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At the Heart of the Classroom: Teachers' Experience of the Suffering and Success of Students for Whom They Care

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AT THE HEART OF THE CLASSROOM: TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE OF THE
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prepared by

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is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Leadership and Change.

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The journey to complete my dissertation has been astounding, illuminating, and immensely satisfying. I have been reminded of why I became an educator in the first place, reminded that my heart has always been the tether that ties me to this work. I could not have reached this place without the support of a number of people who deserve to be recognized. Dr. Carolyn Kenny, my chair, supported me as I found my way and provided me with the best support and wisdom possible. I also have to acknowledge Dr. Al Guskin, who was my guide and inspiration for the first three years of this program. In addition, Jon Wergin has provided guidance, wisdom, and humor on this journey and his deep knowledge of educational history, policy, and practice has been essential in this process. My inspiration has also come from my colleagues in Cohort 10. As co-travelers on this journey, we shared stories, ideas, setbacks, and triumphs. Finally, and of great importance, I must also thank the teachers who joined me on this journey. They gave their time, their thought, and their emotional energy to explore their own lived experience and without their generosity I would not be where I am today.

My greatest thanks and acknowledgement is for my wife Paige and my three children, Finnegan, August, and Ayvind. Paige has been my sounding board and strength. My children have accepted their father's absence and late nights, and I am eternally grateful for their love. This dissertation found its way to the potency of deep relationships and family. I discovered that the level of caring and consanguinity present in my classroom was not unique and in fact, communities of caring are present in the classrooms of all of the dedicated educators who joined me on this journey. This experience has re-centered me in admiration for all things, admiration and a desire to support them all in fulfilling their potential. it has also helped me to find my own truth and understand better the way in which I live in the world.

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Abstract

The core of teaching is the relationship of care between the student and the teacher. A community can be created in the classroom that honors and respects the inherent worth of each individual and through such mutual respect students and teachers can experience success. The suffering and the successes that teachers experience are central to the way they care for their students. There is currently a great deal of focus on education and schooling in the United States and generally this focus ignores the necessity and vitality of the relationship of care. Teachers must daily support and care for students who have great struggles and great triumphs. In my dissertation, I will explore the nature of the experience of these teachers as they work with students who experience suffering and success. I will identify the themes of their experience using a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology based on the work of Max Van Manen. This dissertation is essentially a philosophical examination of the nature of teachers' care for students and how they manifest the experience of suffering and success of those students. Therefore it is a deeply phenomenological work, bound not by the empirical, but by the life-worlds of the participants and of the author. The electronic version of this Dissertation is at OhioLink ETD Center, www.ohiolink.edu/etd

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Chapter I: An Introduction

One morning as I was driving to work this winter, I heard a story on National Public Radio about the outpouring of gifts to the community of Newtown, Connecticut, in response to the tragic shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012. My eyes welled up with tears, as a parent, as a human being, and as an educator. The reality of the loss experienced by those families, by that community, is beyond my ability to fathom, but is at the core of my experience of my life. As I personally struggle to reconcile the experience of suffering as I write this paper, more instances of the suffering take place around in the world. The sarin gas attacks in Syria on August 21, 2013, and the images of the children struggling through the pain of continual muscle contractions, the inability to breath as their diaphragms contract but will not release, added yet another weight to the pressing of my chest. My experience of suffering recalls for me the story of Giles Corey, who during the witchcraft trials in Salem, Massachusetts, refused to speak, to testify, and to confess his collusion with the devil. He was given the choice to either be crushed under the weight of stones or to confess his sins against humanity, against all that was holy and good. Corey chose to remain silent, to expire crushed under the weight of his silence, a refusal to admit his place in something he did not actively create. I too feel the pressure and at some point it becomes unbearable and I must either expire or confess. I choose to confess.

My professional life and my personal life are inextricably linked to suffering and success. Suffering and success are in a universal sense at the core of many of the decisions that I make in my life. My diet, my consumption, and my choices are an attempt to diminish the suffering over which I have direct control. The choices made to promote situations and actions that diminish the

suffering of others and the promotion of opportunities for others to produce, joyfully and bountifully, are decisions that must be considered on a continual basis.

Reducing suffering and promoting success for children and for teachers is the foundation of my work in education. The question that I ask myself every day as I consider the work that is in front of me is "What should be done to create and foster learning spaces that promote success and diminish suffering?" In order to discover the answer to that question, first I must place myself in the dialogue. My own perception of my life shapes my understanding and how I create meaning. This bias is both enabling and disabling and must be the first thing that is explored (*Truth and Method* 269). This acknowledgement of my enabling and disabling bias is to some degree for the reader of my dissertation, but, more importantly it is essential for my inquiry, so that I can place myself and be open to learning.

If one is to make a commitment to a genuine and deep exploration then one must commit oneself to the emotional depth of a topic. Max Van Manen in *Researching Lived Experience* elaborates on the necessity of the researcher to tune into the nature of lived experience because "It is always a project of someone: a real person, who, in the context of particular individual, social, and historical life circumstances sets out to make sense of a certain aspect of human existence" (31). I am a real person, who is exploring the nature of teachers' care for their students and their lived experience of their students' suffering and success. In this exploration I am bound by my own role in formal schooling. I need to acknowledge my own vulnerability in the process of this exploration. I am vulnerable because my heart is touched and hurts at the suffering of others. The suffering of children is suffering that I feel. The joy that I feel when a child uncovers the wonder of bountiful creation is felt deeply as well. My choice to become engaged in education and schooling is fundamentally due to a desire, to a need to work against

suffering in general and the suffering of children specifically. I have a desire to work for the creation of situations where children, and adults, can learn and flourish, recognizing their potential, passion, and possibilities.

Jurgen Moltmann the philosopher and theologian stated in *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* that:

> The suffering of a single innocent child is an irrefutable rebuttal of the notion of an almighty God in heaven. For a God who lets the innocent suffer and who permits senseless death is not worthy to be called God at all. (47)

This is the fundamental question of the theodicy: How can an omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent creator allow for suffering in the world? How have those who have not yet had the opportunity to express their own will be punished for violations of a divine moral code? How can such a divine being either a) exist or b) be worthy of worship if the suffering of the innocent is permitted? The suffering of the child and the inherent incongruity is painfully stated with sharp punctuation in Elie Wiesel's *Night* in the description of the hanging of a boy who had collaborated with prisoners in the concentration camp that had conspired against the Nazis.

> But the third rope was still moving; being so light, the child was still alive…
> For more than half an hour he stayed there, struggling between life and death, dying in slow agony under our eyes. And we had to look him full in the face. He was still alive when I passed in front of him. His tongue was still red, his eyes were not yet glazed.
> Behind me, I heard the same man asking:
> "Where is God now?"
> And I heard a voice within me answer him:
> "Where is He? Here he is-He is hanging here on this gallows…."
> That night the soup tasted of corpses. (62)

The cruel suffering of the child and his eventual death is mirrored in the narrator's journey, the suffering of his faith as the physical suffering of genuine evil weighs upon him. As he arrives at Auschwitz he witnesses the bodies of dozens of children being burned in a ditch and reflects on what he has seen.

Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments, which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget those things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never. (32)

The unfathomable suffering of children along with the suffering of all shakes the foundations of faith in any sort of deity. God dies not dramatically in an apocalyptic fury, but slowly suffocating in the body of a small child. In my heart, the suffering of children shakes my faith in our society and in the nature of our being. I recently had a conversation with a colleague of mine who currently works as a director of technology, but previously was a school counselor. He told me he had to move into an administrative role because, "Every time another kid tells me that he is beaten or not fed, or just ignored, a little piece of my soul dies." I too, am touched and bruised by suffering and I must strive to do what I can to diminish its pernicious grip on the lives of so many children.

I have spent my professional life in the work of education and schooling. In fact, before I became an educator, I was a student, I was educated, so in truth since I began preschool at two years of age. I have spent my days in schools and the process of learning. My own learning and helping others to learn has been central to my identity. I know and remember every student I have taught, I can go through my class lists and find stories to tell about each and every one of them. Stories that make me laugh and stories that make me cry. I never intended to be an elementary school teacher. I intended to be an educator, but an educator at the college level, following in my father's footsteps to a small liberal arts college. This plan unraveled when I began to work as a substitute teacher and found a place where I both felt needed and that I had the ability to make positive change. As I became an educator, an educator of children, I found an experience of genuine caring. I have taught and worked with students who have found their passion and experienced the deep joy of fulfillment and I have taught and worked with students

who have experienced great suffering and been overwhelmed by the weight and enormity of that suffering. I care deeply about all of those students and it is that caring that is at the heart of this dissertation proposal. This care leads me to the question that I hope will bring greater understanding to an essential element of the education experience.

The Question

The primary research question for this dissertation is, "How do teachers experience care for their students? What is their lived experience of the suffering and success of their students?"

The act of engaging in a relationship of education is a relationship of caring. In *Between Man and Man,* Martin Buber describes relation in education;

> The relation in education is one of pure dialogue.
>
> I have referred to the child, lying with half-closed eyes waiting for his mother to speak to him. But many children do need to wait, for they know that they are unceasingly addressed in a dialogue, which never breaks off. In face of the lonely night, which threatens to invade, they lie preserved and guarded, invulnerable, clad in the silver mail of trust. (116)

I cannot conceive of educating anything but the whole person, both in their present and in their possible future. This caring extends beyond a passive observation of the possibility of the other. It is a trust in the other to grow, it is as described by Milton Mayeroff, "Trust in the other to grow is not indiscriminate; it is grounded in actively promoting and safeguarding those conditions which warrant such trust" (28). The relational nature of education and schooling has brought me great joy and great sadness and as an educator and as someone who believes deeply in the transformative potential of learning, I have a need to understand the lived experience of the relationship of care that teachers have with their students.

The examination of this question will allow for a better understanding of the life world of the teachers. In addition, it will bring greater clarity to my understanding of this experience,

allowing me to more fully understand the relational nature of schooling and education. This question is not an academic endeavor; in fact it is deeply situated in the daily experience of education, schools and schooling. If schooling is to serve the best interest of the child, it must too be present in the life of the teacher, as they are the people who stand in relation to and are held accountable for the education of the child.

The teaching profession in the United States is a profession with great demands and pressures and diminishing honor and respect (Valli and Buese 554). In the fall of 2013 a nation-wide poll found that less 50% Americans believed that parents respect teachers.[1] I know this to be true in my own life world of education. I feel the pressures of accountability and achievement coupled with the diminished value of my own work as an educator. In addition, there is other evidence, outside of my own experience, that supports the struggles of teachers. Teachers' stress has been explored in a number of studies. Berryhill, Linney, and Fromewick in the study *The Effects of Educational Accountability on Teachers: Are Policies Too Stress-Provoking for Their Own Good?*, used a mixed methods approach "to discover whether elementary school teachers perceived accountability policies as having unintended consequences for their well-being" (8). They found that, "The answer was yes" (8). Furthermore, this conclusion is consistent with other studies (e.g., Abrams, Pedulla, and Madaus; Barksdale-Ladd and Thomas; Jones and Egley). The relational nature of teaching builds emotional connections of care and teachers are pulled by these connections. At the same time the current school reform movement has a strong focus on accountability and data-based measurement. The accountability and the standardization of schooling can be aptly described using the idea of the Panopticon devised by Jeremy Bentham,

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[1] http://www.harrisinteractive.com/NewsRoom/HarrisPolls/tabid/447/ctl/ReadCustom%20Default/mid/1508/ArticleId/1369/Default.aspx

but used as a metaphor for surveillance and control by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. The Panopticon was a prison design with;

> an annular building; at the center, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells…. All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man a worker or a school boy. By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. (200)

The observer in the central tower is able to see into the cells, but due to the nature of the design, those being observed cannot see if they are in fact being observed. Therefore, "the major effect of the Panopticon [is] to induce in the inmate a state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (201). This idea and its relevance to schooling and education is further discussed by Herbert Kohl in the Teachers College Record in 2009 in his essay "The Educational Panopticon" in which he states;

> When I talk about an educational panopticon, I mean a system in which teachers and students are under constant scrutiny, allowed no choice over what is learned or taught, evaluated continuously, and punished for what is considered inadequate performance. In this context students and teachers are forced to live in a constant state of anxiety, self-doubt, wariness, anomie and even suppressed rage.

The advent of the Common Core Standards and the looming reality of a nationalized assessment only serve to further the Panopticon that has already come into being in schooling. Pennsylvania, where I am an educator, has now adopted an "Educator Effectiveness Project,"[2] which ties 50% of a teacher's evaluation to the test scores of their students. In my dissertation I am not striving to judge a model for teacher evaluation, nor am I testing methods for increasing their job satisfaction. Instead I seek to better understand their lived experience, which serves to shine a light on their life worlds, thus enabling others, including myself, to see better ways to

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[2]http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/educator_effectiveness_project/20903

support them. Most importantly as an educational leader this dissertation serves to build my

contextual understanding of the lived experience of teachers. This in turn will improve my ability

to better provide teachers, both new and experienced, with embedded support in their

professional work.

In many ways the current school reform movement can be traced to the progressive

schooling movement of the early twentieth century. The progressive schooling experience was

grounded in the ideas of a number of prominent educators, philosophers and theorists (Tyack and

Cuban; Dewey; Whitehead; Ravitch; Neill; Kessinger; Tyack and Hansot). These progressive

ideals have shaped my education from kindergarten through my masters of education. I

recognize the progressive ideals for schooling at the edges of my experience and as shadows

behind current practices. There are schools that are explicitly project or problem based, such as

the Minnesota New Country School, and there are organizations such as Expeditionary Learning,

that draw students into the experience of life. At the same time, these practices have become

inextricably intertwined with the measurement, classification, standardization, and evaluation

that are core features of the current educational landscape. In *Left Back: A Century of Railed

School Reforms,* Diane Ravitch postulates that this inspiration has led to the following four ideas,

which she views as significant to understanding the current climate of schooling.

- First was the idea that education might become a science and that the methods and
  ends of education could be measured with precision and determined scientifically.
  This was the basis of the mental testing movement.
- Second was the idea that the methods and ends of the education could be derived from
  the innate needs and nature of the child. This was the basis of the child-centered
  movement.
- Third was the idea that the methods and ends of education could be determined by
  assessing the needs of society and then fitting children for their role in society. This
  was the basis of the social efficiency movement.
- Fourth was the idea that the methods and ends of education could be changed in ways
  that would reform society. Proponents of this idea expected that the schools could
  change the social order, either by freeing children's creative spirit or conversely by

indoctrinating them for life in a planned society. The first version was the faith of the child-centered movement and the second was the basis of the social reconstruction movement. (60)

Although all of the four ideas presented by Ravitch are present, I would like to focus on the first and fourth as they typify the goals of this larger exploration.

The first idea is that schooling and education can and should be measured precisely and effectively. Measurement and accountability are central elements of the new school narrative. In Pennsylvania, where I currently reside and work in schools, the steady march toward quantifiable educational outcomes grows with each year. This system is called the Educator Effectiveness Project and has created a system whereby:

1. The Pennsylvania Department of Education shall develop a rating tool to reflect student performance measures and employee observation results.

2. Classroom observation and practice models that are related to student achievement shall comprise fifty percent (50%) of the overall rating in each of the following areas:
   a. Planning and preparation
   b. Classroom environment
   c. Instruction
   d. Professional Responsibilities

3. Student Performance, which shall comprise fifty percent (50%) of the overall rating of the professional employee or temporary employee serving as a classroom teacher shall be based upon multiple measures of student achievement.[3]

An additional component of this process is the attribution of value-added scores for individual teachers. In my current role as the Director of Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment and Data, I have undertaken a process for all of the teachers in my schools to assign percentages of instructional responsibility for each student with whom they have educational contact. The percentage of educational responsibility along with the percentage of time that a student has been

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[3] http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/educator_effectiveness_project/20903

enrolled in the presence of a certain teacher will be the basis of a growth value-added system,

which after three years of data will become an element of the evaluation of the teacher:

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania 333 Market St., Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

CLASSROOM TEACHER RATING TOOL FORM

Last Name	First	Middle

District/LEA	School	

Rating Date:	Evaluation: (Check one) ☐ Semi-annual ☐ Annual

(A) Teacher Observation and Practice

Domain	Title	*Rating* (A)	Factor (B)	Earned Points (A x B)	Max Points
I.	Planning & Preparation		20%		0.60
II.	Classroom Environment		30%		0.90
III.	Instruction		30%		0.90
IV.	Professional Responsibilities		20%		0.60
(1)Teacher Observation & Practice Rating					3.00

Domain Rating Assignment 0 to 3 Point Scale (A)	
Rating	Value
Failing	0
Needs Improvement	1
Proficient	2
Distinguished	3

(B) Student Performance - Building Level Data, Teacher Specific Data, and Elective Data

Building Level Score (0 – 107)	
(2) Building Level Score Converted to 3 Point Rating	

(3) Teacher Specific Rating	
(4) Elective Rating	

(C) Final Teacher Effectiveness Rating – All Measures

Measure	Rating (C)	Factor (D)	Earned Points (C x D)	Max Points
(1) Teacher Observation & Practice Rating		50%		1.50
(2) Building Level Rating		15%		0.45
(3) Teacher Specific Rating		15%		0.45
(4) Elective Rating		20%		0.60
Total Earned Points				3.00

Conversion to Performance Rating	
Total Earned Points	Rating
0.00-0.49	Failing
0.50-1.49	Needs Improvement
1.50-2.49	Proficient
2.50-3.00	Distinguished
Performance Rating	

☐ Rating: Professional Employee, OR ☐ Rating: Temporary Professional Employee

I certify that the above-named employee for the period beginning _____ and ending _____ has received a performance rating of: (month/day/year) (month/day/year)

☐ DISTINGUISHED ☐ PROFICIENT ☐ NEEDS IMPROVEMENT ☐ FAILING

resulting in a FINAL rating of:

☐ SATISFACTORY ☐ UNSATISFACTORY

A performance rating of Distinguished, Proficient or Needs Improvement shall be considered satisfactory, except that the second Needs Improvement rating issued by the same employer within 10 years of the first final rating of Needs Improvement where the employee is in the same certification shall be considered unsatisfactory. A rating of Failing shall be considered unsatisfactory.

_____ _____ _____ _____
Date Designated Rater / Position: Date Chief School Administrator

I acknowledge that I have read the report and that I have been given an opportunity to discuss it with the rater. My signature does not necessarily mean that I agree with the performance evaluation.

Revised September 2013 8

Figure 1.1 Classroom Teacher Rating Tool [4]

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[4] http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/educator_effectiveness_project/20903

Furthermore the observational elements of the teacher's evaluation are not based on a narrative, although it is possible to include one, but instead on a score ascribed to a set of qualities outlined for the areas of evaluation. The scoring sheet included above demonstrates the focus on quantifiable measures (Figure 1.1). The observational domain must be scored so that they can be calculated as a part of a final score that a teacher receives. The narrative element is therefore reduced to a series of points, of quantitative measures. This fall I sat at a meeting of the principals in my schools for a presentation from a company that had designed an application for the iPad that allowed principals to easily enter scores into the observational categories. These scores would then be averaged and placed directly into the evaluation calculation sheet for each teacher. It was possible to put narrative notes in the system, but not necessary. The teacher has become measured, not by the degree to which she or he touches the heart of the child, but instead by the points on a scale.

Schools in Pennsylvania have also become measured and precisely quantified as a method to determine their worth. As a result of the No Child Left Behind Act, Pennsylvania has had for more than a decade a system of Adequate Yearly Progress. The expectation was that all students would reach 100% proficiency on state assessments by the year 2014. This year approached and students in Pennsylvania had not yet achieved 100% proficiency. Therefore Pennsylvania applied for a waiver from the No Child Left Behind Act with the goal of implementing a new system of accountability that would better address the needs of the state. The result of this waiver, which was approved in July of 2013, was the School Performance Profile (SPP) system. The SPP uses multiple measures of student achievement, including: reading, mathematics, science, and writing proficiency, closing the achievement gap for students

in historically underperforming groups and value-added growth measures along with numerous other categories. These multiple scores are used to give each school a score that can then be used to compare the school to other schools. The school has become measured not by the lived joy of its current and future students, but instead by their points on a profile.

The measured school and measured teachers is fully present in the current educational narrative and it shapes the experience of teachers, student and schools as they navigate the complications of education and schooling. The fourth element of Ravitch's (*Left Back*) model for the current schooling narrative is focused around the "idea that the methods and ends of education could be changed in ways that would reform society" (60). Education as the great social equalizer steps dramatically away from both the Platonic and Aristotelian notions of a hierarchical society and also attempts to address the issues of power, justice, and injustice presented by Foucault (*Discipline & Punishment)* and Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics*). It is the potential of the transformative power of education and schooling that drives my work.

The foundation for social transformation is present on the first page of one of John Dewey's most well-known works. The opening of *The School and Society* lays this out:

> We are apt to look at the school from an individualistic standpoint, as something between teacher and pupil, or between teacher and parent. That which interests us most is naturally the progress made by the individual child of our acquaintance, his normal physical development, his advance in ability to read, write and figure, his growth in the knowledge of geography and history, improvement in manners, habits of promptness, order and industry it is from such standards that we judge the work of the school. And rightly so. Yet the range of outlook needs to be enlarged. What the best and wisent parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all its children. Any other ideal for our school is narrow and unlovely; acted upon it destroys our democracy. All that society has accomplished for itself is put, through the agency of the school, at the disposal of its future members. All its better thoughts of itself it hopes to realize through the new possibilities thus opened to tits future self. Here individualism and socialism are at one. Only by being true to the full growth of all the individuals who make it up, can society by any chance be true to itself. (5)

The opening paragraph of this text is both a call to action for the generation of schooling present at the time of the writing and at the same time an integrative union of the current schooling movement with one of the key figures of educational thought. The progress of the individual child is encapsulated in the progress of the democratic society. The central line in the passage above is: "What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children." This line is followed by the strong statement, "Any other ideal for our school is narrow and unlovely; acted upon it destroys our democracy." The health or very existence of democracy in the United Sates is contingent on the desires of the educational values of the wisest members of our community. The critical determination in the preservation of the democratic vitality of the United States of America is the determination of who is the wisest that establishes the wants for the child. The wisest parent in the community has been replaced by the panopticon of the current schooling movement. The wisest parent in the community became the state and federal departments of education and the national standards and accountability movement. The implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, the Race to the Top Program and now the adoption of the Common Core standards has led to a system that has placed the wisest parent as the state, as opposed to the local community.

The current schooling narrative in the United States has met the conditions for the two criticisms of the progressive legacy examined in this project. The national standards along with the ongoing criticism of the failure of the current model provide a new wisest parent, a new vision for what schooling should be in this country. In addition, the accountability systems that have been put in place over the last decade have enabled the same model explored by Foucault in the medieval plague towns (*Discipline & Punishment*). Systems of surveillance, of "permanent registration" were established so that the, "The registration of the pathological must be

constantly centralized" (196). Foucault envisions the plague town, "traversed throughout with hierarchy, surveillance, observation, writing; the town immobilized by the functioning of an extensive power that bears in a distinct way over all-individual bodies-this is the utopia of the perfectly governed city" (198). The plague is the reason, the justification for the implementation of a system of registration, observation, and accountability. As with the plague, the current school reform narrative found a contagion to justify its imposition; economic competitiveness became the justification. In fact, the opening paragraphs of A Nation at Risk, the 1983 federal report that was the seed that germinated into the current reform movement begins with the statement that "Our nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world" (Federal Department of Education). The report continues stating that in regards to other countries "We compete with them for international standing and markets, not only with products but also with the ideas of our laboratories and neighborhood workshops." The language of this initial call to reform bears remarkable similarity to President Obama in his weekly address on March 13, 2010, "Our prosperity in the 20th century was fueled by an education system that helped grow the middle class and unleash the talents of our people…. Our competitors understand that the nation that out-educates us today will out-compete us tomorrow."[5]

The current schooling narrative has not been created in a vacuum. Instead it has picked key elements of educational, social, and political philosophy that serve to provide a foundation. The current state of educational reform and ideology has shaped my experience of being an educator and supporting other educators. It is through the lens of my life world as an educator that I am able to make sense of the world.

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[5] http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/weekly-address-president-obama-send-updated-elementary-and-secondary-education-act-

Max Van Manen, educator and phenomenologist, discussed the act of writing in his book *Writing in the Dark.* In the final self-titled essay of the collection, Van Manen addresses the nature of phenomenological writing;

> As writers, we know that we have achieved address when we have managed to stir our own selves…. To write is to stir oneself as reader. Therefore, the human science researcher is not just a writer…. Rather, the researcher is an author who writes from the midst of life experience where meanings resonate and reverberate with reflective being. The researcher-as-author is challenged to construct a phenomenological text that makes of the reader a writer rewriting the text again at every reading. (238)

I am stirred by this topic, because not only is it my daily lived experience, but it is also the daily lived experience of the teachers who work with children every day in my schools. The act of writing about schooling, both in theory and in practice, has helped me to better understand the systems and structures of schooling and how they impact the life world of the teachers. The systems of schooling, those created by policy and those created by culture, do not spring forth from previously barren ground. In fact the legitimacy of a change, of a reform, comes from its ability to build a vision of the future, while at the same time connecting to relevant elements of the past. This new story must also exclude those counter narratives that might serve to undermine legitimacy. My own experience of schooling and the education narrative is my consciousness, my life world, and this recognition brings me to this project.

The lived experience of the teacher is impacted by the lived experience of the student. Although this fact has been documented in studies of teachers' impressions and responses to the No Child Left Behind Act and other elements of schooling, a focus on the consciousness of teachers as caring for students in their suffering and in their success is an aspect of experience that has not been explored.

In this dissertation I explore the experience of teachers. The study takes place in the Propel Schools Charter Network. Propel Schools is the fastest growing and arguably most

successful charter school network in the state of Pennsylvania. Propel Schools was founded in 2003 with one school in Homestead, Pennsylvania. Propel Schools currently operates ten schools, serving 3500 students in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, and has plans to open three more regional schools in the next three years. The tenth school in the Hazelwood neighborhood of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, opened in August 2014. The population of students served by Propel Schools has consistently struggled to meet the achievement levels designated by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the federal government under the No Child Left Behind Act. The students who attend Propel Schools, on the other hand, have demonstrated that they are capable of achievement levels that are comparable to the more affluent suburban schools. This can be clearly seen in the correlation between student poverty levels, as determined by Free/Reduced Lunch rates and student achievement on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessments (PSSA). I utilized the publically available data (www.education.state.pa.us) on student demographics and students achievement to create the scatter plot in Figure 1.2. It is very clear that Propel Schools has been able to achieve great success with students from high poverty backgrounds as can be seen in Figure 1.2.
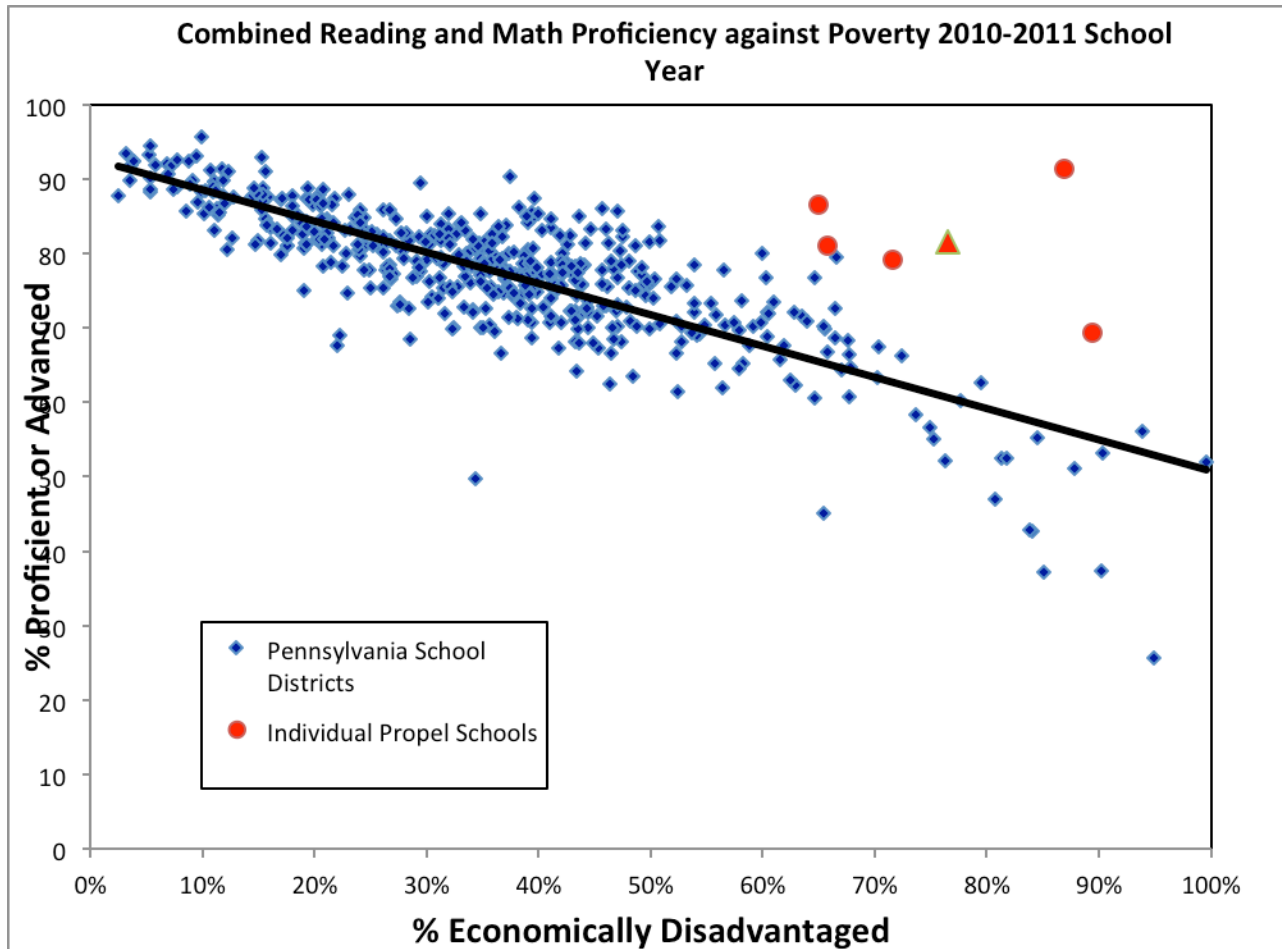
Figure 1.2. 2010-2011 PSSA performance against Percentage of Economically Disadvantaged. Created with data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (www.education.state.pa.us)

Propel Schools has consistently demonstrated that students in their schools can achieve and maintain high levels of academic achievement as measured by the PSSA assessments. These quantitative measures, although illustrative of the success of the Propel Schools system, do not illuminate the consciousness of the teachers who daily care for students and live with and in their suffering and their success. The numbers are present, but the lived experience has not yet been explored. This dissertation will fill that gap by engaging in co-labor with a group of teachers in the Propel Schools. A group of teachers will be purposefully selected. These teachers will be selected because of their demonstration of care for their students. They will be asked to create a daily journal of their experience of the suffering and success of their students. They will also be

interviewed to discuss their experience. Their journals and transcripts will then be analyzed to explore the nature of their life-world in the context of teaching, caring and their students. This study will not examine the life-worlds of all teachers, or even of the teachers in the same school system. Instead this exploration strives to understand the lived experience of the educators who are participants in this study. They were selected due to the fact that they were teachers who I had seen build strong relationships with their students in addition to demonstrations of reflection about their professional practice. Thus this was a rich, purposeful sample. The initial selection process began with a series of conversations with members of the leadership team for Propel Schools. The individuals I spoke with work in all ten of the schools and have interactions with all of the teachers in the organization. We generated a list of teachers who created positive caring communities in their classrooms. This list of ten educators was by no means exhaustive, nor was it designed to capture a certain subset of the teaching population. The list of participants for this dissertation was a group of educators whose lived experience was to be the focus of this exploration of care, suffering, and success. The participants were all asked in person if they would be willing to participate in the study. In addition this study is a hermeneutic phenomenological study. Therefore, the context of the author necessarily shapes interpretation. That being said, I have explored and described the lived experience of the teachers who are a part of this process, as this lens has allowed me to understand my own experience and helped me to better serve educators and as a result to better serve children. I did not undertake this dissertation to discover something that has no relevance to the support of teachers. The success of my dissertation will be determined if it is able to meet the criteria of phronesis outlined by Bent Flyvberg. Flyvbjerg discusses Aristotle's intellectual virtues in his book, *Making Social Science Matter: Why Social Inquiry Fails and How It Can Succeed Again.* Flyvbjerg explores the three

virtues examined in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: episteme, techne, and phronesis. Episteme is the virtue most closely associated with scientific knowing; it is the empirical and verifiable truths that are independent of context (55-56). Techne is the craft of knowing, the production and application of thought with a deep awareness of the relevant context that is required for production (56). Phronesis is the ethical and practical considerations of knowing (56-57). Phronesis as understood by Flyvberg as focusing on "on what is variable, on that which cannot be encapsulated by universal rules, on specific cases. *Phronesis* requires an interaction between the general and the concrete; it requires consideration, judgment and choice"(57). This virtue has always driven my work and my beliefs, but typically not my scholarship. Flyvberg presents four questions that are considered when phronesis is the foundation of scholarship:

(1) Where are we going?
(2) Is this desirable?
(3) What should be done?
(4) Who gains and who loses by which mechanisms of power? (60)

I have approached the elements of this project by using these questions as my guide. In the recent collection on phronesis, *Real Social Science: Applied Phronesis (*2012), Bent Flyvberg, Todd Landman, and Sanford Schram describe phronesis as "practical wisdom on how to address and act on social problems in a particular context" (1). Furthermore, this frame for research and scholarship does not put the emphasis on "particular research methods or types of data," but instead on "producing research that can help develop phronesis by increasing understanding and effecting change in specific contexts rather than questing after the ghost of an abstract knowledge of law-like processes" (2). As I explored suffering and my ontological and epistemological lenses, I maintained an eye on phronesis, so that this examination can provide a context in the larger effort to examine the lived-experience of schooling, education, and the

teacher's care in dialogue with the suffering and success of children. My first chapter began this exploration, justifying the need for such a project and setting the foundation of what follows.

In the second chapter I examine the literature about the nature of suffering, success and the lived experience of the teacher, situating both ideas in an historical and current realm. In this context, I, also examine the experience of the teacher, as one who cares and one who experiences the suffering and success of the students in their care. The exploration of the literature demonstrates the necessity to examine the lived experience of teachers in the context of their care for students both in suffering and success.

In the third chapter I outline the methodology utilized in this exploration. Hermeneutic phenomenology is explored in depth in order to provide a methodological and philosophical home for the examination of the lived experience of teachers. In addition, the chapter examines the place of phenomenology within the context of the researcher. This chapter outlines the mechanics of the study and explores the selection and participation of the co-researchers that are included in the study.

In the fourth chapter I describe the findings of this exploration and provide an exposition of the lived experience of the educators that participate in the study. The central focus of this chapter is their thoughts and their reflections. These thoughts and reflections are drawn from their interviews, journals, and thoughts and provide a foundation for the interpretation of their lived experience.

In the fifth chapter I interpret the themes present in the specific and general lived experience of the participants in this study though the lens of my own hermeneutic lens. In *Phenomenology of Practice,* Max Van Manen describes this search for the essence of meaning as

> Not unlike the poet, the phenomenologist directs the gaze towards the regions where meaning originates, wells up, percolates through the porous membranes of past

sedimentations-and then infuses us, permeates us, infects us, touches us, stirs us, exercises a formative affect. (11)

The search for the place where meaning wells up is the goal of my dissertation. The meaning I am seeking to understand is present in the life worlds of the teachers who participated in my dissertation research. The fifth chapter presents those themes and my understanding of their meaning.

In the sixth and final chapter I draw from the preceding chapters to present a possible future, a potential utopia for schooling that fosters the deep care of teachers. The goal of this chapter returns to the goal outlined by Flyvberg to embody phronesis. My goal is to present possible systems of support to assist educators in maintaining their relationships of care for their students, regardless of the suffering that they may experience. The possible futures strive to envision ways to support those who have given themselves to the well-being of others, regardless of the external and internal struggles that come with such an ethic of care.

Chapter II: Review of the Literature

The literature that holds my dissertation in place, in context and in potential, is vast and falls in a number of traditionally distinct realms of learning. This openness to what shapes my meaning is a critical element of the phenomenological grounding that is the home of my dissertation. I will discuss phenomenology and hermeneutics in more detail in Chapter III, but I must place myself in my methodological home in order to justify the literature that I need to review so that I can seek meaning in the experience of care and of suffering and of success. In *Researching Lived Experience*, Max Van Manen describes his understanding of phenomenological research;

> Phenomenological research is the description of the experiential meanings we live as we live them. Phenomenological human science is the study of lived or existential meanings; it attempts to describe and interpret these meanings to a certain degree of depth and richness. In this focus upon meaning, phenomenology differs from some other social or human sciences, which may focus not on meanings but on the statistical relationships among variables, on the predominance of social opinions, or on the occurrence or frequency of certain behaviors, etc. And phenomenology differs from other disciplines in that it does not aim to explicate meaning specific to particular cultures (ethnography), to certain social groups (psychology), or to an individual's personal life history (biography). Rather, Phenomenology attempts to explicate the meanings as we live them in our everyday existence, our lifeworld. (11)

Van Manen goes on to capture the deep ontological reality that is present for me in phenomenology. In *Phenomenology of Practice* he notes:

> phenomenology is also a project that is driven by fascination: being swept up in a spell of wonder, a fascination with meaning. The reward phenomenology offers are the moments of seeing-meaning or "in-seeing" into "the heart of things".... Not unlike the poet, the phenomenologist directs the gaze towards the regions where meaning originates, wells up, percolates through the porous membranes of past sedimentations-and then infuses us, permeates us, infects us, touches us, stirs us, exercises a formative affect. (11)

I often feel swept up in a spell of wonder, in a fascination with meaning. I have come to understand that the meaning that I create, the manner in which I understand the world is

influenced by my own direct lived experience, but also by history, art, stories, music, theology, philosophy, and everything else I take into my being. Therefore this literature review draws from many realms, because in order to make meaning I draw from many realms and as the researcher, I cannot be separate from the work that I do.

The literature that I need to review for my dissertation is roughly grouped into two categories. Although these categories speak to each other and speak to me in unity, I do find value in looking at each of them in and of themselves. This allows me to explore them with clarity. The first is the experience of the teacher, especially the urban teacher, in the United States in the current reform environment. The second is the nature of suffering and the nature of success. The individual exploration of the literature on these areas will demonstrate the need to return them to a unified exploration of the lived-experience of how teachers experience care for their students. Each of these areas of literature returns to Flyvberg's presentation of phronesis as a central focus for my dissertation. I am undertaking this work, not because it interests me, although it does, and not because it opens professional doors, although it may, but instead because it serves a larger purpose. In my own experience working as an educational leader in urban schools I see teachers struggling every day, struggling with the challenges and the suffering, of the students in their care. Every year I see young talented, passionate, and dedicated teachers leave teaching or leave urban schools. The school year that is underway as I write my dissertation, the 2013-2014 school year, opened with one third of the teachers being new to the Propel Schools organization. This pattern continued as the 2014-2015 school year began with more than sixty new teachers joining Propel Schools. Granted some of this change is due to new positions and opening of a new school and I know that these teachers leave for many

reasons. I know that Sherry,[6] an extremely dedicated and passionate special education teacher, left because she was offered a job working with autistic students in a wealthy suburban district. I know that Laurel, a fifth grade teacher who worked in a one of my schools with the highest rates of poverty, left to teach in a rural district because although she loved her students deeply, she could not take another year of experiencing their suffering. I know that I have conversations every week with teachers, instructional coaches and principals who struggle with the challenges of caring for students and the challenges of accountability mandates. I also know that if I am to make a difference in education for all children and for all people, I need to understand how teachers understand their care for their students, not to capture it in my dissertation, but instead to take the meaning I have made to find a way to create systems of support for teachers, specifically for teachers in urban schools but also and in schools and schooling in general. Flyvberg asks, "What should be done?" In order to understand what should be done, I needed to first understand their lived experience.

Teachers and Their Experience

Teachers are the people who work daily with children to advance the process of learning. I began my career in education as a substitute teacher in 1999. I will never forget my first day with a classroom of my own, a Kindergarten classroom in Keene, New Hampshire. I was terrified and thrilled, lost and yet dedicated to finding my way. I began my career in education a few years before the advent of the No Child Left Behind Act and the current school reform movement, yet it has shaped my experience of schooling and education in such a manner that I cannot separate it from my consciousness. I know that I cannot conceive of my understanding as an educator outside of the context of the current reform movement. During the 2012-2013

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[6] Teachers names have been changed throughout this dissertation.

school year, in the organization where I currently work the average years of experience for teachers is four years. These teachers have experienced all of their teaching and all of their teacher education in the context of the current school reform movement. As a result it is necessary to consider the impact of the modern reform ideals on the experience of the teacher. I find that I need to explore how the changes in accountability, policy, and expectations have had an impact on the job satisfaction, morale, and experience of the teacher. The MetLife foundation has been surveying teachers since 1984 on a wide range of topics. Their report released in March of 2012 has found a dramatic decline in the job satisfaction of teachers. The survey was conducted in October and November of 2011 with 1,001 K-12 public school teachers in the United States. The survey found:

> Teacher job satisfaction has dropped 15 points in the past two years, the lowest level in more than two decades. Today, 44% of teachers are very satisfied with their jobs as teachers, a drop from 59%...A similar pattern is seen in teacher's views on leaving the profession. Three in ten (29%) teachers say they are likely to leave the teaching profession to go into some different occupation within the next five years, a 12 point increase since 2009 (17%). (13)

In addition to the decline in teachers' job satisfaction the survey also found that teacher's perceptions of job security had declined significantly. "In 2006, eight percent of teachers said they did not feel that their job was secure. Today, just five years later, teachers are four times as likely to say they do not feel their job is secure (34%)" (17). The results of this national survey indicate that there has been a decline in the overall job satisfaction and perception of job security of public school teachers in the United States.

The voices of teachers are often not a part of the dialogue on school reform. In 2005 Sonia Nieto undertook the project of capturing the voices of some public school teachers to understand why they teach. In her introduction she too notes that "Currently the most common buzzwords in education are borrowed shamelessly from the business world. The school is a

'market,' students and families are 'consumers' and teachers are 'producers'" (4). Schooling has become focused on "job training and education is a vehicle to serve limited self-interests and consumerism"(4). Her opening comments are in line with the other criticism of school reform since the passage of NCLB, but the focus of her work is neither on the ethics nor purpose of schooling, but the experience of teachers who work within that culture of reform. Nieto's study then goes on to share the stories and reflections of 21 public school teachers in their own words.

Nieto's examination of the thoughts of the teachers included in this work results in the development of five qualities or themes that she identifies as core qualities of teachers. The five qualities are, "a sense of mission; solidarity with, and empathy for, students; the courage to challenge mainstream knowledge; improvisation and a passion for social justice" (204). These core qualities of teachers are not currently valued in the school reform movement when the focus is on achievement and adequate yearly progress. Furthermore, she concludes "The current policy climate at both state and national levels is permeated by a profound disrespect for teachers, especially teachers who work with poor students and students of color" (218). There are voices of dissent against the No Child Left Behind Act and the current reform agenda. They must consider the teacher, their treatment and their morale. A goal of this literature review is to explore the impact of the current reform agenda on the job satisfaction and morale of teachers. In order to do so it is first necessary to examine the foundations of and reactions to the current school reform movement.

History of the Current School Reform Movement

The history of the current reform movement in the United States public school system can be viewed though many lenses. The nature of public schooling has shifted greatly over the

last 200 or so years of history. As noted by Tyack and Hansot in their exhaustive exploration of

school leadership, *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America, 1820-1980;*

> The mainstream of American public schooling during most of the nineteenth
> century was rural, chiefly bureaucratic in structure, exhibiting only rudimentary
> professionalism…the model nineteenth century school was a small one-room
> building….In 1860, 80 percent of Americans lived in places defined by the census
> as rural. (17)

The majority of schooling and school leadership during this era was local and

decentralized. The rural schools of the nation functioned in their communities with a minimum

of regulation. This structure began to change as the nation grew. The Common School

movement and the work of Horace Mann brought about notable changes to the structure of

schools in the United States. Mann was elected to the position of the Secretary of the State

Board of Education for the state of Massachusetts in 1837, a position he held for 12 years. This

position was the first of its kind in the country and Mann approached the promotion of public

schooling with great energy and passion. At the conclusion of his tenure;

> he could take pride in the founding of the state normal schools to train teachers,
> on the creation of school libraries, on improved school houses, on more regular
> school attendance, on enlarged public expenditures for education, on the
> beginning of graded classrooms in cities, on more responsible supervision by
> local committees. Above all, he could see about him a new sense of purpose, a
> stabilized ideology and a model of public schooling. (Tyack and Hansot 62)

Horace Mann laid the foundation for the structures of schooling that would become the

standard into the modern era. It is of value to consider Burke's thoughts on loosely and tightly

coupled systems in that the historical school house may have been internally tight in its coupling

and externally loose due to its geographic isolation and lack of bureaucratic oversight. The early

school house and to some degree the modern school house exemplified the dialectic described by

Burke;

a dialectical way of thinking about loose versus tight is a more realistic and accurate mode for considering these two concepts. In other words, a system can simultaneously be both loose and tight. It is like asking the question of whether an organization should be centralized or decentralized. The answer to this question is both. The better question to pose is which organizational functions should be centralized, such as finance, and which ones decentralized, such as human resources. (148)

In the last ten years as the push for standardization and accountability have come to the center of school policy. This is exemplified both in the *No Child Left Behind Act* and the recent advent of the Common Core standards, a set of academic standards that have been adopted in 44 states with the stated purpose that, "Consistent standards will provide appropriate benchmarks for all students, regardless of where they live"(Core Standards)[7]. This push for standardization is representative of a larger trend that can be examined by another lens for school reform.

This other lens for the modern school reform movement explores the philosophical lens through which school is presented. Kessinger places the trend of school reform since 1938 squarely in the essentialist and neo-essentialist realm. Kessinger defines essentialism as a belief that "focuses on or adheres to the major idea that there are core (essential) subjects or disciplines that should be studied; and, the teacher is the primary authority in the classroom"(265). This essentialist philosophy first came to prominence in 1938 when Bagley "began a movement that called for intellectual training in schools instead of 'child growth and development'" (266). Kessinger goes on to argue that this movement proceeded in flux with progressive educational beliefs until the publishing of the report *A Nation at Risk* in 1983. This report and the federal actions that followed, the first President Bush's *America 2000: An Educational Strategy* in 1991, President Clinton's *Goals 2000: Educate America* in 1994, and, finally, President George W. Bush's reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or No Child Left Behind

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[7] http://www.corestandards.org

Act, in 2001 were all neo-essentialist. Kessinger states that for these federal actions "the objective was to produce a useful and competent individual, the ultimate goal of essentialism and neo-essentialism" (274). Therefore in reference to the No Child Left Behind Act "states are obligated to increase standards, insure achievement by means of tests, expect highly qualified teachers and give evidence of greater accountability"(274). This trajectory of reform has shaped the current climate of public schooling in the United States.

The neo-essentialist focus on achievement has resulted in a deep quantification of schooling, but the initial impulses did recognize the inequities present in the systems of education present in the United States at the turn of the millennium. The initial desire to "leave no child behind" was a noble calling, a desire to address the deep and persistent gaps in achievement between students of privilege and students from more disadvantaged backgrounds. These positive goals have quickly been overshadowed by the implementation of the policies and programs that have been associated with No Child Left Behind and the laws and acts that have followed.

The current reform movement has shifted the balance of power away from the states and local communities and placed power squarely in the hands of the federal government. In many ways this runs counter to the tenth amendment of the Constitution of the United States, which reads "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." There is no discussion of educational policy in the Constitution, so therefore it has been in the realm of the state and local control until the current reform movement. The power dynamic has shifted away from the local community and the school to the federal government. The views of the opposition to the current

essentialist reform narrative are worth considering as a foundation for delving into the effect on

the morale and job satisfaction of teachers in the context of the current school reform movement.

Reactions on the Effect of Contemporary School Reform on Teachers

The current school reform movement is under the direction of the government and people

with substantial financial and political resources. The No Child Left Behind Act and the other

elements of the school reform movement are not without their critics and the voices of these

critics are important to consider before examining the research on teacher job satisfaction and

morale. Henry Giroux, cultural studies scholar and critic of school reform, has framed the debate

on school reform and the questions as to the purpose of schooling and education,

> education can function either to create passive, risk-free citizens or to create a
> politicized citizenry educated to fight for various forms of public life informed by
> a concern for justice, happiness and equality. At issue here is whether schools of
> education are to serve and reproduce the existing society or to adopt the more
> critical role of challenging the social order so as to develop and advance its
> democratic imperatives. (184)

Although he is speaking about schools of education, Giroux illuminates the core debate

as to the purpose of schooling in this country as well as the role of the education of teachers in

determining this purpose. The purpose of schooling is fundamental to the criticisms of the No

Child Left Behind Act and modern school reform.

One of the most interesting responses to the No Child Left Behind Act is that of Diane

Ravitch. She is currently a research professor of education at New York University and one of

the most vocal critics of the testing, accountability and school choice measures of the current

schooling narrative. This has not always been the case; Diane Ravitch spent eighteen months as

an assistant secretary and counselor to the secretary of education in the first Bush administration.

In her book *The Death and Life of the Great American School System* she describes the decade

following her:

stint in the federal government, [she] argued that certain managerial and structural changes-that is choice, charters, merit pay and accountability-would help to reform our schools. With such changes, teachers and schools would be judged by their performance; this was a basic principal in the business world…. I became persuaded that he business minded thinkers were on to something important…Their proposed reforms were meant to align public education with the practices of modern, flexible, high-performance organizations and to enable American education to make the transition from the industrial age to the postindustrial age. (8)

Ravitch goes on to describe how she "began to think like a policy maker…. looking at schools and teachers and students from an altitude of 20,000 feet and seeing them as objects to be moved around by big ideas and great plans" (10). After examining deeply the current school reform movement, she became one of its harshest critics, declaring, "public education is in peril. Efforts to reform public education are, ironically, diminishing its quality and endangering its very survival" (242). Ravitch's views are worth considering because she was in the role of power in the current education debate and yet has changed her views and in the process has become the outsider.

Liberal and conservative individuals and organizations support the current school reform movement. As noted by Steven Brill in his recent book, *Class Warfare: Inside the Fight to Fix America's Schools,* this is because,

An unlikely army of non-traditional urban school chiefs, charter school leaders, researchers at think tanks who were producing data about how teaching counted more than anything else, philanthropists and hedge-fund billionaires who ate up the data, fed-up patents and a growing corps of unconventional Democratic politicians. (7)

These groups came together to support the educational reform movement. Especially troubling to some critics of the current reform movement such as Ravitch is the presence of philanthropists and billionaires in that list. She notes:

Each of the venture philanthropies began with different emphases, but over time they converged in support of reform strategies that mirrored their own experience in acquiring

huge fortunes, such as competition, choice, deregulation, incentives and other market-based approaches. (200)

Furthermore she expressed deep concern about the fundamental issue of private funds shaping the direction of public education.

There is something fundamentally antidemocratic about relinquishing control of the public education policy agenda to private foundations run by society's wealthiest people; when the wealthiest of these foundations are joined in common purpose, they represent an unusually powerful force that is beyond the reach of democratic institutions…. The foundations demand that public schools and teachers be held accountable for performance, but they themselves are accountable to no one. (200-201)

The presence of competition is not a new element in the ongoing examination of reform of public education in the United States. In fact the opening paragraphs of A Nation at Risk, the 1983 federal report that was the seed that germinated into the current reform movement begins with the statement that "Our nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world." In fact competition has been used by the Obama administration as the primary means of enacting federal education reform. Historically, federal educational funds have been provided on a needs basis. The Race to the Top (RTTT) program changed this model with the advent of competitive grants (McGuinn 139). The RTT grants

"were graded on a 500-point scale according to the rigor of the reforms proposed and their compatibility with four administration priorities: developing common standards and assessments; improving teacher training, evaluation and retention policies; creating better data systems and adopting preferred school turn around strategies.

This shift to a competitive grant system has enabled notable changes to occur in the educational landscape and in the experience of the teacher.

These forces that shape the experience of education have had an impact on the teacher and their understanding of their role, profession and well-being. This history and present of the

current context of teachers has led to shifts in the job satisfaction and morale of teachers. These

shifts and changes can be categorized, but they are also the actual experience of teachers.

The literature on the experience of the teachers reveals a number of themes that are

present in their lives. Inevitably, teachers are impacted by changes in educational policy and the

national narrative. Rubin summarizes the multiple impacts of these changes on the teaching

experience,

> Crafted during the Bush Administration, the NCLB law implied that although individual
> teachers could be saviors collectively they were to blame for the failure of US public
> schools to adequately educate children…. Teachers are expected and forced to shoulder
> the responsibility for student success, no matter the influential social and economic
> factors, such as poverty, which are beyond their control…More-over teachers are not
> even a part of the NCLB decision making process…This attribution of blame and
> mistrust, some more subtle than others, has greatly affected the morale of teachers. (410)

It is clear that the accountability and testing component of the law have impacted the

morale and motivation of teachers. The literature examined in my dissertation demonstrates the

following themes;

1. The research on the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act on teacher morale and
    motivation.
2. The research on the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act on teachers' roles and
    their perceptions of their roles.
3. The research on the socio-economic factors that influence teacher morale and
    motivation in the context of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Morale and Motivation

The accountability measures and requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, the Race

to the Top, and other state-based school reform has had an impact on the morale and

subsequently the motivation of many teachers in the studies examined in my dissertation. The

changes in policy and expectations for teachers have caused uncertainty. The effect on the

morale and motivation of teachers takes a number of forms in the literature, but the common

thread is noted by Byrd-Blake et al., who found that "the pressures of NCLB have made a

negative contribution to the morale of both elementary and secondary school teachers" (469).

Furthermore in their mixed methods study they identified ten themes in their qualitative research.

Four of the ten themes related directly to the No Child Left Behind Act.

1. The pressures of test-driven instruction and high stakes testing.

2. The wide range of student ability measured against a single standard.

3. The shift to student centered instruction to meet the needs of testing.

4. The narrowing of curriculum to accommodate tested subjects.

These themes are not inherently negative, although some of the included comments from

teachers demonstrate individual frustration. The morale and motivation of the teachers in

relation to the changes identified in the themes is presented as through the quantitative element

of the research. Byrd Blake et al survey to teachers found that in reaction to the No Child Left

Behind Act, "Elementary teachers had a fairly negative evaluation (M=-1.50), midway between

slightly negative (-1.0) and *quite negative (+*2.0)" (466). The findings of the Byrd Blake et al.

study are reinforced by other studies such as both studies by Santoro, the first, "Good Teaching

in Difficult Times: Demoralization in the Pursuit of Good Work," a qualitative/philosophical

inquiry and the second with Morehouse, "Teaching's Conscientious Objectors: Principled

Leavers of High-Poverty Schools," an empirical case study of one of the subjects from the first

research study. The first study interviewed 13 teachers who Santoro identified as "Principled

Leaders," educators who left the profession because of ethical and moral objections to the

current educational system. Santoro concludes,

> This study was undertaken with the hypothesis that the *No Child Left Behind Act* was primarily responsible for experienced and committed teachers leaving high poverty schools…. This study shows that violating teacher's principles about good work can lead to attrition, regardless of whether the source is national educational policy or a school based initiative.(2699)

This first study, "Good Teaching in Difficult Times: Demoralization in the Pursuit of Good Work," established a more nuanced view of the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act on teacher morale, as federal policy was identified as one element of a larger trend toward devaluing the work of teachers. Her follow-up study, "Teaching's Conscientious Objectors: Principled Leavers of High-Poverty Schools," an empirical case study on one of the participants from the larger study, more clearly identified NCLB as the factor that influenced the decline in morale for this specific teacher.

In Santoro's case study, "Good Teaching in Difficult Times: Demoralization in the Pursuit of Good Work," current policy reforms created a situation to "prevent teachers like Stephanie from addressing student needs, thus creating a situation that simultaneously forecloses access to the moral rewards of the work and may contribute to the attrition of teachers committed to working in high-needs schools" (18). These two qualitative studies support the findings of the first study that the No Child Left Behind Act does have an impact on teacher morale and motivation, but it also reveals that the larger issue is the treatment of teachers, regardless of the role of federal education policy.

Finnegan and Gross's mixed methods study of motivation and morale of teachers in Chicago found the motivation and morale of teachers have a strong connection. The accountability policies of the current reform movement have led to demoralization of teachers, not because of the initial accountability, but due to the feedback loop that occurs, as teachers do not meet accountability targets (624). The fact that Arne Duncan, the United States Secretary of Education, told congress in March of 2011 that 82% of schools may fail in the next year, demonstrates that the negative feedback loop of failure if not yet a reality for all teachers will soon become a reality. Finnegan and Gross also found that,

Although individuals' motives do not appear to change the feedback loop of failure demotivates teachers, they become demoralized which only increases their demotivation. As the AYP targets increase to 100% by 2014, this trend of demotivation and demoralization will likely continue. (624)

The importance of school culture as the essential element in teacher morale and motivation indicates that No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, and other reform efforts are not in and of themselves problematic. Instead they have a tendency to foster school cultures that have the potential to damage morale and motivation. Johnson, Kraft, and Papay found a strong correlation between school culture and teacher job satisfaction but also concern that the "narrow attention to the individual in isolation from the organization" (18) that is a hallmark of the Race to the Top program does not address the essential importance of the unified organizational culture.

A couple of the ways that NCLB, RTTT, and other reform movements have shifted the school and classroom culture is the reduction of teacher curricular agency and the narrowing of the curriculum. The intention of these reform policies was not to reduce teacher curricular agency or narrow the curriculum, but as the standardized test benchmarks have increased in difficulty many school districts have attempted to raise test scores by mandating curriculum and focusing only on reading and math as those are the tested subjects. Crocco and Costigan in their interviews of New York City school teachers found that, "Those who face mandated curriculum and narrowed pedagogical options become more frustrated by the lack of control, especially when they work in schools with high degrees of failure on the Regents tests"(530). It is not the reform policy itself that is having a negative impact on the morale and motivation of teachers, but the response of the local district and school to the reform policy in order to meet the achievement expectations. This theme is found in multiple studies, Hunt et al, found that, "The

pressure to hurry instruction and to truncate non-tested curricula" (72) diminished teacher job satisfaction.

One of the most extreme forms of morale and motivation damage occurs when reconstitution takes place. Rice and Malen in their case study on reconstitution focused on the human cost of removing the entire or majority of the existing staff and replacing them with new staff. They found that it is very difficult to establish a positive culture when the continuity of the culture is completely disrupted (648). The reconstitution of a schools staff is a local choice made in response to the policy requirements outlined in the current reform.

The impact of the No Child Left Behind Act, Race to the Top and other current reform efforts on teacher morale and motivation resides at the local decision-making level. The educational policies themselves do not appear to directly influence the morale and motivation of the teachers; instead it is the changes to their local school climate. Although alternative change methods and school structures could be explored, the rapid increases in accountability measures and the availability of produced materials and program provides a more common solution. My own experience during the No Child Left Behind era is in line with this understanding of the impact of reform policy. The proficiency rate necessary to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessments (PSSA) has increased notably while I have worked in my current school organization, as can be seen in the table below: Table 2.1 Pennsylvania Proficiency Rates for Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)

Subject	2002-2004	2005-2007	2008-2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Reading	45%	54%	63%	72%	81%	91%	100%
Math	35%	45%	56%	67%	78%	89%	100%

Source: www.education.state.pa.us. May 2011. Web.

The rapid increase in the percentage of students who must be proficient or advanced on the PSSA has resulted in increased focus on the tested subjects and preparation for the test. My personal experience is in line with the trend in the literature that identifies a decrease in teacher morale and motivation, due to the reactions to the No Child Left Behind Act, Race to the Top, and other current reform policy.

Teacher Roles

The achievement expectations and other regulatory elements of the current reform agenda have also had an impact on the roles of teachers in the school setting and their perception of those roles. The increased pressure to ensure achievement for all students on multiple measures has changed the daily experience of the teacher. Ballet, Kelchtermans, and Loughran identified four changes in teachers work:

1. Less "down time" during the work day…
2. A chronic and persistent sense of work overload…
3. Negative effects on the quality of results: "as corners are being cut to save time"
4. Diversification of expertise makes teachers become more dependent on external specialists. (210)

They go on to identify the idea of intensification and note that "Intensification goes hand in hand with de-professionalization as a teacher's job is no longer seen as holistic, but rather as a sequence of separated tasks and assignments" (211). The de-professionalization of the teacher is also discussed by Rubin, who notes "teachers' autonomy is being eroded along with their personal and professional identities" (409). Valli and Buese took the data on teacher roles further identifying that not only were teachers responsible for more tasks, but that they were also were experiencing "expanded responsibilities outside the classroom and intensified work within the classroom" (523). In addition, this increased intensity "erodes working conditions, forcing teachers to work under 'interventionist styles of management' where they rely on experts to tell

them what to do and begin to mistrust the expertise they have developed over the years" (524). The teacher has shifted away from being the agent trusted with educating the citizenry of the future to an impediment to the potential of the future. Goldstein and Beutel examined the political discourse around No Child Gets Left Behind and teachers and described a change from teachers as "soldiers of democracy" to "enemies of the state" (283). The articles in the *New York Times* that frame this critical research review are indicative of this change in the teacher role perception.

The de-professionalization of teaching is also viewed through the lens of preparation for standardized testing. Barrett found that many teachers, both veteran and new teachers "perceive their practice to be shaped by an official pedagogic discourse established largely outside of their control" (1023). Furthermore the teachers felt that, "These demands often contradict their own ideas of professional practice that would be most beneficial to their individual pupils" (1023). The role of the teacher has been forced to change to meet the accountability demands of the current reform policy. The teacher's ideas of professional practice and their sense of mission and purpose in education are some of the intrinsic variables that Perrachione, Rosser, and Peterson found never to be connected to a teachers tendency to remain in the profession. In fact "The findings indicate that teachers' reasons for leaving were solely extrinsic (e.g., low salary, role overload" (11). In addition in the same study in comments of dissatisfaction the top reason was "role overload" (7). The role of the teacher has shifted as new focus has been placed on student achievement and accountability.

Teacher's roles have shifted in a number of ways along with the current trends in school reform. The teacher has become de-professionalized, their autonomy and agency have been reduced in order to ensure that they increase achievement. The push for achievement has also

altered the daily practice of their role, as the focus on testing and accountability has diminished the vault of time for their professional judgment and action. The roles of the teachers have been impacted by the current reform agenda.

Income Inequality and Teacher Morale

The third major theme that arose during the literature reviewed for my dissertation revolved around the disparity of teacher morale and job satisfaction as a result of No Child Left Behind when considering the income level of the student population. The tendency was for low-income schools to have greater academic challenges. These challenges led to greater implementation of actions in response to No Child Left Behind and other reform elements. The morale and satisfaction of the teachers decreased and the retention rates were lower. These findings were present in many of the studies in the critical review of research even when the focus of the study differed from this conclusion.

The impact of No Child Left Behind and reform policy in relation to income levels is present in many curricular areas and contexts. McCarthey in her study on the impacts of No Child Left Behind on teachers writing instruction found that "Teachers from high income schools felt more freedom to teach writing the way they wanted since their schools consistently made AYP, while teachers from two low income schools believed they had to follow the packaged programs" (498). The de-professionalization of the teacher is therefore more prevalent in the low-income school. In addition, the retention of teachers in low-income schools is impacted as found by Roellke and Rice due to the fact that greater centralization of decision making "makes the profession less attractive, particularly in low-performing schools that are under the watch of the state" (291). The low-income teacher receives greater pressures on morale and role than the teacher in the more affluent school.

The other side of the retention research focuses on those low-income and high-minority schools where teachers do stay and remain satisfied with they work. In their study of teachers working conditions, Johnson, Kraft, and Papay found that in relation to their job satisfaction and retention, "conditions of teachers' work matter a great deal" (16). They also found that the "high turnover rate of teachers in schools with substantial populations of low-income and minority students are driven largely by teachers fleeing the dysfunctional and unsupportive work environments" (16). The low-income and minority schools that did retain teachers had "elements like the school culture, the principal's leadership, and the relationship with their colleagues" (16). The schools that do succeed do not get trapped in the negative feedback loop discussed by Finnegan and Gross. Instead they provide a school climate that can be a buffer against some of the external factors that bring pressure on the morale and role of the teacher.

The literature on the experience of the teacher in the context of the current school reform movement and the experience in the context of the demographics of the student population, demonstrates the challenges in supporting teachers. In addition to the manner that policy impacts teachers, they also interact with their students, interacting with their suffering and with their fecundity. In order to examine this more fully I will next explore suffering and success.

Suffering

In order to explore the relationship between suffering and schooling, or the educator's experience of the suffering I find it is necessary to spend some time exploring suffering. In doing so, I continue to return to the phronetic research stance, asking myself, "Where am I going?" More importantly, I also ask, "Should I be going there?" The goal of understanding educators' perceptions of suffering serves the greater good and it is with this in mind that I shall proceed.

Suffering is a term and a state of being that has been considered by philosophers, theologians, and human beings in general for thousands of years. The English word suffering comes from the Latin *sufferer*, meaning to bear or endure. This is derived from the Latin *ferer*, meaning to carry, bear, or bring. Suffering then has its origins in a physical weight that is hoisted upon the individual. The physical presence of an object that presses down on a being is manifested in suffering thorough emotional or mental burdens as well as those that are physical. A weight to carry provides suffering with a tangibility and gravity, preventing its discussion from being a cursory acknowledgement of hardship and instead requiring that its ongoing presence and effect be acknowledged.

The burden of suffering has been present throughout existence and many attempts to understand the manner of the alleviation of suffering have been presented. Jeremy Bentham put one important model of note, Hedonistic Utilitarianism, in the 1823 edition of *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislations,* namely that, "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure.* It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do" (14).

Bentham's hedonistic utilitarianism promotes the increase of pleasure as a means to address the unpalatable nature of pain. Pleasure has the power to cancel out the suffering of pain and should therefore all actions should be taken to increase pleasure. This hedonistic view toward the problem of pain and pleasure in fact has been shown in recent research to be the form of happiness seeking most strongly endorsed by young adults (Peterson, Park, and Seligman 38) In my own experience this tendency toward pleasure seeking as a means to alleviate the experience of suffering is often utilized in school age children as well as in young adults.

An alternative model for the management of suffering was put forth by Negative

Utilitarians such as Karl Popper, who in his notes to Chapter 9 of *Open Society and its Enemies*

clearly outlines his beliefs about the mitigation of suffering,

> I believe that there is, from the ethical point of view no symmetry between
> suffering and happiness, or between pain and pleasure. Both the greatest happiness
> principle of the Utilitarian and Kant's principle "Promote other people's
> happiness," seem to me (at least in their formulation) wrong on the point, which
> however is not completely decidable by rational argument…. In my opinion
> human suffering makes a direct moral appeal, namely, the appeal for help, while
> there is no similar call to increase the happiness of a man who is doing well
> anyway. (564-565)

Popper turned the utilitarian model on its head making a bold argument that diminishing

suffering was more important than the increasing of happiness. The ultimate goal of the

reduction of suffering presents a very different set of actions than the attainment of universal

pleasure as put forth by Bentham and the Hedonistic Utilitarians. If one is to place actions that

diminish suffering above all others this necessarily shapes the choices that are made about the

way that one interacts with the world. The abhorrent nature of suffering calls it to be addressed

above the attempts to increase pleasure.

The utilitarian understanding of suffering and happiness or pain and pleasure is further

confounded when the realm of suffering is expanded beyond that of the human being. The

publication of *Animal Liberation* by Peter Singer brought a new critical awareness and expansion

of the notion of suffering to the table. Singer extended the immorality of suffering to all living

creatures. Examined further by philosophers and theologians such as Daniel Spencer, calls were

made "that ecological ethics must become the grounding for all ethics…we need a fundamental

shift from an anthropocentric, human-centered world view to an eco-centric, all-of-life-centered

worldview" (9). The suffering of all living things is of great concern to me and has played a

central role in the last decade of my life. I have chosen not to eat animals or the products that are

produced from them, as the conditions of their care are not in line with my desire to work against suffering. This is a moral decision I have made in order to diminish the amount of suffering that I bring directly into the world.

The challenge of identifying suffering is deftly handled by David Foster Wallace in an article he wrote for *Gourmet* magazine in August of 2004. He was asked by the food and culture magazine to travel to the Maine Lobster Festival and write an essay on the experience. The essay that he produced, "Consider the Lobster," is a strong argument for not eating animals, not because it is a panegyric for animal rights, because it is not, but instead because it is a genuine grappling with the reality of suffering. Wallace is able to delve deeply into the moral morass of pleasure and pain, suffering and happiness through the lens of the lobster. As he contemplates the lobster in one's kitchen, franticly thrashing in the pot of boiling water he states:

> Standing at the stove, it is hard to deny in any meaningful way that this is a living creature experiencing pain and wishing to avoid/escape the painful experience. To my lay mind, the lobster's behavior in the kettle appears to be the expression of *preference*; and it may well be that an ability to form a preference is the decisive criterion for real suffering. (8)

A preference against suffering serves as a succinct definition of the nebulous nature of suffering. Suffering then can be an individual's preference not to experience something that is unpleasant or to return to the designation of Bentham some that is pain. The varied degrees of suffering are not attended to in the preference against or for something and the preference against a paper cut differs from the preference against being boiled alive or the preference against the existential angst that arises from institutionalized oppression. The lobster example allows the relationship between pleasure and pain or potentially power and disempowerment to be brought to the discussion. Wallace wrestles with considering the suffering of the lobster and his own appreciation and pleasure he derives from eating it. He laments:

I believe that animals are less morally important than human beings; and when it comes to defending such a belief, even to myself, I have to acknowledge that (a) I have an obvious selfish interest in this belief, since I like to eat certain kinds of animals and want to be able to keep doing it, and (b) I have not succeeded in working out any sort of personal ethical system in which the belief is truly defensible instead of just selfishly convenient. (8)

The pleasure of one individual can result in the suffering of another. Therefore suffering and concurrently flourishing are enmeshed with power. Although the dichotomy of pleasure and pain is useful in providing a stark contrast in this exploration of suffering, the next step is to examine the place that suffering has in the maintenance of systems of power. If, as Flyvberg suggests in *Making Social Science Matter*, I am to engage in utilizing phronesis as the stance from which my research flows I must consider the fourth of his questions, and not shy away from any discomfort it may bring. In considering "Who gains and who loses; by which mechanisms of power?" (60) It is useful to draw from one of the most heavily cited thinkers in Flyvberg's text, Michel Foucault. The value of Foucault, as stated by Flyvberg in *Making Social Science Matter* is the "emphasis on the dynamics of power. Understanding how power works is the first prerequisite for action, because action is the exercise of power" (107). The dynamics of power are the dynamics of suffering because the suffering that we are concerned with is the suffering that is caused by action, by the exercise of power. Again returning to the etymology of the word the suffering is borne by the individual. There is, of course, no end to the suffering that comes about by the cold hand of circumstance, but these occurrences and situations, do have elements of choice and power in terms of the situational and systematic injustices in the system. The remaining sufferings of chance are an issue for the theodicy that we steered away from earlier in this exploration. Power then, and in this case Foucault's recognition of action as an expression of power, is the next step on this journey.

Foucault opens his exploration of the criminal justice system, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison,* with a detailed retelling of the execution of Damiens the regicide on March 2, 1757 in Paris. The degree of detail in the imposition of a spectacle of suffering is not in place for a hedonistic delight, but as a mechanism of power, the maintenance of control over the populace. In order to remain in control, it was necessary in the eyes of the monarchy to publically enact brutal, physical pain on any whose actions could be seen as having the potential to undermine those who held the power. As with the transition of the meaning of suffering from an etymological root of physical burden to the addition of emotional and psychological burdens that must be carried, Foucault then examines the shift from the use of physical torture to the modern prison system. Even early in this transition, he asks "If the penalty in its most severe forms no longer addresses itself to the body, on what does its lay hold? It seems to be contained in the question itself: since it is no longer the body, it must be the soul" (16). In other works, such as *The Subject and Power,* Foucault continues to codify the transition in the nature of power in his discussion of Pastoral Power. This power initially arose as a manifestation of religious institutions and was concerned with other worldly salvation and the need to impress upon the society a manifestation of salvation. Foucault acknowledges that Pastoral Power may have shifted away from institutions of religion, but has been replaced by the state, the other worldly salvation has been replaced by "ensuring it in this world. And in this context the word 'salvation' takes on different meanings: health, well-being (that is, sufficient wealth, standard of living), security, protection against accidents" (132). Suffering as a product of the exertion of power has shifted from the bodily manifestation, the carrying of a weight or the force exerted upon the body to the confined soul in the prison or to the control exerted for the good of the flock, both individual, and communal. The lobster from David Foster Wallace, like

Damiens the regicide, like the child dangling from the noose in "Night" experienced the ultimate

endurance of physical suffering. How then do we explore the experience of suffering of the soul?

There is one more paradigm for suffering that must be considered that will provide a

model for the suffering of the soul. Andrew Sung Park is a theologian and philosopher and he

has put forth the concept of *han* as a way of deeply examining suffering in light of sin, faith and

Christian virtues. Han is a concept that is more complicated than suffering, for although han is

the "collapsed feeling of sadness, despair, and bitterness" (17). It is also "bitterness plus

resentment" (18), and "the division of the tissue of the heart caused by abuse, exploitation, and

violence. It is the wound to feelings and self-dignity" (20). Han in its native Korean has many

meanings which are understood by those who have membership within the culture. Park also

makes the connection between sin and han, positing that the very nature of sin and forgiveness is

"self-centered; it is concerned about and focuses almost exclusively on the sinner/oppressor"

(73). Park envisions the relational nature of Han as a means to alleviate the suffering of the

victim and the oppressor:

> we perceive the deep pain of the victim, which is the structure of the person's han,
> or the conscious or unconscious agony of the sinner, which arises from
> dehumanizing the victim. Perceiving as well as sharing Thou's reality of han we
> come to embrace Thou, in the process we experience salvation. (107)

The concept of Han recognizes the inherently relational nature of suffering, and of

salvation. In addition the depth of Han provides a strong foundation to place the emotional and

psychological suffering that we are grasping to understand. Even as the experience of the

individual has moved away from institutional physical en-burden-ment, the systems of

institutional suffering as a mechanism of power are still present in society and in the structures of

schooling. On the other hand, education and the structures of schooling can and do provide

opportunities for success. Therefore, before delving into the ideas that surround education and schooling it is first necessary to examine un-suffering, or flourishing.

Flourishing and Success

I find it difficult to identify the exact word that serves as the counter to the suffering. The root of suffering, with its focus on the enduring and carrying of a burden speaks for a dialectic relationship, for un-suffering. The lifting of burdens, the removal of weight that bears down upon beings. Yet I have a desire to go further, not to just remove the burden, but to go further and provide beings with the opportunities to grow and be in a state of satisfaction or joy in relation to their ontic experience. There are two terms that I continue to return to. I return to them because they resonate with my own lived experience. It is my hope and that my joy is manifested when I am able to feel that I am flourishing and that my ontic experience manifests fecundity and success.

Flourishing is a term that has been increasingly used to describe the positive progress of the individual, community, and society. It has its origins in the latin word *florere* meaning to bloom, blossom, or flower. Beings are able to flourish when they are able to, like the flower, stand tall and expose their beauty and purpose, both to their internal and external worlds (Seligman 26). Although this term and notion is appealing, I find that it falls one step short of the potential of a dialectic relationship with suffering. Suffering places an impediment to creation upon the being, a weight that holds down potential. In response to that suffering, to flourish provides a form of creation, but it is usually limited to the individual even though there are some references to societies and cultures flourishing, for example the Renaissance. A flower, a blossom, is an attractant and a means to achieve fruitfulness. Furthermore, Aristotle addresses flourishing in his foundational work, *Nicomachen Ethics,* as flourishing or *eudaimon*, noting that,

no supremely happy man can ever be miserable, for he will never do what is hateful and base. For in our opinion, the man who is truly good and wise will bear with dignity whatever fortune may bring, and will always act as nobly as circumstances permit, just as a good general make the most strategic use of the troops at his disposal, and a good shoe maker makes the best shoe he can from the leather available and so on with experts in all other fields. If this is true a happy man will never become miserable. (26)

The happy person, the flourishing person does good, is happy in the context of their place within the structures of expectations of society. The flourishing general leads troops in a noble and virtuous manner and the flourishing shoemaker makes shoes in a noble and virtuous manner, but their place with in their roles in society are predefined. He speaks of the morally strong man who "accepts the leadership of reason" (31). The man who is not morally strong does not have the same capacity for the "leadership of reason." Furthermore, as this is an exploration of the children, education, and schooling, it is necessary to point out that in the discussion of flourishing, Aristotle feels it necessary to explain that "a child is not happy, either; for, because of his age, he cannot yet perform such actions. When we do call a child happy, we do so by reason of the hopes we have for his future. Happiness, as we have said, requires completeness in virtue as well as a complete life time" (23). The dialectic to oppose suffering then seems not to fit with the idea of flourishing as it struggles with a history of the ossification of social hierarchy as well as an exclusion of the potential for happiness or flourishing for children as they have not yet lived the full life of virtue necessary to flourish as described by Aristotle. It is true that more modern conceptions of Aristotle's flourishing or *eudaimonia* do involve a greater sense of growth and virtue than simply living a good life (Bauer et al. 99). This growth and virtue though are still represented as in individual blossoming. The strength of the relationships of power that lead to suffering proves to be a strong force against the individual blossoming. Furthermore if the

goal is to stay true to the questions of phronetic research a more active and power aware lens must provide the focus for understanding and new action.

The idea of fecundity, meaning fertility, is as an alternate pair for the dialectic if the antithesis of suffering is sought. The first time I heard the term was when William McDonough, architect and designer, came to Oberlin College when I was an undergraduate student. His firm had designed the Environmental Studies building. In the talks he gave on campus he frequently used fecundity as a descriptor for the type of design that he strives for in his work. In *Cradle to Cradle* McDonough and Braungart expands on this idea of good growth that leads to "more niches, health, nourishment, diversity, intelligence, and abundance-for this generation of inhabitants on the planet and for generations to come" (78). Fecundity has implicit in its meaning a greater notion of these elements than flourishing. Fecundity or to fecund springs forth directly from the latin *fecundus*, meaning fruitful, fertile, and productive. There is a generative quality, an aspect of creation, which is present that serves as a more effective antithesis against the suffering and the requisite dynamics of power. Fecundity is a term that is often used in scientific research on fertility both human and non-human beings, but is rarely, if ever used, in relation to the continued development of the being following its initial creation. Fecundity provides an antithesis to suffering. The model outlined by Andrew Sung Park's conception of *han* as suffering, as the "collapsed feeling of sadness, despair, and bitterness" (17) and our understanding of the mechanics of power that are behind the suffering, require this generative and purposeful balance.

Suffering and fecundity have been established as elements of the lived experience of beings. Suffering is the experience of potential burdened by the actions of power. The despair at the realization of the diminished potential due to forces, intentional and systematic, that press

down on the individual, community, or culture. In addition, suffering is the presence of a preference against such burden. The acknowledgement that there is another way that is preferable to the current experience of the individual. Fecundity provides an alternative force for the experience of the individual. It provides for the unburdening of the potential of the individual, community or culture to be producing, fruitful, and fertile in its positive growth. This foundation is necessary before returning to the second aspect of this exploration. The school can be both an agent for the promotion of fecundity or the burden of suffering. The manner in which schools and schooling have understood their role both in the past and the present is necessary to understanding the lived experience of students in schools and education. If schools have the potential to both burden and unburden, it is necessary to understand the forces and beliefs that provide a foundation for schoolings actions.

The notion of fecundity is not a universal or necessary counter to suffering, but it forces me to consider something beyond flourishing. Fecundity can be described as individualized success. The well-being and actualization of each being, of each child, not only to shine as an example, but also to produce and reproduce success is necessary if the cycles of challenge are to be overcome. To succeed is to be antithetical to suffering. If to suffer is to be burdened, then to succeed is to not only cast off that burden, but also to produce and reproduce success. This fertility, fecundity, is a powerful model for supporting the ongoing growth and development for those in our care.

The literature on the experience of the teacher and suffering/fecundity has demonstrated a need to combine these two realms to better understand and subsequently support the experience that teachers have of the suffering and fecundity of the students in their care. The next step in this process is to determine the manner in which I will be able to better understand the lived

experience of teachers in their care for students. This methodological and philosophical home is

necessary to place my dissertation so that I can open myself to experience and meaning.

Chapter III: Phenomenology and a Methodological Home

The ultimate meaning of humanity is an incredibly worthy and genuine exploration. What it means to be human in the world and in ourselves defines our experience, our understanding of reality, and our awareness of being, being-in-ourselves and being-in-the world. As we experience the end of our time, as an individual, as a culture, or as a species, I suspect it will not be the generalizable truths that matter, but instead our sense of meaning. The meaning of the lives we have led, reflected upon, and experienced in the creation of our meaning. The individual lived experience, our consciousness, is the world in which we live, and although the life worlds of others may intersect and have common meaning with our experience, it is our own individual reflection and experience that provides us with a place in the world. In this exploration, I am striving to find my place in the world as a social science researcher, educator, and seeker of meaning.

This chapter of my dissertation has a number of goals. The first is to examine the nature of being and being-in-the world, as a manifestation of the purpose of ontological examination. The second is the recognition of the need for and value of a methodological homeland. Third is an exploration of phenomenology as a philosophical and methodological foundation. Fourth is the specificity of a methodological perspective presented by Max Van Manen. The accomplishment of these goals will provide a foundation for my own path as a social science researcher and hermeneutic phenomenologist. This will allow for final section that outlines the research process that I will use in my dissertation.

Being-and-Being-in-the-World

The search for humanity that lies at the heart of phenomenological research is the search that I have undertaken. Although I have reached this point, in the beginning of my journey, toward my place as a social science researcher, I resisted the call to this perspective on social science research. Phenomenology seemed too separate, too apart from research. The researcher was too present, the "findings" were too fluid, and the conception of reality was too questionable. In order to find a place in research I first needed to reconcile my perceptions of what research can be both personal and professional.

This journey to find my methodological home has brought me to explore phenomenology and hermeneutics. The path to this place is one part of this exploration. The place where I find myself is built upon the experiences that led me there. Phenomenology is a philosophical as well as a methodological endeavor and it is necessary to understand these foundations in order to understand the methodology. This understanding has helped me shift from being someone who reads about phenomenology into a phenomenologist.

The shift in my social science research to an acceptance of a home in hermeneutic phenomenology brought about a realization for me that has stood at the edge of my understanding since my freshman year of high school. In my freshman year, I was introduced to a text, *I and Thou* by theologian and philosopher, Martin Buber. In that text he discusses the nature of relational being, as well as the nature of divinity. Buber posits two fundamental types of relationships: I-It relationships in which the I interacts with the It, with the other, in order to derive benefit for the I. The second type of relation is the I-Thou or I-You. This type of ephemeral relation presents itself as a universal dismissal of the self and the otherness of the

relational partner and the entrance into a situation of mutual respect and value. There is a critical

passage in that text, which I have struggled with since I first came across it.

> Henceforth, when man is for once overcome by the horror of alienation and the
> world fills him with anxiety, he looks up (right or left, as the case may be) and
> sees a picture. Then he sees that the I is contained in the world, and that there
> really is not I, and thus the world cannot harm the I, and he calms down; or he
> sees that the world is contained in the I, and that there really is no world, and thus
> the world cannot harm the I and he calms down. And when man is overcome
> again by the horror of alienation, and the I fills him with anxiety, he looks up and
> sees a picture; and whichever he sees, it does not matter, either the empty I is
> stuffed full of world or it is covered in the flood of the world, and he calms down.
>   But the moment will come, and it is near, when Man, overcome by horror,
> looks up and sees in a flash both pictures at once. And he is seized by a deeper
> horror. (121-122)

This passage from the text bound itself to me the first time I read the book, although at

the time, I knew the passage was important, but I did not understand why it was important. I still

possess the copy of the book that I had in that class when I was a freshman in college. There are

two pieces of marginalia present on pages 121-122. The passage above is bracketed, apart from

the rest of the page. The first piece of marginalia is the statement that "This is important." Then

on page 122 the text only fills the top quarter of the page and from the end of the text extends an

arrow written by my 19-year-old self the first time I read the passage. The arrow curves down a

quarter of the open page and ends at the question "What does this mean?" This text, both at its

initial introduction and for years to follow remained an enigma, there was always a recognition

of the importance of the text in understanding being-and-being-in-the-world, but it was only in

the past year that I began to grasp the meaning of this particular passage.

Understanding the nature of being is one of the oldest quandaries of humanity. The

wondering about what it means to be something and to be something in relation to other

somethings is a philosophical task that has long been a consideration in the human condition. A

consideration of being requires a consciousness to consider that being, or, as noted by Martin

Heidegger in *Being and Time,* "Being is always the Being of an entity" (29). It is necessary to have an awareness of the self in order to consider the being of the self. The I possesses an awareness of its existence and as in the scenes depicted in Buber's passage above, "he sees that the world is contained in the I, and that there really is no world, and thus the world cannot harm the I and he calms down" (121). If the being is able to place itself in the consciousness of its existence, as a fundamental centrality of being, it is then able to see the world in relation to itself and have comfort in its essential being. On the other hand, being does not exist in a vacuum, alone in itself. Any being, is a being-in-the world, because as noted by Heidegger "Any concern is already as it is because of some familiarity with the world." (107) This Heideggerian being-in-the-world is further clarified by Max Van Manen when he describes being-in-the-world as "the way human beings exist, act, or are involved in the world—for example, as parent, as teacher, as man, as woman, or as child" (175). The being-in-the-world is shaped by its context, inextricable from experience and identity.   This then is Buber's other notion of being in which, "the I is contained in the world, and that there really is not I, and thus the world cannot harm the I" (121). This contextual envelopment enables the being to see itself as a part of the whole, held fast and firm in the web of existence. These two notions of being are in themselves both comforting. The I, the being, can be the enveloping centrality or it can be the enveloped constituent. The "horror" arises when it realizes that both the being and the being-in-the world are wholly true both in and of themselves and in relation with each other. The dual nature of being, the being of the I and the being of the world in which the I exists was the first element in this journey. In order to find a methodological home, I needed to find a perspective that recognized the duality of being.

Searching for a Methodological Home

The need for a methodological home was an essential element of my growth as a social science researcher. The ability to feel at home in something I inhabit allows me to shed the insecurities and discomforts of uncertainty and otherness and instead focus on the potential for discovery. Therefore it was necessary for me to find a methodological home in my path toward becoming a social science researcher. It would have been an easy choice to identify a methodology that was the most likely to lead to publication or potential future employment activities. The current reform movement in education is centrally focused on the measurement and evaluation of all aspects of learning and teaching. I have meetings scheduled for the next two weeks to support school principals in the data gathering needed for the value-added scores that will become a portion of teachers' evaluations. Every teacher in every tested class will have two numbers assigned to them in relation to each of their students. The first number is the percentage of enrollment time with each student. If a student and teacher have shared the classroom (in terms of enrollment not attendance) from the start of school until the first day of testing then their percentage will be 100%. If the teacher or student has not been enrolled together for the entirety of the time between the start of school and the test, that percentage will be decreased accordingly. The second number is the percentage of instructional responsibility that the teacher has for the student. If the teacher is the only one providing instruction to the student for a tested course, then the teacher is 100% responsible for that student's instruction. If that student receives instruction from another teacher for support, intervention, enhancement, or enrichment, the teacher's responsibility is adjusted accordingly. These two percentages are then used along with the standardized test scores of the students to measure the efficacy of the teacher and inform

their evaluation.[8] This element of teacher evaluation is indicative of the focus of policy and research in public education in the United States over the last ten years. In fact the degree of measurements and accountability has increased over those years in the transition from the No Child Left Behind Act to the current Race to the Top and the Common Core standards.

I knew that I could find a place for research in the current emphasis on measurement, accountability, and quantification. It would have been easy to construct a study that assessed the impact of teacher perceptions on a variety of factors on student achievement. I already have ten years of teacher, parent, and student survey data along with ten years of achievement, discipline, attendance, demographic, and other data points currently in my files. There are multiple factors that can be analyzed and correlations that can be found. The data could be used to measure efficacy and tier the impact of practices, attitudes, and elements of culture. In my daily practice I frequently hear of the set of teacher moves that exemplify the best practices and teacher moves that are research based, validated, and approved. It would have been easy to contribute to this trend in educational research. Although this may have been the path of least resistance, and I did begin along this path to some degree, I began to feel deep discomfort in knowing that I was missing the truth of the actual experience of education in the sea of numbers. I recognized that I needed to find a place where I felt as though I belonged, a methodological home that addressed my needs and being and was in alignment with my beliefs.

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[8] Although this particular model and this experience are currently in place in Pennsylvania, it is very similar to systems being put in place in many other states. The Pennsylvania system is outlined here,
<http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/educator_effectiveness_project/20903>
The Race to the Top funding provided by the federal government contained a number of contingencies such as the adoption of the Common Core standards and the design and implementation of student achievement-based teacher evaluation systems.

Geologic Time

In many ways this need to feel at home is rooted in the sense of place that is more often

discussed in ecological or environmental texts. One such example comes from Thomas Fairchild

Sherman's discussion of the value of place in *A Place on the Glacial Till* in which he remarks on

Henry Thoreau:

> There is a wilderness of time and nature within any place on earth. When in the
> nineteenth century many New Englanders made the long trip to northern Ohio,
> Henry Thoreau walked the few miles to Walden Pond. It was one of Thoreau's
> great rules of life that any Walden Pond contains the reflections of the entire
> world within it—that one can see and know and feel, if eye and mind and heart
> can be open, more at one's own doorstep then hurried travelers will ever reveal in
> the far corners of the earth. Thoreau longed to know "the entire poem" of heaven
> and earth revealed in the reflections at Walden, as Tennyson yearned to know his
> flower in the crannied wall. Words and verses of the poem are everywhere before
> us-at Selborne, or at Walden, or in the woods and fields and villages of Ohio. (9)

Sherman touches on the necessity for careful, open, and mindful exploration of the world

in which we live our daily lives. The fullness of the actual lived experience is best found in the

actual life lived daily and continually. This passage and text is even more vital for and relevant

for me because Sherman was a professor of biology at Oberlin College, where I spent four years,

and the town of Oberlin where I remained for another following graduation from college. When

he speaks of the "junction of Chance Creek and the Vermillion River, the little promontory on

which I like to sit" (37), I am drawn to his experience, because I too have sat upon that little

promontory and watched the water flow below. The ashes of my first dog, a malamute, that my

future wife and I rescued when we were in college, have been spread in the water of Chance

Creek. He was an emotional and corporeal precursor to my children and his remains are a part of

the watershed examined in this text. Sherman discusses the geology, the water, the people, the

flora and fauna of north east Ohio, and as I read his description, I feel connected as I am at home

in that place. Wendell Berry also addresses the necessity of context in his discussion of propriety in *Life is a Miracle.* As he begins his "Essay Against Modern Superstition" he states that,

> "Propriety" is an old term, even an old-fashioned one, and is not much in favor. Its value is in its reference to the fact that we are not alone. The idea of propriety makes an issue of the fittingness of our conduct to our place or circumstance, even to our hopes. It acknowledges the always pressing realities of context and of influences; we cannot speak or act or live out of context. Our life inescapably affects other lives, and inescapably affect our life. We are being measured, in other words, by a standard, and only by that standard that we did not make and cannot destroy. (13)

I cannot escape, nor do I wish to escape, the people, places, and ideas that have shaped the manner in which I make meaning in the world. Berry is correct in that this connection to others is inescapable and in order to find a place to conduct research I needed to find a place, a home, that not only recognized, but also honored actual experience and the context that shaped my actual experience and the experience of the other participants in my research.

Initially, in my path toward social science research I did not have a clear road laid out before me. I had convinced myself that my research needed to have enough quantitative rigor to be a springboard for future explorations and opportunities in educational scholarship. At the same time I have always been drawn to narratives, to descriptions of events and memories. My own memories exist, not as pictures or films in my mind, but instead as narratives, as a description of what has occurred, or at least what I have perceived to have occurred. This misalignment brought about struggles as I tried to find my way. Growing closer and closer to the time where I needed to find my methodological home, I considered and tried on many methods, searching for a place that fit my skin and my heart. I delved into grounded theory, various mixed method configurations, Delphi methodology, and others before settling on Q-methodology in an

attempt to have a methodology that straddled the qualitative and quantitative worlds. The

description of Q-methodology in Bruce McKeown and Dan Thomas's *Q Methodology* provided

a possible solution to my struggle.

> Fundamentally, Q entails a method for the scientific study of human subjectivity.
> Subjectivity, in the lexicon of Q methodology, means nothing more than a
> *person's communication of his or her point of view.* As such, subjectivity is
> always anchored in *self-reference*, that is, the person's "internal" frame of
> reference, but this does not render it inaccessible to rigorous examination…. As a
> matter of principle would seem to hold special promise for those seeking to make
> more intelligible and rigorous the study of human subjectivity. (12)

Q methodology had an appeal as it provided a systematic process for the exploration of

experience and the perception of experience. I felt that I had found an answer to my struggle and

I dove deeply into the methodology. I read the foundational texts written by William Stevenson,

and I joined and read every entry on the Kent State listserv, one of the essential forums for

dialogue in the methodology. I read examples of research that used Q methodology in an

attempt to understand a methodology that tried to understand the subjectivity of people as

described by Exel and Graaf;

> The results of a Q methodological study can be used to describe a population of
> viewpoints and not, like in R, a population of people. In this way Q can be very
> helpful in exploring tastes, preferences, sentiments, motives and goals, the part of
> personality that is of great influence on behavior but that often remains
> unexplored. (2)

The general idea was that the viewpoints of people are what shape their behavior and

eventually the decisions they make about how to structure their lives, both professionally and

personally.   The emphasis on quantifying the experience or viewpoints of a population was

central to the philosophical and ontological foundation of the methodology. I delved into studies

using Q-methodology and encountered sections such as this one in Chang et al.'s "Exploring

Eco-Integrity in Old Adults."

The extreme scores for each factor and the scores of individual statements from each discourse of the P-samples revealed that those who loaded on factor 1 tend to emphasize the connections with their parents and offspring, and they consider themselves as being privileged…. The P-sample with the highest loaded scores of this factor was a 65-year-old male Catholic…. This subjects perceived that his economic status was high. (251)

This emphasis on the quantification of lived experience began to cause a disorienting dilemma for me as a social scientist and as an educator. As I read these studies I never experienced what Max Van Manen described in *Researching Lived Experience* as follows:

A good phenomenological description is an adequate elucidation of some aspect of the lifeworld—it resonates with our sense of lived life. In one of his lectures Buytnedijk once referred to the "phenomenological nod" as a way of indicating that a good phenomenological description is something that we can nod to, recognizing it as an experience that we have had or could have had. In other words, a good phenomenological description is collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience—is validated by lived experience and it validates lived experience. (27)

The absence of this connection with the findings using the Q-methodology forced me to realize that I had not found my methodological home and I needed to revisit my sense of myself and the way I interacted with the world.

Context and Phenomenology

As the researcher I cannot escape my context and instead of attempting to separate from it, which is arguably impossible to do, instead I choose to embrace the manner in which I make meaning and explicitly allow it to inform the meaning that I make. Hans-Georg Gadamer in *Truth and Method* states this notion in more philosophical terms,

a person trying to understand a text is prepared for it to tell him something. That is why a hermeneutically trained consciousness must be from the stare sensitive to the text's alterity. But this kind of sensitivity involves neither "neutrality" with respect to content nor the extinction of one's self, but the foregrounding and appropriation of one's own fore-meaning and prejudices. (270)

I knew that I wanted to better understand the experience of education and schooling, so that as an educator, I would be better able to support positive, humane, and effective models for

learning. This thread is present in all of work in my doctoral program that I have undertaken, from my case study on an integral school in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania to my research redesign essay on teacher satisfaction. The methodological quandary in which I found myself required that I reexamine my own lived experience and the way that I make meaning.

I remembered my own history—that I was drawn away from majoring in biology in college to focusing on modern religious thought. I remembered that when asked at my interview for acceptance to for my M.Ed. program at Antioch New England University which three books had influenced me the most I listed *I and Thou* by Martin Buber, *Savage Inequalities* by Jonathan Kozol, and *Among Schoolchildren* by Tracy Kidder. I remembered that I believed in philosophy, context, and hermeneutics and lived experience. This reconnection caused me to drift and lose my way for a little while, before I reconnected with a methodology and philosophical stance that had always felt like home. I began to revisit texts and ideas that I had considered before and although at the time they felt like home to me, I had pushed them aside in attempt to find a different path for understanding the lived experience of educators. As I began to revisit I returned to Ruth Behar in *The Vulnerable Observer* who addressed my disconnection from my writing;

> It is far from easy to think up interesting ways to locate oneself in one's own text. Writing vulnerably takes as much skill, nuance, and willingness to follow through on all of the ramifications of a complicated idea as does writing invulnerably and distantly. I would say it takes yet greater skill. The worst that can happen in an invulnerable text is that it will be boring. But when an author has made herself of himself vulnerable, the stakes are higher: a boring self-revelation, one that fails to move the reader, is more than embarrassing; it is humiliating. (13)

The personal, the feeling, and the heart was also, albeit more poetically present in Ronald Pelias' *A Methodology of the Heart:*

To represent the human anatomy without including the heart is the equivalent of describing a car without mentioning its motor. The crisis in representation stems from forgetting where the power is.

Pinning a butterfly to a mat, classifying it, and presenting it to other collectors says nothing of its beauty. It's always a question of what story you want to tell.

Knowing what is true, what is valid and reliable, and what to predict should come from listening to as many stories as you can and deciding how to act responsibly. (9)

The classified and presented butterfly is in many ways the same as the teacher classified, quantified and presented for judgment in the current system of school reform. The beauty of the interplay of learning is lost in the pinned specimen. The powerful relationship that is built between teacher and student, which is at the heart of schooling, is removed as an intangible, only present if it can be measured and validated. I had rediscovered where my methodological home was not. I had found that I needed to be in a place that was both aware of the heart, context, and beauty of the others, but also recognized that I as the researcher too had heart, context, and beauty that influenced my own life world. My explorations led me to back to phenomenology as a methodology to explore.

I took the next few months to delve deeply into phenomenology in general and hermeneutic phenomenology specifically and now I am ready to move forward in my work as a scholar researcher. I entered into my exploration of phenomenology and hermeneutics with a desire to understand and find a place where I felt I belonged. I revisited phenomenology and I read and contemplated and began to come across ideas such as those expressed by Max Van Manen in *Researching Lived Expereince*:

Phenomenological research is the description of the experiential meanings we live as we live them.

Phenomenological human science is the study of lived or existential meanings; it attempts to describe and interpret these meanings to a certain degree of depth and richness. In this focus upon meaning, phenomenology differs from some other social or human sciences, which may focus not on meanings but on the

statistical relationships among variables, on the predominance of social opinions, or on the occurrence or frequency of certain behaviors, etc. And phenomenology differs from other disciplines in that it does not aim to explicate meaning specific to particular cultures (ethnography), to certain social groups (psychology), or to an individual's personal life history (biography). Rather, Phenomenology attempts to explicate the meanings as we live them in our everyday existence, our lifeworld. (11)

The exploration of lived experience as described by Van Manen and others captured the essence of what I had been seeking in my role as a researcher. Van Manen again captured the deep ontological reality that is present for me in phenomenology. In *Phenomenology of Practice* he says that,

> phenomenology is also a project that is driven by fascination: being swept up in a spell of wonder, a fascination with meaning. The reward phenomenology offers are the moments of seeing-meaning or "in-seeing" into "the heart of things"…. Not unlike the poet, the phenomenologist directs the gaze towards the regions where meaning originates, wells up, percolates through the porous membranes of past sedimentations-and then infuses us, permeates us, infects us, touches us, stirs us, exercises a formative affect. (11)

I must admit it was my intention to only put part of this quotation into this paper, but once I began writing I was drawn in to the essence of the statement, it permeated, infected and stirred me. As I read these about phenomenology and read phenomenology I found myself nodding and "swept up in a spell of wonder," I had found my methodological home and now I needed to understand it and determine how to engage in the way of researching, thinking, and being that had so captured me.

Phenomenology: Transcendental or Hermeneutic?

I have found my methodological home and now I must understand what it is to be a phenomenologist and furthermore how to be a phenomenologist. It quickly became apparent that, that as noted by Bentz in her paper, "Husserel, Schutz, Paul and Me: Reflections on Writing Phenomenology", phenomenology is a "radically different way of being" (60) and furthermore is "not a 'research method'…. Rather it is a way of being of constant radical inquiry" (60). The

first question then is what is phenomenology? What is this radical different way of being, a way of being that Bentz herself describes in the same text, an exploration of her own experience of coming to phenomenology in her doctoral work, as considered a heresy, "only tolerated in the cracks, in potholes" (60). In addition, phenomenology is a tradition wherein, as noted by Van Manen in *Researching the Experience of Pedagogy*, "Part of the phenomenological method consists of distrusting any method, and it involves deconstructing the various theoretical perspectives, assumptions and conceptualizations that prevent us from interpreting experience as we live it, pre-reflectively" (24). The description, understanding, and utilization of such methodology can be challenging, especially if it is considered to be a methodology alone, set apart from the philosophical considerations that provide the structure for the methodological skin.

The flexibility of phenomenology and the unease with rigid classifications of its nature does not prevent its description. In fact although there are many descriptions and types of phenomenology, and although they vary, there are common essences and foundational elements that are present. In their exploration of phenomenology for the *Journal of Holistic Nursing*, Wojnar and Swanson identify seven perspectives in the phenomenological tradition, Descriptive/Transcendental, Naturalistic, Existential, Generative Historicist, Genetic, Hermeneutic and Realistic (173). Although each of these perspectives has different areas of focus and a distinct philosophical foundation, they all possess a common understanding of the centrality of lived experience and the essential ontology of our consciousness that is derived from lived experience. The core understandings can be found in a description provided by Bentz, a description that captures the key elements of the philosophy and methodology:

> Phenomenology, the study of consciousness and its objects (phenomena), is a way of knowing which employs enriched and embodied awareness. Phenomenology directs

us to the fullness of experience rather than a remote or pro forma accumulation of information and facts….The aim of the study of phenomena (objects of consciousness) is to bring about awareness and understanding of direct experience. Unlike traditional methods of research, phenomenology involves the researcher in an enriched awareness of her own consciousness. It challenges one to let phenomena reveal themselves, rather than predetermining what phenomena are. Phenomenology seeks to portray the essential or necessary structures of phenomena, and to uncover the meaning of *lived experience* within the *everyday lifeworld.* (3)

The elements of this description illuminate many of the key facets of phenomenology. In all of the variations there is a continual thread of the study of consciousness and striving to "bring about awareness and understanding of direct experience" (3). The seven perspectives on phenomenology discussed by Wojnar and Swanson all provide illumination on the fact that "phenomenology is keenly interested in the significant world of the human being " (Van Manen *Researching Lived Experience* 9), but there are two perspectives that have guided the majority of phenomenological research. These two perspectives, descriptive/transcendental and hermeneutic, both share the same underlying philosophical understanding that "phenomenology is the systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures, of lived experience" (*Researching Lived Experience* 10). The commonalities of phenomenological perspectives do provide a common ancestry to both transcendental and hermeneutic phenomenology, but critical philosophical and methodological divergences exist that must be explored in order to understand why I as a social science researcher have been drawn to hermeneutic phenomenology and find myself unable to connect with transcendental phenomenology.

Descriptive/Transcendental Phenomenology

The genesis of phenomenology as a viable methodological and philosophical stance for social science research began in earnest with Edmund Husserl. Although Husserl leans upon Kant and admits that he provided the foundation of understanding upon which he built his the

theory presented in *The Crisis of European Science,* Husserl acknowledges the difference in his

philosophy.

> Should I, in the following presentations, succeed-as I hope-in awakening the insight
> that a transcendental philosophy is the more genuine, and better fulfills its vocation
> as philosophy, the more radical it is and finally, that it comes to its actual and true
> existence, to its actual and true beginning, only when the philosopher has penetrated
> to a clear understanding of himself as the subjectivity functioning as primal source,
> we should still hand, that Kant's Philosophy is on the *way* to this, that it is accord
> with the formal, general sense of a transcendental philosophy in our definition. It is a
> philosophy which, in opposition to pre-scientific and scientific objectivism, goes
> back to knowing subjectivity as the primal locus of all objective formations of sense
> and ontic validities, undertakes to understand the existing world as a structure of
> sense and validity, and in this way seeks to set in motion an essentially new type of
> scientific attitude and a new type of philosophy. (99)

Kant's emphasis on subjective knowledge does provide a launch pad for Edmund

Husserl's development of transcendental phenomenology. Husserl postulated a model for

phenomenology that focused on the essences of our lived experience the essence of our life

world. He believed and the transcendental phenomenologists continue to believe that

understanding is possible when "it utilizes only the data available to consciousness—the

appearance of objects" (Moustakas 45). Husserl "presented an ideal of transcendental

subjectivity—a condition of consciousness wherein the researcher is able to successfully

abandon his or her own lived reality and describe the phenomenon is its pure, universal sense"

(Wojnar and Swanson 173). Moustakas describes Husserl's intentions, in that he;

> was concerned with the discovery of meanings and essences in knowledge. He
> believed that a sharp contrast exists between facts and essences, between real and
> non-real…. The challenge facing the human science researcher is to describe things
> in themselves, to permit what is before one to enter consciousness and be understood
> in its meanings and essences in the light of intuition and self-reflection. The process
> involves a blending of what is really present with what is imagined as present from
> the vantage point of possible meanings thus a unity of the real and the ideal. (27)

The idealized transcendental phenomenology that is the foundation for all further development desires to capture the universal sense, the essence of experience unmediated by the ontology of the researcher. The researcher strives to separate himself or herself from the unobserved experience of the subject. Ultimately, phenomenology is

> a significant methodology developed for investigating human experience and for deriving knowledge from a state of pure consciousness. One learns to see naively and freshly again, to value conscious experience, to respect the evidence of one's senses, and to move towards inter-subjective knowing of things, people, and everyday experiences. (Moustakas 101)

The descriptive/transcendental phenomenological perspective seeks a pure expression of the lived experience of the participants in the research. The purity present in this transcendence is mirrored in the description of the relational purity in Martin Buber's *I and Thou* relationship:

> The relation to the You is unmediated. Nothing conceptual intervenes between the I and You, no prior knowledge and no imagination and memory itself is changed as it plunges from particularity to wholeness. (62)

Transcendental phenomenology strives to do exactly as its name suggests, it strives to transcend the mediation of the contextual world of the individual that constitutes an experience. The subject and the object, the I and the Thou, become separated from their being outside of the actual experience and become focused on their consciousness, which surrounds their experience. Inherent in this separation and purity is the abandonment of context and interpretation. The phenomenologist strives to capture a description of experience. Husserl posited that the reality of the being of the world, as our conscious experience is all that we have to validate the reality of being. Lewis and Staehler describe this stance, "If we no longer pass judgments about the being of objects and of the world, we are still left with objects and the world as they appear to us…" (14). The reality of the world can only be present in our descriptions of the world that is open to the world as it appears to consciousness. As a result the "the world and objects shall be

considered in an untainted fashion. For this reason all prejudices and ready-made opinions are bracketed, and we focus entirely on the way in which world and objects appear to us" (15). Transcendental/descriptive phenomenological inquiry requires the stripping away of context and involves an attempt to shield the researcher from themselves. Husserl's conception of phenomenology provided the foundation for other perspectives that followed. At the same time many critics developed criticisms about the ability to exclude context from consideration of consciousness. These criticisms led not only to the development of hermeneutic phenomenology, but were also necessary in my acceptance of a methodological home.

In coming to phenomenology as a methodological home, my first exposure was to the transcendental/descriptive perspective. This perspective, although I have come to understand the initial logic behind its formation, pulled from me one of the most essential understandings of the way that I make meaning of the world. I am deeply contextual in the way that I make meaning in the world. I am curious about all areas of knowledge and am always striving to understand the world in which I live.   The information that I take in is added to the ontological web in my consciousness and it is from there that I am able to interpret my experiences. My ontological understanding is inseparable from my interpretation of my context. This hermeneutic reality allowed me to find my methodological home.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

The shift away from the transcendental/descriptive perspective began with a student of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger. Heidegger questioned the nature of reality, of being, and our temporality in *Being and Time* the genesis of hermeneutic phenomenology. In his introduction to the text, he acknowledges, "Our investigation itself will show that the meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in interpretation" (61). Interpretation is the

critical element in understanding the nature of the world in which we live. My own interpretation is shaped by my experience as a father, as a husband, as an educator, as a white male, as an agnostic reader of theology, as a vegan raised in a progressive college town, and all of the other elements of my context that shape the way I understand experiences. I knew that when I heard the anecdote of a teacher describing the challenge of an autistic student's reaction to a power outage at school, I would hear that anecdote with a certain hermeneutic lens. I understand that experience through the lens of an educator, through my own experience working with students on the Autism spectrum. In addition my lens would be shaped by educational thinkers, whose perspectives on education shape my understanding, Neill, Holt, Seizer, Freire, Ayers, Kohl, and others. My lens will also be honed and polished by non-educational thought such as that of Buber, Niebuhr, McKibben, Berry, Horton, and others. I am also influenced by fiction, poetry, film, and music. This entire context builds a complicated and continuously evolving glass through which I see, sometimes darkly and sometimes with great clarity. I am sure that other researchers and other phenomenologists will bring a different glass through which they interpret.

The nature of hermeneutics and its role in phenomenology was further described and examined by Hans-Georg Gadamer. In his discussion of the theory of the hermeneutic experience in *Truth and Method* he describes necessary tensions between openness and the reality of contextual meaning in the examination of experience.

> If we examine the situation more closely, however, we find that meanings cannot be understood in an arbitrary way. Just as we cannot continually misunderstand the use of word without its affecting the meaning of the whole, so we cannot stick blindly to our own fore-meaning about the thing if we want to understand the meaning of another. Of course this does not mean that when we listen to someone or read a book we must forget all our foremeanings concerning the content and all our own ideas. All that is asked is that we remain open to the meaning of the other person or text. But this openness always includes our situating the other meaning in relation to the whole of our own meaning or ourselves in relation to it. (271)

The description of the hermeneutic process captures the every present struggle between openness to the lived experience of the other and the realization, acceptance, and manifestation of one's own context as ever present in one's interpretation. Therefore

> A hermeneutically trained consciousness must be, from the start, sensitive to the text's alterity. But this kind of sensitivity involves neither "neutrality" with respect to content nor the extinction of one's self, but the foregrounding and appropriation of one's own form-meanings and prejudices. (271)

Humans are unable to separate themselves from their own self, one cannot make one's self extinct, therefore the act of interpretation and meaning making must explicitly be aware of its context and recognize the elements that shape meaning.

This interplay between the researcher, the participant, and their context in relation to Gadamer's thought is described by Bentz and Shapiro in that "Gadamer views the hermeneutic space as a place where one reaches out to someone who is a stranger" (113). The stranger can be someone well known, but nevertheless in order to be open to the other, one must recognize their own place because, "All human action, interpretation, and understanding occur within traditions that guide tastes, points of departure, concerns and patterns of interaction" (113-114). The interplay of interpretation results in a "hermeneutic circle" where the researcher "moves cyclically in interpretation between the whole and the part of the text, and between ourselves and the text" (42). An awareness of this process and our own contextualized ontology is necessary in hermeneutic phenomenology.

My own growth as a social science researcher into a fresh hermeneutic phenomenologist was only possible as I realized that not only the acceptance, but more importantly the necessity of contextual awareness was a critical component of the philosophical grounding of the methodology. In my earlier exploration of my methodological home, I discussed the emphasis

on measurement and accountability in my work and in the current educational climate in the

United States. In fact I spend many days compiling, analyzing, and submitting data sets to

various agencies of the Pennsylvania Department of Education in order to ensure compliance

with accountability expectations. The vast majority of the files that are included in the

submissions of data do not have student names present. Instead, students' identification is

replaced with a universal number, the PASecureID that becomes the student. In addition the

student's race, economic status, presence of special needs and other demographic factors have

their names replaced by numbers. I recognize that the quantification of information allows for

greater ease of analysis. Professionally I utilize this quantification on a daily basis as a tool for

accountability and guidance, but at the same time I know that the story and the context of the

lived experience of the student is stripped away as they become part of a massive data set,

aggregated and analyzed. Even when the data is disaggregated it is done so by category, not by

the individual life world of the student.

My initial weariness with the nature of phenomenological research has been replaced by

a deep sense of place and belonging in both philosophy and methodology. I now read statements

like the following from Bentz and Shapiro with a different reaction than before I found my

home.

> The question of reality base is not raised because the world is defined by the
> webbing of the observer's world with that of the observed. It does not matter if
> things are 'real' in the sense of having a factual existence independent of our
> perceptions and experience, for things are understood only in the context of other
> things. For example, reality cannot be determined by tests involving measurement,
> because measurement is itself part of the contexts. Conversely, a dream or fantasy is
> treated as real if it has an impact on intersubjectively accepted data. The reality is in
> the strength of the web. (112)

Factual reality is of less importance than what is true to us and what fits into the web of

context that shapes our meaning. My acceptance of this has allowed me to grasp the

philosophical and methodological home that allows me to be true to my reality as I strive to understand the lived experience of others. The next step in my journey comes from a need to do more than just understand, but also to have an orientation towards practice and positive growth. The need to make a difference, not just in understanding, but also in life brings me to the final elements of this exploration, Max Van Manen's lived experience human science inquiry.

Lived Experience Human Science Inquiry

Max Van Manen is an educator, writer, professor, and phenomenologist. He has researched and written extensively on pedagogy, teaching, children, and phenomenology. His description of the qualities of good pedagogy outlined in *The Tact of Teaching* capture my sense of educational value with near perfection.

> essential to a good pedagogy: a sense of vocation, love of and caring for children, a deep sense of responsibility, moral intuitiveness, self-critical openness, thoughtful maturity, tactful sensitivity towards the child's subjectivity, an interpretive intelligence, a pedagogical understanding of the child's needs, improvisational resoluteness in dealing with young people, a passion for knowing and learning the mysteries of the world, the moral fiber to stand up for something, a certain understanding of the world , active hope in the face of prevailing crisis, and, not the least, humor and vitality. (8)

My orientation as an educator, an educator who believes deeply that meaningful relationships and mutual value for the inherent value of each individual student is critical to the success learning, finds resonance with Van Manen's emphasis on the humor and most importantly vitality of the pedagogical stance. My own contextual fires were stoked when I first read *The Tact of Teaching* and upon reaching page 66 found a discussion of the relation to the child citing Martin Buber, a theologian and philosopher who has had great impact on my sense of being and being in the world.

> this encounter, too contains the possibility of a certain pedagogical eros that transforms the teacher into a real educator. The teacher meets the class, and, says Martin Buber, from this situation one can discern the "greatness" of the modern

educator. "When the teacher at school enters the classroom for the first time, he sees children who are big and small, coarse and finely featured; he sees sullen faces and noble appearances, ill-shaped and well-proportioned bodies-as if they were the representation of creation," says Buber. "And his glance, the glance of the educator, embraces them all and takes them all in." In this gesture lies the vocation, the greatness of the educator. The pedagogical love of the educator for these children becomes the precondition for the pedagogical relation to grow. (66)

The gesture of the educator that is described by Van Manen in conjunction with Martin Buber is the gesture that I have made and felt many times with students, initially those in my classrooms and then with students in my schools. I experience the "phenomenological nod" when I read not his research, but also the research of others who employ his perspective on hermeneutic phenomenology, such as the following passage from *Phenomenology and Practice* a journal begun by Van Manen, in which Sachi Edwards examines vegetarianism and veganism in her paper, "Living in a Minority Food Culture: A Phenomenological Investigation of Being Vegetarian/Vegan"

Surely, questioning the morality of our food choices is a difficult and uncommon thing to do. Our parents gave us this food and most people eat it on a regular basis, so what is there to question? They are good people, so why would their food be anything but good? If I feel uncomfortable with the practices of the food industry does that mean I also have to question those who support it (by eating meat)? Even posing such questions to oneself can be unnerving, as it may mean calling into question their daily actions as a reflection of their own ethics and principals. (12)

I am a vegan and this passage, as with the passage above about the gesture of the educator causes me to nod in recognition of the familiarity of the lived experience in present in the passage. This connection and consanguinity provides the strongest justification for the use of his methodological perspective in my research.

There is another element of Van Manen's contribution to my perspective that is present in these passages. I have a desire to retype it here in this paper in order to not only demonstrate to the reader that it is a powerful statement, a powerful statement to me, as I know exactly the

experience that is described here, but to also remind myself of another critical contribution to my place as a social science researcher the Van Manen has made. In addition to writing about pedagogy, he has also written about the act of writing as a means of meaning making. In *Writing it the Dark* Van Manen says;

> As writers, we know that we have achieved address when we have managed to stir our own selves…To write is to stir the self as a reader. Therefore, the human science researcher is not just a writer, someone who writes up the research report. Rather, the researcher is an author who writes from the midst of life experience where meaning resonate and reverberate with reflective being. The researcher-as-author is challenged to construct a phenomenological text that makes the reader a writer-rewriting the text again at every reading. (238)

The process of my meaning making is a process of writing. The act of creating language to describe my experience and my consciousness is the act that allows me to generate meaning. I can reflect through pure thought, through dialogue with others, through silent contemplation, but inevitably it is only when I undertake the act of committing consciousness and reflection on consciousness to the page that I am able to formulate meaning. The realization that Van Manen too, understands the generative power of writing is for me another justification for the use of his perspective as the guide posts for my social science research.

The appropriateness of Van Manen's perspective on hermeneutic phenomenology, from my personal response to the awareness of my meaning making from the process of writing, allows me to further find my place, beyond the initial philosophical home to a practical home. This final place requires some examination of the perspective that is present in Van Manen's methodology. The majority of the description of this perspective can be found his book *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. This text provides the foundational perspective for my home as a social science researcher.

The fundamental structure of human science research outlined by Max Van Manen is situated in the larger philosophical perspective of hermeneutic phenomenology that has been outlined in the course of this examination. Van Manen further clarifies his perspective in his discussion of the "Methodological Structure of Human Science Research,"

> hermeneutic phenomenological research may be seen as a dynamic interplay among six research activities:
>
> (1)　turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
> (2)　investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
> (3)　reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
> (4)　describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
> (5)　maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
> (6)　balancing the research context by considering the parts and the whole. (31)

The activities that Van Manen outlines are further discussed in his text and provide a methodological framework for social science research. In addition to outlining a methodological frame, Van Manen is also explicit about the role of importance of the phenomenology of practice, the phenomenology that arises from professional lived experience. He is explicit in his text *Phenomenology of Practice* in which he states that:

> The competence of professional practitioners is largely divided into pathic knowledge. Professional knowledge is pathic to the extent that the act of practice depends on the sense and sensuality of the body, personal presence, relational perceptiveness, tact for knowing what to say and do in contingent, thoughtful routines and practices, and other aspects of knowledge. (20)

Max Van Manen completes the final elements of my search for a methodological home. The lived experience human science inquiry provides a perspective on hermeneutic phenomenology that recognizes the vitality and necessity of context in the exploration of lived experience. In addition, the recognition of the necessity of practicality aligns with the phronetic stance that I have recognized as a crucial element of my work.

The journey to a methodological home began with the recognition of the duality of being, being-in-ourselves, and being-in-the-world. This was followed by the recognition of the necessity of a methodological home, a place that aligned with my notion of being-in-myself and my being-in-the-world. Upon the discovery of the need for a methodological home, phenomenology and hermeneutics found me in a place where my being and being-in-the-world could feel at home. The recognition of the practical and effective in Flyvberg's descriptions of phronesis held me to my values and Max Van Manen provided specificity and guidance for methodology and pedagogy. The goal of this project was to find a methodological home that aligned with my understanding of the nature of being, the necessity of context, and the will to practicality. The perspective on hermeneutic phenomenology outlined by lived experience human science inquiry provides that methodological home and now I am able to explore the experience of education, school, teaching, and learning. I am able to explore in order to discover how to support positive and affirming leaning is schools and in learning.

Study Design

The methodological home that I have found allows my dissertation to have a design that enables better understanding of the teacher's lived experience. I have designed this study to enable me to engage with a number of teachers in order to explore the nature of their experience. In this study, I focus on teachers who work in the same school system in which I currently work. This enables me to have a stronger grounding in the organizational and community context of the schooling environments and to have the important foundation of rapport with my participants. I have selected ten teachers using a purposive sample. The teachers were selected based upon my understanding of their tendency toward reflection and their success in forming strong attachments to their students. These teachers teach a variety of grade levels in different schools

within my school organization. The teachers selected are not a representation of all teachers, nor are they a representation of teachers within my school organization. Instead the teachers selected are a part of an examination of themselves and their consciousness. This enabled me to understand my journey, my question, and my quest.

The teachers selected for my dissertation were asked to complete a journal at the end of each school day each day for two weeks. They were asked to respond to the following question: "As you cared for your students today how did you experience their suffering and their success?" I met with each teacher prior to their journaling and provided a description of suffering and success that is used in my dissertation. Suffering was described as "sadness, bitterness, or despair stemming from the burdens of life." Success was described as "the generation of ideas or products with a sense of accomplishment and confidence." I discussed with the teachers that I want them to reflect, not on the experience of the child, but instead on their experience of caring for a child who is experiencing suffering or fecundity. The journals provide the first form of text that will be used in the interpretation of my dissertation.

The second form of text used to explore this topic that commits me to this world are the interviews with the participating teachers. I scheduled unstructured conversational interviews with all of the participating teachers. The interviews begin with the same question as the journals and the conversation that follows is co-led by the teacher and myself. The interviews were recorded and these recordings were used both in the interpretation phase of my dissertation, as well as a foundation for additional rounds of interviews with the teachers. These additional interviews occurred as needed in order to capture the teacher's expression of their experience.

These texts, both written and spoken form, the substance for my interpretation of the lived experience of teachers care for their students in the context of suffering and fecundity. As

outlined by Van Manen in *Researching Lived Experience*, it will be through the "act of writing and rewriting" (31) that I will describe the phenomenon. It is my goal to be aware of the fact that "for one's self to acquire knowledge, one may need to surrender one's self in order to encounter that which leads to knowledge" (Bentz and Shapiro 164). I intend to be open to experience and open to learn. It is with this frame in mind that I conducted a pilot study to explore the method that I will be using in my dissertation.

A Pilot Study: The Reciprocal Relationship, Teacher:Student

> For Example, in caring for a child I am stirred by the possibilities to be realized, and this is bound up with my hopes for the growth of the child through my caring. By contrast, where there is not possibility of new growth, there is despair. (Mayeroff 32-33)

Introduction. My professional identity is easy for me to classify. Although in my work I fill roles of administrator, analyst, strategist, along with numerous planned and unplanned roles, I am and always will be an educator. In addition, although over the past decade the majority of my work has been with adults, teachers, and educators themselves, my greatest sense of self has come from working with children. When I look back on my work, it is the lives of students that I have been able to support in their growth that provides me with the greatest sense of purpose and worth. *I remember the triumphs of Charles, who entered my 3rd and 4th grade multi-age classroom in Acworth New Hampshire, a number of years behind his peers in reading ability. His academic deficits were balanced by his gregarious nature and desire to enjoy life. I remember his sense of accomplishment as he left my classroom two years later, ready and able to read and write along with his peers, as well as still being able to tell the best joke and complete the most difficult stunt. I remember Jamie, a small and wiry girl who lived just down the hill from the school. She had her own sense of fashion, humor, and determination to do as she pleased in the world. I watched her and supported her as she navigated the tricky social*

world of young adolescence and I watched and supported her as she found her voice in her

writing and in her self-expression. I also remember Mauve, who came to school each day from a

trailer deep in the woods, her clothes unwashed and smelling strongly of cigarette smoke and cat

urine. I remember John who came to my class in fourth grade, having moved from school to

school, I remember how he was unable to read and how deeply this frustrated him. I remember

how he spent only a short time in my class before his parents moved again and he went on to a

new school. I think about him and I wonder and I fear that he may have never had the chance to

catch up. I think about him and all of the children who have passed through my classroom door.

I remember their triumphs and their successes, and their suffering.

 I know and remember every student I have taught, I can go through my class lists and

find stories to tell about each and every one of them. Stories that make me laugh and stories that

make me cry. Standing in my first real classroom on the first day of school, waiting for the

students to arrive. The room was set up exactly as I wanted. There were shelves lined with

books, pencils, and supplies in their places. The names of the students were on their desk. I had

attempted to group them according to the information I had from the other teacher at the school.

When the students began to arrive, some by bus, some dropped off by their parents, and some

walking to the school my heart was beating so fast and hard in my chest. I never intended to be

an elementary school teacher. I intended to be an educator, but an educator at the college level,

following in my father's footsteps to a small liberal arts college. Although, my father is a

professor of economics and I never intended to follow that aspect of his life, my undergraduate

degree was in modern religious thought and that was the path I was going to follow. This plan

unraveled when I began to work as a substitute teacher and found a place where I both felt

needed and felt that I had the ability to make positive change. As I became an educator, an educator of children, I found an experience of genuine caring.

Investigation. The genuine caring for the well-being of the student in their wholeness has always been at the core of my identity as an educator. My training and values as an educator have always focused on the whole child and the totality of their potential. Martin Buber (*Between Man and Man)* describes worthy education:

> Education worthy of the name is essentially education of character. For the genuine educator does not merely consider individual functions of his pupil, as one intending to teach him only to know or be capable of certain definite things; but his concern is always the person as a whole, both in the actuality in which he lives before you now and in his possibilities, what he can become. (123)

I cannot conceive of educating anything but the whole person, both in the now and in their possibility. This caring extends beyond a passive observation of the possibility of the other. It is a trust in the other to grow, it is as described by Mayeroff, "Trust in the other to grow is not indiscriminate; it is grounded in actively promoting and safeguarding those conditions which warrant such trust" (28). I am myself in a reciprocal relationship with the children with whom I share a classroom. This relationship of trust and wholeness necessitates that I explore the experience of their suffering and the experience of their fecundity.

The necessity to explore these experiences is not rooted in a need to understand myself, alone, although through this process I have gained better understanding of my identity as an educator. The necessity of this exploration also strives to engage in the "progress of humanizing human life and humanizing human institutions to help human beings to become increasingly thoughtful and then better prepared to act tactfully in situations" (Van Manen *Researching Lived Experience* 21). In this case of the exploration of the lived experience of the suffering and fecundity of students as experienced by their teachers, those situations are the situation of

teaching, schooling, and being in relation with students. In my experience education is inherently relational. As a teacher, I was able to more effectively support student's learning as my relationship with them grew. As an administrator, I worked with hundreds of teachers and the ones who had the most success with students were the teachers who built strong mutual relationships with students. In order to represent the primacy of the relationship of student and teacher, I will refer to the relational pair as teacher:student. This pair demonstrates the necessary presence of both parties in order to have a meaningful learning experience.

The relational nature of my experience as an educator has shaped my conception of not only my own identity as an educator, but also my notion of the life world of the educator. In exploring the educator's experience of the suffering and fecundity of their students it was my concern "to discover aspects or qualities that make a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is" (Van Manen *Researching Lived Experience* 107). It was my hope that by understanding the qualities of teacher experience of the suffering and success of their students in the context of the reciprocal relationship of the teacher:student, educators, and those involved in education planning, support, policy, and reform can themselves act with greater care toward the situations and expectations of teachers. This pedagogical tact is at the heart of my desire to work in this practical realm of phenomenological inquiry, the power of this phenomenology of practice is described by Van Manen in "Phenomenology of Practice."

> we may say that a phenomenology of practice operates in the space of the formative relations between who we are and who we may become, between how we thing or feel and how we act. And these formative relations have pedagogical consequences for professional and everyday practical life. Phenomenological reflection—reading and writing of phenomenological texts—can contribute to the formative dimensions of a phenomenology of practice. By varying the prefixes of the derivatives of "the formative," the various formative relations may become manifest. Phenomenology formatively informs, reforms, transforms, performs and performs the relation between being and practice. In-formatively, phenomenological studies make possible thoughtful advice and consultation. Re-formatively, phenomenological text makes a demand on us, changing us

in what we may become. Trans-formatively, phenomenology has practical value in that it reaches into the depth of our being, prompting a new becoming. Per-formatively, phenomenological reflection contributes to the practice of tact. And pre-formatively, phenomenological experiences gives significance to the meaning that influence us before we are even aware of their formative value. (26)

The potential power of phenomenological inquiry to inform, to reform, to transform, and perform, allows for this exploration of the lived experience of teachers to be something more practical than a simply philosophical examination. In the same paper, "Phenomenology of Practice" Van Manen discusses Langeveld's exploration of the secret places of children and reiterates the primacy of living with the reality of the awareness that can follow phenomenological exploration.

> Langeveld argues that it is inevitable to see how the normative is intimately linked to our understanding of children's experiences since we are always confronted with real life situations wherein we must ace: we must always do what is appropriate in our interactions with children. From the perspective of Lageveld's pedagogical interest in children, a phenomenology of practice sponsors a pedagogical sensitivity that expresses itself in tactfulness on the part of the adult. (25)

In the case of this phenomenological exploration I had a deep personal and professional interest in better understanding of teacher's lived experience of the suffering and fecundity of the students with whom that have the reciprocal relationship of teacher:student. Personally, I choose to work in schools and education because I believed that the learning, and a holistic pedagogy of potential was the best possible means to reduce suffering and injustice in the world. Theodore Parker, Unitarian minister said,

> I do not pretend to understand the moral universe, the arc is a long one, my reaches but little ways. I cannot calculate the curve and complete the figure by the experience of sight; I can divine it by conscience. But from what I see I am sure it bends towards justice. (84-85)

It is my belief that by serving trusting holistic pedagogy and learning, I can press a little harder on that curve and increase that bend toward justice. In addition I have a professional

interest in understanding this lived experience. In my work there are many teachers who come to work with students full of passion and a desire to do good in the world. Some of these teachers continue and maintain their passion and belief in the bend towards justice. On the other hand there are also many who lose faith in this potential and either leave the profession or cease to meet the children in the reciprocal relationship of the teacher:student. Educator and author Alfie Kohn reminded me of this in a number of responses to a tweet on January 4, 2014, Kohn tweeted about Theodore Sizer, founder of the Coalition of Essential Schools, educational reformer and educator. Kohn tweeted, "When teachers complained to Ted Sizer about a kid, he'd gently reframe by asking, 'What does this student need from you?'" Some of the responses praised the notion, while others such as Jasmine Brown said, "@alfiekohn I don't seem to be able to stretch myself thin enough to meet all the emotional and attention needs. Wish I could." Kathleen Plond replied, "@alfiekohn He needs a relationship and guidance. Sometimes more than we can give him." The struggle of the teacher in the face of the challenges of the relational nature of teaching is real and as someone who professionally supports educators in the act of educating I have a profound professional interest in supporting the growth of passion and dedication to pressing the curve toward justice. It is my hope that this phenomenological exploration will bring clarity on this to me and to my reader.

Participant. The study undertaken for this paper was a pilot study for a larger

consideration of the nature of teachers' experience of the suffering and fecundity in the context

of the reciprocal relationship of the teacher:student. As the purpose of this paper was an

exploration of the feasibility for a hermeneutic phenomenological study, as opposed to the

large-scale study itself, a single participant was selected using purposeful sampling. The

participant is a teacher in one of the schools for which I serve as the director of curriculum and

instruction. She was selected because I had observed her working with students and we had had

a number of conversations during the fall of the 2013-2014 school year. As a result of these

conversations I built an impression that she was a new educator who not only had strong

relationships with students but was also a reflective educator who thought deeply about her

practice and her students. Her tendency toward reflection was confirmed during her participation

in this research. Brianne reflected,

> We had to do journals every day in my practicum, and I loved it because I could get all
> my emotions out, I was so angry today about this, but then the next day, yesterday, now I
> feel so much better about yesterday and today is a new day being able to reflect as a
> student teacher….When I started teaching I promised myself that I would journal and
> type and reflect.

The study consisted of daily journals kept by the participant along with unstructured

conversational interviews. Brianne was asked to reflect every day on her experiences of the

suffering and the fecundity of the students that she worked with that day. The reflection is a key

element of phenomenological research. Van Manen describes this in *Researching Lived*

Experience as follows,

> A person cannot reflect on lived experience while living though the experience. For
> example, if one tries to reflect on one's anger while being angry, one finds that the anger
> has already changed or dissipated. Thus, phenomenological reflection is not *introspective*
> but *retrospective*. Reflection on lived experience is always re-collective; it is reflection
> on experience that is already passed or lived through. (10)

Brianne's reflections served as the basis for the unstructured conversational interviews. The interviews were transcribed and the transcriptions were shared with Brianne prior to the next round of interviews.

The teacher who participated in this research, Brianne, was 24 at the time of this study. The study took place in December of her first year as a special education teacher in a Kindergarten-7th grade charter school in an urban area in Southwestern Pennsylvania. She was a special education para-professional at the same school during the 2012-2013 school year. She has always wanted to be a teacher and her experience with her sister having special needs was a strong motivation for following that path in education.

Brianne and I have had very different experience in education and schooling. This study was not an attempt to understand what it means to be a teacher. Instead, its purpose was to explore the way a teacher experience the suffering and fecundity of the students in their care. The following themes emerged in my conversations with Brianne, along with her journals and my own experience.

Emotionally Invested: *Emotional connections in teacher:student.*

The first theme that was illuminated in Brianne's reflective journals, interviews, and my own personal experience was the deep emotional investment that a teacher feels with their students. This emotional investment can connect the teacher to the suffering of the student with whom they are in a reciprocal relationship. The teacher:student has a reciprocity that presses heavily upon the teacher.

Brianne recognizes her own emotional attachment to the students or her kiddos as she often calls them. Her emotional investment allows her to be deeply involved with her students.

> I feel like if I wasn't emotionally invested in what I do it wouldn't make it so easy to get up every morning and spend 12 hours here like I do most days. It's exciting because I

grow with my kids, and I see where they are going and I see their growth and I make these connections between what they were doing last month and what they are doing this month. You know for the most part, I spend half of their lives with them. They are in school a large amount of time. Especially my kiddos, a lot of them also have in after-school. I mean they get here at 8 and they are here until 6 with me, but I feel like those connections help them respect me and I feel like we have a better connection.

Brianne's emotional connection to her students and her decision to work as a special education teacher has a deep history in her experience in her own family. She has two sisters who had additional challenges to overcome in their development. She has a younger sister who had seizures for a number of years and an older sister who had a brain tumor and ongoing challenges as a result. Brianne and her older sister graduated from high school the same year that she did, although her sister is four year older. Brianne's path to education was shaped by this experience, "I got in, saw my option of special education there was just no other question that was who I wanted to work with. I had always had camps with my sister growing up, so I wanted to continue doing that, that was something that I was passionate about." Her personal emotional history was still very present in her current work with students with special needs. When a student experiences a particularly challenging episode;

> I could be hands on, I'm ready to do what I need to do. I can be focused, I can be calm, cool and collected, but afterwards, that physically draining thing. I saw a lot of connections yesterday and a lot of flashbacks.

Brianne's lived experience was an critical contextual touchstone in her reciprocal relationship in the teacher:student relationship. A deep emotional connection exists between teacher and student, in speaking about parents, Brianne said, "Parents sometimes don't always know what to do. To know that someone is coming along beside them and that we love their children as much as they do." As a parent I initially scoffed at this statement. I have had classes of students and I have children and the love that a parent has for their child differs from the love that a teacher has for students. I reflected on this statement and realized that in my experience as

a teacher there did exist a special type of love for the students in your class. I know without a

doubt I would put my life at risk for my children, I would dive in front of a bus to push them to

safety. I would also risk my life to protect students who have been in my class.

The students I have had in my classes over the years hold a special place in my heart. I

remember them all and I gaze toward the future with them, regardless if I still have any contact

with them. The students with whom I have shared time in the classroom do all hold a special

place in my heart, different from the place that my children hold in my heart, but also different

from other children and other people and other living things. Deep emotional investment in the

being of the students is present in my experience as well as Brianne's experience. The

importance of caring for the other can help to shape meaning: "My world becomes intelligible

for me through caring and being cared for, or, put differently, as I become responsible for the

growth and actualization of others" (Myerhoff 92). The depth of care and relational trust in the

teacher:student relationship is also evident in the portrait of Kay Cottle presented by Sara

Lawrence-Lightfoot in *Respect*. Lawrence-Lightfoot opens her portrait of Kay Cottle, a middle

school teacher, with the following,

> Making oneself vulnerable is an act of trust and respect, as is receiving and honoring the
> vulnerability of another. Such an offering of oneself aligns with Martin Buber's idea that
> a person who says "You" does not have something, but "stands in relation." Dreams,
> when "offered," do not become the possession of the other. They represent the trust and
> respect that forges a connection. (93)

This vulnerability and the relation to the nature of the others dreams offered are at the

heart of my experience as an educator and at the heart of Brianne's lived experience as an

educator. Brianne recognized the integration of her life and the lives of her students.

> It is interesting how I am relating to my students, their struggles are, become struggles for
> me and then I try to jump in and problem solve for them and I think it is important for me
> to see too, because, should I always be jumping in?

The ability to relate deeply to the being of the student requires recognition of the necessity of supporting the growth and learning of the student. This deep connection is the foundation for the experience of suffering and fecundity experienced by teachers of students. The lives of all of my students still touch me as I continue in time. Last night I wrote a letter to a student that I taught when she was in 3rd and 4th grade. Now she has begun the final semester of her senior year of high school. I think of her often, as I think of all of the students that I taught. She entered my classroom in 3rd grade as a funny, brilliant, and quirky student. When I write to her now she is still funny, brilliant, and quirky.   My initial discomfort with Brianne's comparison of parental love and teacher love dissipated somewhat as I reflected on the fact that as I remember and care about my students and as a parent, I search for the qualities of students that I have taught in my own children. Hoping that my daughter, that my sons, possess the sense of self that this student had or hoping that they possess the resilience that this student so often demonstrated. In the *Huffington Post*, blogger Lori Gard writes that,

> And as the teacher remembers, she reminds herself that to teach is to touch lives. To listen. To lift. To motivate. To compel. To inspire. To encourage. To enrich. And above all. To teach is to use one's life to make a difference. To make an impact.

In my experience as an educator, I have made a difference in the lives of my students, but also they have made a difference in my life. The reciprocal relationships I have had and the reciprocal relationships that Brianne describes are very real to us, and as a result the suffering of our students touches us deeply.

I feel like I am a failure: Suffering and connection in the teacher:student relationship.
The experience of deep connection to the lives of students can tie the teacher to the student, but it also ties the teacher to the struggles and suffering of the student. As an educator, I feel the suffering of students, of the people, that I have spent time with in the classroom setting. My

experience of their suffering and their struggle differs from my experience of the suffering of other people, who have not been students in my classroom. In the past year a cousin and a close friend from high school have had their lives ruined by association with narcotic abuse. My friend from high school is in prison and my cousin is dead. Their suffering touches me, but in a depersonalized way. My role in their suffering and struggle is external. The struggle and suffering of students I have and have had touches me far more deeply. Students of mine have taken on a role of quasi-child. This relationship is central to the reciprocity I feel in their suffering.

The connection to the failure and suffering of students was central to Brianne's experience as well. She described an experience where a student of hers had struggled with his emotions, struggled to the degree that he eventually needed to be physically restrained in order to ensure that he not harm himself or other people. Brianne reflected on this situation and her connection to it.

> So, that so, emotionally draining experience, you know, where yesterday I was like maybe it is something neurological, maybe something within the nervous system, is just causing him to be unable to take in any more stimuli, or to reduce that, or to be, thinking of all of the things. It is also hard because we have been working for weeks on strategies, things you know. Ways to nip it in the bud early, or give him the sensory breaks and different strategies and you throw yourself into it and then it fails. And then you are like….and I feel like I am back at square one. I feel like I am a failure. And although parents don't see that, administration doesn't see that….it's hard, its hard I think, being a new teacher and pouring yourself fully into your job and your students and getting emotionally and taking it home and getting home and going, this is my day and this is what happened, and my husband going, I'm really sorry, but I don't know how to relate. I was like….if you were at your job and you tried and you tried and nothing was working, and I said what would your boss say to you, and he said, he'd probably fire me. I'm like exactly.

The failure of a student touched her deeply. It felt like a personal failure. It was something that her husband, an accountant, cannot understand, his personal experience with his clients and colleagues differs from the reciprocal relationship of the teacher:student. The student

that I recently wrote to now is looking toward her first year of college and I am thrilled thinking of her future. Her struggles have been overcome, but there are other students that I have taught, whose suffering still weighs upon me. When I was a high school principal I knew a student, born with sever spinal deformities. She enjoyed life, enjoyed learning, and I enjoyed her company. She finished high school and the summer before her first year of college, she underwent surgery on her spine. She did not survive the recovery from the surgery. Thinking of her, writing of her, still brings me to tears. I can look up the claymation videos of the life cycle of the sea turtle that she made on YouTube, reminding me of her creativity and talent. The suffering of the students I have taught, and the suffering of the students Brianne has taught touches us deeply, because they are more than people that we spend time with, they are children in our care and that relation is deep and strong.

Conclusion. Brianne and I have a different history and a different time line in education. She was just beginning her career and I have spent a decade and a half working with students. She entered teaching in an urban school that serves mostly students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and from racial and ethnic groups that have traditionally struggled to find justice in American society. I entered education in a rural school that also served many students from an economically disadvantaged background, but students whose racial and ethnic groups have do not have the same legacy of struggle. Granted I have spent the past decade working in the same communities where she now works, but our beginnings differ. Outside of this difference, our lived experiences share the same essence. Students we have taught exist in a special place, loved and in relation to us in a way that other people are not. As a result, our experience of their suffering affects us deeply, pressing on our hearts. My experience and Brianne's experience are both tied deeply to our students, they matter to us: when they thrive, we

feel their triumph, and when they struggle, we feel their suffering. These common themes are the reciprocal relationship of the teacher:student.

Lessons Learned: Reflection on the Pilot Study.

The pilot study was an essential component of this process. It provided me with the opportunity to explore my methodology, my language, and my analytical process. The pilot study confirmed that my path was the correct one, both for my topic and for my own growth as well as my development as a scholar, educator, and phenomenologist. It also illuminated a couple of aspects of my initial study design that required modification prior to implementation of the full study. The pilot was critical in honing the exploration that became this full dissertation.

The members of my committee brought the first critical realization that came as a result of my pilot study to light. I had set up a relationship between teachers' lived experience of the suffering and the fecundity of the students in their care. The notion of suffering was clear to the participant, but fecundity proved to be a problematic term. Upon reflection and guidance from my committee member, it became clear that the term fecundity was too obscure and that its reproductive connotations clouded the meaning that was intended in this study. My initial desire to use the term fecundity as opposed to the term success arose from the association that I and other educators might make between success and standardized test scores. Although this is a legitimate concern, the pilot study made it clear that the term fecundity is more problematic. As a result I changed the journal prompt for the participants in the larger study. In addition, I did not use the word fecundity in the interviews but rather used the work success instead. In an attempt to separate success from test scores, I defined it as follows, "The generation of ideas or products with a sense of accomplishment and confidence." I believe that this change brought greater clarity to my larger study and to my own understanding.

The pilot study also allowed me to reflect on the place of my own voice in relation to the voices of the participants. The pilot study intermingles my voice and the voice of the participant throughout the narrative. As she describes her life world, it sparked interpretive moments for me and I became caught up in my own thrill at feeling the waxing of my own understanding. As with my language, the pilot study and the guidance of my committee allowed me to realize that in order to honor their experience, I needed to give the participants the space to share themselves. Again their descriptions touched me, but I recognized that I needed to be separate from their story in order to take the time to reflect and understand my own story.

This first experience also allowed me to explore my analytical approach to building understanding. I discovered that the journals provided me with guidance in my open conversational interviews and that by reading them prior to the interviews I was able to build a rapport around the already revealed experience presented by the participants. This approach was critical in the full study and it was through the pilot that I was able to clarify and implement this critical step.

The pilot study was an essential element of this dissertation. It demonstrated that my approach had value, both to me and to the teachers who joined me in this exploration. In addition, it allowed me to see that I would be able to build understanding exploring my question and using the methods that are outlined in this dissertation. The first study enabled me to refine my language, methodology, and analysis and was essential in the success of the full study.

I spoke to my husband about Jamie spending the summer with us and enrolling in some summer camps. Is that a solution or is it too much? I have to think about how this will influence our family at home. My husband's quote to me, "you can't do it all Laura." But I feel like if I don't stick up for these kids, no one will. Sometimes I feel like (again) no one is fighting for them. (Laura)

Chapter IV: Study Results

The ten participants in my study completed a reflective journal at the end of their teaching day each day for two weeks. Their journaling was open-ended, but they were asked to begin by considering the experience of the suffering and success of the students in their care that day. The journals were identical gray journals without any line markings or other guides for the writing process. The journals were collected prior to the first interview and provided a basis for some of the initial conversations. The ten participants in the study all took part in the initial face-to-face interview, which was recorded and transcribed prior to a second round of interviewing. One participant did not want to delve deeper into some of her own history as a part of this study, so she did not continue beyond the first interview and journaling. One participant and I were not able to connect for a second round interview due to her schedule and mine. The remaining teachers did take part in additional interviews. All but two of these follow-up interviews were conducted in person and recorded. The two phone interviews were also recorded using a phone recording application. The participants were always aware that their responses were being recorded both in the physical and phone interviews. These interviews were dialogues on the lived experience of the teachers who participated in this study and as a result their tone, content, and context differed according to the experience of each individual. Some of the participants returned over and over to their relationship and their care for their students, while others shared the stories that they remembered. This chapter strives to present a picture of the study and of the participants. In doing so, it will also begin to weave together the themes that emerge from their

experience. These themes and stories will be presented in this chapter and their interpretation and implications will be explored in the final two chapters of the dissertation.

Research Process

The goal of this research was to explore teachers' experiences of the suffering and triumph of students for whom they care. The nature of suffering and the nature of triumph are central to this exploration, as they are central to my lived experience of being an educator and my experience of being. My study strives to hold those experiences in a way that they can be present in my consideration of my own being and context. This then presents a series of lampposts that light the path that I create with each step.

The ten participants in this study were all know to me prior to beginning this study. They were selected due to the fact that they were teachers who I had seen build strong relationships with their students in addition to demonstrations of reflection about their professional practice. Thus this was a rich, purposeful sample. The initial selection process began with a series of conversations with members of the leadership team for Propel Schools. The individuals I spoke with work in all ten of the schools and have interactions with all of the teachers in the organization. We generated a list of teachers who created positive caring communities in their classrooms. This list of ten educators was by no means exhaustive, nor was it designed to capture a certain subset of the teaching population. The list of participants for this dissertation was a group of educators whose lived experience was to be the focus of this exploration of care, suffering, and success. The participants were all asked in person if they would be willing to participate in the study. The ten participants asked all agreed to both journal and take part in the interviews. Although not the primary goal of the sample, the participants did reflect the diversity present in the organization. This diversity was present in both demographic and educational

realms. Two of the participants are male and eight are female. Two of the participants are persons of color and eight are Caucasian. Two of the participants are in their first year of teaching and eight have three or more years of experience. In addition the participants represent a broad cross section of educational assignments in the organization. Propel Schools has eight elementary/middle schools and two high schools. Therefore one of the teachers is a high school teacher while the other nine are elementary or middle school teachers. Propel Schools also has on average 16% of the student population receiving Special Education through an Individualized Education Plan. Two of the teachers who are included in this study are Special Education teachers, while the other eight are regular education teachers. This is not to say that the regular education teachers do not have students with identified special needs, but that their formal role in the school differs from the special education teacher. Diversity and a representative population were not primary goals of the selection of the participants, but as they are representative of the population of teachers in the organization, they do offer an array of lived experiences.

The participants initially agreed verbally to be a part of the study. Following their verbal confirmation they were provided with Informed Consent forms and given an opportunity to ask any questions. They were made aware that this dissertation was a collaborative research project and that they would be able to engage in member checking to ensure that the representation of their lived experience was accurate and appropriate. The stories of the educators contained in this chapter were shared with them and they had the opportunity to make any corrections, additions, or suggestions that they felt were appropriate. Once the consent forms were signed, all of the educators were asked to write in the journals that were provided for a period of two weeks. These journals were then returned to me prior to the first round of interviews. I read through each journal multiple times prior to each interview, making notes about the experiences described by

the participants. The intention was not to develop themes or other conclusions about the

participants, but to enable me to better honor their experience and reflection during the

interviews. I was able to refer to their reflections and the stories that they described. This was of

special value due to the fact that the interviews for this study were unstructured conversational

interviews. The journals allowed me to inquire about the participant's reflections as a means to

more deeply understand their experience of the suffering and success of students in their care.

The interviews were conducted primarily in the teacher's classrooms. The first round interviews

were recorded and transcribed. Eight of the participants also took part in second round

interviews that were also recorded and transcribed. These interviews along with the initial

journals were analyzed using a holistic reading approach. I listened to the entirety of the text and

read it multiple times in order to try to capture the phenomenological meaning (Van Manen).

Following this reading the stories of each participant were written. As noted by Van Manen;

> the researcher is an author who writes from the midst of life experience where
> meanings resonate and reverberate with reflective being. The researcher-as-
> author is challenged to construct a phenomenological text that makes of the reader
> a writer-rewriting the text again at every reading. (238)

I have discovered through this process of research that it is through the act of writing that

I am able to create meaning and reflect on my own hermeneutic spiral. Therefore, the act of

writing each story and the interpretation that arose in the process of each story allowed for

meaning to come forth. The stories that are presented for each of the participants by no means

constitute a totality of the topics that they covered in their journals and in their interviews. They

each captured such a volume of experience that a complete retelling would stretch out and

overwhelm the essence of their story. Each story presented here exists to paint a picture of the

teacher's lived experience, in his or her own words.

These stories with individual interpretations were shared with the participants and it was these stories that form the basis for the more holistic interpretation in Chapter V. Finally it is the holistic interpretation in Chapter V that allows me to answer the questions that Flyvberg posed that were instrumental in beginning this journey. These questions drive this entire process, so before the interpretive stories themselves take hold of this journey, it is necessary to pause for a moment with these questions:

(1) Where are we going?
(2) Is this desirable?
(3) What should be done?
(4) Who gains and who loses; by which mechanisms of power? (Flyvberg 60)

Jacquetta. Jacquetta is a special education teacher at a relatively new school in Western Pennsylvania. She has worked in education for many years although it is only in the last couple of years that she has moved from a twenty-plus-year career in early childhood education to elementary education. She began at the school as a one-on-one aide with a student during the 2013-2014 school year. When this study took place she was working as a special education teacher for students in the 6th and 7th grades. As these interviews were taking place it was announced that she would be moving into a 5th and 6th grade math regular education position for the 2014-2015 school year. Her time in early childhood was an area in which she felt that she had stabilized, but she felt that she "needed to do something different...and she let go of her other dreams of being an attorney and went to do something that she was really good at." She noted that in her work with young children her colleagues came to her when they needed support in working with children in times of struggle. Her past experience of being sought out for students with special challenges in the early childhood setting helped her to decide that special education was an area where she could best utilize her gifts.

She was asked to participate in this study because of the relationships of care that she builds with her students. She connects deeply to her students and recognizes that, "When I look now into education my successes aren't really based upon me, I look at my students and it's interesting how, if they succeed or if they fail I feel that I have succeeded or failed." At the same time, she also recognizes that at the end of the day, what she most needs to do is to try her hardest for each of her students. She is a teacher who has a presence in the classroom and in the school, that is unmistakable and her absence is always obvious. Recently, she was out of school for a couple of days due to some health concerns and upon her return, I heard her voice loud and confident in the 5th and 6th grade hallway and I knew what had been missing. Her presence has allowed her to see beyond the quantifiable measures of the students to the importance of all of the aspects of the child.

I conducted Jacquetta's first interview at the start of the school day. I stopped by the classroom that she shared with the 5th and 6th grade English language arts classroom. She and I chatted a little and then we left the classroom to walk to one of the offices in the building so that we would be able to conduct our interview. On the way to the office we passed a group of 5th and 6th grade students who were putting their belongings in their lockers at the start of the day. One student stopped Jacquetta and gave her a gift, a gift in a small yellow bag. She thanked the student and then she and I continued on to the office for our interview. When she began to talk she noted:

> I think too often time, we do look at our students and society as a whole, our culture, looks at our scores on assessments, they look at their GPA or that SAT scores, we always look at all of this data to see if we achieved anything, but I started to look at the whole child, you can have the smartest child, but they can be emotionally defunct. I think we also need to, as educators, I sometimes don't even want to use the word educator because we take on so many different roles, that our successes are wide spread a myriad of different areas where we can achieve success. Here is a student who has approached me with a yellow bag, a gift for me, and truthfully this is a student where we have had

conflict, so for him to approach me this morning with this gift bag, it wasn't even about what was in the bag, I looked at the bag and thought to myself, he thought enough of me this weekend to go and bring me something, so that was fabulous.

These relationships with the students enable Jacquetta to have a deep connection to the emotional and personal lives of the students, but also drive her to meet their needs academically. While reflecting on how she meets students she recognized that, "It's all about studying and knowing your students, really knowing your students, if you see that one thing doesn't work you have to keep trying something else, and you keep trying until you find that key, that will unlock something in their brain that will unlock something that's says WHOA that's the thing." Jacquetta is an optimist about her students. She refers to them as men and women, and sees their potential through the challenges that they have experienced in life and through the challenges that they will inevitably continue to experience in life.

> It's almost like seeing a house, when I drive through Braddock, north Braddock, Swissvale, I see different houses. I can recall living in Wilkins township and literally driving past this house that was dilapidated, it was huge, and I know that at one point in its life time it was beautiful, but now the paint is chipping, I can imagine, I look at the roof and I can see it needs a new roof, I can just imagine what the inside looks like, I can look at the overgrown grass, it was not cared for it was neglected for all that time.

> I wish someone would buy that house, it has so much potential.

> It takes someone who has as eye to see beyond what is there and it takes that same individual to want to develop into, oh I want to manicure that lawn.

> I want to get into that work I want to get my hands dirty.

> I think that maybe, I don't know what percentage of the population that it, but most people want to take the easy way out, they want a job they can do a 9-5, they want their weekends, but when you are teaching, it is not like that at all.

> So, what percentages of the population are really built for that?

The possibility that she sees in the students that she works with fulfills not only them, but is also supporting and fulfilling. In her journal and in her interviews she talked about having her

bucket filled by her students. In reflecting on the school year that was drawing to a close at the time of our interviews, she said, "I think my bucket is full….when it comes to the students, my bucket is more than filled. It really is, they have, this is a challenging group of individuals that we have in our middle school and I've reached them." She also discussed this in her journal;

> I accomplished something;
>
> I became a woman of influence.
>
> How can I use it for their success?
>
> To open, to ignite desires, dreams.
>
> This overwhelming need to share that revelation gripped my heart. I share with them how I know this!
>
> My bucket was brimming with, flooding with success. I breached a chasm few adults had.

The relationship that she has with her students is fulfilling for her and helped her to identify herself and acknowledge her own successes. The story she told of the student who brought her the gift suggests that her relationships with the students matter to them as well.

Paola. Paola has been teaching for eleven years, both in Florida and in Pennsylvania. She, like many teachers, and like myself, began her career as a substitute. She had a long-term position in middle school and eventually had her own classroom. She came to Pennsylvania and helped to open a school on Pittsburgh's Northside. In reflecting on her role as a teacher Paola said that, "I just think it is a calling. I think it is what I have always done even as a little girl." She had a teacher in school that she felt like saved her;

> In school there was one teacher, Mrs. Clay, Jean Clay, who saved me.
>
> I grew up in a rough neighborhood, a really rough high school and I met her in my sophomore year by accident.

I tried getting out of her classroom, I didn't get the grades, I would leave out the back door, she just welcomed me in, she is older, she is more like a grandma to me.

Ever since then I didn't want to leave school.

She continued her description of Mrs. Clay;

She was there all the time,

I was able to talk to her about my mom, my mom was real bossy, so was my father, they were absent parents, they never checked report cards, they never asked for homework and they were bilingual so they could not help me anyway, so she took the role of a teacher of a friend of a mother.

She found ways for me to be involved in the community.

I went from nothing to being a leader of a huge organization in south Florida, she gave me the avenues to be successful and to find who I was and I guess my passion and who I was going to be.

The deep personal relationship that she experienced as a student continues to find her as a teacher. Another school year has begun for Paola and during the first week of school I make sure to visit all of the classrooms in all ten of the schools in my organization. I walked into her classroom on the second day of school and found her with all of the students in her classroom gathered close around her. Some sat on the small rug at the back of her room, while others sat on chairs pulled closely around the rug. Often when I enter a classroom the students turn to look at me, offer a greeting or if I am new to them, ask their neighbor who I am. When I entered her room, no one turned to look at me, because they were all intently focused on the conversation and community that was being built in the classroom. Paola was talking to her class about love and family and what it looks like in the classroom community. This personal relationship, the caring that she has for her students is central to the way that she structures her classroom. In the interviews she reflected:

I know them on a different level, I spend time with them, I ask them questions and they open up to me just this morning Lamont came in and said, can I talk to you on the side,

they know they can say I need to talk to you there is something that I need to say to you. There is never a time in my day that I say give me a minute, I stop what I am doing and I say let's go talk, because even if I go outside for a minute and say "What's wrong, can we talk about this later" or maybe we can't but it needs to be addressed immediately, you can't if you tell a child no, you missed the opportunity to know what is wrong then, and they may not let you back in. And they know I love them.

The relationships that Paola builds with her students extend beyond the hours of the formal school day. She described her efforts to build relationships with the current 3rd grade students that she will have the following school year in 4th grade.

Maija, she will come over this summer and spend a weekend with me, her sister Ashley last year spent a weekend with me. Jam and Jamaal I take them out over the summer for breakfast, I need them to know that I am real and that I am not just their teacher, and then they see me as like their mom and that helps.

The relationships that she builds with students and the intensity of care that she feels for them does impact her experience of their successes and their struggles. She reflected that, "Sometimes I wonder how much I can do? Most of my kids appreciate me and being in school, but others act like they truly don't care." The struggles that her students experience weigh upon her, she puts forth great effort both physical and emotional and when situations do not result in the outcome that she feels is best for the child it has an impact. She related the story of a student who was;

struggling academically, as well as socially.

All year I have kept an open communication with his mom and dad. I have helped him get tutoring after school.

I have invited dad into my room so he can see and hear what I do.

Finally he took him to UPMC (University of Pittsburgh Medical Center) for an evaluation and has informed me that he will no longer be with Propel??

URGH!!

After all that hard, one-on-one work, dedication and love for this child, he is going to remove him?

-Oh and the boy said today,
"I'm going to a better school, with better teachers."

These struggles are present with many of the children that she teaches in her classroom.

She reflected on one student and wondered if she "should continue to allow LaShawn to slowly

get back into the routines?" This student had not been fully participating in routines of the

classroom because, "Her stepdad was recently shot and her days at school have been a

challenge." Paola was concerned that,

> We have adapted so much that I feel she now can't get back to where she was before the incident. I find myself sometimes being too nice to her but then really stern because I don't want her to fall further behind. I have to find a happy medium for us.

The dichotomy of suffering and success is ever present in her experience of her students.

Paola described her relationship with another student;

> He has destroyed my room, insulted me, and slammed the door in my face.

> Jerimiah has also hugged me, laughed with me and made me proud.

> Lately, he as made all the right choices with no reward to be handed. Has he learned just to be a good person?

> I'd rather Jerimiah learn how to treat people before becoming a master in multiplication.

> He can be such a good kid.

Paola cares deeply about her students, she expects them to succeed because she

recognizes that, "I can have the worst day, but my day is nothing compared to theirs." The

relationships she has built with students allow her to construct a vision for their success and that

vision is what drives her each and every day.

Anthony. Anthony began his teaching career as a substitute teacher in Johnstown,

Pennsylvania. He continued to work as a substitute for four years before first finding a classroom

in a school that closed and then coming to the Propel School's network. Anthony has taught

science at the middle school level for four and half year in two Propel Schools. He has a family history of teaching with both his mother and his uncle having been teachers.

Teaching is incredibly rewarding for Anthony and he brings his passion and excitement about learning to the students in his classes. He is a relatively young man and is aware of current style in music, sport, and fashion. His influence on the students in his classes, especially the young men, is evident as the school year progresses and his hairstyle begin to appear on some of the boys in the class. This closeness leads to situations where;

> You have more students who are going to share their heartaches and their successes in that process.

> I just feel in both situations the main objective is to just be there with them, to help them out to try to make the situation better for them, the end goal is for them all to be successful.

> The openness that he has with his students also leads to situations where their suffering

and struggles weigh upon him.

> I remember back in Johnstown, there was a 3rd grade, I had my students write a letter and I asked the students if they have ever received a letter, and I wished I hadn't asked that question.

> "My dad wrote me one from jail"
> "My uncle wrote me one from jail"
> "My mom who I never see wrote me one from California"

> I got answers, it just wasn't exactly the answers that I wanted to get. Family members dealing with drugs, with violent situations, situations where they are not with the parents anymore.

Anthony's classroom is an enjoyable space to spend time. He smiles a lot, he engages the students in interesting hands-on science experiments, and the students are focused but social. The experiences and suffering of the students does infringe upon this space, which can be a challenge for Anthony.

It wasn't that I never had to deal with things growing up, but not with the situations that they have to deal with on a regular basis.
It can be hard, to deal with it yourself.
I guess you are thankful that you didn't have to deal with it when you were growing up.
It is tough some days, you go home thinking about it a lot, talk myself through them, think about maybe how I would have handled it differently. You know, I try to get past the emotion at some point and put it in my memory bank.

It is tough on the teacher, the fact that you become so emotionally attached to all of your students and you do care for them.

The suffering and struggles of students along with the deep level of care that Anthony has for his students causes him to feel their suffering deeply. He described a recent situation where a student came into his classroom at the start of the day to tell him that her baby nephew had passed away. He reflected that, "Her story and tears broke my heart. Her suffering became my suffering. I couldn't have imagined being in her situation. He wants to make a positive impact on the lives of his students." He paused and then remarked, "Such a hard a tragic thing for anyone to deal with." The struggles of his students are very real to him, very personal. This is also true of the successes of his students. When he reflected on the experience of being a teacher he remarked;

You are hoping that they are going to be successful.

One of my objectives is not to be forgotten, I want to make an impact, you don't want to be lost, you don't want to be forgotten, you want to make that impact so you sort of live on, with somebody else so they have those memories.

My feelings of success come from seeing how much I mean to my students.

Anthony's experience of being a teacher is inextricably intertwined with the suffering and the successes of his students. His desire to be remembered, to not be forgotten, drives him to support the successes of his students, to support their realization of their dreams and at the same time to minimize their suffering, to show them care to diminish their struggle.

Anna. Anna is a special education teacher at a high school, she works primarily with seniors who are preparing to leave school and step out into the world. She went to a charter high school and participated in an internship in an elementary school classroom. Following college she worked as a substitute teacher, and completed her master's degree in special education, before getting a position at one of the school in the Propel School's organization. Anna is a maelstrom of positive energy and dedication to her students. She fills the room with her joy and her fierce protection of the students that are in her care. Anna is also touched by the struggles and suffering of her students. Early in our interview she expressed her challenge.

> When it is something really horrifying, like my one student's, his history is….when we talk about his history in the project I do with him, it's like ok, don't cry, don't cry, So I guess a lot of empathy, I feel for them I talk with them I try to understand their point of view. I understand that sometimes their behavior is not because they want to be defiant and loud and crazy but you know it is something, trying to understand where they come from and who they are.

Anna works with students who have struggles in addition to the struggles of youth, the struggles of poverty, and the struggles of racial oppression. Her students also have the challenges of differences that set them apart from the other students in the school.

> So many people I tell I am a special ed teacher and they are like how do you have the patience for that. There are a ton of teachers here who have the same reaction, they think my kids are bad, well my kid has an IQ of 58 and he's treated just like every other kid here. No one ever thinks about those back-stories.

Her lived experience of the suffering and the success of her students impact her greatly, but at the same time she is able to separate their experience from her life, when asked how she manages the suffering and struggles of her students, she paused for a moment:

> I think it because my life outside of school is astronomically crazy and busy and I have so much going on, and so much to do, volleyball practice and dance practice and coaching.

> I have so much to do, my brain doesn't stop until I go to sleep, it's not always focused on school.

I feel like there are some teachers, who go home and sit on their couch and eat dinner with their husband, and talk about school and I don't have time for that.

The particular challenges that her students face add an additional layer or worry to Anna's work as an educator. She described a situation where a student had the opportunity to have an evaluation, an evaluation that if he qualified would offer him services beyond high school and the student refused to take part in the evaluation. This choice was:

So upsetting to think that he might not get the services that he needs after high school.

I am honestly scared for his future and I am not sure how I experience it personally.

I think about it a lot and I am glad that he has a wonderful father that will do whatever it takes to care for him.

It is just so frightening that his actions, his responses, and attitude could get him arrested, beaten, or worse.

I've tried to have "real" talks with him, but he believes he is invincible.

I wish I could get through to him.

The struggles of the students and their impact on Anna are balanced by the triumphant joy of their successes. After her students had a meeting at the end of the year with the school counselor to finalize their post-secondary plans, Anna was delighted by their excitement. She exclaimed "I am so proud of them! I brag about them to friends, family, and co-workers." She related a story about one of her students;

One of my severe life skills students who is diagnosed with autism and an intellectual disability wore a hat today that said "We Turnt Up" on it.

He then proceeded to pose like a "gangster" for me when I took his picture. Although the phrase is somewhat annoying at times, it is awesome that he went from only talking about Spongebob and child cartoons to really meshing with our typical high school population.

It truly makes me smile and I love telling people about the things he says or does!

Sharing his happiness is a blessing.

Anna's experience of the suffering and successes of her students celebrates the steps they make toward independence and adulthood, but at the same time she hopes, "to keep a good relationship throughout the next chapter in their lives." Her care for her students is evident in each interactions with and statements about her students.

Stacy. Stacy teaches kindergarten and first grade at Propel's first school. She has been teaching at the school for seven years. She spent two years at another school prior to coming to the school. She taught 4th grade for two years before moving to kindergarten. Her students and their experiences touch her deeply and both their suffering and their successes are always on her mind.

In her interviews and in her journaling Stacy had many reflections on her lived experience of the suffering and the successes of her students, but during that time her experience with one student in particular took center stage. One of her first journal concerned that student and his mother.

RING!!!

This is all I can remember from today.

At the end of the day I was teaching a writing lesson that I felt was going very well. My classroom phone rang and I realized that it was Sammy's mom.

I thought it was a change of dismissal, so I answered.

Sammy's mom was talking very fast and not making any sense. I told her in 20 minutes I would have my prep and would call her then.

She continued to talk over me screaming that she was a good mother.

My heart was racing.

I took a few notes about the conversation. The phone rang 7 more times in 15 minutes. I answered #5 only to find out that clearly she was not herself. I started thinking about

Sammy-knowing about his devastating home life and being his teacher for 2 years I was feeling very frantic.

I took off to the office, I sort of jogged-thinking about it now I really see how upset and scared I was for Sammy. I don't feel any better but I needed to tell somebody.

Sammy lines up and holds my hand on his own—I give him a hug-he knows nothing and I am mad.

Mad I can't protect this student from the world and so sad that his basic needs aren't being met.

I'm scared for him.

The following morning Stacy went to breakfast early, fearing that Sammy would not be there, but he was there and everything seemed to be all right. The following week Sammy was not at school and Stacy grew increasingly worried. When he did return his attitude and behaviors were very challenging. She described the work with him, "This is my Sammy dance—when he comes to school for several days in a row we take two steps forward. When he misses we take two steps back. This is exhausting and so frustrating." After his return to school the class took a field trip to the zoo, and Sammy had numerous behavior problems and was placed on a red level in the behavior system that Stacy uses in her classroom.

End of the day and Sammy was on red. At the end of the day as I was passing out planners Sammy breaks down.

Cries a deep internal cry.

Grabbed my legs fell to the ground and screamed please move my clip up, I don't want to get beat!

This broke my heart.

I'm conflicted-I want him to learning and show cares. I don't want him to get hurt. I never saw him cry/melt/beg like this. I gave him orange. I feel guilty-I should have gone red because orange didn't comfort Sammy at all.

I'm embarrassed and guilty, is this what a good teacher does?

Why does this one lil kiddo have it so hard??

The struggles and suffering that her students encounter weigh upon Stacy and she talks often of her exhaustion, frustration, guilt and sadness. She also is uplifted by the successes that her students encounter. On one occasion a student had a very difficult day with a new therapeutic support staff and was throwing items around the room. At the end of the day, during the closing circle, that student shared, "He was proud that he told his brain to come back down. Then without prompting he said sorry to the class." Stacy remarked that she continues "to be amazed by my students." She related another story of a conversation between two students in her kindergarten class.

> During school I heard Alice tell her friends she was going to the mountains over
> the weekend.
>
> -LaTasha: "No, you can't go there you need a car."
> -Alice: "Well, yeah, we have a car-my mom does."
> -LaTasha: "Your own car or a bus?"
> -Alice: "My mom's, we go all the time."
> -LaTasha: "Oh we have to stay at home because mommy doesn't got a car."
> -Alice: "You can come with me. I'll ask my mom."
>
> I loved how Alice responded to LaTasha!

The past school year was a challenging one for Stacy. The ongoing struggles and suffering of her students in addition to the particular challenges that Sammy presented were exhausting and sometimes it felt like every two steps forward was followed by two steps back. When the year drew to a close Stacy decided to move up to first grade with that group of students, including Sammy, because although it was challenging, she felt that they needed her, and she needed them.

Jennifer. Jennifer teaches 5th-grade humanities and English language arts at the same school as Jacquetta. Like many educators she began her career as a teacher working as a day-to-

day substitute following college. She then moved in to more permanent substitute teaching roles before getting a job at the school where she now teaches. She experiences both the suffering and the successes of her students and is conscious of the balance that is necessary between these two elements of her work.

Jennifer experienced these dual feelings at a recent evening event to display her students' ancient history projects.

I have mixed feelings about the event tonight.

For the students that did show up to see their work displayed, I really enjoyed seeing their faces light up and their pride as they exclaimed, "Mom, look!"

On the other hand, I was disappointed at the little amount of students that came. I'm torn at the thought of whether or not the students care about their work or if the parents are unable to make it to the evening events.

The teachers put so much time into setting up and organizing events to celebrate the students. I don't think the students/parents realize the extra hours that are behind the scenes.

The balance between the students who, with their families, were about to celebrate their accomplishments and those who were not able to be present was both rewarding and frustrating. Jennifer is one of those teachers who puts in many extra hours and never stops thinking about ways to make the content of her class exciting and engaging for her students. She has been a mentor to new teachers and she has engaged in organization-wide development of social studies curriculum. She came in early from her summer vacation to set up her classroom as a model for new teachers who were part of the induction program. She is troubled when students do not realize and appreciate the amount of work that she and other teachers put into the learning experiences that they create. As the school year drew to a close she shared a story from the end of May.

> I told the students that there were three weeks of school left. One student replied in a sarcastic tone, "Thank you….then I can get away from these teachers."

> I'm not sure if the students realize how much this can hurt our feelings. We put in more than enough time and effort into creating wonderful experiences for them. They don't see this and understand this.

> What does it take to get the students to realize that we care for them?

> Is it possible for us to get them to feel grateful?

> The students come in first thing in the morning with disrespect and anger.

> No matter how nice I am, no matter what I say, they talk back or give attitude.

> Is it possible to change this?

The lack of appreciation of the students is concerning to Jennifer, not only because it invalidates the effort that she puts into her work and the care that she has for her students, but also because it shades the students potential. She worries that, "These kids have so much potential that often gets hidden by the negative reputation that seems to stick with them." She continued to lament that, "It's like they have a shield up and don't want to be pushed to the next level." As the school year neared its end Jennifer shared a genuine success that her class experienced.

> I have mentioned my kiddos being the underdogs in the school and always having a negative reputation. Finally, my class won a food drive!

> Sounds silly, right?

> They were ecstatic!

> This little event meant so much to them. After the announcement we celebrated for a good ten minutes. They couldn't stop smiling.

> I didn't want this to end.

Jennifer wants her students to succeed because she cares about them and if they do not succeed then she feels like she is not doing all that she can for them. She wants each and every

one of her students to know that there is good and that there is success in their lives. Jennifer

began the next school year with a new team of colleagues; she is the seasoned teacher, eager to

help to build a culture of success for all of her students.

Madelyn. Madelyn is a middle school English language arts teacher at a kindergarten to

8th grade building in a community just east of Pittsburgh. Madelyn started at the school as an

AmeriCorp volunteer and served in that position before becoming a middle school teacher the

following year. The journaling and interviews that are a part of this dissertation occurred during

the end of her first year in the classroom. The beginning and middle of the school year were a

struggle for Madelyn as she tried to find the right relationship with her students that both

honored her care for the students, and at the same time upheld standards of behavior and

academics. I visited her classroom a number of times during the school year and her desire to

make create a positive and effective classroom was palpable.

Madelyn's struggles at the beginning of the year are captured in the story of one student

that she shared after a number of conversations about her experience as a first-year teacher. Her

story, although long, captures her experience, her own struggles with the challenges of being a

teacher in an urban school.

> I had another student, He was a student named James. He came into school with finger
> marks on his neck, like he has been strangled. CYF (Office of Children, Youth and
> Families) was called a number of times throughout the year. He was being abused by his
> step dad but you can call CYF, but you can't really do anything. He is a student I feel
> like I didn't get a chance with. The expectations are the same for every student, but….he
> did a lot of work, he was very very bright. His expectations for getting work done were
> very low, I fed into it. It is kind of how to survive with this student. I wish I had said, I
> don't feel right about this. It was hard, he was getting abused by his dad, his mom knew
> about it. But she would blame the school. She would say to me, this school used to be
> good, but now you let him do all of this stuff. He would rip down everything in the
> hallways, pull down the cubbies.
>   He really brought my morale down, when I was trying to gain confidence in my
> teaching. He would say "Shut Up" to me all the time, "You're dumb, you can't teach,
> you don't know anything."

He kind of made it a norm in the one classroom.

This continual fire in that home room was influential so it spread and it became the norm to berate me. His plan was, he had a 504, so he would get less demerits then other students.

This one student would make me want to scrap my whole classroom, because I thought something was wrong.

In the end he ended up getting suspended for 45 days for bringing weed to school. When he left, people would say to me, your confidence about teaching seems so much better. This student, I would let him take control of the classroom.

When he was gone I was able to rebuild trust with my homeroom.

Before I would try and he would just say things to me and it would become the James show.

I would say, I don't really know what to do.

On the other hand, he is very worried about high school.

On the last day of school he was laying on the floor outside of Spanish class, he didn't want to leave. He would say he hated me, he hated this school, but he didn't want to leave, I think he knew he got a lot of special attention here.

The challenge of being a new teacher combined with the challenge of working with a student who is giving as well as receiving abuse was incredibly difficult for Madelyn. When I came to visit her classroom in the middle of the school year, I was concerned that she would quit before the school year ended. Instead, as the school year went on and as her confidence grew, to some degree because James was out of her classroom, but in large measure as her confidence in her abilities grew, she began to transform her teaching and the learning of her students. She began to experience the great successes of her students.

During the last few weeks of school she related a conversation that she had with a student who has asked to stay after school to complete a project. They were talking while she worked and the student told her how unsuccessful she had been at her previous school and how good she felt about the successes she was having at this new school. Madelyn asked her what she thought was different and the student replied, "Because the teachers know everything about you." Madelyn laughed at first and then the student explained that the teachers, "know when you can't

do your work and help you." She was ignored before, but Madelyn felt that the student knew

that she was valued and cared for at this school.

      Michelle. Michelle teaches 5th grade English language arts at the same school where

Madelyn is a middle school teacher. She has been teaching at the school for nine years. Before

that she taught for six years in San Diego and was an aide for five years before that. Michelle

brings a great deal of experience, both instructional and relational, to working with her students.

When I first joined the organization nine years ago as a school administrator in the school where

Michelle currently teaches, she was working as an instructional coach, as part of the leadership

team. This was my first introduction to the organization and she offered guidance and support as

I figured out the personalities of the adults and children in the school. Michelle is one of the

more experienced teachers in the Propel Schools system and this is evident in the ease with

which she builds her classroom community.

      Michelle attributes her success in building relationships with student in large measure to

her own experience as a difficult student in school.

> I was very challenging in school, extremely challenging,
>   I use what I would have like to have done with me.
>   I feel like the bond has to come first Each child is like a puzzle. What is going to
> work for them?
>   I enjoy trying to figure out each child and what is going to work for them
> behaviorally and academically.

      Michelle is able to work with all types of students, in fact she prefers the students who

have greater challenges. She doesn't share her background with them, but "they know and they

feel that I truly believe in then and I understand the challenges." Even though she understands

and is able to relate to her students, she is still continually troubled by the suffering that so many

of her students endure.

I have a student who has been living in a shelter with her mother. It makes me feel extremely sad and powerless that I can't change her living situation.

I don't feel good knowing that she struggles on a daily basis to be fed and housed.

I want to fix her situation so she doesn't feel shame.

The struggles of her students manifest themselves in her worry about their well-being, both emotional and academic.

Today my student who lives in the women's shelter went home early because of a transportation issue.

It is extremely frustrating that she is a student who cannot afford to miss a day of instruction.

It creates conflicts in me because I know home life is in such a state of fluctuation and that has to come first.

However, I'm worried for her and her education. I'm worried that I can't educate her in the way that she needs in order to be successful in life.

Michelle is dedicated to the success of her students and is regarded as a fair but firm teacher by the students in the school. She sees education as the means to a better future and is driven to help each child succeed. At the same time she recognizes that it is the relationships and the bonds that she has with students that enable their emotional and academic success.

Laura. Laura teaches 6th grade English Language Arts at the Propel School in Homestead, Pennsylvania. This school has the largest percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch and is also nearly 100% African American. Laura has taught at the school for four years. Prior to coming to Propel Homestead, she taught for two years in a school in Pittsburgh's Hill District, another community with high poverty and low opportunity. She began her teaching career teaching for two years in the Compton neighborhood of Los Angeles. Laura is a teacher who's classroom has always felt like a sanctuary from any maelstrom that might be thrashing about within the school house walls.

Laura strives to create that a sanctuary space, a space separate from the rest of the world, separate from the suffering and the struggle that is present in the daily lives of her students.

> I also really want to excite them about life, they are not just here to do worksheets or take a test, but they can get lost in the world of literature.
>
> My classroom sometimes is an escape from reality, they really believe for those eight hours that it is their life, that they are making their own future.

In spite of the struggles of her students she feels proud of what they are able to accomplish when the step into the space that they have created together. She is "Proud. Despite Parker's 30 plus absences (due to evictions and home life), he's spending every second in my classroom working hard to keep from getting behind. His work ethic is unstoppable." At the same time she feels guilty, "…guilty for worrying so much about academics when he obviously has much bigger issues." The range of emotions that she experiences with her students is up and down; she describes it as follows:

> A roller coaster of emotions: happiness, sadness, guilt, disappointment, joy, laughter and numbness.
> I find that the longer I work in this setting, little seems to surprise me anymore. It's not disappointment in my students, rather they lack of guidance and support they receive at home.
> They're parenting themselves and I'm parenting them, too.

"What will I do with out you next year?" Drew asked.

> My honest answer is "I don't know," because it sometimes feels like I'm their everything-and I'm the only one fighting for them.

Laura worries that the successes that her students have may not translate beyond the community that she has created in her classroom. "I worry how they're going to have success with out me," she writes after her students assessment results show impressive growth, "I'm thrilled-but this gives me anxiety, too." This sentiment is echoed when she discusses their research papers as well; "They amaze me, they work so hard and are completely immersing

themselves in our current novel, too, which is intense. I hope they see what I see in them. I hope

they see their potential. That is why I teach."

Laura experienced a situation during the journaling that is part of this project that caused

a great deal of worry and concern. One of her students attempted to commit suicide. Thankfully

the student was unsuccessful, and has received treatment, but it caused her to consider taking the

student into her home.

> I spoke to my husband about Jamie spending the summer with us and enrolling in
> some summer camps. Is that a solution or is it too much? I have to think about
> how this will influence our family at home. My husband's quote to me, "you can't
> do it all Laura." But I feel like if I don't stick up for these kids, no one will.
> Sometimes I feel like (again) no one is fighting for them.

Laura cares deeply about her students. As a teacher she has been successful both in terms

of the academic success of her students and in building a caring and safe classroom culture. She

ended her reflections saying, "Yes, I want them to be strong academically, but I want them to be

good people." Laura has a young child of her own and decided that she needed to dedicate more

time to being a mother. Therefore she moved into a part time instructional coaching role for the

2014-2015 school year, to ensure that she is able to give the parental support and guidance to her

own child that is so often lacking for many of her students.

William. William teaches middle school humanities and social studies at Propel

McKeesport. He has also taught at Propel Homestead where Laura and Stacy are currently

teachers. William majored in history in college and didn't intend to initially become a teacher,

but her began coaching youth soccer and decided he really enjoyed working with young people

and became a teacher. He taught for four years in a traditional public middle and high school,

before coming to Propel Homestead and then Propel McKeesport. William's classroom is a place

the educators from all over the organization like to visit. In addition when we bring people

around from other schools, or organizations William's classroom is almost always on the list of

places to visit. This is because he has created a place that feel like a community separate from

the rest of the world. A place where students can explore themselves, thrive, struggle and

succeed safely and with care.

The energy that William puts forth to create this space is substantial. In our first

interview he reflected on the intentionality of the community that he was striving to create in his

classroom.

> I want kids to be able to come in here and feel safe, not safe physically, of course
> that, but safe to say what ever they wanted to say.
> I had one kid last year and he by the end of the year he raised his hand,
> but he had a hard time saying what he wanted to say,
>
> but by the end of the rest of the class realized that he had some pretty good things
> to say, so let him say it or help him say it, and that is pretty fulfilling.
>
> That's why I like keeping my door closed,
>
> I am not trying to keep people out,
>
> but I like that cozy safe feeling in here, its just us, it like a family in here.

William has created a sense of family in his classroom, where students feel safe to

express themselves and bring to him their hopes and dreams as well as their suffering and their

struggles. He described how he has come to feel about his students.

> I felt like a crazy parent, like the crazy parent that the teachers complain about. Its
> emotionally taxing with kids. I cry a lot more than I used to, Happy cries a lot
> more than the sad cries.
>
> I feel like I live a little bit of it with them. I find myself being a lot more sensitive
> to their, ,,,,I don't know for me it is hard to pin point it, but I am so defensive of
> them, I have a lot of parental protection of them in a way.
>
> Their successes, a lot more proud than I was in the past in a traditional public
> school and a lot more disappointment.

The experiences of the students have had a notable impact on William as well.

Their success and their failure have allowed me to figure out who I am. I have got a lot larger sense of who I am, what I actually care about or how actually how best I work. I am so challenged, so I had to figure out what was my best attribute. That challenge has helped me know who I am.

The positive growth and rewards for the successes of his students, his family have also created spaces where William has discovered that there is a limit to the level of emotional investment that he can put forth. In describing a relationship with a student who graduated, but was still coming to him for assistance and parental type guidance, he stated, "That was hard, but I felt like I had to separate myself, drowning, not that she was drowning me, but it was so much, emotional investment, that I felt like I was slighting other children." He also remarked that when he has children of his own, "I wonder if I am going to be able to be an effective father, because I expend so much emotion on these people, will the well be dry when I come home from school? I do worry about that." The emotional toll is heavy on William, "I get emotional about success stories and also when I feel helpless, helpless to help these kids." During our second interview, he paused and said, "The huge emotional roller coaster, you love real hard and you fight real hard, they were right away, they wanted you and then needed you."

William is a co-leader of a middle school redesign team at Propel McKeesport and has shifted his curriculum to focus on history and social studies standards. His room continues to be a place where students feel safe and cared for and other teachers come to see what he is doing and what they can learn from him.

A Glimpse at the Life-World of the Teacher

These ten teachers have spent their days working with children, trying to provide them with a place of care. These pictures of their lived experience are not intended to capture the totality of their life world. Instead they present pictures of the ways that they perceive the truth of the experience that they inhabit as educators, and as educators in urban schools. Each of these

images exists as a story for each of these educators and they stand alone, separate from each other. This chapter presents their pictures and it is my hope that the reader, educator or non-educator will read their descriptions and Buytnedijk's phenomenological nod.

I have found my own phenomenological nod in my engagement with the lived experience of the teachers who participated in this study. I have spent time in all of their classrooms, I have read their journals over and over and I have listened to and read the transcriptions of their interviews countless times. I have found myself smiling, laughing, crying and nodding along as their experiences resonate with me as an educator, a parent and a human being who cares deeply about the well being of others. The writing of this chapter was a struggle for me, because I wanted to include all of their words, all of their feeling, all of their passion and dedication. Their stories touch me deeply and I wanted to share them with any other readers so that they could have that same experience. It is my hope that I was able to capture the places they inhabit as educators.

Chapter V: In the Heart of the Classroom, Interpretive Essay

The life world of the classroom teacher can be seen as a world of care, a world where the ultimate goal is far beyond the time scale that is experienced in the 190 days of school. Nell Noddings boldly and simply affirms this in her book *Caring*, when she states, "As teacher, I am, first, one-caring" (176). In June of 2014, I sat in the Carnegie Library in Homestead Pennsylvania and watched a group of students I first knew as an elementary school principal cross the stage and graduate from high school. I know that some of them will start college in the fall; I know that some of them will not. I know that the college completion rates for students from low-income backgrounds continue to lag far behind students from more affluent backgrounds. I know that some of the students I have known have become parents at young ages and I know that some of them are in prison and I know that some of them have slipped away from this earth. I also know that some of the students that I taught in Vermont and New Hampshire have graduated from college or found careers where they find meaning and value.

The stories of the participants in this exploration both affirmed and focused my experience of being an educator. How do they and how do I experience the suffering and the success of my students, and why do we care? If we are to know what should be done and who gains and who loses, then we must first ask why do we care? If we, if I, know why we care then there is a moral imperative to be fully present in relation with the child, with the student. Returning to Nell Noddings, she describes this special relational situation of caring:

> The one-caring is engrossed in the cared-for and undergoes a motivational displacement towards the projects of the cared-for. This does not, as we have seen, imply romantic love of the sort of pervasive and compulsive, "thinking of the other" that characterizes infatuation. It means, rather, that one-caring receives the other, for the interval or caring, completely and nonselectivily. She is present to the other and places her motive power in his service. (176)

Noddings goes on to address the nature of dialogue between the teacher and student in a manner that resonates with me fully, she say; "When a teacher asks a question and a student responds, she receives not just the "response" but the student"(176). There are statements that speak to me so deeply that I hold on to them as reminders of my values, check points that I can refer to as I make decisions in my life to ensure that I am true to my core, and this is one of those statements. The inherent value of the other, expressed by Noddings, Mayeroff, and Buber, is my experience of being an educator and it is my experience of being. This interpretive essay is an attempt to understand caring, a sense of wonder, suffering, and success or fecundity, as I have and continue to live it, but more importantly how the participants in this study have and continue to live it. I cannot capture the truth of the teachers who were participants in this study, but I can from them attempt to capture my own truth. In doing so, I will continue to draw from the world as I know it and what shapes my world. Such expressions of intersubjectivity through reflection and reflexivity are the hallmark of hermeneutic phenomenology.

Consanguinity

I began my life as a scholar focused not on education, but on the spirit, on the community that gathers around a deeper sense of belonging and place. I began college with the intention of studying biology, this lasted through the first half of my freshman year until I took a class titled "Christian Utopian and Communitarian Movements." This class and reopened my eyes to the larger world and changed my professional and personal journey. This journey introduced me to Buber, Kant, Schleimacher, Hegel, Foucault, and many thinkers who are present in this dissertation. I was also introduced to Reinhold Niebuhr whose discussion of community in *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, informs my understanding of the community created in the classroom of care. Niebuhr explores human nature in the opening of the text;

Human nature is not wanting in certain endowments for the solution of human society. Man is endowed by nature with organic relations to his fellow-men; and natural impulse prompts him to consider the needs of others even when they compete with his own. With the higher mammals man shares concern for his offspring and the long infancy of the child created the basis for an organic social group in the earliest period of human history. Gradually intelligence, imagination, and the necessities of social conflict increased the size of this group. Natural impulse was refined and extended until a less obvious type of consanguinity then an immediate family relationship could be made the basis of social solidarity. (2)

Although the language, written in 1932, is gendered, it captures the extension of the familial relation to groups that exist outside of biological relation. The consanguineous relation is no longer just that of like blood in a purely biological sense, but instead, in Niebuhr's model it expands to the community, the nation, and the state. The nation or the state identifies itself as a non-biological same blood entity. This group, nearly familial in concern for the other, becomes a potent model for understanding the relationship that the teachers in this study have with the students for whom they care.

One of the notable themes present in the teachers' experiences in this study is the expansion of their consanguineous group to include the students in their classrooms. William described his relationship as, "I felt like a crazy parent, like the crazy parent that the teachers complain about." Laura went as far as beginning the process of taking students into her home as a foster parent. Anna brags about her students like a proud parent and at the same time is intensely protective of them. All of the teachers in this study talked about a deep emotional connection to their students, a deep sense of care for them, their well-being, and their success.

The student's inhabit a space that is different from the space of other relations in the lives of the teachers who took part in this study. The relationships is not one of friendship, it does more closely resemble parental care. Paola expressed this line in her interviews,

A line between friendship and teacher, my students don't see me as a friend, but they know I care for them in a certain way, they do respect me…. they see me as this adult that cares about them and a mother, they can respect me.

The caring that the teachers express is deeply personal and as described by Noddings, "The one-caring, in caring, is present in her acts of caring. The one caring is sufficiently engrossed in the other to listen to him and to take pleasure or pain in what he recounts" (19). This individual caring for the students within the teacher's classrooms can become in its totality that which creates the consanguineous community. This space, separate and sacred, is a common thread in the life worlds of these teachers.

The Thou, the Community, and Salvation

The classroom for the teachers in the study has become a community—a place separate from the other spaces, both in the school and in the world. The teacher's intentionality in the creation of this space stems from the care that they have for their students, the consanguinity that renders them nearly familial. In understanding this I am again drawn to Martin Buber and the nature of the Thou. This Thou, though, is not the Thou of individual interaction, but the Thou of communal cohesion and the Thou that is present in the relational space. Buber discusses that relational space in *I and Thou*:

> The anchoring of time in a relation-oriented life of salvation and the anchoring of space in a community unified by a common center: only when both of these comes to be and only as long as both continue to be, a human cosmos comes to be and continues to be around the invisible alter, grasped in the spirit out of the world stuff of the eon. (163)

As a theologian the language Buber uses is of course deeply religious and the Thou that stands at the center of the community, the common center, is the unmediated relationship with the divine. The salvation is a spiritual salvation, but it is also a relational salvation. To be saved, one must be in an I-Thou relationship with the divine and that provides a center for the

community. It is only then through the presence of both relation and salvation that "human cosmos comes to be." This human cosmos in this edition of *I and Thou* was something different prior to 1957. Previously, the text read, "a limitlike formslike human cosmos, a homelike, houselike world, a world shelter for man" (164). The homelike, houselike world is attained through relation-oriented salvation and the unified community. The language of relation, salvation, and community permeate the lived experiences of the teachers who took part in this study.

The teachers who were participants in this study all spoke of the special and intentional spaces that their classroom communities came to represent. Laura described her classroom as an "escape from reality." William described himself as a "crazy parent." Madelyn realized at the end of the year that the students noticed the care that she had for them. This family, this community, was also intertwined with a goal of salvation. Jacquetta, in her discussion of fixing up a house, sees the potential underneath the rough exterior. Michelle sees each child as a puzzle when figured out can be made to be whole. Laura sometimes feels like she is the only one fighting for the students. These teachers are striving for the human cosmos. They have created a relational community and it is a community not to only comfort, but also a community to save. The primacy of relationships and community as the foundation of growth and salvation is present across these classrooms. The relation of the I-Thou is focused on standing in relation to achieve salvation. Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot in her discussion of Buber's notion of "standing in relation" in *Respect: An Exploration* describes this beautifully, "As we hurtle through our lives, such moments are altogether too rare, and the relationship in which they occur provides a reminder of what nourishes us most profoundly" (197). Relationships of meaning and caring are essential to reducing suffering and the enhancement of growth and salvation. The importance of

caring for the other can help to shape meaning; "My world becomes intelligible for me through caring and being cared for, or, put differently, as I become responsible for the growth and actualization of others" (Meyerhof 92). This communal relation with the goal of salvation of the cared for is a central theme and to live in phronesis, I must always consider it in my work as a scholar, professional, and human being.

In order to reflect on this theme of the community and salvation I find it necessary to first place myself in this story. In placing myself here, I want to acknowledge the realizations that I have had about my lived experience. This, of course, is a bias, whether enabling or disabling, but being that ultimately this is a search for understanding. Van Manen again captured the deep ontological reality that is present for me in phenomenology. In "Phenomenology of Practice" he states:

> phenomenology is also a project that is driven by fascination: being swept up in a spell of wonder, a fascination with meaning. The reward phenomenology offers are the moments of seeing-meaning or "in-seeing" into "the heart of things"….Not unlike the poet, the phenomenologist directs the gaze towards the regions where meaning originates, wells up, percolates through the porous membranes of past sedimentations-and then infuses us, permeates us, infects us, touches us, stirs us, exercises a formative affect. (11)

I often feel swept up in a spell of wonder, in a fascination with meaning. The way that I generate meaning is influenced by my collected perceptions and experiences. In this process, I have found an unexpected thread that has run through my history, a thread that helps me to understand the communitarian and salvation themes present in the lived experiences of the teachers who participated in this work.

Utopia

My first drive to Yellow Springs, Ohio, to begin my Ph.D. is vivid in my mind and as I take these final steps in writing this dissertation. My twin sons, along with my daughter were old enough for me to strike out on my own, a process that I began early in the morning of the Sunday

that began the program. Living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, I was not more than four and half

hours from Yellow Springs, so I awoke early on that morning and got into my blue Toyota Prius

driving west. Driving west out of the hills and valleys of Western Pennsylvania, back into flat

expanses and fields of corn of central Ohio. This landscape brought back memories of my

undergraduate studies at Oberlin College in Ohio. I returned to the lands of reformist fervor that

spawned Oberlin College in 1833 and Antioch in 1850.   My connection to the second great

awakening and the spirit of utopianism has been central to my experience throughout my

childhood and my college years as well as my adult life.

I spent my youth in Northampton, Massachusetts, as the son of a college professor and a

pediatrician. Northampton has been identified by Epodunk as the most liberal medium-sized city

in the United States. Incidentally, the 10th most liberal large city on the list is Seattle,

Washington, where I was born and the most liberal city in Ohio, where I attended college is

Oberlin. The liberalism of these towns and cities is noteworthy in that it provides an atmosphere

for my early years, but does not tell the story that I am finding myself to be a part of as I am

swept along in my reflection on my journey to this place at this time. In my reflection, the

liberalism of these places is less important than the tendency toward utopianism. Northampton

was home to the Northampton Association of Education and Industry, which, according to

Northampton's museum and education center was "A society in which the rights of all are equal

without distinction of sex, color or condition, sect or religion."[9] The utopian impulse, both in

ideal and in practice, is present in Oberlin and Antioch's history as well. Both institutions were

established during the second great awakening in an attempt to create institutions that could

create a version of the present and of the future that exceeded the possibility of the present.

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[9] http://www.historic-northampton.org/highlights/educationindustry.html

The tendency toward utopianism is deeply enmeshed in my own experience as a student, scholar, and practitioner. I entered Oberlin College as a freshman with a score of 5, the highest possible score, in Advanced Placement Biology, an award for outstanding science performance in high school, and a clear path toward a degree in the sciences. The schedule I selected for the fall of my freshman year of college reflected this path with my acceptance into a high-level advanced neuroscience class. I was successful in my classes in the sciences and by December of my freshman year I was still on the same path. This changed due to the fact that Oberlin was a liberal arts institution and as a result had a requirement that students meet requirements for breadth of courses across varied departments. Therefore, in the spring of my freshman year, I enrolled in a class entitled "Christian Utopias and Communitarian Movements." Grover Zinn a professor of religion, a passionate scholar, and my future advisor taught the course. I found myself immersed in utopian communities, such as those at Oneida, Harmony, Amana, as well as those communities such as the Amish, the Hutterites, and the other Anabaptist groups who lived in multiple locations but possessed a common ethos.

I wish that I could that I have always realized that utopianism was a central element in my path, but this did not become truly clear until I began the process of writing this dissertation. When I am truly honest with myself about the fuel that keeps my fire burning, that fuel is deeply utopian in nature.   The places and the ideas that excite and inspire me are places like the Summerhill School, a democratic school in England, or the Highlander Folk School in New Market Kentucky, or Schumacher College in England, or Black Mountain College which burned brightly and then extinguished or more locally the Saxifrage School in East Liberty Pennsylvania. These are all examples of places that believe that the world can be a better place, a fairer place that honors the totality of being. My professional life working in charter schools,

and my personal life, sending my children to a Waldorf school or daring to pursue a Ph.D. from Antioch are all a symptom of my utopian idealism. The mentions of these specific schools are not for my benefit, but are present in the hope that some reader will investigate these institutions and be inspired, as I have been inspired to pursue those endeavors that strive to serve a world where one person can change the world, and can change the world to benefit all beings, not just themselves.

Although I did not fully realize it then, it was this utopian ethos that I embraced as I drove into Yellow Spring, Ohio, on that humid day in August. That utopian ethos was present when I met the first member of my cohort Kiko Suarez, another early arrival on that Sunday morning. That first week in Ohio as I began to know my fellow students and professors, reminded me that I was in the right place. Even the structure of the program models the utopian communities that have enticed me. Coming together in a created community, apart from our usual lived environment, with the goal of bettering the world, and our selves each residency is a form of utopian practice. The bookend to the first residency of course is the last. The final residency in Santa Barbara was at the time an accomplishment, but I have realized that it was also the end of a community, the end of a utopian experiment and it is my hope that I can take what I have experienced along to create new communities of hope and wholeness.

The experience of utopian creation, experience, and then summation is present in the lived experiences of the teachers who participated in this project. Stacy was not ready to let go of the community that she has struggled to create. In addition the student, Sammy, whose suffering challenged her, was not yet saved, so she remained in community. The utopian impulse continued from kindergarten to first grade. William spoke explicitly about the community that he created, the community separate from the world outside those walls. Jennifer, in relishing the

accomplishment of her students and their own pride at that accomplishment, wished that it would

not ever end. In the spring, Laura invited me to visit her classroom to see her students present

their research on Greek mythology. The students had transformed the room and themselves,

creating a very tangible manifestation of the community of the classroom. As I walked around

the room, each student took on the character of the god, goddess, or character from mythology

that they had researched. The students had great pride and confidence in their knowledge and the

success of their work. The externalized community present in her classroom that day although

visible through dramatic presentation, was not different from the daily community present in her

room. Whenever I entered her classroom and I ask the students what they are doing, they share

with great pride and confidence their knowledge and success of their work. The teachers who

participated in this study are striving to create utopian communities, communities that are

separate from the world and communities that offer salvation for those community members. In

his discussion of true community, Buber stated that,

> True community does not come into being because people have feelings for each other
> (though that is required, too), but rather on two accounts: all of them have to stand in a
> living reciprocal relationship to a single living center, and they have to stand in a living,
> reciprocal relationship to one another.(94)

The students in these classrooms do stand in living relationship to each other, as do their

teachers, but they also stand in relationship to the living community that is the classroom. This

depth of presence is powerful for the teachers and their lived experience, as they feel the

suffering and the successes of the members of their community.

Suffering and Salvation

The lived experience of the teachers who participated in this study is varied and cannot

be formed into a unified or generalized theory. They each have their own life world that they

inhabit and the relational community that they create and the way that they stand in relation to

the students in their care differs. The lived experience of the suffering and success of each of their students is not the same and cannot be described in the same way. Their experience has enabled me to understand my place as an educator and has helped me to better understand the how I can figure out what should be done.

In this project I have come to realize that the way that teachers experience the suffering for students for whom they care is most present because of the community of relation that they have established. Milton Mayeroff described how a "pervasive intelligibility comes," into life,

> Not in the sense in which scientific explanations or the ability to predict and control makes phenomena intelligible. Nor is it what we feel in the presence of anything familiar. Instead, it consists in understanding what is relevant to my life, what it is that I live for, who I am and what I am about in actual day-to-day living, not in the abstract. (91)

People live for many things, but one of the central truths in human history is that our family groups, be they biological or cultural, hold a place of deep value in our actual day-to-day living. The experience of being a teacher, a teacher who truly cares, is to extend that consanguineous envelope to include the children of their classroom. The suffering and the successes of the students exists not in the abstract, but in the sphere of caring and therefore it pushes against teachers. We can vicariously experience such a push in stories of the participants in this study. The intensity of this experience is central to my experience as an educator and is present in the truth that the participants in this study have described as well. The question is not, "Do these teachers care about students and does the suffering and the successes of those students impact them?" The lived experiences of the teachers who participated in this study show that their caring and subsequent suffering and fecundity can be understood as deep and potent. The question instead returns to Flyvberg's questions, which are addressed in the final section of this exploration.

Chapter VI: Utopia and Phronesis

This exploration of the teachers' lived experience of the suffering and success of students in their care has never been an exercise only of the mind or of the spirit. The mind and the heart that have been put into this exploration are here to allow me to better understand the teachers' experience and my own experience as an educator. This understanding has then been combined with the utopian impulses that reemerged in my journey through this project. I am compelled to imagine what schooling can be so that teachers can be provided with the space to create the consanguineous communities of care that enable children to diminish their suffering and increase their success or fecundity.

In standing fully in hermeneutic phenomenology I stood still and searched through literature, through poetry, through theology, music, and film. I looked at everything that has shaped the way in which I understand the world, looking for a picture to paint of the way that schooling could be to foster the deep relational community of genuine care. I did find texts, in the broadest sense, that shaped my utopia, but when I stopped and was honest with myself, I realized that not only had I stood in paradise, but like in the biblical story of the garden of Eden, the temptation for the fruit of knowledge led me away. The difference in my garden is that it is no longer the same place due to the response to the forces that press upon it from the outside.

I lived in Keene, New Hampshire, and heard that the 3rd and 4th grade teacher at the Acworth Center School in Acworth, New Hampshire, was leaving. I had completed both of my student teaching assignments in multi-grade classrooms and the opportunity to teach in a school with multi-grade classrooms was one that I had to explore. After a number of interviews with parents and the other teacher at the school, I was offered the position. The Acworth Center School is a small rural public school that sits atop a hill, in a town enveloped in the White

Mountains of southwestern New Hampshire. The school on top of the hill is part of a New England Triptych, along with a town hall and a congregational church. All three sided in white and all three centers of the community. When I began at the school there were two teachers, a teacher who taught the 1st and 2nd grade multi-grade classroom and myself. The school also had a secretary and received visits from other staff such as a gym and music teacher. The Acworth Center School also had a principal, but she was responsible for four schools and only rarely ventured up the hill to visit us. Soon after I began teaching at the school another teacher who also happened to be my wife joined the faculty.

The school was a certain type of school that I have found in a number of small remote places. The school was allowed to exist as a center of the community and our responsiveness and accountability was to the community of parents who sent their children to the school. In addition the school was of such a size that it felt as if it were one entire family. The students would move seamlessly through classrooms according to their needs. The teachers too were able to move freely, both in and out of the formal classroom spaces. If the spring day was warm and beautiful, the entire school might venture out into the woods, seeking out the first sylvan blossoms. The family of the school extended out from the classroom to encompass the entire school and furthermore out into the community.

This type of familial community was not unique to the Acworth Center School. I also found it at the Wells Memorial School in Harrisville, New Hampshire, and at the Westminster Center School in Westminster, Vermont. This feeling was also present at the Westminster West School in Westminster West, Vermont. At that school, there was a teacher, Clair Oglesby, who spent 45 years teaching 1st and 2nd grade in a two-room schoolhouse in that small town. I was lucky enough to meet Clair once and I found her presence and obvious love of children to be

enchanting. Clair Oglesby passed away after a long battle with cancer in 2009 and a web page

was set up in her memory. Included on that page are reflections from her memorial service and a

reflection by Kathy Richardson captured the feel of her classroom;

> Watching Clair, I began to understand the critical responsibility adults have in a
> child's life. Now in my classroom I try to remember many lessons I learned in
> Clair's Classroom.
> - Get to know each child: strengths, weaknesses, interests, skills, temperament
> - Get to know the parents, include them, make them partners in the work of
>   education
> - Listen to the kids, let their voices be heard through their work
> - Don't be afraid to let kids struggle and strive for large things
> - Create community within the classroom-kids learn a great deal from each other

The communities that spread and enlivened the classrooms like those I have described

were possible because teachers, parents, and children were able to create something together

unencumbered by external pressures that pressed upon their understanding of the needs of their

community. I recognize that these schools were small and that there are teachers who would not

give such full devotion to the students in their care, but considering the decline in the moral and

motivation of teachers as a result of No Child Left Behind and the Race to the Top that were

explored in the literature review, I am not sure if Clair nor I could have begun our careers as we

did with the current accountability

It is not my goal to create an academic document that has no relevance to practice, nor is

it my goal to lament what used to be, but instead to see a possible future. The four questions that

Bent Flyvberg presented in his exploration of phronesis in *Making Social Science Matter* provide

a framework to consider such a future;

1. Where are we going?
2. Is this desirable?
3. What should be done?
4. Who gains and who loses; by which mechanisms of power? (60)

I cannot hope for an answer to, nor do I have any intention of answering, these questions, as they are rhetorical in nature. Delving into these four questions with full depth and contextual/hermeneutic awareness is a project that could take a lifetime and fill far more pages. In addition they are subjective in that they can only be presented through the lens that the questioner brings to the exploration. These questions are the central questions to address the larger concerns that I have about the current state of teaching in the United States. In my career as an educator I have seen changes in the role of the teacher and the way in which teachers are experiencing their profession. In addition as explored by Erdly and Harris in their Triblive article, both nationally and locally, enrollment in teacher preparation programs has declined dramatically. These national trends in combination with my experience seeing many passionate, dedicated teachers leave either the classroom or under-resourced school drives me to explore possibilities so that teachers who care about their students like they are members of their families can stay in the classroom.

Where Are We Going?

The question of where we are going is the first thing that has to be asked in this situation. We are going in many different directions and everyone will view this question with a different lens. It enables me to return to my thoughts from earlier in this exploration when I discussed the shift toward quantification of students and teachers as a central element of the contemporary school reform movement. This can be further examined by considering Heesoon Bai's exploration of biophilia and the Cartesian Universe in "Reanimating the Universe" from the collection, *Fields of Green: Restoring Culture, Environment, and Education*;

> When we look at the world through a biophilic view, trees, animals, streams, mountains, and all that exists in Nature elicits in us deep feelings of love, gratitude, compassion, care, and respect. We appreciate their aliveness, and are emotionally affected by their

presence. We are enlivened and enriched by their flourishing presence. Or we are moved to pity and compassion for their suffering and diminishment. (138)

This description of the biophilic view speaks deeply to me as I strive to see the inherent value in all of existence. This view also mirrors the view of the students that the teacher holds as expressed by study participants. The teacher, the teacher in me, and the teachers who participated in this dissertation hold the biophilic view of the students in their care. This is the "Where are we going?" that is at the heart of the teacher's lived experience.

The "Where are we going?" of the current trends in school reform are coming from a different place. They are coming from a place that more closely resembles the Cartesian Universe that Bai describes, a universe that is drained of magic and wonder, a universe that "is inanimate. It does not speak to us, we do not hear it; it does not touch us; and we are not moved by it" (138). The emphasis on the depersonalization of students and the quantification of their education-life into metrics and data points is the inanimate place where we stand. The removal of the relational community as a primary focus in the classroom is where we are going. If as I asserted at the start of this exploration that the current reform movement was focused on economic competitiveness and the quantification of schooling then a clear picture of where we are going begins to form. It takes its most extreme form in the current infatuation with blended and online learning formats that remove some, or all, personal interaction between people and replace the teacher with a software program. This may be for some a utopia future, for some this may be an idealized where we are going, but I see it as Bai does in her discussion of Arne Johan Vetlesen's concept of psychic numbing, that, "there is an essential connection between psychic numbing and the kind of numb indifference that is destructive to the world" (135). The disconnection from the other, the emphasis of the I-it over the I-Thou in the sphere of education, as well as other areas in modernity, has the potential to remove care for the other as a being of

inherent worth and instead categorize and reduce them to productivity equations. Is this the only possible answer for "Where are we going?" I hope that it is not, but I am not willing to wait and see.

Is This Desirable?

Many people in fact see the current direction in school reform as desirable. In fact, as I discussed earlier in this project, I agree deeply with the initial reasons to begin the process of education reform. It is true to me that deep inequities have and continue to exist and persist in schooling in the United States of America. It is true to me that academic success is most strongly determined by the facts of your birth. It is true to me that there are some educators and schools that have treated students unfairly and provided them with an inadequate education. Although all of these things are true to me and I believe that change does need to come to schooling and education, I am deeply concerned about the desirability of the current school reform movement.

The direction that we are headed has had impacts on many aspects of schools and schooling, some practical and some philosophical. Practically, the focus on quantification and measurement has had a negative impact on teachers as I examined earlier. The emphasis on testing and data has greatly increased the number of tests students I have worked with take and the stakes of those tests have increased dramatically. The type of caring described by Noddings, Mayeroff, Buber and others is not valued and is often seen as soft and weak. Noddings responds to this notion in *Caring*;

> An ethic built on caring is thought by some to be tenderminded. It does involve construction of an ideal from the fact and memory of tenderness….. Far from being romantic, an ethic of caring is practical, made for this earth…. An ethic of caring is a tough ethic. (99)

The Ethic of Caring differs from the Ethic of Justice that can describe the current school reform movement. The current school reform movement was born out of a concern for justice, a desire to leave no child behind. In doing so it created a set of quantities that defined equality and justice. The question was how do you measure injustice, so that you know when it no longer is present. An ethic of justice has the honorable goal of providing opportunity for all people, in removing their individual personhood and identifying them only by that which is measurable, it separates them from themselves, from their being. An ethic of care, on the other hand, is still a manifestation of a desire to provide the best care and support for each individual regardless of all other factors, but it acknowledges the totality of that person and stands in relation to them. It stands in relation and honor of their inherent worth and from them strives to support them in their growth and their success. Which is more desirable? I know that there are other people who feel that depersonalization and quantification removes the uncertainty of the individual and allows for uncluttered measurement, but I do not believe that people can be depersonalized and quantified and that if the individual is removed then so too is the person and if we are to truly honor the person, we must honor them in their totality.

What Should Be Done?

The question of "What should be done?" is not an easy question to answer because there are so many elements of the current climate in schooling that could and should be addressed to shift the emphasis in schooling. It also requires that the answers that I have provided to the first two questions are accepted. Assuming that they are there are a couple of things that should be done in order to more fully honor the care that is present in the classroom.

The relational nature of the classroom is central to the communities of care that have been established by the teachers in this dissertation. The teachers all spoke of the importance of

spending time with their students and getting to know them, having the time to talk with them about their lives outside of the school house walls. This is only possible if teachers have groups of students that are of a small enough size that they are able to build a community of care in the classroom. This can be thwarted by large class sizes or early departmentalization of classrooms. Teachers being provided with the opportunity to spend multiple years with students, growing and learning together, can also enhance it. The size of the school itself is also an essential factor. I was just speaking with a parent at my son's soccer practice this week and she was talking to me about how amazing it was that in her daughter's school all of the teachers in all of the grade levels knew her name. This cannot be accomplished without a scale that is appropriate for building communities. The size of a community cannot be too large or it will exceed the ability of people to build the I-Thou relationships that lead to the communal space of caring.

The overemphasis on quantification is another area that needs to be reconsidered for a different future for schooling. There is a place for evaluating students' progress and learning, but that place needs to be personalized to the needs and context of that individual. The over emphasis on the standardized tests as the measure of success is not sensible as a means to help every person achieve their hopes and dreams. The high stakes and teacher evaluation elements that have been added to the standardized testing environment compound this. I have personally seen the emphasis shift in classrooms and whole schools as the testing requirements and targets have increased over the past decade.

The third and the most difficult thing that should be done is to shift the relationship that all of society has toward teachers and educators. If we are to expect schools that honor and respect each child for their inherent worth, then we as a society must also stand in relation to the teachers who work with our children. I have three children of my own and I do not always agree

with every decision that their teachers make, but I always honor the work that they do, because it is what drives the future.

The question of what should be done also has implication for different individuals in different roles in schooling and education. Although the current climate surrounding schooling has its origins in policy, both national and local, the climate itself is created and shaped by teachers, school leaders, academics and policy makers. These different roles can all take steps to return value to the heart of the classroom and in doing so provide teachers and students with acknowledgement and value to the power of their relationships of care are consanguineous communities.

The teachers in school have the least power to enact large scale change in the systems and structures of schools and schooling, but at the same time they have the greatest power in actually creating the communities of care that support both themselves and the students who pull so strongly at their hearts. In his essay on Creative Maladjustment, in the collection "I won't learn from you: And other thoughts on Creative Maladjustment," Herbert Kohl discusses his early experience as a teacher being scolded for using the wrong type of art supply for the students in his inner city classroom. In order to do what he believed was right for the students for whom he cared, he borrowed the idea of maladjustment from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and applied it to the life of the teacher. To be maladjusted was to not adjust and not accept those actions and systems that damaged the well being of those in your care. At the same time Kohl felt it was necessary to be creative in your maladjustment, because sometimes speaking truth to power directly can result in the loss of the opportunity to work with children entirely. I admit this is difficult to write, as it essentially says to teachers, do what you know is right and caring, but be

careful in your actions. It falls then to school leaders to provide teachers with the spaces and the safety to engage with their classrooms and with each other.

The school leader, the principal, the central office administrator, the superintendent, have positions where they can most directly support the creation of consanguineous communities of care at the heart of the classroom. My first teaching job was a Kindergarten position in Keene, New Hampshire, and my principal at the time, told me that it was her job to protect the teachers from the rest of the world so that they could focus on their classrooms. At the time, I did not fully understand the value of the approach, but now I see how vital that role in is for the successful fostering of community that is the focus of this exploration. The school leader has the power to take a number of actions that can support teachers in creating consanguiniousness;

1. <u>Time for Collaboration and Community among Teacher:</u> The school leader can create and support times for teachers to meet together, not to complete data sheets or plan interventions, but time for them to talk about their experience, share stories and talk about every child in their classrooms. This type of sharing builds communities of support among teachers and by promoting and making time, the school leader show that dialogue is valued and necessary to the well being of the teacher, classroom and the school as a whole.

2. <u>Active Valuation of The Whole Experience of Education:</u> The school leader can demonstrate value for communities of care by actively celebrating and promoting those teachers who build I-Thou relationships with their students. Instead of posting graphs with standardized test scores in the hallways of the school, school leaders can post the stories of students and teachers describing their successes and how they feel supported and cared for in the school community.

3. <u>Public Advocacy for the Community of Care:</u> The school leader is the voice of the

school to the community, the media and the leadership above them at the district, state

and federal level. They have the opportunity to promote the consanguineous classroom

community. They can schedule community events focused on the community and all

that they can accomplish together. In addition they can speak out to their colleagues,

and engage in their own maladjustment and advocacy for caring in the classroom.

The school leader can be both a shield from the outside world and also a mirror who

reflects both back to the teacher and to the world outside of the school the value of the little

utopias that are created in with in the walls of the classroom. Hopefully their mirror will bring

some illumination to the academics and policy makers who, although more distant from the lived

experience of the schoolhouse, have managed to wield incredible influence.

The academics and policy makers of course have great power in shaping the narrative and

actions that impact the work of the school leader and the teacher. The academics in particular

have the opportunity to explore the total experience of education. Qualitative research in

education has great value as it seeks to explore the actual experience of individuals who engage

daily in the work of schooling and education. They can then present paper and write books that

address the nature of care in the classroom. They also shape the experience of the student

teacher who becomes the next new teacher in the challenging urban school. They can create

teacher education programs, which spend deep and lengthy course work to the nature of

relationships, dialogue and care. This in turn can be provided to the policy makers, to show them

the value that is present in care in the classroom. The policy makers are so separate from the

experience of the classroom that I can only ask that they trust the teacher and maybe, just maybe

spend some real time with real teachers and real students in real schools.

Who Wins and Who Loses and by What Mechanisms of Power?

The question of who wins and who loses is the most important question of the four and the most difficult to examine. It is the most difficult because it is not a question of schools or education, but a question of all of society and the nature of our humanity. If we as a society are able to articulate who wins and who loses, then we can truly determine if those results are acceptable and in alignment with our view of what society we want to be. The initial impulses of the current reform movement were to ensure that no one was going to lose, but the means and the ethos that has driven the changes have shifted the wins and losses into different directions.

I began this journey because I felt deeply. I felt deeply the suffering of others and their pain and I needed to explore how I could find better ways to alleviate suffering and encourage success. I discovered through this process that not only did the teachers who participated care deeply about their students, but I also confirmed that not only do I care deeply for children in my care, but I care deeply for everything and that if I want to be true to my own nature I need to strive to always have the ethic of care in all of my interactions.

I had a conversation with a friend of mine the other night in relation to the schooling choices that we have made for our families. My wife and I have decided to send our children to a Waldorf School. Our reasons to send them there are many, but at its core there is an ethic of care and reverence at the school that is more important than any academics, although they are strong as well. Our friends send their children to a conservative Jewish school. They too have a desire to have their children be present in an environment that stresses an ethic of care. In our conversation our friend stated that she gets questioned about if she is limiting the college or career options for her children and she said that what mattered to her was not what her children would do, but what type of people they would be. We can choose to have a system that ignores

the suffering, ignores the care, and focuses on what children will do or we can choose to have a system that honors each child, tends to their suffering, and focuses on the kind of people they will become.

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