mom, I really like Mr. Houn.” And I said, “That’s good you know, because

I am sure he likes you.” She goes, “No, I really like him Mom; he talks to me.”

She goes, “I trust him. I get to talk to him and he doesn’t tell me to sit down and ignore me.”

Laura. Big brown eyes, long dark hair, and a permanent smile are the characteristics that come to mind when I think of Laura. Laura, who is 7 years old, was born in Costa Rica and came to Canada at the age of 2. Her native language is Spanish. At 3, while her mother studied English, she attended a daycare where she was first introduced to English. Laura lives with both her mother and father and has a brother who is 5 years younger.

During the 9 months of waiting for her brother's arrival, Laura's parents were separated. Shortly after her brother's birth, Laura's parents resolved their differences and reunited as a family. During the past year both of Laura's parents were involved with Laura's growth as a learner and were eager to help her.

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Appendix G.1 - An Examination of Teacher Reflection

Rob Boody

Editor's Note

This appendix contains parts of Chapter Four of Rob Boody's dissertation to give the readers enough information to get the most out of chapter 8. The title of Rob's dissertation, which was completed in August, 1992 at Brigham Young University, is "An examination of the philosophical grounding of teacher reflection and one teacher's experience."

Results

This chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part is primarily descriptive, to give a feeling for how Dave Jensen teaches and how he thinks about teaching. This description is valuable in its own right. Indeed, *Among Schoolchildren* (Kidder, 1986) is one of the best books I have read on schooling, even though it presents little in the way of theory or explicit analysis. But the description is also a good base for the second part of the chapter, which presents six analytic themes derived in the course of the research.

A few caveats are in order. First, please remember that the names used here are pseudonyms to protect the privacy of the participants. Second, these results are only part of what I recorded, which is in turn only part of what I saw, which is in turn only part of what was

there to be seen. Third, even what seems to only be description is also interpretation. As the succeeding philosophy chapter will argue, there is no neutral or objective seeing, and an observer interprets a research situation by how he or she acts within the scene -by attending to one thing instead of something else, by what he or she thinks, records, and feels- as well as by later analytical processes. Fourth, therefore, readers should not assume that what I say is really what was there or the only way it could be seen. But, fifth, on the other hand, I did not make it all up, and I am presenting good evidence for what I have to say.

(In denying objectivity I do not want to simply substitute a radical subjectivity.) Finally, the intent of this chapter, and indeed the entire dissertation, is to open up and broaden the idea of teacher reflection. Towards that end, let me invite readers to join the process by examining their own experiences in the light of these results. Perhaps some ideas will occur that might be useful in making sense of teaching or life.

Setting a Context for Dave Jensen's Reflections

It is Tuesday, January 15, 1991, the first day of second semester at Seacrest Junior High School. I have a certain sense of excitement as I walk up to the doors in the middle of the school building. Part of the reason I am so excited is that my dissertation is really starting to happen, and this is the semester to do it in. But I am also energized by the discussion Dave Jensen and I had just yesterday. It was a Monday and school was out, at least for the students, as a one-day semester break. The teachers came in and used it as a planning period for the next semester. We both knew it would be the only time for us to talk at length in a theoretical or overview fashion, before details, actualities, practicalities, and daily teaching tasks took over our relationship. So I came to talk things out with him. He talked at length about what he would like to see in an ideal reading class, and I am interested to see what he will do today and this semester.

I come in a little late, about 8:40. All the students and Dave Jensen have their desks in a big circle, which takes up the circumference of the entire room. I slip into a chair near the door and behind the circle. Every desk has a poster board tag on it, with one of the following titles on it: Summarizer, Predictor, Clarifier, Question-Asker, Connector, Language Appreciator, or Teacher. I immediately recognize these as roles in the strategy known as *reciprocal reading*, because near the beginning of last semester Dave Jensen and I talked with a first year teacher who came to him for advice. The novice teacher had also talked about reciprocal reading. We both thought it sounded like a good idea. I imagine that Dave Jensen knew about it already, but this is the first I know of his implementing it. This is also a different way of doing reciprocal reaching than what the novice teacher mentioned. In his depiction, only one student at a time was a Language Appreciator or Predictor, here, every student has a role.

The roles used today reflect his view of reading, especially of reading this piece of literature (the *Odyssey*). The Summarizer retells what happened. The Predictor thinks about what might happen next, or what might have happened if a character had acted differently. The Question-Asker asks questions in regards to the text, things that are not clear, or things that would help explicate the text, such as wondering why someone did a certain thing, etc. The Clarifier answers or guesses at answers to the questions posed by the Question-Asker. The Connector makes connections between the reading and his or her own life. The Language-Appreciator notes and explains any particularly noteworthy uses of language, a particularly apt role for the *Odyssey*. And the Teacher calls on the other students and records their participation. Dave's only role, in theory, is to read aloud, but in fact, he steps in rather often.

Dave is reading the *Odyssey* aloud as I come in. At about 8:50 he stops reading and says, "Time to discuss it." Dave Jensen asks the Teacher [Jennifer, the student filling the role of Teacher in the reciprocal reading activity] to call on Summarizers first, and

especially those who didn't participate much last time, because they should all be prepared now. The Teacher, Jennifer, has a class roll in front of her, with marks for those who had participated last class period, so she calls on a Summarizer who had not. The student does a fair job retelling the story of Scylla and Charybdis. Then Dave requests the Teacher to ask another student for more detail. The Teacher asks Teresa, who adds more detail. I could see Teresa's journal and she had a full column of notes. Then a Question-Asker is called, who asks a question about the reading, and a Clarifier is called to try and answer it. On the second round of question and answer, the Clarifier who was called stumbles around a bit, until Dave tells him, "No one knows, just make a guess." He seems to loosen up a bit after that and makes a good guess. Dave then asks a Predictor to predict how a character might act differently in one of the situations. He says, "I don't know." He replies, "Of course you don't know, predict." Then he restates his request. This sort of thing goes on a while longer.

Dave is having to take an active role to make sure things happen. The students seem to be having problems with Clarifying and Predicting. Many of Dave's students do not see reading as other than a mechanical fact-extraction process, and Clarifying and Predicting require students to view reading in another way. Part of the reason Dave wants to use Reciprocal Reading is to get the students to experience aspects of good reading they might not otherwise do.

Then several Connectors are called, who are in the spirit of their role. One connects this part of the *Odyssey* to several Bible stories, another connects very well to a recent international event. Next, Language Appreciators are asked for. Numerous hands shoot up and Debbie is called. She reads a line of the *Odyssey* that she thinks is particularly good use of language. Four other pieces of the poem are given, by four other students. Dave frequently prompts each Language Appreciator to explain why the passage he or she chose is a good use of language.

I wonder if Connecting is easier than Clarifying and Predicting, or if it is just the particular students involved, but two out of the three Connectors said things that showed they were personally connecting with the *Odyssey*. Language Appreciation also seems relatively easy for the students, although they seem to feel it self-evident what the appreciation is and were hesitant to share their understandings.

At about 9:15 Dave has the students switch roles. To do this, each student writes his or her name on the role card they have been using. Then they pass the card on and receive one from another student. They are also to take notes about the next passage from the *Odyssey* that will help them in their new role in the next column in their journal. Dave further reminds them to “think on paper” (i.e., in their journals). Dave wants each student to try a variety of roles to broaden their horizons in responding to literature. Few of them seem to do naturally many of these aspects in their own reading. Thinking on paper also relates to Dave’s overall desire to break them out of the rut of mechanical reading, to help them be more carefully prepared and not as vague in their responses.

Then Dave reads another section of the *Odyssey*, that of Antinous’s speech to the other suitors. He then asks the students if they should start right then on the discussion or if he should continue reading. They respond with a quick and wide-spread outcry to start the discussion right then. This discussion lasts the remaining minutes of the period. The bell rings and all of the students file out.

The next period, third period, is Dave’s preparation period. He usually spends the time preparing materials, ideas, and grading, or attending to the numerous, small, miscellaneous errands teachers have to do. As soon as we are in the office, he starts to reflect out loud on what just took place, without any prompting from me. He said, “It went better than last time, but still not lively. Too squelched? Too many kids?” He suggests some possible alternatives: getting them in smaller groups with a reader, or reading all together and discussing in groups, or

giving them a checklist so that each student could do any and all of them. He mused aloud on what to do. "Would they keep their roles in the small groups? Or be able to say anything and then label it, sort of meta-cognitive. I'm trying to nudge them out of ruts but don't want to stifle their spontaneity. How to do it?" The bell rings for fourth period. Dave's first class of the day, described above, is a ninth grade English class. The other four classes he teaches are all reading classes. The ninth grade English class goes all school year, but the reading classes last only one semester. Therefore, after the bell rings for the start of fourth period, he introduces himself to the class and informs of what course they are in. Then he begins a get-to-know-you-and-your-name activity. He has everyone tell their names and something about themselves using a word with the same letter as their first name. He starts with "I'm Mr. Jensen and I like jazz." Then the next person says his name and what he likes, and then repeats. The third person does hers and the previous two and so on till the end, whereupon Dave does the whole list. He also spot-checks several students on their ability to remember the entire list. I participate in this activity and learn many of the student's names.

The primary goal of Dave's reading course is to help reluctant readers become active readers. His students can be viewed as belonging to one of four categories: (a) those who read well but don't read, (b) those who read poorly and don't read, (c) those who read well and do read, and (d) those who read poorly but do read. The last category is pretty small, as is category c.

One might ask why any of those groups would be in his class, especially category c. The answer is that placement in his class is not always voluntary for the students, and sometimes good readers who read refuse to do their work in regular English classes and so end up in his class. One good example I can think of is Thomas. He is undoubtedly intelligent, and an accomplished reader. We saw him in the class reading such things as *Metamagical Themas*, a biography of Lenin, and a 'C' programming manual. He refused, however, to do

anything in his regular English class telling me, for example, that the way his teacher approached poetry took all the life out of it—so his parents forced him to take this class. He also refused to do any of the “busy work” that Dave requires—by which Thomas meant any of the writing about his reading that Dave tried to stimulate and Thomas flunked his class as well and left at term.

I don’t actually know of any that fully fit category d, but there are some, like Susan, who may read one type of book frequently but be otherwise a fairly poor reader. Susan only read Harlequin romances, so it was Dave’s desire to help her to broaden her horizons during the class.

Category b contains the largest number of students. Category a is not so populous as b, but more than c or d. One example is Greg. He could read, and read well, but he had not read a book since first grade. Apparently he entered school being able to read, but his teacher told him that he was too young to know how to read and that instead of reading he needed to learn all the sounds and symbols with the rest of the class. He thought to himself then, “Well, if she doesn’t want me to read, I won’t.” And he hasn’t. During the year he was in Dave’s class he began to read, although it took months before he read much. By the end of the year he had read a number of 300+ page books.

How exactly do students find their way into Dave’s reading classes? To see the class in perspective, there are a variety of kinds of English classes available. As well as regular English classes, there is a behavior disorder unit for students with serious behavior problems and a resource (special education) class for those that meet those criteria. The school also offers enriched English, college prep, and AP classes. Dave’s class is different than all of the above. His course is meant as an intervention, to remediate kids who aren’t succeeding in regular English classes but who don’t meet the criteria of behavior disorder or special education. For that reason her reading class lasts only a semester instead of a year. And Dave is not required to cover a

particular content.

Most of Dave's students are referred by regular English teachers who have students they think Dave could help. The school counselors are also often involved. Parents play a role as well, as they must approve their child's schedule, and in some cases request their son or daughter be put in Dave's class.

After the completion of the name learning activity, Dave tells the class that he will read to them. He lets them know ahead of time that they will be writing a letter to me about the chapter he is going to read. He advises them to listen carefully and to do a lot of thinking about what they are going to hear. Dave begins to read the first chapter of Robert Newton Peck's *A Day No Pigs Would Die* (1972). Peck is a writer of quality young adult fiction. Dave starts, "I should of been in school that April day." His normally brisk, pleasant voice takes on a louder, more forceful tone as he reads for the group. No doubt part of this is to provide sufficient volume for all to hear. Partly I think it also suggests a desire to be dramatic, to pull in these students who don't like to read, and are probably not used to listening.

But instead I was up on the ridge near the old spar mine above our farm, whipping the gray trunk of a rock maple with a dead stick, and hating Edward Thatcher. During recess, he'd pointed at my clothes and made sport of them. Instead of tying into him, I'd turned tail and run off. And when Miss Malcolm rang the bell to call us back inside, I was halfway home.

Picking up a stone, I threw it into some bracken ferns, hard as could. Someday that was how hard I was going to light into Edward Thatcher, and make him bleed like a stuck pig. I'd kick him from one end of Vermont to the other, and sorry him good. I'd teach him not to make fun of Shaker ways. He'd never show his face in the town of Learning, ever again. No, sir.

A painful noise made me whip my head around and jump at the same

time. When I saw her, I knew she was in bad trouble. It was the big Holstein cow, one of many, that belonged to our near neighbor, Mr. Tanner. This one he called "Apron" because she was mostly black, except for the white along her belly which went up her front and around her neck like a big clean apron.

She was his biggest cow, Mr. Tanner told Papa, and his best milker. And he was fixing up to take her to Rutland Fair, come summer. As I ran toward her, she made her dreadful noise again. I got close up and saw why. Her big body was pumping up and down, trying to have her calf. She'd fell down and there was blood on her foreleg, and her mouth was all thick and foamy with yellow-green spit. [I hear several comments like "ugh," and "gross," and several laughs from the would-be tough guys.] I tried to reach my hand out and pat her head; but she was wild-eyed mean, and making this breezy noise almost every breath.

Dave lowers the book and asks the class: "Are you seeing this? Go to the movies in your head as you listen."

Turning away from me, she showed me her swollen rump. [Several snickers echo around the room.] Her tail was up and arched high, whipping through the air with every heave of her back. Sticking out of her was the head and one hoof of her calf. His head was so covered with blood and birthsoop that I had no way telling he was alive or dead. Until I heard him bawl.

Dave stops reading and asks the class "What could 'purchase' mean here? It surely doesn't mean its usual meaning of buying something. What other word could you substitute in its place?"

He was so covered with slime, and Apron was so wandering, there was no holding to it. Besides, being just twelve years old, I weighed a bit over a hundred pounds. Apron was comfortable over a thousand, and it wasn't much of a tug for her. As I went down, losing my grip on the calf's neck, her hoof caught my shinbone and it really smarted.

The only thing that made me get up and give the whole idea another go was when he bawled again. I'd just wound up running away from Edward Thatcher and running away from the schoolhouse. I was feathered if I was going to run away from one darn more thing. I needed a rope. But there wasn't any, so I had to make one. It didn't have to be long, just strong. Chasing old Apron through the next patch of prickles sure took some fun out of the whole business. I made my mistake of trying to take my trousers off as I ran. No good. So I sat down in the prickles, yanked 'em off over my boots, and caught up to Apron. After a few bad tees, I got one pantleg around her calf's head and knotted it snug. "Calf, I said to him, "you stay up your ma's hindside and you're about to choke. So you might as well choke getting yourself born." Whatever old Apron decided that I was doing to her back yonder, she didn't take kindly to it. So she started off again with me in the rear, hanging on to wait Christmas, and my own bare butt and privates [snickers again] catching a thorn with every step. And that calf never coming one inch closer to coming out. But when Apron stopped to heave again I got the other pantleg around a dogwood tree that was about thick as a fencepost.

Now only three things could happen: My trousers would rip. Apron would just uproot the tree. The calf would slide out.

Dave breaks into the story again. "Predict. What do you think is going to happen here?" Students shouted out things like: "The calfs gonna die." "The boy is going to die." "That boy is an idiot."

But nothing happened. Apron just stood shaking and heaving and straining and never moved forward a step. I got the other pantleg knotted about the dogwood; and like Apron, I didn't know what to do next. Her calf bawled once more, making a weaker noise than before. But all old Apron did was heave in that one place. "You old bitch," I yelled at her, grabbing a blackberry cane that was as long as a bullwhip and big around as a broom handle, "you move that big black smelly ass, you hear?" I never hit anybody, boy or beast, as I hit that

cow. I beat her so hard I was crying. Where I held the big cane, the thorns were chewing up my hands real bad. But it only got me madder. I kicked her. And stoned her. I kicked her again one last time, so hard in the udder that I thought I heard her grunt. Both her hind quarters sort of hunkered down in the brush. Then she started forward, my trousers went tight, I heard a rip and a calf bawl. And a big hunk of hot stinking stuff went all over me. Some of it was calf, some of it wasn't. As I went down under the force and weight of it, I figured something either got dead or got born.

Dave again inquired of the class, "What do you think of the boy now?"

All I knew was that I was marled up in a passel of wet stuff, and there was a strong cord holding me against something that was very hot and kicked a lot. I brushed some of the slop away from my eyes and looked up. And there was Apron, her big black head and her big black mouth licking first me and then her calf.

But she was far from whole. Her mouth was open and she was gasping for air. She stumbled once. I thought for sure I was going to wind up being under a very big cow. The noise in her throat came at me again, and her tongue lashed to and fro like the tail of a clock. It looked to me as if there was something in her mouth. She would start to breathe and then, like a cork in a bottle, some darn thing in there would cut it off.

Her big body swayed like she was dizzy or sick. As the front of her fell to her knees, her head hit my chest as I lay on the ground, her nose almost touching my chin. She had stopped breathing!

Her jaw was locked open so I put my hand into her mouth, but felt only her swollen tongue. I stretched my fingers up into her throat and there it was! A hard ball, about apple-size. It was stuck in her windpipe, or her gullet. I didn't know which and didn't care. So I shut my eyes, grabbed it, and yanked. Somebody told me once that a cow won't bite. That somebody is as wrong as sin on Sunday. I thought my

arm had got sawed off part way between elbow and shoulder. She bit and bit and never let go. She got to her feet and kept on biting. That devil cow ran down off that ridge with my arm in her mouth, and dragging me half-naked with her. What she didn't do to me with her teeth, she did with her front hoofs.

It should have been broad daylight, but it was night. Black night. As black and as bloody and as bad as getting hurt again and again could ever be. It just went on and on. It didn't quit.

He closes the book and talks to the class again. "What happened there?"

After a discussion he asks them to write a letter to me about what they just heard. "Tell him what you were thinking as you heard it, what you wondered about, what it reminded you of, what struck you about it. Say something that grabbed you, or what you noticed about the writing. Rob will write back to you."

Dave further tells them to use correct letter form, which he describes verbally, and also writes on the board. In addition, the students are to include one or more of the following suggestions: What did you visualize? What did you feel? What part did you like best, and why? What part struck you as important? What did you notice about the writing? What did you experience as it was being read? What questions do you have at this point? What predictions do you have about what might happen next? What did it remind you of? He also writes these questions on the board. As the students write, I ponder what I have seen so far today. What Dave did this day could be labeled under the rubric of "whole language."

But I think it is instructive to note that he was not trained to be a whole language teacher. He was trained in skill and drill and mastery learning, and only came to what he does now as a teacher over time through his reflections on teaching. It is also important to note that although he has read widely in whole language (and other) views of

reading and writing, and taken courses and taught them, he is not a slave to any one view or person in the field. He freely borrows ideas from others but usually adapts them in the process. He invents as well. And he thinks deeply about the needs of his students.

He originally received a B.S. in secondary English and then taught junior high English. He noticed that his students read poorly. He tried to teach what he thought were wonderful works of literature, even for that age group, and students couldn't read them. Dave thought, "Wow, we've got to start a little bit earlier." That's when he started getting interested in teaching reading.

Several years later he was teaching elementary school. For teaching reading he was following a skill and drill approach, as he had been taught to do in school. In this approach, reading is conceived of as discrete skills to be broken down into finite behavioral objectives. For each skill there would be a pretest, a posttest, and remediation if the students hadn't mastered it. Dave borrowed a book from his principal that looked interesting. He started to read that book and read all night, finally going to bed at 4:30 in the morning. The book was *Reading Miscue Inventory* (Goodman & Burke, 1972), and it was the most exciting professional book he had ever read.

The message of the book to him was that the mistakes a teacher sees happening in reading are not mistakes at all, they are miscues. That is, they show how a student is thinking and act as a window into his or her head. They show what a student is cueing into. None of the "mistakes" are random; they are based on something. As Dave puts it, "That just blew me away." It was a difficult book to understand, but it gave Dave the motivation to grapple with the ideas and to implement them in his classrooms. "I tried for eleven years to make sense out of it and to try some of those things just in that one little book. You know, it never occurred to me to write to the author or the publisher for more information. Not until I've gotten into writing myself have I realized that I, even though I was the teacher, had to go through the

same evolution my students do to learn that there is a human being on the other side of that blackprint.”

He asked about the book at the local university while taking graduate classes and also asked around the school district in which he taught. No one knew much about the book; the most information he received was, “Well, I think those people are somewhere in Arizona.”

He had become very proficient at mastery learning. He was awarded Teacher of the Year in another state. He had students who were at the bottom of a school that was itself at the bottom of the eleven junior high schools in the district. In his two years there, he brought his students up to the middle of the pack on standardized tests. It looked really good. “But you know what?” he said, “The kids didn’t like to read, and it finally got through my thick skull. So what if they can master at 80 percent or better at cause-and-effect, so what if they can break down words, so what if they can do this, that and the other. If they still won’t touch a book with a ten-foot pole, what have you accomplished?” At the same time he was still trying to make sense out of the Goodman and Burke book, without any support or background knowledge.

At this time Dave was really searching. Even though he was doing what anybody would consider good things, he did not feel he was meeting his goals of helping readers. But then, in 1984 in Secondary Reading, he saw an advertisement for a ten-day workshop by these authors. He went down to the workshop for 10 days. In his own words: “It just changed everything. Everything made so much sense. I took 85 pages of notes. And I have gone over and over those notes countless times. And things have even made more sense as I’ve experienced some of it.” He heard Ken and Yetta Goodman and Dorothy Watson conduct the seminar on Miscue Analysis and whole language. He met the other people attending the workshop who were also struggling, who were going through the same kind of searching and struggles he was, and others who were more advanced and had a

lot of experience and were coming just for a refresher, one at a nearby university who was doing exciting things in Dave came back ready to set the world on fire. He had been given their name of some whole language. Dave contacted her and began going to a whole language support group. Seven years later he still attends almost every month. The other members are mainly teachers also trying to make sense out of these philosophies of language learning and how such assumptions impact instruction and learners. A professor or two often acts as mentor.

The school bell rings, releasing me from my reverie. The kids file noisily out into an even noisier hallway. Those students assigned first lunch are off to eat, those with second lunch have one more class before lunch. Dave's fifth hour class has first lunch.

The two of us ate our lunch in his room. Dave rarely eats much, often a small can of juice, a piece of fruit, and a piece of bread. During the 25 minutes allotted for lunch, we talk and he further prepares for the next three classes of remedial reading. There have been times we have talked in general, but more usually we talk about specific students and activities. He often changes what he does in the following three classes by how things go in the fourth period class. We often talk while he is grading or running errands around the school.

Fifth period has more students than the other sections, and the name game takes so long they have less time to write a letter. Sixth period, it seems, is the one to worry about this semester—they seem unexcited by his reading, and make unrelated comments. For example, while Dave is talking to the class, Grant belligerently yells "Why am I here?" not once but many times. Another student, Finette, can't remember a thing about the chapter. In sixth period, students finish the name game quicker because there are fewer students, so Dave has them draw a picture of the most poignant part of the chapter for them, and also ask any questions they have about the class. Seventh period goes much like fourth period did.

After school is out, Dave tells me that, overall, the day went much better than he expected. As I sat in his room while he filled out the attendance sheets, I began to think about what I have seen today and what we talked about yesterday. Yesterday, Dave began our discussion by opening the large blue lab notebook in which he keeps his thoughts and writings and notes and says, "I did some thinking over Christmas holiday<totally colored by how much time I spend [doing school related work], feelings of lack of valuing for what I do [by others], and my inundation<so it may not "work." I could see a date written in his notebook- December 30. So I thought to myself, yes, this is a time when he has more time to himself and is released from the daily grind of school. It is also New Years, a time when people reflect back and take stock and make plans for the future. But under the hope of what he could do to help all of his students better lurks a couple of his longtime bugaboos: he often feels burdened by the amount of time and emotional energy teaching takes and the lack of appreciation.

His energy and enthusiasm and confidence built as he continued. "My question was, What would the dream reading program look like in junior high school to really make a difference for the kids? It is not a dichotomy, but I see two general types of kids along a continuum: those who are proficient readers but are reluctant or not into reading, and the less skilled in reading. I need to do something to address the needs of both. To work this out I asked myself two questions: One, what would the students feel like when they left this ideal program, and two, what could they do?"

"Such a program would have this characteristic: the student would feel competent. It seems to me that many of my students do not read because they do not think they can. But I'm nervous about them simply feeling confident, because I have some students who feel they are competent and are not. So they should both feel confident and show they are competent. But to whom? Probably to me. I also have a distorted view of the world, as do these students who mistake their

reading competence in either direction, but I work with other kids and teachers and so have wider horizons.”

Turning to the notes in his daybook, he read, “Behaviors the students should exhibit:

- select a book enjoyable for them to read
- figure out hard words (sounds like English pronunciation)
- also figure out meaning
- be intrigued by words, want to know things, be learners of language (this one is really idealistic, not basic)
- support other readers, be in a community
- learn from print
- formulate meaningful, well-formulated ideas
- infer from clues
- build cultural literacy, be exposed to all kinds of wondrous writing
- be able to discuss ideas from reading
- make meaning from print (this one is basic)
- concentrate while reading and writing
- give up negative attitudes towards reading and writing (this is really pie in the sky).”

Dave continues, “I’m thinking of rethinking the writing part and renaming the class, because writing is integral to reading and literacy. Maybe I should start more basic, with a good sentence, a well-formed paragraph (a meaningless phrase)? But I need to be careful it is still authentic. It should be a reading and writing class, and help kids be competent, proficient, and feel they can handle the demands of both reading and writing.”

From other discussions I know that he sees reading, writing, listening, and speaking all as aspects of literacy. He often encounters resistance from students who don’t want to write. They usually don’t want to read either, but if it is a reading class they are at least willing to do a

minimal amount for a grade. But they seem to feel that writing should not be required in a reading class.

The need for authenticity is part of one of his underlying themes. That is, Dave does not want to impose either reading or writing tasks on students just as skill builders, but only in the context of doing important things. At this point in our discussion, Dave began grading exercises from the end of the previous semester (grades don't have to be in till the end of the week). The next hour or so of our discussion took place as he graded. Because of the pressure of his work, we often talk while he does other things. Experienced teachers seem to develop the ability to multi-task, to do more than one thing at a time. Such teachers often have learned "tricks" to get things done faster as well. While continuing to grade papers, Dave continued, "Then I sat down and thought specifically about how I would bring these goals to pass. First, I would have everyone read, and decide which type they were. I would not use the term "reluctant reader." I would put them in a matrix: reluctant yes/no, skilled yes/no. There are a few in each category but most are reluctant."

I chimed in at this point, "And it's even more complicated if we bring in writing. What about the ones who are not so bad at reading but are poor or reluctant writers?" I was here thinking of Thomas as an example, who was an excellent and non-reluctant reader but who would not put pen to paper.

Dave noted that some of the students are really pretty capable, but they don't feel they are and so do not act as if they are in most circumstances. Then he began to detail tactics to bring his desired goals to pass. "I would like to have lots of group sharing of books to read. If they are reading they will have some to share. I will introduce lots of books and provide hooks." Sometimes he introduces books simply by telling about them but more often he tells about a book and reads short selections from it. Occasionally he reads an entire chapter, as with *A Day No Pigs Would Die*. He asks the students to

maintain a sheet in the class journal to record books they might like to read in the future. Any of the books he shares are good candidates for this list. Sometimes students come up after he shares a book wanting to check it out right then.

Then he says, "I will provide lots of class time to read." Many days the students read for about thirty minutes, silently and individually, in a book of their own choosing. Some days the activities planned do not permit individual reading, but there are occasional days where the class reads the entire period. He also requires as homework, usually the only homework they do get, that each student read half an hour a night five days a week.

Along with these other pieces Dave wants to "have book discussion groups, not necessarily group books. Each student could share the book they are reading, tell an interesting part, read aloud, tell why they chose that part, discuss issues raised, and have some intellectual discussion." A group book is where all or part of a class reads the same book and discusses it at certain set points along the way. Dave does this once a semester usually, using three different sets of books to choose from every semester.

Group books often used include *Deathwatch*, *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, *The Book of Three*, *The Outsiders*, and *A Summer to Die*. Dave continues his list: "I want to have lots of probing of thinking. They just must think here. It is much easier for teachers if students don't think; they don't have to deal with hard questions. I will support the less proficient readers. Not that they will know who is in which group. And I will help all of them reflect on their reading, of course." He sighed. "It sounds so wonderful, but how to pull it off? I have always wanted to do it, at least since learning about whole language."

Returning to his list, Dave says, "We need to do more oral reading. They need to become more confident in that area." I throw in, "Most can't or won't."

Dave said, "I've been having them read into a tape recorder. Some like to do it in the classroom [at the cubicle set aside for that and for conferences], others like to do it in the hall, and others like to read to other people while recording in the hall." He initially had them do this reading to give him a quick evaluation of their oral reading abilities. He gives the students extra points if they read five minutes a day out loud at home. Next on his list was, "Cloze experiences. If not overdone, they can have a very good impact on developing the ability to see if one's reading is making sense, to use context clues, and in guessing what hard words mean. You get a lot of mileage out of Cloze as far as thinking is concerned." Even though Cloze can be a part of traditional skill and drill reading development methods, Dave does not just reject it out of hand. Instead he has tried Cloze exercises and observed their effects.

After Cloze, Dave moves on to "Retelling. Could be that I'm expecting too much too soon to get them into reflecting. Some don't even know what's in the text, like Kent. That kid doesn't know what he's reading." Dave had checked on Kent as he was reading *Deathwatch*. Kent told him nothing, and responded to Dave's prompts with "I don't like to think as I read."

"Retelling helps students be determined to get meaning. So many of them just keep going on even if it makes no sense to them, they see it as not their problem."

"I wonder how or where they got that?" I wonder. Dave thinks that having students reflect is crucial to reading. But it is also true that if they don't pull anything out of the reading to reflect on, then reflection doesn't make much sense. And he does have students who have trouble getting anything out of their reading. Kent is a very good, or should we say bad, example. As Dave puts it, he has defined reading simply as seeing words and turning pages. Nothing else happens; there is no human connection. I still wonder how students become like that, that they can "read" and get nothing and not worry

or care about it. I imagine that the artificiality and coercive nature of schooling has a lot to do with it. At this point Dave finished grading, and I prepared to leave Dave to more grading from last semester and more preparation for the new one.

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Appendix G.2 - Themes of Reflection

Rob Boody

The preceding section of the chapter described some of the thoughts and actions of Dave Jensen as a junior high school teacher. Aspects of reflection can be seen throughout the portrayal, but to allow the description to speak for itself I withheld comment. In this section, however, I will explicitly describe six major themes of reflection developed out of the research. The choice of the descriptor “themes” is a conscious one. Other than the fact that it is a term often used in ethnography and naturalistic inquiry, it also implies that I will discuss things I have seen without implying that there is a rigid structure at play. I don’t want to assume that the term “teacher reflection” has only one meaning or even that definitions are primary, or that there is only one kind of reflection. Words have uses; they are part of forms of life (Wittgenstein, 1958). My goal is to pay close attention to what actually goes on, and provide close description and analysis to bring forth better understanding of what reflection is, how it works, what effects it has, and how to help develop it. I want to help delineate the modes and aspects that occur, not define it as one thing. It is not even a “thing”; it is a variety of practices related to each other the way that games are (see Wittgenstein, 1958).

In many qualitative studies, research starts from the actual terms the participants use. It then becomes a matter of teasing out the culturally held ideas about this particular term. Spradley uses this approach very effectively in discussing tramp culture (see You Owe

Yourself a Drunk, Spradley, 1974).

In the present study, “reflection” is not a term that Dave Jensen used in the way it is used here. However the idea of researching reflection came out of our work together. So, in a sense, I am applying a term from the literature onto Dave’s experience. It is helpful to have some organizing concept to pull together all of the singular occurrences we have experienced in his classroom. But at the same time such a concept can be dangerous to productive thinking and action. Even more than bringing the literature to bear on the classroom I would like Dave Jensen’s experience inform what I have seen in the literature.

There are potentially many other ways to talk about what goes on in Dave’s classroom. I am not creating an interpretation that is clear and distinct from all other characterizations; I do not require convergent and discriminant validity. I welcome reverberations. I am trying to create an interpretation that will be beneficial for teacher educators, teachers, and ultimately, for students, parents, and the communities in which they live. Therefore, if some of what I say seems not to fit, or is wrong, or doesn’t connect, readers should not feel coerced to accept it. On the other hand, if something I say does not neatly fit into a pre-existent scheme I hope readers will consider the possibility of throwing the scheme away and opening themselves up to new experiences and thoughts.

Theme 1: The Four Theoretical Versions of Reflection

I did not go into the study to prove or disprove the major views of reflection, but as I read the literature on reflection at the same time period as I did the fieldwork, I could not help but consider what I was seeing in light of the theories I was reading. I found them all to be helpful in thinking about parts of Dave Jensen’s experience, but too

narrow and limited to be useful to me in articulating a wider view. I do not think that any of the received theories account for enough of what I saw going on, nor do I think that their language is as rich as could be. On the other hand, I think there are reasons for using each of their languages, and each can be used to describe some of what I saw. Let me briefly indicate what I think each of the four views has to offer and what some of the weaknesses of each view are.

Retrospective Analysis: There are certainly times when Dave would, after the fact, think about what had just happened to make sense of it. The problem with describing reflection in this way is that it ignores many other facets of reflection that are not retrospective, neither are they as conscious and deliberate. It ignores the larger context of his life. In addition, nothing is said about how such reflections make a difference in the present or future. That is, even if a teacher looks back on a teaching experience and thinks, for example, "I don't think that the students got very much out of this lesson," it is not clear how this will or will not factor into future teaching experiences.

One issue not well discussed in the literature is what exactly it is that is looked back upon. Dave Jensen, for example, saw things in his classroom that many people would not have seen. But there is always more that could have been seen. And there are different ways of seeing. Thinking of reflection merely as looking back on experience assumes the neutrality and givenness of experience.

Another slighted issue is that for such reflections to make a difference depends on a lot of things that are not discussed. For example, if Dave decides that a class did not go well and reflects on it, how will that affect tomorrow's classes? The class he reflected on is already past, and presumably tomorrow's plan is not identical. And if teaching is not mechanical, but a human activity, then the results of reflection are not mechanical in nature, and their influence not of a causal nature. A third issue is that there is a tendency to lose connection with the other person in thinking of reflection as retrospection. Retrospection

is always after the fact, and it can be very introspective.

Dave Jensen does sometimes seem to do something like Cruickshank's (1987) analysis of effectiveness of methods and techniques. But he works with real lessons to real students, not contrived situations, as does Cruickshank. And, like most teachers, Dave usually reflects alone. As part of a larger teacher education approach, Cruickshank's method may well be a useful approach for limited objectives; but it is not a good description of how practicing teachers reflect.

Dewey: Some of Dave's reflection might well be seen as a problem solving process. But again, problem solving alone does not describe the broad range of his reflections, and it ignores the fact that problems and rationality do not drive the process.

Consider the story above of his development as a teacher of reading fueled by the students' cry of "I hate to read." This could be seen as a case of problem-solving. He felt discomfort with what was going on, he worked out some things to do, he found a way to talk about it, and he could tell that some of what he was changing to was working. But as my analysis of the situation from the perspective of Dewey's seven-step model shows, this model is not a good description of the situation. (The italicized parts are quoted from p. 25 above, the rest of the text is my analysis.) Pre-reflection. Starts with a problematic situation, "perplexed, troubled, or confused" (Dewey, 1933, p. 199). This was certainly the case in our example. But this formulation tends to ignore the possibility that one could investigate something problematic in theory although not yet in practice or that one felt led to investigate without feeling any essential sense of anxiety. It also assumes that the natural position of humans is to be happy and satisfied, and not perplexed or troubled.

1. Direct action temporarily inhibited, so that thinking may take place. Suggestions of what to do occur; if more than one option exists, inquiry proceeds. Dave Jensen did not stop teaching the

students so he could reflect; he did his sit-down thinking after teaching hours. But why do we assume that no ideas can come while action is taking place (see, for example, Schon, 1983; also pp. 43-46 above). This model says nothing about where the suggestions come from. Is it always necessary to have competing suggestions for inquiry to proceed?

2. Felt uneasiness transformed through identification and articulation into an intellectual problem to be solved. There certainly was some sense of this happening, although Dave taught for years before the major breakthrough occurred in 1984. It was much more than an intellectual problem. The knowledge required was not something he could get entirely from books or talk. He had to feel his way into it, and develop practical knowledge to guide him in carrying out what needed to be done.
3. Working hypothesis developed to guide data collection. His original data was gathered probably without hypothesis, as is most ethnographic data. Gathering data to support or refute a particular hypothesis has the tendency to cast everything in terms of that particular hypothesis and ignores much else that may be going on. Too often an hypothesis becomes a straight jacket.
4. Proposed solution elaborated and connected with other things through a reasoning process. This certainly occurred in the case I am discussing, but Dave's "solution" is not in essence a methodological or technical solution. It involved a different way of relating with students and of seeing the process and pedagogy of reading; it was a different form of life.
5. Attempt made to verify the hypothesis through empirical testing. Further refinement of the hypothesis and further testing can occur if the initial test does not verify the hypothesis. What kind of evidence would confirm or disconfirm the hypothesis? Dave Jensen continually tests his activities, but on the grounds of what specific hypothesis? This is not to say that he does not employ verbal formulations that sound like

hypotheses, for that he does not test these. I am simply pointing out that the process of hypothesis testing is not as straightforward as the model suggests. For example, if we take a verificationist approach, making a hypothesis and looking to see if the predicted results occur, we are unable to certify our hypothesis due to the logical fallacy of affirming the Consequent. More than predicate calculus is required.

Post-reflection. In post-reflective period, a feeling of “a direct experience of mastery, satisfaction, enjoyment (Dewey, 1933). This is not Dave’s usual state at all. He continues to be troubled by his teaching and the needs of his students. He does often feel satisfaction when students he works with do well and break out of bad habits. But he still worries about he others. Van Manen: One could always, of course, spread Dave Jensen’s actions out along van Manen’s hierarchy. Following Noffke and Brennan’s critique, however, to do so tends to ignore the connections between the levels in the hierarchy, and the idea that all of the levels are needed. In addition it takes as the ideal state something that does not reflect Dave’s situations. Take, for example, his moving from book reports to his version of written book sharing⁶ “For Our Reading Pleasure.’ Perhaps there is not really that much difference. Perhaps it is only a difference “in technique.” Or is it? Could the change in technique be seen as a way to promote free speech community, not as an impediment to it? “For Our Reading Pleasure” is intended to be a way to let students talk more about what they got out of a book, and in a way that might invite other students to want to read it. Several students who disliked many aspects of the class nevertheless took this social aspect of the class very seriously and spent much time preparing their submissions.

Schon: Sometimes Dave Jensen does what could be labeled as reflection-in-action. Indeed, I find Schon’s (1983) notion very powerful, as it gives a way to see mindful work going on even in “on the fly” action. To me, this is an important advance for the status of teacher knowledge (see Body, 1992). Schon provides a way to talk

about teachers as problem solvers, as Dewey attempted, but without some of the baggage left over from nineteenth century science (see the following chapter) that Dewey's approach carried with it. But once again, there are other ways of reflecting as well, and reflection-in-action misses the personal and ethical nature of reflection. For example, when I see Dave talking with a student about something, and reframing the situation for them, what I see happening is more than a description of mental processing—I see obligation. Why does Dave bother to try to reframe something at all? Is reframing an intellectual game or an act of service? Particular students trouble him over extended periods of time, sometimes well past when anything concrete could have been done for them.

Each of the four ideas of reflection from the literature can be seen in the data. Each is a perspective from which to see the data, each revealing and concealing different things. But I find none of them individually, or collectively, enough to account for what I see going on.

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Appendix H - Spradley's theme synthesis and report writing

Editor's Note

This appendix contains a summary of ideas about theme synthesis and about writing qualitative reports. Most of these ideas come from James Spradley's book *Participant Observation*.

The data analysis activities presented in other chapters (Domain analysis, Taxonomic analysis, and Componential analysis) allow the qualitative inquirer to focus attention on in-depth analyses of selected domains within the broad cultural scene or social situation under study. However, in addition to examining selected details of a culture, qualitative inquiry should "chart the broader features of the cultural landscape." This chapter discusses "Theme analysis," a set of procedures which one can use to understand and convey a holistic sense of the entire cultural scene.

1. Pages 140-141

Many qualitative researchers attempt to convey holistic views of the scenes they study with an **inventory approach** which simply lists or identifies all the domains they have discovered. However, Spradley suggests that an important extension of the inventory approach consists of the **discovery of cultural themes** that a [culture's] members have learned and use to connect those domains."

Theme analysis is based on the assumption that "every culture, and every cultural scene, is more than a jumble of parts. It consists of a system of meaning that is integrated into some kind of larger pattern." Spradley defines "a cultural theme as any principle recurrent in a number of domains, tacit or explicit, and serving as a

relationship among subsystems of cultural meaning.”

2. Pages 141-142

To clarify further what a theme is, Spradley says that themes are usually stated as assertions (e.g., in Apache culture, men are superior to women). These assertions or “cognitive principles” represent what people in the culture being studied “believe and accept as true and valid; [they are assumptions] about the nature of [people’s] commonly held experience.” These assertions vary greatly with respect to their generality. But when an assertion applies to numerous situations and recurs in two or more domains within a given culture, it is considered a cultural theme. These themes do not need to “apply to every part of a culture. Some themes recur within a restricted context or only link two or three domains.” Single all-encompassing themes are rare. “It is more likely that a culture or a particular cultural scene will be integrated around a set of major themes and minor themes.”

Spradley presents examples of themes from studies he conducted of tramps and of cocktail waitresses in the USA. One example from the study of tramps illustrates that many of the domains studied involved the concept of **risk**. Spradley used that concept to organize and interpret many of the tramps’ activities- it became a theme. In the cocktail waitress study, he found the theme of **gender** running through almost every domain he discovered.

3. Pages 142-144

Another important distinction is between tacit and **explicit themes**. Explicit themes are those that “appear as folk sayings, mottoes, proverbs, or recurrent expressions” (such as “Pigs are our hearts” from the Mae Enga in New Guinea or “Harmony through diversity” in Indonesia). These statements rarely contain all the information needed to understand the theme’s application in the culture, but they may be a clue to the perceptive researcher for further inquiry.

“Most cultural themes remain at the **tacit** level of knowledge. People do not express them easily, even though they know the cultural principle and use it to organize their behavior and interpret experience. Themes come to be taken for granted, slipping into that area of knowledge where people are not quite aware or seldom find need to express what they know. This means that the [researcher] will have to make inferences about the principles that exist.” For example, although judges would explicitly deny them and tramps never stated them explicitly, Spradley discovered three rules that seemed to be followed tacitly by judges in courtrooms where tramps were brought for trial:

-
- Rule 1: When guilty of public drunkenness, a man deserves greater punishment if he is poor.**
-
- Rule 2: When guilty of public drunkenness, a man deserves greater punishment if he has a bad reputation.
- Rule 3: When guilty of public drunkenness, a man deserves greater punishment if he does not have a steady job.
-

4. Page 144

“Themes not only recur again and again throughout different parts of a culture, but they also connect different subsystems of a culture. They serve as a general semantic relationship between domains.” Spradley suggests “that analysis consist[s] of a search for (a) the parts of a culture, (b) the relationship among those parts, and (c) the relationship of the parts to the whole. In studying cultural domains and taxonomies, [we] have been searching for parts and their relationships. The search for themes involves identifying another part of every culture, those cognitive principles that appear again and again. But the search for themes is also a means for discovering the relationships among domains and the relationships of all the various parts to the whole cultural scene.”

5. Pages 144-154

Spradley spends the rest of this chapter discussing various strategies he and others have used to discover themes. These are not as well developed into systematic approaches as some of the steps discussed in other handouts have been. But they provide some ideas participants can begin with in discovering themes in their own studies.

1. Total **immersion** in the cultural scene during the field research has always been used to discover themes. By concentrating all one's attention and experience in the research setting, the researcher's thoughts and feelings become saturated by the experiences of the people under study. Then relationships among domains and new themes begin to emerge almost subconsciously as the researcher reflects on the field notes accumulated during immersion.
2. **Making a componential analysis of cover terms for entire domains** is another strategy for identifying themes. The componential analysis activities discussed in another handout focus the researcher's attention on included terms within a selected domain for a focused and in depth analysis. But the same techniques can be used to discover attributes of domains and the dimensions of contrast between those domains within a cultural scene. This holistic approach reveals patterns within and between domains, which are the same as themes. Spradley gives an example from a study of a small factory which makes tannery equipment. He identified 41 domains within this cultural scene and then, using a paradigm chart, began searching for similarities and contrasts among these domains. This focused his attention on the whole scene and the relationships among the domains within it.
3. An even broader perspective may be gained by **searching for a larger domain that includes the cultural scene**. With this approach, the researcher locates the cultural scene under study (the factory in the example given above, or a supermarket) within a larger domain of which the cultural scene is an instance. For example, the tannery equipment factory discussed

above is a kind of factory; the supermarket is a kind of store. Seeing the cultural scene within this context may bring themes to mind.

4. "Another strategy for discovering cultural themes is the **examination of [and search for similarities among] the dimensions of contrast** for all the domains that have been analyzed in detail." Again, this strategy utilizes analyses made during componential analyses for selected domains within a cultural scene. Spradley presents an example from his study of tramps to show how dimensions of contrast for the domains "tramps", "trusties", and "drinking behavior" all contained references to a concept he eventually called "mobility." This concept became one of the central themes of his study.
5. **Identify organizing domains.** As discussed in other chapters, some domains within a cultural scene tend to organize a lot of the information included in other domains. This is often the case with domains using the semantic relationship "X is a stage of Y." For example, Spradley's study of tramps included a domain called "stages in making the bucket" which gave a grand tour of how tramps got put in jail. As he described each stage in his final report, he was able to connect other domains to those stages for elaboration. The chronology of "making the bucket" gave a common strand or theme around which the rest of the story could be told.
6. **Make a schematic diagram of the scene** to help you visualize relationships among domains in that scene and relationships between that scene and other domains in other scenes. This approach is really just a visual way to do the thinking described in the other strategies described above. For example, Spradley presents (on page 150) a diagram that represents the "stages in making the bucket." Seeing a diagram like this can suggest possible relationships and themes to the researcher.
7. **Search for universal themes.** "In the same way that there appear to be universal semantic relationships, there appear to

be some universal cultural themes, the larger relationships among domains.” Many of these are represented by theories in social science. Others are simply patterns one finds in reading the literature. The more familiar a qualitative researcher is with the literature which includes this growing set of universal patterns, the more useful they will be as a basis for comparison with qualitative data. Spradley presents a short list of six universal themes to illustrate this point. But there are many more to be discovered in the literature. By reflecting on these themes while reviewing your own field notes, you may discover instances of universal themes in your own data which will help you organize that information. Spradley’s six themes are:

1. **Social conflict**

People have social conflicts with each other and these conflicts can often be useful ways to organize and understand the details observed in a cultural scene. For example, the conflicts between tramps and others in society related to the major theme of risk avoidance Spradley discovered.

2. **Cultural contradictions**

“Cultural knowledge is never entirely consistent in every detail. Most cultures contain contradictory assertions, beliefs, and ideas. Every [qualitative researcher] is well advised to search for inherent contradictions that people have learned to live with and then ask, ‘How can they live with them?’ This may lead to the discovering of important themes.” For example, in many cultural scenes, people have official images they try to project which contradict their “real” or insider image. What other contradictions do the people you are studying demonstrate?

3. **Informal techniques of social control**

By paying attention to how participants in your study attempt to control behavior or get people to conform to the values and norms of their society, important cultural

themes can be discovered.

4. **Managing impersonal social relationships**

Especially in urban cultures, people develop ways to deal with people they do not know. Searching for actors use of such strategies in your study can reveal themes.

5. **Acquiring and maintaining status**

In most cultures, people strive to achieve status, although the symbols of status vary greatly from culture to culture. Discovering what participants in your study do to acquire and maintain status should reveal important themes.

6. **Solving problems**

“Culture is a tool for solving problems. [Qualitative inquirers] usually seek to discover what problems a person’s cultural knowledge is designed to solve.” Many other domains of a cultural scene can be related to the types of problems people are trying to solve and how they are doing it.

8. **Write a summary overview of the cultural scene.** “This strategy for discovering cultural themes will help to pull together the major outlines of the scene you are studying. In several brief pages, write an overview of the cultural scene for someone who has never heard about what you are studying. Include as many of the major domains as you can as well as any cultural themes you have identified. The goal of this overview is to condense everything you know down to the bare essentials. In the process of writing this kind of summary, you will be forced to turn from the hundreds of specific details [in your field notes] and deal primarily with the larger parts of the culture; this, in turn, will focus your attention on the relationships among the parts of the culture and lead to discovering cultural themes.”

Ideas about writing

The ongoing accumulation of field notes constitutes an initial type of report. In fact, for some applications of qualitative inquiry, no other formal report may be needed at all (e.g., when a teacher is gathering information for use only in his or her classroom and is not going to share that information with anyone). However, in most instances, qualitative inquirers must select from the great wealth of information they have compiled to create reports that will be useful to various audiences. This chapter and readings provide suggestions for writing reports.

1. Pages 155-6

Throughout the process of conducting a study, qualitative inquirers accumulate many pages of field notes which include descriptions based on participant observations, interview transcripts, document and photo analyses, domain, taxonomic and componential analyses, reflections on method, reflections on field relations, and so on. This usually amounts to hundreds of pages.

You will need to review these notes throughout the study in order to conduct the cycle of collection-analysis-collection-analysis-collection-etc. described in other handouts. However, “By taking several hours to review all your notes- condensed accounts, expanded accounts, journal, analysis and interpretation- and recording what you have collected” into a new list or inventory, you will accomplish three important objectives:

1. “It will help you see the cultural scene as a whole,”
2. “It will identify gaps in your research that can be easily filled,” and
3. “You will discover ways to organize your final paper” or report of your research.

2. Pages 156-159

Such an inventory can be made on pages at the front of your field notes, on cards, on a single huge piece of cardboard, in a computer database, or any other way you want to use. Several things to include in your inventory are discussed by Spradley:

4. **Make a single comprehensive list of cultural domains** that you have identified during the study by writing only the cover term in the inventory. This involves reading through the field notes again to pull out previously discovered domains and to identify new ones. It may help to review again the “general cultural domains” discussed in the focused observations handout too. Even more domains may come to mind as you complete the other inventory activities discussed below.
5. **Make a list of analyzed domains**, which you have used during the focused portions of the study. These will probably fit into three categories with the first two representing the focus you have used during the study:
 1. **Complete**: those domains for which you have worked out a taxonomy and a paradigm,
 2. **Partial**: those domains for which you have done a partial taxonomic and componential analysis, and
 3. **Incomplete**: those domains for which you have cover terms and some included terms, but which lack any systematic analysis.
6. **Make a list of collected sketch maps** or diagrams that you have created in your field notes or that you could create to represent physical features, routes people use, relationships among people, patterns of activities, and so on.
7. **Make a list of themes** (major and minor) that you have discovered throughout the study. Categorize them as

complete, in process, or tentative, depending on how well you have developed them through theme analysis.

8. **Make an inventory of examples** you can use to illustrate the domains and their categories, and the themes you will address in a report. These provide the flesh you will want to put on the skeleton created by the many analysis activities conducted earlier. Examples are stories, anecdotes, events, quotations, etc. that illustrate points you want to make about the situation you have studied.
9. **Identify any organizing domains** you have discovered (e.g., stages in shopping is an organizing domain for a study on grocery shopping). Such domains can provide an organizing framework for writing a report.
10. **Make an index or table of contents of your field notes.** You could identify the pages in the field notes associated with each of the selected themes and domains you want to write about. Comprehensive indices can be generated with some word processing computer programs which index every word in the field notes.
11. **Make an inventory list of miscellaneous data** or artifacts such as newspaper articles, memos, photos, etc. that you have collected during the study.
12. **Make a list of additional research possibilities** for the scene you have been studying or elsewhere that you believe would be relevant to the research you are completing. This will “clarify the boundaries of the work you have done and make you aware of the limitations of your own work.” This list will help you plan subsequent studies and will help others build on your work.

3. Pages 160-161

Although any report of a qualitative study is incomplete, partial, and likely to need revision, you should begin writing such reports sooner

than you might think. The process of writing will help you discover information gathered during the research process.

The best way to learn to write qualitative reports is to write one. To help, you should read examples of reports and review the points made by Spradley. But you will learn best by doing it!

4. Pages 161

Conducting qualitative inquiry may be thought of as a form of translation which “discovers the meanings in one culture and communicates them in such a way that people with another cultural tradition can understand them.” This translation process involves two major tasks:

13. Digest and make sense out of the meaning processes or systems used by the people you are studying (all the collection and analysis activities discussed in earlier handouts were intended to help you learn to do this), and
14. “Communicate the cultural meanings you have discovered to readers who are unfamiliar with that culture or cultural scene.” This means that you have to be able to communicate in writing with an understanding of both the cultural meaning systems of your informants and the cultural meaning systems of your audience. “A truly effective translation requires an intimate knowledge of two cultures: the one described and the one tacitly held by the audience who will read the description.”

5. Pages 162-168

“One fundamental cause of inadequate cultural translations lies in the failure to understand and use different levels of writing.” Spradley points out that many social science writers use very general levels of writing which fail to reveal the meanings in peoples’ actions because

very little concrete detail is included. The qualitative research process begins with description and discovery of particular, concrete, and specific events of everyday life. Then, through the use of several analytical approaches, the researcher discovers domains and patterns which represent the cultural scenes being studied. These discoveries allow comparison of the scene with other scenes, cultures and theories.

But general statements associated with these broader views of the scenes studied should not stand alone in written reports. They do not adequately translate the cultural meanings of the people studied to the audiences. For a well written qualitative inquiry report, “the concern with the general is incidental to an understanding of the particular. In order for a reader to see the lives of the people we study, we must show them through particulars, not merely talk about them in generalities.”

To overcome the problem of using only general statements, Spradley identifies six levels of writing and suggests that all six are needed in qualitative reports. The proportion of a report dedicated to each level should vary depending on the goals of the inquirer and the audience of the report. The six levels are described briefly from most general to most particular:

15. **Level One: Universal Statements** are broad statements that summarize patterns found in the cultural scene being studied and in all other scenes that have been or might be studied in the world (e.g., in Spradley’s cocktail waitress study, he used his study experience in a single bar in a specific city to assert that “Every society takes the biological differences between female and male to create a special kind of reality: feminine and masculine identities.”). The beginning researcher might be timid about making such broad statements; but there are some universal patterns and when you discover one,

you should state it.

16. **Level Two: Cross-Cultural Descriptive Statements** are “statements about two or more societies, assertions that are true for some societies but not necessarily for all societies.” These statements help show that the cultural scene is not completely unique and isolated from the rest of the world, although it has many contrasting characteristics as well (e.g., in the waitress study, Spradley noted that there are complex societies and simpler societies and the cocktail waitress phenomenon is part of a complex society, involving many more cultural perspectives than most phenomena in simpler societies).
17. **Level Three: General Statements about a Society or Cultural Group** are broad statements about the culture of which the cultural scene being studied is an example. The culture can be simple or complex, such as a tribe in Africa, American culture, groups of people who do the same types of work, etc. For example, in Spradley’s study of waitress in Brady’s Bar, he made statements like this which apply “to all institutions of which Brady’s was one example: ‘Bars, in general, are places of employment for hundreds of thousands of women, almost always as cocktail waitresses. Their role in bars tends to be an extension of their role at home- serving the needs of men.... Like most institutions of American society, men hold sway at the center of social importance’.”
18. **Level Four: General Statements about a specific Cultural Scene** are general but descriptive statements about the scene you are studying. Often they are abstract statements made by informants and will appear in your fieldnotes as quotations. These statements often contain many of the themes you will want to communicate to the audience; but they are too abstract to stand alone (e.g., in the waitress study, Spradley made statements like,

“The waitresses at Brady’s get hassled by customers.” or “At one level, Brady’s Bar is primarily a place of business. At another level, Brady’s Bar is a place where men can come to play out exaggerated masculine roles, acting out their fantasies of sexual prowess, and reaffirming their own male identities. Brady’s Bar is a men’s ceremonial center”).

19. **Level Five: Specific Statements about a Cultural Domain** are statements referring to the cultural scene you are studying, using the cover and included terms of the domains you discovered and want to describe for the reader. These statements may refer to taxonomies and paradigms, which represent an outline of relationships within and between domains. Use of limited descriptive narrative may put some flesh on these bones or outlines but most of the language is still at a fairly abstract level (e.g., Spradley gives an example from the waitress study “of a specific statement about the domain, ‘asking for a drink.’ [cover term] which makes up part of the culture of cocktail waitresses. ‘One frequent way that men ask for a drink is not to ask for a drink at all. In the situation where it is appropriate to ask for a drink, they ask instead for the waitress. This may be done in the form of teasing, hustling, hassling [included terms], or some other speech act’).
20. **Level Six: Specific Incident Statements** are the most different from all the other levels. Such a statement “takes the reader immediately to the actual level of behavior and objects, to the level of perceiving these things.” Such statements help the reader to envision and even feel what the actors are experiencing. “Instead of merely being told what people know, how they generate behavior from this knowledge, and how they interpret things, you have been shown this cultural knowledge in action. A good [qualitative] translation shows; a poor one

only tells.”

Spradley gives an example from the waitress study that is closely related to the examples given for the other five levels and which could be used as a piece of data for generating the other statements: “Sandy is working the upper section on Friday night. She walks up to the corner table where there is a group of five she has never seen before: four guys and a girl who are loud and boisterous. She steps up to the table and asks, ‘Are you ready to order now?’ One of the males grabs her by the waist and jerks her towards him. ‘I already know what I want! I’ll take you,’ he says as he smiles innocently up at her.”

To further illustrate the six levels of writing and their effects on readers, Spradley provides examples of six statements from his research on tramps. All these statements describe one aspect of tramps’ experience— “begging, borrowing, panhandling, lending, and otherwise exchanging things.”

21. **LEVEL ONE:** Reciprocity among human beings is balanced where two people give to each other over time, each giving and each receiving. Such reciprocity occurs in all societies.
22. **LEVEL TWO:** Tramps, like those who live in tribal villages, depend on one another in time of need. They expect others to reciprocate. A Kwakiutl Indian will give in a potlatch and later receive gifts at someone else’s potlatch. A tramp will give to another tramp and also beg from another tramp.
23. **LEVEL THREE:** Tramps engage in much more reciprocal exchange than do other members of the larger society. This kind of exchange takes many forms.
24. **LEVEL FOUR:** A tramp in the Seattle City Jail will exchange goods and services with other tramps. If he is a trusty in the jail, he might exchange a service for money with someone in lockup.

25. **LEVEL FIVE:** (Informant's statement) "Yes, a tramp will beg from other tramps. If you're panhandling you can expect another tramp to give you money or a cigarette if he has it. You realize that sometime he will need something and then it will be your turn."
26. **LEVEL SIX:** It was a dull Tuesday afternoon and a slight mist of rain was blowing gently in from the Puget Sound. Joe had become a kickout an hour earlier; several minutes ago he walked off the elevator on the first floor of the Public Safety Building and found his way to the street. Pulling the collar of his worn tweed jacket up around his neck, he hunched his shoulders slightly and headed downtown, wondering where he would find money for a drink or even a cigarette. He might have to make a flop under the bridge on Washington Street tonight to stay out of the rain. He saw a man approaching him as he headed slowly down James Street, obviously another tramp. Looked like a home guard tramp, but he couldn't tell for sure. "Can you spare a quarter for a jug?" he asked. "I just got a kickout." "No, I'm flat on my ass myself," the other man said, "but how about a smoke, all I got are Bull Durhams." After taking a light too, Joe started on down James Street looking for a tourist or businessman to panhandle. Spradley urges beginning qualitative researchers to concentrate on using the most general and the most specific levels of writing "because generalities are best communicated through particulars." Of course, the amount of space you have for a report, the context in which your report will be read, and your goals for doing the research should all be taken into account along with the audience you are writing for to determine the balance between each level. General audiences will appreciate more writing at level six with a few abstract statements woven in. Professional and academic journals have restricted space; statements

at levels one and two, illustrated with statements from levels five and six provide one effective way to use that space.

6. Pages 168-172

Spradley points out that translating all the information gathered through qualitative inquiry into a report can seem like an overwhelming task. Therefore, he breaks it into a few manageable chunks or suggested steps:

27. **Step 1: Select an audience**, identify it clearly, and then keep in mind throughout the writing, who that audience is. By doing this, the researcher will respond to the interests and needs of that audience in much the same way he or she would if talking to that audience. An excellent way to do this is to pick a target reader, learn all you can about the interests of that person and then write the report for that person. If you do that, every reader who has similar interests will feel the report was written for him or her.
28. **Step 2: Select a thesis**, central message or point you want to make with the report. Theses may come from the themes discovered during the research, from the goals for doing the research in the first place, or from the literature related to the study. The thesis should be stated as briefly as possible and then used throughout writing to organize and integrate the report.
29. **Step 3: Make a list of topics and create an outline**. You cannot include all the information gathered in any single report; so “this step involves reviewing your field notes and the cultural inventory you made and listing topics you think should be included in the final description. Once listed, you can then make an outline based around your thesis. This will divide up your actual

writing into sections, each of which can be done as a separate unit. If you have been writing short descriptive pieces throughout the project, many or all of these may fit into the outline.”

30. **Step 4: Write a rough draft of each section** in the outline. Don't worry about revising or perfecting the writing at this stage. If you do, it will take too long and may seem overwhelming to you. "Write as you talk" to create this first draft of the report. Talking involves very little revising; so you get the ideas out quickly.
31. **Step 5: Revise the outline and create subheads** to reflect any changes that you discovered were needed during the drafting of the sections in step four. Sections may need rearranging. New subheads and sub-subheads may be identified to guide the reader through the structure of the report and to make the transitions between sections.
32. **Step 6: Edit the rough draft**, implementing the revised outline and subhead into the drafted sections from step four. Revise each section to improve grammar and style, while keeping the overall description and thesis in mind. Have someone review the manuscript to give you feedback.
33. **Step 7: Write the introduction and conclusion.** Although you may want to draft these earlier, they really are not needed until this stage of report writing. Once you see the rough draft as a whole, it is much easier to write these summary statements.
34. **Step 8: Reread your manuscript for examples.** Make sure you have included enough examples in the right places so that your report has the right balance of the six levels of writing for the audience and purposes you have selected.
35. **Step 9: Write the final draft.** This may mean simply a final editing and typing of the report. Rarely will you

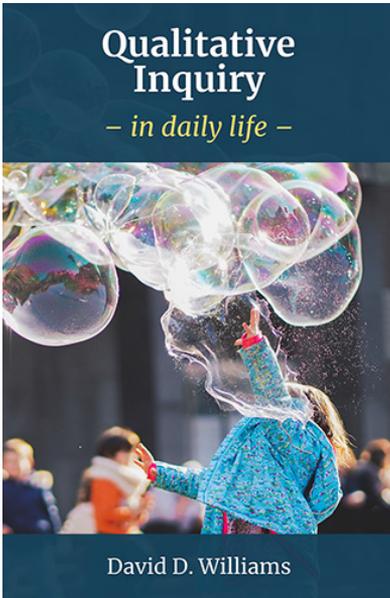
have to start writing all over, because by following the previous eight steps, you have produced several versions of the report and will now have a draft that reflects most of the concerns that could be raised about it.

Book Authors

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David Dwayne Williams has conducted more than seventy evaluation studies throughout many countries. He also conducts qualitative research on people's personal and professional evaluation lives, including how they use evaluation to enhance learning in various settings. He has published more than forty articles and books and made more than one hundred professional presentations examining interactions among stakeholders as they use their values to shape criteria and standards for evaluating learning environments and experiences. Dr. Williams is an emeritus professor from [IPT](#) at [Brigham Young University](#).



Williams, D. D. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry in Daily Life (1st ed.)*. EdTech Books. Retrieved from <https://edtechbooks.org/qualitativeinquiry>



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