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**TEACHING WITH SPIRIT: FREIRE, DIALOGUE, AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE  
COMPOSITION CLASSROOM**

by

**JUSTIN VIDOVIC**

**DISSERTATION**

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

2010

MAJOR: ENGLISH

Approved by:

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Advisor

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Date

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## **DEDICATION**

Thank you to the friends from the spiritual, artistic, and teaching communities I joined, from whom I have learned new values and ways of being. I owe a debt I can never really repay for everything I have been given.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to David Magidson, Claire Shinkman, Jeffery Steiger, everyone at Wild Swan Theater, Karen Pogue, and Stacey Peckens for artistic mentoring in things other than academic writing. Amongst other things, they all said, and modeled for me, “Trust yourself and have some faith, and you’ll make something beautiful.” Thanks to John Mead and David Schaafsma for telling me how important sharing honest academic work can be. Jeremy Salvatori let me stay in Ann Arbor with him during the weekend of my defense and took off work to drive me to and from it – which is only a small excuse for including him here; I would be far less strong and happy without his friendship. Because of Francesca Vitali, I know I can be happy in love and write at the same time. She also celebrated with me after each dissertation accomplishment, which made the whole thing more fun. Melissa Harrison braved new ground with me in multiple ways when we didn’t know anyone else in Chicago. Sarah Grace believed in me. Jodi Nachtwey was a bridge for me between my academic and other worlds and her support and friendship were constant during this process – so was Scott Longpre’s. Brodie Brockie drew a picture of me in heroic posture, reading books for my dissertation -- just in case I started to think research wasn’t adventurous. Thank you to my committee for engaging with this work so fully and dialoguing with me about it. Finally, this dissertation would not exist in any form at all without the academic mentoring and encouragement of Gwen Gorzelsky, who not only mentored me in teaching, researching, and writing academically, but also in doing it meaningfully in the context of the rest of life.

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## CHAPTER 1 “SPIRITUALITY IN COMPOSITION”

Critical pedagogy is a term used to describe a set of pedagogies that aim to use classrooms and educational institutions to bring social change towards a more just, more democratic society. Generally, these pedagogies attempt to do this by discussing and trying to demystify societal power relations. Critical pedagogy almost always associates itself with a left-wing ideology, if not explicitly with Marxism. While in 1970 Louis Althusser argued in *Ideology* that educational institutions exist primarily to recreate the existing power structure and left room for the fact that good teachers and schools *might* be able to resist this role, critical pedagogy is generally considered to have been fathered by Paulo Freire in Brazil. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire discusses the way traditional modes of education reify and recreate oppression and a passive reaction to oppression. He outlines a system of dialogic education that he believed if carefully implemented would bring social change towards a more just society. Freire's ideas were brought to the United States partly by Ira Shor, who knew and worked with Freire. Shor, teaching in an open admissions college in New York, noticed that students who were otherwise unengaged would become actively involved when he used a pedagogy that incorporated students choosing local political and cultural issues that the class would then examine together and write about. While Shor makes the point that this pedagogy can lead to social change, his primary pitch is that such a dialogic, locally tailored, student-centered pedagogy dramatically increases student engagement. While Shor's pedagogy uses Freire's ideas of local issues brought to the table by students and then approached through dialogue, other American theorists of

critical pedagogy have moved away from this idea, relying more heavily on the ability of the instructor (ostensibly acquired through reading critical theory) to bring critical awareness to the students. James Berlin argues that by reintroducing the political concerns of ancient rhetoric, composition classrooms can be relevant by examining cultural and literary texts for relations of power. Henry Giroux also argues that through the examination of cultural texts a good critical pedagogue can demystify hidden power dynamics and oppression inherent in capitalism. While Berlin and Giroux retain Freire's interest in Marxist social change through education, much of the dialogic nature of Freire's pedagogy as well as the belief in student-chosen locally relevant topics is lost.

Recently, the field of composition has been revising its beliefs and assumptions about critical pedagogy and the ways to work with ideology in the classroom. The dominant pedagogy in composition for some time, traditional critical pedagogy of the sort espoused by Henry Giroux or James Berlin has come under fire as being arrogant, unresponsive to student needs, and ineffective in bringing change. Russel Durst, for instance, argues for a "less confrontational pedagogy" ("Can We Be Critical of Critical Pedagogy?" 111):

which accepts students' pragmatic reasons for attending college, seeking to establish common ground between teacher and student. But the approach also strives to build social consciousness, seeing these two goals as complementary, not mutually exclusive. Rather than support an oppressive status quo, my approach rests on a recognition that few students are radicalized by critical pedagogy – indeed, far more appear to be alienated by such instruction ... and that seeds of political awareness and action are better planted through a pedagogy that accepts students' reasonable wish to be successful in school and and career. ("Can We Be Critical of Critical Pedagogy?" 111)

While Shor's work partly consists of descriptions of a high level of student engagement in his own classroom, student "resistance" to critical pedagogy is now



commonly referenced, and theorists and researchers have begun to try to investigate how to respond to this resistance. Xin Liu Gale argues meanwhile that those like Shor who seek to *reduce* teacher authority in the name of more democratic student-centered classrooms ignore the institutional authority the teacher has and cannot possibly escape. Durst uses his study of the classroom of one of his graduate students to make the point that critical pedagogy often ignores the goals that students bring to the writing classroom and that students have good reason to resist such a pedagogy (*Collision Course*). In *Who Can Afford Critical Consciousness?*, David Seitz demonstrates that middle class teachers often make assumptions about the ideologies of working class students and that these ideologies and the path to change are always far more complicated and specific to each student than we imagine them to be. In order to be effective, both Durst and Seitz argue, critical pedagogues need to take into account the concerns, goals, and specific socio-economic backgrounds of individual students before designing course content. A uniform critical pedagogy delivered from on high is doomed to fail because it does not take into account the lived in and felt-about specific existences of individual students. And yet, if we trace the roots of critical pedagogy in composition back to Paulo Freire, we find that both of these ideas are central to his pedagogical theory but that we seem to have lost them along the way.

Other works, like Wallace and Ewald's *Mutuality in the Writing and Rhetoric Classroom*, shift the focus from the content of class discussion to the format of class discussion, attempting to prove qualitatively and quantitatively that a class that is truly more mutual and democratic is indeed possible and leads to greater student engagement. The focus of Wallace and Ewald's study, theoretically, is in line with the

work of Mary O'Reilley, Ira Shor, Jane Tompkins, Kenneth Bruffee, and, again, Paulo Freire in that they all make the case that it is not *what* we cover in the classroom but *how* we organize a classroom, treat our students, and play our role as teachers that has the most potential for the growth of democratic principles and actions in our citizenry.

More recently, Julie Lindquist makes the argument that the missing factor in our work as critical pedagogues, especially when we're dealing with class based ideologies and working class students, has been our neglect of the role that emotion plays in teacher persona and classroom interaction. Lindquist makes the case that in order to effectively help students become critically aware, we need to find out not just what students need us to *do* in the classroom, but who they need us to *be*, and that we find this out by asking and then listening. She suggests that certain emotions can help students learn and asks that teachers "perform" these emotions when necessary. So as to avoid the criticism that she is advocating the emotional manipulation of students, Lindquist goes on to say that if we "perform" certain emotions that students need to see, we will eventually succeed in truly *feeling* those emotions and thus in becoming a better "performer" of that emotion.

When middle class teachers hear their white working-class students express rage at those who advocate affirmative action, they are as likely to feel alienation and disapproval as they are to experience empathy. And when they feel such alienation, they have a choice: They can act in response to their alienation (they can, for example exercise their power to silence students who express such views or invoke their own moral authority to challenge such views as unethical) or they can *perform* empathy. ("Class Affects" 202)

Lindquist makes a call for composition researchers to begin doing a careful examination of the role of emotion in classrooms so that teachers, especially those interested in critical pedagogy, can begin to responsibly negotiate the important role that emotion

plays in learning and change.

What these critiques of critical pedagogy and the power dynamics inherent to composition studies have in common is that they demand we take into greater account the complex lived and felt- about lives of not only our students but of our fellow teachers and ourselves. This critique has included not *only* our economic and social statuses, but our basic emotional responses that, as Lindquist argues, are part and parcel of our place in society.

For instance, in “Pedagogy of the Distressed,” Jane Tompkins discusses what she calls the performance model of teaching. Most university teachers, argues Tompkins, were, as children, good performers at home and at school. Tompkins argues that these early successful performances created a “knowledgeable” and “capable” false self that served to protect the child. Tompkins draws this idea from Alice Miller’s *The Drama of the Gifted Child*. Exacerbated by the competitive atmosphere of graduate school, the preservation of the false self, Tompkins argues, brings teachers to the classroom with one primary goal: to maintain the illusion of this false self. We attempt to convince students, as we once convinced parents and our own teachers, that we are knowledgeable, capable, and belong where we are. Tompkins tells of beginning a process of bringing to class a truer self, a self that spent less time protecting herself, proving herself, or performing for her students. Tompkins describes her performance self as a self that is motivated by fear, “fear of being shown up for what you really are: a fraud, stupid, ignorant, a clod, a dolt, a sap, a weakling” (654). And so we remain “afraid of revealing the unruly beings we actually are” (654). The performance self then, to Tompkins, is a self that is motivated by both fear of being found out and by a desire for

approval from the adults and teachers of the past as well as our students. A truer self is a self that is, to Tompkins, comparatively free of the fear of exposure and the need to impress. Teaching with a truer self involves “a kinder, more sensitive attitude toward one’s own needs as a human being, in place of a desperate striving to meet professional and institutional standards of arguable merit” (660). Tompkins isn’t clearer than this about what a “true” self would be except that it means *less* performance to cover up human flaws like occasional ignorance or emotional responses. Briefly, she outlines the ways this change of perspective altered her teaching and the positive effect she feels it had on her students, on their writing, and on class discussion. Tompkins describes a student centered classroom based on problem posing, group work, and student presentations that, she admits, is not a unique way to organize a classroom, but, she argues, her important point is that bringing her true self to class had a huge effect on her own sense of job satisfaction and the engagement of her students and that it was in bringing a truer self to the classroom that she became able to teach such a class.

This call for research on critical pedagogy that will lead to a more holistic understanding of teachers and students has extended to the broader realm of spirituality. Perhaps even more so than those compositionists who wish to discuss emotion specifically, those compositionists interested in talking about or incorporating spirituality into their research and/or into their own critical pedagogy have had a difficult time finding a lexicon and academic Discourse in which to do so. Beth Daniell in a CCC’s special “conversation” on spirituality remarks on the awkwardness, discomfort, and conflict involved when academics tried to find effective ways to discuss spirituality and writing at conferences. Nevertheless, says Daniell, it was at such a conference she was

reminded that Paulo Freire's ideas of critical pedagogy, on which so much of our field's ideas of critical pedagogy are based, are deeply rooted in Freire's strong Catholic beliefs and that his belief in the possibility of positive social change was supported by his faith. By excluding this part of Freire's ideas, argues Daniell, we cannot fully understand his concept of critical pedagogy. In addition, she says, "adult literacy workers all over the United States testify to their students religious motives for learning to read" ("Composing as Power" 239). She argues that if we ignore these motivations and/or lack the lexicon to discuss spiritual ideas as a field, it robs us of our ability to understand and work with the writing of these students. In my own classes at the university and community college level, I have frequently worked with students who primarily read and write for religious or spiritual purposes as part of their religious community or in order to pursue their own religious or spiritual development. In a *Communion of Friendship*, Daniell argues that literacy studies as a whole does not have a full understanding of our students' writing sites and purposes:

Varying in their overt politicization, [research work in literacy] shows that the modernist promise of literacy – economic security, upward mobility, political freedom, intellectual achievement, middle-class values, personal fulfillment – is inequitably fulfilled. But [these works] also show that some people use literacy to make their lives more meaningful, no matter what their economic and political circumstances are. [Literacy research] situates writing as part of everyday life, moving research into what Gere has called "the extracurriculum of composition." This body of research responds to the questions postprocess composition studies should be concerned with: Why and how do people in our culture read and write when they are not compelled to by the state, what are the functions and forms of these various literacies, what do these practices mean to the participants, to college students, to composition studies, and to the wider culture?  
(6)

Daniell demonstrates in her book that spiritual progress as prescribed in twelve step literature relies on writing and reading and that the women in the Al-Anon group she

was studying, in different ways, depended on writing to continue their spiritual development and communicate as a group. It is through this communication, both in spoken dialogue and in writing, that the women progress in their recoveries and growth.

Lizabeth Rand makes a similar argument in “Enacting Faith: Evangelical Discourse and the Discipline of Composition Studies.” Rand demonstrates, through an examination of works within composition that deal with student religious writing, that compositionists have continually marginalized, belittled, misunderstood, and disrespected student writing on religious topics and the very faith on which many of these students base their lives. Further, by taking a close look at the Discourse of evangelical Christianity, Rand argues that there are clear parallels between the ideas and methods of evangelical Christianity and critical pedagogy. Both, she argues, promise an “awakening” and ask for the faith of students that after such an awakening, the individual, and eventually society as a whole, will be better and more just. Both critical pedagogy and evangelical Christianity are preached by someone who is supposedly closer to awakening (critical consciousness), and can see beyond the ills and illusions of modern society. Despite, Rand argues, the recent polarizing debate on abortion, most religions are, in fact, subversive in their encouragement to move against the values of mainstream society. When compositionists speak and act with derision about the religious writing of students, Rand argues we do them and ourselves a disservice.

As has often happened in the history of composition studies, pressures and debates in the field are linked to larger political and social forces. After the “left” lost the 2004 presidential election, the national progressive political Discourse seemed to mirror

recent questions in composition about critical pedagogy. The dialogue in publications like *The Nation* and the news in papers like the *New York Times* tried to put a finger on what the left wasn't understanding – and often the answer reached was Discourse on spirituality. (Dao, Press, Kirkpatrick, Lerner, Wakefield, Ehrenreich). Many, like Barbara Ehrenreich writing in November of that year in *The Nation*, argued that the *spiritual* beliefs of the country could no longer be ignored. In a series of articles in 2004 and 2005, *The New York Times* covered stories of various democrats who started including faith in their platforms and others calling for the party to find a way to reach religious voters (Dao, Kirkpatrick). The continuing call from some on the left for a Discourse on faith inspired an issue of the *Nation* in April of 2004 which included contributions from multiple authors on the relationship between progressives and spirituality and religion.

In my research I hope to, as Daniell and Rand ask, make room for a Discourse on spirituality and the role it might play in bringing change and growth in the classroom for our students and perhaps for ourselves. Similarly, I hope my research examines, questions, and brings empirical evidence to Lindquist's point that we cannot hope to work towards social change in the classroom without paying close attention to the more holistic responses of our students and ourselves. This includes the ways in which students have emotional reactions to challenges to their identity in the classroom. Noticing a holistic response would also be the ways students feel they are asked to leave their spiritual identities at the door of the university classroom. In so doing, I hope to recover both the spiritual aspects and dialogic nature of Freire's critical pedagogy towards a more holistic idea of growth and change in the classroom than critical pedagogy has traditionally seemed to offer.

In not working towards this understanding, argues James Moffet in a piece in *Spirituality in Writing*, we risk not only alienating students, but stunting their educational growth. Moffett describes true education as the path of a soul learning the important lessons it needs to learn in the material world. He imagines a school that thinks of education in such a manner. Such schools, he argues, would take advantage of student-centered pedagogies, believing that no teacher can know what it is that another soul need truly learn anymore than the teacher can know the right path to get there. In the same CCC's "conversation" discussed earlier, James Moffett makes a plea for composition to think more fully about spirituality, if not for the sakes of our students, then for ourselves.

My pitch is not so much that the university should provide spiritual sites of composing for the sake of therapy and spirituality, which have done without universities since before the latter were founded, as that the university needs spiritual sites of composing for its *own* sake. For my point here, consider what therapy, spirituality, and the university's missions are essentially about. I'll designate them all three by one term, *getting better*-- getting better in the sense of *healing*, getting better in the sense of *becoming a finer person*, and getting better in the sense of *becoming more competent* at some activity. Now the university acts, and the writing program right along with it, as if getting better at doing something is really all it's concerned with. But writing programs, and the universities along with them, will never get any better themselves so long as they don't take together all three senses of this goal. People don't learn to write well just to accommodate an institution and then the one after that, even if they try to and think they should. We get good at doing something as part of getting well and realizing our deepest being. I know the university feels it shouldn't play doctor or priest, dirty its hands with therapy and its mind with religion. But if it has real live students on its hands, its hands are already dirty. And the time has come for intellectuals to quit confusing spirituality with superstition and sectarianism. Unhealed wounds and underdeveloped souls will thwart the smartest curriculum. (9)

In my own teaching, I have found that without incorporating my emotional and spiritual selves into the persona I bring to the classroom, I have not only closed Discourses and avenues that my students might take toward growth as writers in my classroom, but



have closed similar avenues for myself as a teacher/student in my composition classrooms. I argue in this work that cutting off these aspects of myself in the classroom has reduced my effectiveness as a writing teacher, as a critical pedagogue, and that, as Moffet argues, I have made my job more difficult and less satisfying.

### **The Inherently Spiritual Nature of Freire's Liberatory Pedagogy**

Paulo Freire does not frequently make the spiritual aspects of his pedagogy explicit. This is not because spirituality is not important to his pedagogy but rather just the opposite. Spirituality is the foundation of Freire's pedagogy, and, as I'll argue, the necessary foundation of any pedagogy that requires the type of radical risk that Freire's pedagogy asks students and teachers to take. Daniell points out in her introduction to CCC's special issue on spirituality that the western academic eye tends to miss the spiritual nature of Freire's work not because the spiritual nature is not there but because western academics are as likely to be blind to faith in a discussion of pedagogy as Freire, coming from a background of Catholicism and liberatory theology, is to take it for granted. Freire occasionally remarked on the surprise he met from people on either side of this divide at what for him was a natural union, writing in *Pedagogy of the City*, for instance, that he has "a certain camaraderie with Christ and with Marx, which surprises certain Christians and makes naive Marxists suspicious" (233). Because Freire does not seem in his work to frequently draw attention to the fact that his pedagogy is "spiritual" (because for him, I think that pedagogy requires the spirit is a more obvious fact than it is for a secular North American educator), we have needed western pedagogues like Daniels and Giroux to draw attention to this spiritual foundation of his pedagogy for us. Giroux, for instance, writes in his introduction to

Freire's *Politics and Education*,

Central to Freire's politics and pedagogy is a philosophical vision of a liberated humanity. The nature of this vision is rooted in a respect for life and the acknowledgment that the hope and vision of the future that inspire it are not meant to provide consolation for the oppressed as much as to promote ongoing forms of critique and a struggle against objective forces of oppression. By combining the dynamics of critique and collective struggle with a philosophy of hope, Freire has created a language of possibility that is rooted in what he calls a permanent prophetic vision [...] Freire's attack against all forms of oppression, his call to link ideology critique with collective action, and the prophetic vision central to his politics are heavily indebted to the spiritual and ideological dynamics that have both informed and characterized the theologies of liberation that have emerged primarily from Latin America since the early 1970s. In truly dialectical fashion, Freire has criticized and rescued the radical underside of revolutionary Christianity. ... Freire is a harsh critic of the reactionary church. At the same time, he situates his faith and sense of hope in the God of history and of the oppressed, whose teachings make it impossible, in Freire's words, to 'reconcile Christian love with the exploitation of human beings.' (xvii)

Giroux goes on to say that what has hampered western critical pedagogy is a despair and cynicism that sees domination and oppression as a closed circle, with no hope or dream of escape. Giroux points out that Freire draws on the tradition of western social criticism, but that what makes it unique and, unlike its European counterparts, so empowering, is its union with the theological ideas that also influence Freire.

[Freire's pedagogy] is prophetic in that it views the kingdom of God as something to be created on earth but only through a faith in both other human beings and the necessity of permanent struggle. The notion of faith that emerges in Freire's work is informed by the memory of the oppressed, the suffering that must not be allowed to continue, and the need to never forget that the prophetic vision is an ongoing process, a vital aspect of the very nature of human life. In short, by combining the Discourses of critique and possibility Freire joins history and theology in order to provide the theoretical basis for a radical pedagogy that combines hope, critical reflection, and collective struggle" (xviii)

For bell hooks, too, both Paulo Freire, and his work, are deeply spiritual. hooks writes of having two major spiritual teachers in her life. The Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Naht Hahn and Paulo Freire. hooks discusses Naht Hahn's view that a true spiritual

teacher can teach by his/her mere presence and joy of being. She writes of her experience meeting Freire,

When I first encountered Paulo Freire, I was eager to see if his style of teaching would embody the pedagogical practices he described so eloquently in his work. During the short time I studied with him, I was deeply moved by his presence, by the way in which his manner of teaching exemplified his pedagogical theory. (Not all students interested in Freire have had a similar experience.) My experience with him restored my faith in libratory education. ... The lesson I learned from witnessing Paulo embody the practice he describes in theory was profound. It entered me in a way that writing can never touch one and it gave me courage. (19)

One intention of this dissertation is to draw out and further develop the spiritual aspects of Paulo Freire's pedagogy towards developing a set of goals for western pedagogues in pursuing a more holistic and spiritually supportive pedagogy. Chapter two works towards building a fuller definition of spirituality as it relates to pedagogy and to provide a framework for continued dialogue on a spiritually engaged pedagogy. But for now, to provide an initial definition for "spirituality" for the purposes of this chapter, I'm going to lean on Beth Daniell's working definition in *A Communion of Friendship*, her study on the literate practices of women in an Al-Anon twelve step group in "Mountain City":

Throughout this book, I define and redefine the terms spiritual and spirituality, but let me begin with simply this: consciousness of a spirit, or the spirit, of gods, or a God, of some force for good beyond the material world, of what people in Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon call a higher power. It is the sense of being part of something bigger than oneself, of being connected to something higher than one's quotidian concerns. When asked for a definition of spirituality, the Mountain City women say, "Everything, hon, just everything" but also "confidence" and "belief in myself," connecting personal growth and emotional health with spiritual progress, notions of spirituality shaped by both AA and Al-Anon. *A Communion of Friendship* is not about séances or new-age philosophies or fundamentalism or even mainstream Christianity. It is not about religion as the term is typically used. Both Al-Anon and Alcoholics Anonymous claim to be spiritual but not religious programs. Though an anthropologist would likely classify both organizations as a religion and a sociologist or religious historian

would see AA and Al-Anon as a “new religious movement” (Lester), I maintain in this book the AA—Al-Anon distinction. Some members of AA or Al-Anon explain the difference by joking that religion is for those who are afraid of hell, while spirituality is for those who have been there. A recent book explains that the postmodern age has revived the term spirituality to stand as contrast to both materialism and organized religion, and I use the term in that way as well. (7)

Using this definition of spirituality as outlined by Daniell and drawn from her research into the spiritual practice of twelve step, I want to demonstrate in detail the often implicit, but nevertheless fundamental, spiritual basis to Paulo Freire’s pedagogy of liberation. I am comparing Freire to twelve step instead of to another set of spiritual beliefs because twelve step is not a religion so much as a set of specific rules and practices for organizing in groups with the intention of learning and growing. Twelve step is primarily a framework for dialogue amongst people who want to overcome a similar problem. Nevertheless, twelve step, unlike Freire’s pedagogy, is considered a spiritual program and its spiritual basis is explicit. It is also a spiritual program that is commonly practiced in North America, both by those without religious affiliation and those with. Freire’s pedagogy has much in common with this set of spiritual practices. I want to first outline the primary qualities that Freire thinks necessary for liberatory pedagogy. Then I will demonstrate the way these practices are mirrored in the recommendations for change in twelve step spiritual practice. Whether, as Daniells says, twelve step groups are a religious movement or exist outside of religious movement, they are a set of spiritual guidelines for people in groups to approach profound change. Developed at first as a way to make the deep changes necessary to let go of alcohol addiction, twelve step groups have since been formed throughout the country to tackle eating disorders, codependency, sexual and love addictions, and any number of other behavior changes that require the support to change at the most fundamental levels. As two systems

designed for profound change, one considered first and foremost spiritual, and the other wrongly considered to be only secular and political, a discussion of their commonalities might help a North American audience see Freire's pedagogy in a different light.

Freire makes the case that the primary mode of education employed by revolutionary leaders should be dialogue. By this, Freire means quite a specific process. A problem should be found in co-operation with the students, and then the class should engage in investigating this problem together. This means that the teacher should call into question his/her own assumptions about the problem and should investigate the problem anew, taking advantage of ideas and approaches brought by students. Rather than the teacher working out the problem on his/her own and then presenting the information to the class, the investigation is done in tandem. The teacher gives his/her ideas, but so do the students, and so the role of teacher/student is constantly shifting. All members of the class are struggling with the oppressor inside, and through investigation, all members of the class come to a fuller understanding of the mechanics of this oppression and the possible routes to freeing ourselves from this oppression. To Freire, all work in the classroom should be praxis in that there are no ideas without action and no action without reflection. To be the type of teacher Freire advocates is not, according to Freire, an easy task and takes more than intellectual rigor. A teacher who engages in true dialogue must have love, humility, hope, trust, and critical thinking. Without these things the pedagogy is not possible.

To Freire, love is the opposite of domination and control. If we seek to control life or others, then we seek death, not life. To teach a pedagogy of life, we must give up the desire to control or dominate our students or to control what or how they learn.

Dialogue is equally impossible without humility.

Dialogue, as the encounter of those addressed to the common task of learning and acting, is broken if the parties (or one of them) lack humility. How can I dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and never perceive my own? ... How can I dialogue if I consider myself a member of the in-group of “pure” men, the owners of truth and knowledge...? How can I dialogue if I am afraid of being displaced, the mere possibility causing me torment and weakness? Self-sufficiency is incompatible with dialogue. ... At the point of encounter there are neither utter ignoramuses nor perfect sages: there are only people who are attempting, together, to learn more than they know now. (90)

Equally important is having faith in people-- faith “in their vocation to be more fully human ... even before he meets them face to face” (91) – and trust, that must be built on the revelation of the “true concrete intentions” of all participants and on action that matches word. A critical pedagogy to Freire must also be built on hope.

Hope is rooted in men’s incompleteness, from which they move out in constant search – a search which can be carried out only in communion with others. Hopelessness is a form of silence, of denying the world and fleeing from it. The dehumanization resulting from an unjust order is not a cause for despair but for hope, leading to the incessant pursuit of the humanity denied by injustice. Hope, however, does not consist in crossing one’s arms and waiting. As long as I fight, I am moved by hope; and if I fight with hope, then I can wait. (92)

And finally, a critical pedagogy must be built on critical thinking. And here, in the definition of “critical” has our field most frequently seemed to depart from Freire’s concept. Often in my graduate studies it has seemed that what we mean by critical consciousness in composition is for our students to come around to a specifically leftist way of viewing the world and to make the critiques of capitalism that we ourselves make. Indeed, in Durst’s study of critical pedagogy in the classroom, he demonstrates that this is how students perceive teachers who are critical pedagogues -- as leftist ideologues pushing our political perspectives. In his introduction to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Donald Macedo argues that often American pedagogues have removed Freire’s work

from its Marxist roots and also from its roots in the work of other Western philosophers such as Jean Paul Sartre. But I would argue that, in fact, the use of Freire in composition has remained so closely aligned with a specifically Marxist vision of leftist political and economic change that it has been in much more danger of losing contact with the fluid and organic nature of the very holistic changes Freire describes. While Freire certainly frequently seems to have had in mind a Marxist type of revolution, the pedagogy that he describes is also non-directive and at odds with the idea of a specific model for change given from above. Freire describes critical thinking this way:

thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and the people and admits of no dichotomy between them – thinking which perceives reality as process, as transformation, rather than as a static entity – thinking which does not separate itself from action, but constantly immerses itself in temporality without fear of the risks involved. Critical thinking contrasts with naive thinking, which sees “historical time as a weight of stratification of the acquisitions and experiences of the past,” from which the present should emerge normalized and “well behaved.” For the naive thinker, the important thing is accommodation to this normalized “today.” For the critic, the important thing is the continuing transformation of reality, in behalf of the continuing humanization of men. (101)

Far from having the narrow political and economic goals which I, many of my colleagues, and the students in Durst’s study have often perceived it to have, Freire’s critical pedagogy, in his prologue to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, is described as having the most important goal of working towards a world where “it is more possible to love.” Though Freire was a Marxist and also influenced by Western philosophy, his idea of change and where it comes from was also something profoundly different than these influential predecessors. In Sartre’s existential philosophy, for instance, man, having no definition in and of himself, defines himself. Sartre tried to set man free from any idea of a human nature, instead giving mankind full control and responsibility over himself and his [sic] decisions, a state he himself admits is likely to cause extreme disorientation,

fear, and, for many, paralysis. Where Sartre and Marx were atheists, Freire's concepts of change are based in faith. Where Sartre believed we could have such control over our lives that we could, through force of our own will and intellect, define the bounds of our own nature, Freire believed that only through humbling ourselves and admitting our own imperfection could we learn and teach. Only by believing in the potential of others, all others, to teach us even when we couldn't perceive what we might learn, could we move towards being more human together in communion. Viewed this way, Freire's pedagogy gives up the individual control over our lives and destinies that Sartre or Marx offer, in favor of a path we cannot know but must travel together. To the extent that Freire was a Marxist, I also have to believe that if he followed his own pedagogy and came to the table to work and learn with teachers in today's world, he would also have to, for the sake of being a teacher-student, give up, even if only momentarily, his own idea of a specific type of revolution. He writes in *Pedagogy of the City*:

What is altogether impermissible, in democratic practice, is for teachers, surreptitiously or otherwise, to impose on their pupils their own 'reading of the world,' in whose framework, therefore, they will not situate the teaching of content. ... The role of the progressive educator, which neither can nor ought to be omitted, in offering her or his 'reading of the world,' is to bring out the fact that there are other 'readings of the world,' differing from the one being offered as the educator's own, and at times antagonistic to it. (244)

As much as Freire had his own specific ideas about the path to social change and these are always a part of his pedagogy, if Freire's ideal pedagogue hoped to not only teach, but learn, he would humble himself to believe in the unknowable path towards change and humanness, and in the fact that such change might come in ways that no one at the table could understand or predict in isolation.

While this move seems to take Freire further from the grand narrative of Marxism,



it also seems to bring Freire closer to the grand narrative of human growth and spirit that the post-structuralists also criticize. Derrida, in "Of Spirit," for instance, identifies Heidegger's move to begin talking about the spirit as one of the places where he is drawn into German nationalism and fascism. According to Derrida, to talk of the development of the human spirit is always eventually to assume that the correct spiritual path will be the spiritual path of the group of people in question. Derrida traces the way Heidegger in his early work refuses to use the word "spirit" but then does begin to use the word and shortly thereafter equates spirit with the spirit of the German people in their specific geo-political place with their specific spiritual destiny. Even, argues Derrida, when we talk about such concepts as freedom, we always eventually mean the freedom of one group of people. Derrida argues that it is impossible to avoid the ethnocentrism that comes with discussing the spirit, and, through using the example of Heidegger and Germany, implies that basing philosophy or politics on concepts such as spirit will eventually lead to the imposition of one set of values or one "spiritual" path on others. Leaving aside for a moment that Derrida's only example here is Heidegger and Nazi Germany, and that because it can be argued that Heidegger's philosophy may have defended fascism that certainly does not mean that everyone who uses the word "spirit" has defended, or is in danger of defending, fascism, there is still an important argument to address here before I move forward using the word "spirit." /s Derrida right in implying that it is not possible to use concepts such as "spirit" without being ethnocentric to the point of oppression? Certainly he demonstrates the danger exists. And one doesn't need to think very hard to find other instances in which a people have oppressed others in the name of spiritual progress.

The point, I think, is that in Freire's work, not only is there an acknowledgement of this danger, but the cognizance of this danger is central to Freire's pedagogy. To Freire, we are always, in *all* aspects of our lives, in danger of reproducing the behaviors we have learned from our oppressors. We are always in danger of reproducing oppressive dynamics in our homes, in our schools, and in our revolutions. Changing the oppressor inside of us is an always and constant struggle, not something that is ever perfected or that any of us are ever free from. For it is just in believing we have risen above our fellow man -- the critical pedagogue or Rand's evangelical Christian who have achieved the sight to offer others -- that we most need fear the oppressor inside us. (Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 48). That we would be in as much danger of doing this with spiritual concepts as we would be with pedagogical, political, revolutionary, or familial concepts and systems seems clear. I think that this is why Freire makes a constant striving for humbleness a precondition for a revolutionary pedagogy. It *is* natural when we believe that we are on a spiritual path to believe that other people should be on that path as well. But Freire tells us that doing this will lead us in the wrong direction -- to exactly the place we don't want to be, the capitalist oppressor inside of us. Freire tells of peasants who want to be free, but in their world view, the only alternative to being the oppressed is to become the oppressor. "They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized" (48). They wish to be land owners themselves, who are just as brutal to their own peasants. (Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 47). Freire argues that this internalization of consciousness affects relationships. To Freire, liberation involves breaking this cycle of oppressor-oppressed and instead becoming a "human" who does

not impose his will on others. It is possible to use our own idea of spiritual growth to oppress. It is possible to make of our own individual journey a grand narrative to apply to others and even to the whole world. But it is also *must* be possible to work always for humbleness -- to believe in our own spirit and yet to approach every interaction, whether between individuals or between nations with respect for each individual's and each group's own path in this universe.

Often critiques of capitalism that are rooted in a fear of grand narrative end up painting a closed loop, with no hope. As Giroux points out, this closed loop has been to the detriment of critical pedagogy and led only to pedagogies of cynicism and despair, and, as Durst points out, to frustration on the part of our students. Herbert Marcuse, for instance, in *One Dimensional Man* describes the way the capitalist system has gotten so strong that all effort to change, all contrary ideas, are swallowed up and subsumed so that it is no longer possible to change. If we can accept that it is possible to use the concept of the spirit to oppress and accept that capitalism can and does subsume and swallow some attempts at change, can we not also, while being cognizant of this, believe that it can sometimes be otherwise ? If we accept the assumption, as does Freire, that the purpose of education is growth (movement towards a world in which it is more possible to love) then to continue writing and growing and teaching mustn't we believe that it is the case that the spirit, as one, and as many, can move through positive change with humility?

I want to now demonstrate the parallels between Freire's dialogic education and the practices of twelve step groups. I am comparing Freire's pedagogy to twelve step rather than to some other organized religious group because twelve step is non-

denominational and consists primarily of a set of guidelines for members to use to relate to one another when pursuing a common area of growth. Twelve-step has often been criticized in the psychological community for its dependence on faith to bring change, but this same foundation of faith is implicitly present in Freire's pedagogy. Outside of the explicit nature of its spiritual foundation, the practices of a twelve step group are strikingly similar to the practices of a group pursuing Freire's dialogic education. Though other criticisms have been leveled at twelve step for its roots in the protestant Christianity or gender bias of its founder Bill Wilson (Daniell, *Communion of Friendship* 30), the actual guidelines for interaction are quite straight forward. In many ways, the mechanics of twelve step groups are the closest thing our current society has to a commonly used and participated in manifestation of Freire's liberatory pedagogy of dialogue.

Because twelve step meetings are organized around any number of destructive problems in people's lives, each meeting is a little bit different. I will discuss some practices that are common and are discussed in official twelve step literature, acknowledging that variations on these practices exist from group to group. The practices I describe are drawn from the foundational literature that groups receive from the national associations of Alcoholics Anonymous and Codependents Anonymous and use to begin a meeting. First, everyone who wishes to tackle the "problem" comes to sit at a table. Literature is read at the beginning of the meeting to outline the nature of the problem (the fact that it is not possible to control alcohol, an alcoholic, gambling, other people, food, etc.) and to outline the method that will be taken towards recovering from this problem. (Starter Packet of Codependents Anonymous). This reading usually takes

about ten minutes. Then each person speaks. The speaker shares his/her struggle with the problem and their “experience, strength, and hope” around their recovery from the problem. When the speaker finishes speaking, the members of the meeting are allowed only to say “thank you” or “thank you for sharing” without further comment, without giving advice. Any advice-giving, comment, or non-verbal communication other than this is labeled cross-talk and not allowed at meetings. (Some meetings allow certain venues for cross-talk, either after the meeting or from a designated leader.) Each person shares only about their own struggle with the problem and his/her own progress and set-backs, and everyone listens without comment. Then the meeting is over. In other words, the members of the group engage in something very similar to Freire’s idea of dialogue, and the learning and support that stems from “meetings” comes from this dialogue. Freire’s dialogue consists of a group chosen “theme” and then a mutual exploration of that theme through truthful speaking and grounded humble listening. He says in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*:

Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men and women transform the world. To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming. Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection. But while to say the true word – which is work, which is praxis – is to transform the world, saying the word is not the privilege of some few persons, but the right of everyone. Consequently, no one can say a true word alone – nor can she say it for another, in a prescriptive act which robs others of their words. Dialogue is the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world.

Participants in twelve step hear about new ways to grow and learn and share their own ways to grow and learn through the focus of the chosen problem, or in Freire’s words, “theme.” Participants name their experience truthfully and do not stand in the way of others doing the same, so that there is a naming of the experience of the theme chosen

within community. This dialogic learning is the core of Alcoholics Anonymous and other twelve step meetings. I want to be clear here about what is meant when Freire uses the term dialogue. It is neither the type of civic speaking proposed by traditional rhetoricians nor the alternative model of speaking referred to as “Socratic.” In dialogue, participants do not try to co-opt, reframe, or pretend to completely understand the experiences of another. Respectful listening allows the speaker to have their own experience and their own representations of those experiences. A type of Socratic dialogue in which interlocutors are only drawn into speaking so that they can be led to a predetermined answer by someone who knows better than they do what they should be thinking about their life circumstances is not dialogue in the sense that I or Freire mean it. “[Dialogue] is an act of creation; it must not serve as a craft instrument for the domination of one person by another. The domination implicit in dialogue is that of the world by the dialoguers; it is conquest of the world for the liberation of humankind. ... Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself. It is thus necessarily the task of responsible subjects and cannot exist in a relation of domination” (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 89) In a Socratic “dialogue,” only the student is marked for change through guidance to an answer the teacher already knows. In dialogue as it is meant here, all parties have the responsibility to listen and be open to the lived experiences of others without using argument or unasked for guidance to shut down the possibility of being changed by the exchange. Freire argues that dialogue is an act of creation, which means that something wholly new emerges in the world. This type of dialogue is also not an argument where the intention is to change one another by engaging in direct rhetorical disagreement. As Julie Lindquist points out in her

ethnographic study of barroom Discourse (A Place to Stand), this type of argument rarely brings any actual change to the beliefs of participants but is far more frequently merely a platform for rhetorical performance. In dialogue as it is meant by Freire, and in this dissertation, contributors are changed by the contributions of others, but this happens only through a respectful listening that allows each person the equal standing to represent their own experience as they see fit. It is a model of speaking towards change based on respect, sharing, and trust, rather than on conflict.

Even the nature of the problems taken on at twelve step meetings are not completely out of step with the sorts of problems Freire describes his own groups tackling. In one example Freire gives in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* a group of students looks at a slide of workers standing at a corner, obviously drunk. The group then engages in discussion about the nature of the scene and their feelings about the drinking depicted. The hope, according to Freire, is that the participants in the discussion will come to understand the root causes of the drinking and its connection to the frustration and despair inherent in the power relationships of their society

In order to facilitate this dialogue, twelve step literature and practices incorporate ideas very close to Freire's own preconditions for dialogue. The work must be done with love rather than control or domination. There are no teachers in these groups, only teacher/students, and there is no recommended religious, political, or economic path to growth. The problem is chosen by the participants in the group, and the solution to that problem is developed individually in communion. The opening with which people begin their sharing is something with which the public is generally familiar. Each person identifies him/herself as someone who is struggling with the problem at hand. This

helps partially to create an atmosphere of humility. Each person who shares is acting as a teacher-student who is coming to the problem at hand as someone who is struggling to grow through that problem just as is everyone at the table. That orientation must be set before anything can be shared. No one is there to give advice to others about how to conquer the problem, but merely to learn from the shared ideas gained through each person's individual recovery. Most sharing done in twelve step programs are personal stories with the particular addiction, but these stories are deeply connected to the family and societal systems around us that have fed into the addiction. Part of the purpose of twelve step meetings is to provide an alternative community that can support a different set of beliefs, values, and behaviors. While personal stories are shared, these stories always revolve around the common and shared theme of the meeting – the addiction at hand. Similarly, Freire makes the point about dialogic education that it must always be rooted in the experiences of the dialoguers. Topics come from the students (and are added to by the teachers, as members of the dialogue) and these topics are discussed as rooted in the every day experiences of the dialoguers. (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 107). For instance, fittingly for this discussion, Freire gives the example in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* of a dialogic group that approaches alcoholism as its theme, or topic. A picture is shown to the group of a “drunken man walking on the street and three young men conversing on the corner” (118). The group participants said “the only one there who is productive and useful to his country is the souse who is returning home after working all day for low wages and who is worried about his family because he can't take care of their needs. He is the only worker. He is a decent worker and a souse like us” (118). Freire goes on to show how there is an



interplay between the recognition of the self in the situation and the societal context that creates the picture and contributes to the felt experience. “In their comments on the codification of an existential situation they could recognize, and in which they could recognize themselves, they said what they really felt. ... On the one hand, they verbalize the connection between earning low wages, feeling exploited, and getting drunk – getting drunk as a flight from reality, as an attempt to overcome the frustration of inaction, as an ultimately self-destructive solution. On the other hand, they manifest the need to rate the drunkard highly” (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 119). This contradiction then becomes a place for further dialogue on the issue at hand, alcoholism, as it relates to the lived experience of the group participants and their social situation. While personal stories are more prominent in twelve step practice, both twelve step and dialogic education begin dialogue around a common chosen theme that must take into account the lived experience within a social context.

The twelve step programs call themselves spiritual programs, and as such they are based on faith. These programs ask participants to find for themselves a higher power, but this higher power is by no means required to be some form of deity. The official literature suggests that participants might choose their support group as a higher power, or the program itself; it need merely be something larger than themselves or any individual in their lives. Freire’s idea in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that we must have faith in the human “vocation to become more fully human” seems to me a particularly good articulation of the twelve step concept of higher power. Having faith in something larger than ourselves does not mean we need to have faith in a “God.” When we have faith in the process of working in a support group or on a dialogic process, as I have

argued twelve step is, we are having faith in the human “vocation to become more fully human.” We are trusting that in giving up a tight hold on our own individual view of reality so as to be exposed to the dialogic exploration and creation of the world, we will be okay because we are being led by the human “vocation to become more fully human.” This is something larger than ourselves; it is a higher power, and can give us the trust to be open to dialogue. Neither twelve step, nor Freire, argue that faith need be attached to anything more “divine” than this. Participants are asked to have faith that each of us *is* on a path to becoming more fully human -- ourselves, and the people around us -- and that this is why we may trust our own lives and feelings as well as the lives and feelings of those around us without needing to dominate and control those lives and feelings. Freire calls having faith in man’s “vocation to become more fully human” *life* rather than death because it requires us to slowly give up our attempts to stop change, growth, and transformation. In order to do this we must believe that these transformations will lead to greater humanity in ourselves and the people around us. This is the basic idea behind faith in twelve step programs and the development of this faith is partly what is intended to give participants the courage to let go and change when otherwise this change and the feelings that come with it would be too terrifying and cause a retreat into further denial, or, in Freire’s terms, naive thinking.

Twelve-step work also parallels Freire’s concept of hope. The participants at meetings come to the table with the belief that it is possible to change and that the talking that is done at the table *will* lead to change. Everyone at the table is engaged in, in Freire’s words, a “constant search” for completion, a search that can “only be carried out in communion with others.” The talking that is done at the table is talk about growth

that breaks the silence of hopelessness and despair that Freire describes. “As long as I fight, I am moved by hope; and if I fight with hope, then I can wait,” writes Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*; one might as easily say, as does the serenity prayer that has been adapted by all twelve step programs, that what we seek is the strength to change the things we can, the courage to accept the things we can’t, and the wisdom to know the difference (Alcoholics Anonymous Website). Twelve step literature asks for action, not just talking, but it asks for action that comes with patience and faith that the right time will come for action and each change. As long as we are changing the things that we can change, we can have patience with and acceptance for the things we cannot yet change. We are also asked to accept that we may not always know how the required changes and growth will come about.

Seen in this way, twelve step groups are a recipe for the development of the type of critical thinking that Freire describes: A thinking that does not accept the weight of the “acquisitions and experiences of the past” whether those be a historical past or the past of a family history or childhood. This is critical thinking that sees being human as being in the process of transformation towards ever more humanity and that sees relations between people for their potential to be not relations of control, domination, and fear, but freedom, acceptance, and love. (Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*).

The second chapter of my dissertation will continue to discuss the spiritual aspects of Freire’s pedagogy, as I draw on the writing of North American pedagogues to develop a full framework for discussing spirituality in teaching

## **Methods**

This dissertation will take advantage of a mix of teacher-research, ethnographic,

and autoethnographic methods to examine my own teaching during a time when I was starting to move towards incorporating a more holistic spirituality? into the classroom. These methods will be fully outlined in the following section.

Data was collected during three semesters of a service-learning section of intermediate composition and then coded multiple times using the methods of Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw outline methods for coding data in which rich descriptions of groups or events are recorded in note form in an open ended investigation process. These notes are then analyzed multiple times for patterns and themes. The patterns and themes are then used to frame further questions of the events and groups that have been observed. The data is analyzed again with these questions, patterns, and themes in mind. The purpose of this method is to systematically make sense of qualitative data in a such a way that preconceived research ideas don't taint the analysis of the data. (Emerson, Fritz, and Shaw, *Ethnographic Field Notes*) I then attempt to evoke, through both narrative and analysis, the experience of incorporating a spiritual self into my teaching persona as well as the blocks and setbacks to doing this and the effect it had on my classroom. To facilitate the analysis of "spirituality" in the classroom, as well as to try to more fully define "spirituality," as it applies to pedagogy, I develop a frame work for spiritually integrated pedagogy drawn from the work of Paulo Freire as well as from a synthesis of North American pedagogues who have attempted to discuss and advocate for spirituality in the classroom. These pedagogues of spirituality include bell hooks, Parker Palmer, and Leela Fernandes. I also examine, as it relates to a spiritually integrated pedagogy, the concept of bringing to teaching a "fuller self," or a self that includes aspects of

personality frequently left out of teaching personas, including but not limited to spirituality, emotional responses, and insecurities. One prominent proponent of such an idea is Jane Tompkins, and I intend my dissertation to engage with the many critiques of her controversial article in *College Composition and Communication*, "Pedagogy of the Repressed." Finally, I also will also seek to understand this difficult process of change through the Discourse theories of James Gee. Through writers like Gee, Freire, and Shirley Brice Heath, literacy studies brings to Composition the understanding of the ways in which learning language practices, far from being an isolated classroom experience, is in fact a process that involves everything from the way we were held as babies to the complex socio-political beliefs of our communities. For Gee, as for Freire, the classroom is a complicated place of often competing and contradictory Discourses that people bring to the classroom. Part of the point of works like Gee's and Freire's is that these Discourses involve not only the specific language choices we make, but the ways those language choices are defined by our values, feelings, and backgrounds. Teaching reading and writing requires moving in these Discourses and feeling them resist one another; teaching writing well, according to Gee, requires an understanding of that process. Most spiritual Discourses have stark differences with academic Discourse. These differences can bring up moments of conflict when the two Discourses are mixed. Freire's dialogic education draws on spiritual Discourse. The spiritual aspects of Freire's pedagogy, if not omitted, can bring up these moments of conflict and emotion. Noticing these moments can help teachers become better at Freire's dialogue. Chapter two looks at how an understanding of Discourse helps outline both the need for a spiritually integrated pedagogy to support

the difficult Discourse changes students go through in the classroom and for the development of a spiritual Discourse on the part of the teacher to support this pedagogy. This relationship between spirituality, Discourse, and Freire will be discussed further in chapter two.

Viewing my classroom, my teaching, and myself through a theoretical lens of holistic change based on Paulo Freire's pedagogy, I explore the following research questions:

1. What is a theoretical framework for approaching a supportive holistic pedagogy in the classroom that does not ignore the spiritual self?

2. What happens to teacher satisfaction, engagement, learning, and pedagogy when one attempts to bring a more full self, including a spiritual self, into the classroom?

3. What happens to student engagement and learning, including learning about writing, when the teacher brings a more full self, including true emotions and spirituality, into the classroom? Are these changes reflected in class discussions and student papers? If so, how?

4. What are the blocks and difficulties, internal and external, to enacting a spiritually integrated pedagogy of the sort espoused by Freire, Tompkins, twelve step, hooks, Palmer, and Fernandes? How do teachers deal with these blocks?

### **Methods Continued**

"O.K.," said one of my friends, "So just for a moment, let's not think about the expectations of your committee or what you do or do not think will be published. Can you just tell me what you would write if you could write the dissertation in any way that you wanted to write it? What would you do if it was completely yours to do with as you

wanted?”

“I don’t want to say things about what my students are thinking or how they’re changing that I don’t know are true,” I started. “The truth is, I don’t know *how* they’re experiencing my class or how it’s changing them or not changing them. I mean I can put together my observations and I can ask my students, but that’s as close as I can get to knowing. I’m learning that the only thing I can really know is my *own* experience. And even that, even my own life as I’m living it in the moment, is not something I can ever completely understand.” As I continued to talk I realized I did in fact already have strong ideas of what my work would look like. “I don’t want to get stuck putting either the experiences of my students or myself in boxes that suit my arguments and limit the possibilities those experiences have in the future to mean things I might not have understood at the time and assuredly don’t completely understand now. So I want what I write to be primarily grounded in my own experience of change in these semesters of teaching because that’s what I can take the most responsibility for representing... although, you know, even there, I’d rather borrow Steven Tyler’s term... evoke? ‘Cause he says we can’t really represent reality, right? That the goal of good ethnography is to *evoke* reality for our readers through narrative. Mine are the experiences of change I can most concretely evoke, and I want to write about my students and what they’re living in my class as they get exposed to my changing pedagogy mostly through the lens of my own shifting experience of interacting with those students. Also, the pedagogical changes I made in class ... they’re a result of all the things that were changing in the rest of my life. I don’t want to write about the rest of my life, but I don’t want to pretend that those things weren’t happening and weren’t causing all the

changes I was making as a teacher. I want to be able to evoke myself for the reader as a teacher but as a teacher who has a spiritual and emotional life – relationships, conflict and passions -- the same sort of full picture I'm starting to let my students see when I'm *in* the classroom. And I want it to be interesting. I want to really *write*. And I want to write in a way that not *only* people who are familiar with the Discourse of my field can understand what I'm saying. That's what I'd do. If I could write it exactly as I'd like to write it."

Many academic sources now support and encourage this type of writing, but among the most useful to my project are those written as part of the teacher-research movement. Because I was interested in exploring my own pedagogy and how it changed as my spiritual beliefs changed and how these pedagogical changes altered the dynamic in my own classroom, I started with teacher-research. Teacher-research, as described by Ruth Ray in *Theory and Practice* and Cathy Fleishcher in *Composing Teacher-Research*, is not a method but a research orientation that involves teachers investigating their own courses or participating as collaborators in that investigation. Teacher-research is an intellectual and methodological movement that incorporates many individual methods including participant-observation, interview, Discourse analysis, textual analysis, and case study. It shares an epistemic view with many theories of collaboration in which knowledge is socially constructed. In addition, teacher-research is a methodological framework designed to assist teachers in pursuing problems that arise within their own classroom, to find practical solutions to these problems, and then to create theory from this practice. One of the questions I took into this study was how could I develop a teaching persona that was closer to the self I was discovering outside



of the classroom. I wanted to know both whether or not bringing more of this self into the classroom would enhance my own job satisfaction and also what effect it would have on the freedom my students had to represent themselves both in spoken word and writing. The methodological framework of teacher-research allowed me to ask this question of my own classroom and own teaching style and to investigate it while I was teaching. Teacher-research also allowed me to research the interplay of my changes as a teacher with the choices that my students were making.

Teacher research is usually conducted by an open-minded, inquiring teacher who sees the classroom as an egalitarian community in which he or she is but one of many learners [ ... ] Students are not merely subjects whom the teacher-researcher instructs and assesses; they are co-researchers, sources of knowledge whose insights help focus and provide new directions for the study. (Ray 175 - 176)

By orienting myself as a teacher-researcher, I could research my own classroom, taking in as much contextual knowledge as being immersed in my research site would allow. Because teacher-research sees the teacher as “one of many learners” in the classroom, it also allows me to focus on the development of my own teaching practice through interaction with the other student-teachers in the classroom in a way that respects the agency of my students to affect classroom dynamic and make decisions about their own contributions to that dynamic.

Because teacher-research seeks to take in the context surrounding the research focus, it allows for multiple methods of data collection, trying to give as complex and detailed a picture of what happens in the classroom as possible. Teacher research also parallels Freire’s dialogic pedagogy in its belief that knowledge construction should be a shared endeavor between researchers, teachers, and students. Like in dialogic education, knowledge pursuit is facilitated by a teacher, but that knowledge is a result of mutual

exploration. Dialogic education requires that teachers learn from students and from the investigation into the “theme” or topic. Teacher-research asks that teachers choose classroom problems that really need to be solved and learn as teachers from the investigation. Freire also focuses on praxis in his pedagogical theories – forward looking theory should inspire and guide informed revolutionary action (*Politics of Education* 138). Teacher research values the use of theory and research in so much as that theory and research solves practical classroom problems and makes a place for the classroom practice to then inform the theory and the research. As such, teacher research is a methodology particularly suited for investigations into dialogic education as it shares many of its epistemic views.

Within the methodological framework of teacher-research, I used ethnographic data collection (including classroom observation, interviews with students, and audio taping). Though much ethnographic method was developed for use in anthropology and detailed in such works as *Ethnographic Field Notes* (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw), compositionists like Wendy Bishop, Lynee Lewis Gaillet, and Christopher Keller have attempted to theorize the method specifically for composition and classroom study. It has been used in canonical composition literacy studies works such as Shirley Brice Heath’s *Ways with Words*. Ethnography was adopted by composition partly to balance forms of research such as those used in order to do experimental investigations of the cognitive writing process. These studies removed students from the classroom atmosphere and tried to reduce variables so as to get a clear picture of the thought process involved in writing. The critique made was that without the classroom atmosphere of assignments and student/teacher interaction and feedback, we could not

fully understand the writing process as it really happened. For many works, such as those by Seitz, Heath, and Durst, the effort to understand the writing process included the context of students' lives outside the classroom, including social and economic realities, oral and verbal communication in the family, and writing done in other classes or for other purposes. As Janet Alsup writes in her chapter of *Ethnography Unbound*:

Those working in the disciplines of education and composition studies began to recognize what social anthropologist Clifford Geertz and sociologists of the Chicago School of the 1920s and 1930s had recognized long before: qualitative, empirical research offers advantages over more quantitative, experimental, and quasiexperimental studies when the research subjects are people and the research foci are primarily human behaviors and interactions. An emphasis on individual experience, cultural and social issues, identities, inequities, and researcher self-reflexivity are some of the characteristics of qualitative research that make it attractive to humanists and educators. (134)

Using ethnographic method then gives me the ability to present a highly contextualized picture of my classroom and my place within it. Freire asks that dialogic pedagogy begin again with each context, taking into account the specific social situations of the students in the classroom and the important issues of that locality. As Giroux argues, "Freire's work is not meant to offer radical recipes for instant forms of critical pedagogy; rather, it is a series of theoretical signposts that need to be decoded and critically appropriated within the specific contexts in which they might be useful" (xviii). As such, less contextualized research would not be as well suited to studying dialogic pedagogy because it is a pedagogy that changes from locality to locality and classroom to classroom.

In choosing ethnography as my primary method within teacher-research, I am also working in a tradition that values the use of story telling and narrative. Even at ethnography's roots in anthropology, after data is collected and coded, it is presented

through narrative and storytelling. Clifford Geertz's analysis of four canonical anthropological texts demonstrates the way that narrative choices on the part of the author reveal the social position and perspective of the researcher and his culture, and he argues that the effectiveness of the ethnography is based partly on how well the writing itself is done.

The ability of anthropologists to get us to take what they say seriously has less to do with either a factual look or an air of conceptual elegance than it has with their capacity to convince us that what they say is a result of their having actually penetrated (or, if you prefer, been penetrated by) another form of life, of having one way or another "been there." And that, persuading us that this offstage miracle has occurred, is where the writing comes in. (4)

Not only does Geertz argue that strong writing is part of the power of ethnography to bring us knowledge, but also that our critiques of ethnography should take this aspect of ethnography quite seriously.

As the criticism of fiction and poetry grows best out of an imaginative engagement with fiction and poetry themselves, not out of imported notions about what they should be, the criticism of anthropological writing (which is in a strict sense neither, and in a broad one both) ought to grow out of a similar engagement with *it*, not out of preconceptions of what it must look like to qualify as science. (6)

Geertz compares ethnographers who wish to deny their relationship to novelists and poets while fancying themselves physicists to mules who talk only of their mother the horse, and never their father, the less reputable donkey.

Critical theory having called into question the ability of even hard scientists to truly represent reality, more recent discussions of ethnography have questioned ethnography's ability to "represent" reality at all. As mentioned above, Stephen Tyler argues that the strength of the ethnographer lies in his ability, rather, to "evoke" an experience for his reader. If the subjective nature of observation and the inability to

climb outside of our own cultural perspective disallow the ethnographer from giving us an objective representation, the ethnographer can still, argues Tyler, use detail and narrative to evoke the ethnographer's experience in being introduced to and immersed in that culture. Tyler's concept of evocation of a cultural experience helped me deal with my fear that in trying to represent the experiences of my students in my course I would simplify, misread, and misrepresent their experiences. I did feel confident I could evoke the experience of being part of my classroom, at least from the teacher's perspective, as the room and the people in it changed and grew. I would be discussing the experiences of my students only insofar as I could report their direct feedback or exact words -- less making claims for the meaning of their experience than reporting how I read that experience at the time and read it now and evoking both the moment in time and the process of interpretation and analysis I engaged in that led to my own choices in the classroom.

While self-reflexivity is part of the tradition of ethnography, and specifically ethnography within composition studies, it is often discussed, for instance in Alsup's chapter or by Gesa Kirsch as a way to reveal researcher bias or gain the trust of readers. But I wanted to do more than this, truly treating myself as part of the classroom micro-culture. It is a micro-culture co-created by my culture and expectations and those of my students and one always partially formed by the constraints of the institutional expectations under which we work. Certainly of the people in a classroom co-creating a micro-culture, the teacher has a somewhat larger share of responsibility, agency, and effect on that micro-culture, and I wanted to write about myself in that role. In Ellis and Bochner's detailing of autoethnographic method, I found a research model

that did attempt to do just this.

Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations. [...] Distinctions between the personal and cultural become blurred, sometimes beyond distinct recognition. (739)

Autoethnography then highlights the very relationship that I want to discuss -- that of my changing emotional and spiritual life, and the culture, experiences, and pedagogy of the classroom as these things functioned within institutional expectation.

In these texts, concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and self-consciousness are featured, appearing as relational and institutional stories affected by history, social structure, and culture, which themselves are dialectically revealed through action, feeling, thought, and language. (Ellis and Bochner 739)

Autoethnography seemed to provide one response for one of my first dilemmas in approaching this project, a dilemma faced by most researchers in composition who struggled to find a way to discuss emotion and spirituality: How do we find the method, language, and form to discuss topics that have, in the past, been deemed to be outside the realm of intellectual and academic inquiry and have thus been almost precluded *a priori* by the academic forms and languages?

The mode of storytelling is akin to the novel or biography and thus fractures the boundaries that normally separate social science from literature; the accessibility and readability of the text repositions the reader as a coparticipant in dialogue and thus rejects the orthodox view of the reader as a passive receiver of knowledge; the disclosure of hidden details of private life highlights emotional experience and thus challenges the rational actor model of social performance; the narrative text refuses the impulse to abstract and explain, stressing the journey over the destination; and thus eclipses the scientific illusion of control and mastery. (Ellis and Bochner 744).

This, then, is the methodological framework and methods used in this project: data was collected using traditional ethnographic fieldwork methods of note taking,

audio recording, and collection of classroom texts and writing (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw; Bishop). This data collection was done in the winter 2004 and fall 2005 semesters by Gwen Gorzelsky, a then assistant professor of English at Wayne State University and myself and then in the winter 2006 and fall 2007 semesters by myself alone. For the winter 2004 and fall 2005 semesters there are then two sets of notes on each class period. Gwen was pursuing her own research on my classroom and soon after published an article about student resistance to critical pedagogy and student agency as it functioned in my classroom (Gorzelsky, *Working Boundaries*). Ray argues that “what distinguishes teacher-research from other composition research is its collaborative spirit” (183). While Gwen was taking notes in my class I noticed that her notes differed significantly from mine in that my notes were written after class was over and were largely narrative based. Gwen’s notes, on the other hand, were written during class and primarily recorded the actual words that people said. For the two of the class sessions that I focused on from those two semesters, I used her notes to supplement my own, creating a fuller picture of the class period. As such, the narratives from chapters three and four that were from the winter 2004 and fall 2005 semesters have a slightly different feel, mostly in terms of the amount and specificity of the dialogue they include. Roen and Mittan say, “Scholars do not work alone, even when they think they do, because they are always affected by the social heteroglossia. Scholars work better when they work, overtly, with others” (Roen and Mittan 289). As such, it was definitely a good thing in terms of triangulation to have Gwen’s ability at note taking and capturing dialogue to supplement my own notes. Roen and Mittan also admit that whenever scholars work together issues of hierarchy can cause a problem if one person is

dictating the research (296). “The problem with such arrangements is that they don’t involve minds in the dialogic thinking, the negotiating that can engage minds to mutually grapple with the problems at hand” (296, 297). In this case, however, the dissertation was wholly my project and Gwen passed off her notes for me to use as I wished. I chose only two class periods from which to significantly draw from them, but am happy for the fuller picture they provided. Roen and Mittan point out that often in collaboration there is a mentoring process in which a senior researcher helps bring a junior researcher into a field and there was certainly this type of discussion that happened with Gwen as I talked through possible ways I could present my data and the arguments that I had been formulating. It was at this point that I asked Gwen to direct my dissertation as most of my questions about making my research work in the field were already directed to her. Her data coding process was separate from mine, and when we coded data from those semesters, we ended up focusing on different issues. Because these were writing classes, class writing including assignments written by my students as well as my own assignment sheets and syllabi were collected and coded. I coded the data in an open coding framework in which the data was analyzed for patterns and interest without a specific research question in mind. Slowly, a number of research interests and patterns came to the fore both through my coding. At this point, I decided that I wanted to investigate the interplay of my spiritual changes and the effect those had on my interactions with students and my pedagogy and the effects *those* changes had on the classroom as a whole. I then recoded the data to find any data or moments relevant to this question that had not been noticed in the original coding. Then, using primarily my notes (supplemented with Gwen’s for two class sessions,) I began to try to retell



stories in the detail and language that I hoped would evoke my experience for my readers. I first told the stories in a way that, I hoped, as Ellis and Bochner write, would involve my readers in a dialogue, trying not to claim knowledge that I did not have or to prematurely draw confining lines around experience that would minimize its complexity, prematurely naming that experience beyond my ability to do so and limiting my readers' ability to see in my stories aspects of my interactions with students and my classroom that I may have missed. To, in effect, take advantage of the many layers of thought, feeling, and interaction at play, rather than trying to limit those layers. Then, however, I went back to my stories, and tried to apply the analysis I had learned earlier in my academic career, to try to formulate for my reader the conclusions relevant to our field that I had come to during and after the process of teaching, research, and writing. These narratives are analyzed in chapters two and three. They are narratives of moments in the classroom when my academic Discourse as informed by my primary Discourse and by my training in graduate school (a secondary Discourse) came into conflict with spiritual Discourses I was acquiring. These conflicts brought up emotion and led to changes in my teaching Discourse (a secondary Discourse).

The second chapter of my dissertation is a further examination of the spiritual aspects of Freire's pedagogy along with its more explicitly spiritual counterparts in the work of North American writers bell hooks, Parker Palmer, and Leela Fernandez. I demonstrate that pursuing Freire's pedagogy, or any serious pedagogy of change, is not possible without attention paid to the spiritual aspect of growth and change. Additionally, I argue that this spiritual grounding is evident, though often implicit, in Freire's writing. I also seek to develop a framework for talking about spirituality in the classroom by

identifying four common pedagogical emphases in the work of these writers. I argue that by paying attention to these four attributes of a holistic classroom, we will teach in more effective, pragmatic, and satisfying classrooms that simultaneously work towards more profound social change than we could possibly accomplish otherwise. These three attributes are an attention to the spiritual progress of the instructor, a bringing of a fuller teaching-self to the classroom, spiritually based equality that can ground dialogue, and a melding of spirituality with a firm commitment to social justice.

The third chapter consists of narratives drawn from ethnographic notes taken during the winter 2004 and fall 2005 semesters during which I taught a service-learning class in which college students tutored middle school students in writing plays that we performed in class and in a variety show. The narratives focus on the first two of the four aspects of spiritually integrated classrooms I outline in chapter two, that being an attention to the spiritual progress of the instructor and the bringing of a fuller self to the classroom. The intention of the narratives is to evoke the difficult experience of making early moves towards a classroom that is more spiritually integrated. Chapter three analyzes these narratives using Paulo Freire's theories of dialogic education and James Gee's theories of primary and secondary Discourse. While Gee's theories are mostly designed to help us understand the difficult Discourse changes our students must make in composition classrooms, I apply the theories here to my own primary and learned secondary Discourses. I identify five aspects of my primary Discourse and five aspects of the spiritual Discourse I was being exposed to at the time. These Discourses were multiple as I was experimenting with exposure to that type of Discourse for the first time. These spiritual Discourses, however, were primarily around the literature and people

surrounding Zen Buddhism and twelve step. I examine the effects my primary Discourse had on my teaching Discourse as evident in the narratives and the detrimental effects my unexamined primary Discourse had on students and my own pedagogy. The analysis then examines the moments of introduction of a secondary spiritual Discourse into the classroom and the effects that move had on both the class and myself. Chapter three makes the point that it is only through attempts to begin dialogic education that we can become more fully aware of our primary Discourse and hope to move beyond being bound by it as teachers. Additionally, I argue that it is only through freeing ourselves from the bonds of an unexamined primary Discourse that we can find ways to more fully embrace and benefit from dialogic education.

The fourth chapter examines the narratives from the fall of 2005 and winter of 2006 as well as one narrative from 2009. This chapter focuses on the third and fourth aspects of the framework for spiritually integrated dialogic pedagogy, being reciprocity and social justice. Chapter four makes the case that reciprocity of learning is necessary for dialogic education and points out several places where I as the teacher am actively learning about the theme being discussed with my students. Chapter four also argues that a spiritually integrated dialogic pedagogy contributes to student's ability to work with ideas of social justice with less resistance. Chapter four also explores the Leela Fernandez's concept of "witnessing" as it applies to listening during dialogue.

The fifth chapter details my conclusions after having done this study and attempts to demonstrate how this works moves forward the field of composition. It attempts to use the findings from chapters three and four to organize a year long workshop for writing teachers who wish to work on dialogic education using Freire's

prerequisites for dialogic education of faith, love, and humility. The exercises are drawn from the spiritual traditions of twelve step and Zen Buddhism and are applied to dialogic education. The exercises are all community endeavors that attempt to take seriously the spiritual aspects of Freire's pedagogy and so do some departmental development of spiritual Discourse and awareness about the spiritual and emotional aspects of Freire's pedagogy. The workshop plan uses the practices of inventories, concentrative and mindful meditation, and visualization to help bring our blocks to dialogic pedagogy to consciousness.

## CHAPTER 2 “SPIRITUAL PEDAGOGIES”

Freire is always aware in his writing that the type of learning and growing he is proposing both teachers and students engage in is one that requires constant and intense risk. The move from one Discourse to another is not as simple as a matter of learning a new skill set, but involves fundamental changes to identity, to our conception of ourselves and where we fit into the world. Indeed, as Freire argues, nothing real changes unless everything around it changes, too, and this type of change, radical change, requires not only a risk to our egos and psyche, but as Freire points out especially when he is writing of his own incarceration in and then deportation from his homeland, often a risk to our bodies. Freire makes the point repeatedly that his pedagogy is a pedagogy of risk. In *The Politics of Education* he writes of risk as so fundamental that it is the only alternative to despair and death, saying ““Existence is not despair, but risk. If I don’t live dangerously, I cannot be” (130). Indeed, to Freire, liberatory education involves a constant negotiation with risk, an ongoing sense of our limits and how much risk we are capable of taking -- a life and a pedagogy in which we are always risking at, but not beyond, our very limits. These risks are social, physical, emotional, and psychological. They are the risks that are necessary to move always away from the oppressor inside of us, to live differently in the world, and to dream of and achieve a different world in which to live. Freire writes, “A society in a state of permanent revolution cannot manage without a permanent prophetic vision. Without it, society stagnates and is no longer revolutionary.” There is, he goes on, “no prophetic vision without risk” (139).

As I will argue, dialogic education is partly an attempt to support students in

taking these risks in the classroom. But attempting dialogic education also requires taking risks for teachers. As I point out in chapter one, dialogic education requires practices, beliefs, and communication strategies that are not generally part of the traditional academic classroom. To understand the nature of this risk and how to move through it, it is helpful to read Freire's dialogic education through the lens of James Gee's theories on Discourse. Understanding how everyone is programmed by our early experiences as well as our professional training can help us understand and move through resistance to doing dialogic education and help us do it better. The spiritual pedagogies discussed in this chapter also provide an alternate "Discourse", to use Gee's terms, through which to view and critique teaching as well as a more detailed exploration of the types of teaching values that Freire says are necessary to teach dialogically.

In *Social Linguistics and Literacies*, James Gee writes that all people enter the social world with a primary Discourse brought from their family.

Primary Discourses are those to which people are apprenticed early in life during their primary socialization as members of particular families within their sociocultural settings. Primary Discourses constitute our first social identity, and something of a base within which we acquire or resist later Discourses. They form our initial taken-for-granted understandings of who we are and who people "like us" are, as well as what sorts of things we ("people like us") do, value, and believe when we are not "in public." Lots can happen to them as we go through life, and by the time we are no longer children, our primary Discourse has transmuted into our lifeworld Discourse, our culturally distinctive way of being an "everyday" person, not a specialist of some sort. (168)

Any Discourse we acquire in our lives, and we acquire many throughout our lives, affects and is affected by this primary Discourse. These Discourses are made up of language, beliefs, and values, but they are also practices. For instance, Gee gives the example of walking into a biker bar and asking for a light for a cigarette. Gee points out

numerous grammatically correct ways of asking for a match that are “correct” in many contexts but do not work at all in this Discourse. The biker bar Discourse has a language that comes with it. But, Gee goes on:

Imagine I say the “right” thing (“Gotta match?” or “Give me a light, wouldya?”), but while I’m saying it, I carefully wipe off the bar stool with a napkin to avoid getting my newly pressed designer jeans dirty. In this case, I’ve still got it all wrong. In this bar they just don’t do that sort of thing: I have said the right thing, but my “saying-doing” combination is nonetheless all wrong. It’s not just what you say or even just how you say it, it’s also *who* you are and *what* you’re doing while you say it. It is not enough just to say the right “lines.” Other sorts of bars cater to different “types of people.” If I want to – and I am allowed to by the “insiders” – I can go to many bars, and, thereby, be many different “types of people.” So, too, with schools. Children are “hailed” to be different sorts of students in different classrooms, even in different domains. (3)

Discourse practices can involve all kinds of behaviors and practices that mark us as part of a Discourse or as outside of that Discourse. “In fact,” argues Gee, “the matter goes further: It is not just language and action which must ‘fit’ together appropriately. In socially situated language use one must simultaneously say the ‘right’ thing, do the ‘right’ thing, and in such saying and doing also express the ‘right’ beliefs, values, and attitudes” (151). Gee gives the example of an African American woman at a job interview who does use “Standard” English, and so in this way is correctly responding at the job interview, but does not represent the correct values and beliefs about herself and her own ability to be a supervisor and so is not, in fact, responding using the Discourse required by the situation of the job interview. Despite her language being correct, she doesn’t represent the right beliefs and values. (153) Gee argues:

The whole point of talking about Discourses is to focus on the fact that when people mean things to each other, there is always more than language at stake. To mean anything to someone else (or even to myself) I have to communicate who I am (in the sense of what socially situated identity I am taking on here and now) and what I am doing in terms of what socially situated activity I am carrying out (Wider and Pratt, 1990). Language is, as we have seen, not enough for this.

We have to get our minds and deeds “right,” as well. We also have to get ourselves appropriately in sync with various objects, tools, places, technologies, and other people. Being in a Discourse is being able to engage in a particular sort of “dance” with words, deeds, values, feelings, other people, objects, tools, technologies, places and times so as to get recognized as a distinctive sort of *who* doing a distinctive sort of *what*. (153)

To use an example that I will come back to later in my dissertation, my primary Discourse, or the Discourse that I acquired at the family dinner table and other family interactions, held within it certain behaviors and actions that came with being a professional in a service profession. When my parents, both social workers, would talk or act in front of us regarding their work, these actions and words were filled with the values of self-sacrifice and personal responsibility to community and those less fortunate. There were other beliefs and values that came with speech-about or modeled-actions-around being a professional. For instance, my parents frequently talked at the table about their conflicts with larger corporate or government systems that were resisting the appropriate actions. This position within and simultaneously against large institutions became part of what it meant to be a service professional, at least one from my family. One of my brothers is a special education administrator who works with autistic children, and my other brother is a nurse at a veteran’s hospital. My two brothers talk, now, about their work similarly to the way my parents did when we were children. Mixed into the talk of the good that is done at the work place are the stories of resistance to larger systems and the self-sacrifice involved in long hours working in a place where one frequently comes into contact with human excrement or gets bit by children. Being a nurse or a special education administrator (or an English teacher) requires, coming from my primary Discourse, a set of beliefs and values that are expressed in the way that “work” is talked about. It is not just in the way that work is



talked about, however, but also in the way that the work is done that primary Discourse works. Primary Discourse influences the “who,” I am when I am a “service professional” at work. As a graduate student, I was involved with a service learning program that reached out to children in under privileged schools in order to do mentoring and literacy work. This sort of work was required by the aspects of my primary Discourse around being a “service professional.” I put in long hours doing individual conferences with students; I wear this as a badge, and bring it up at job interviews as a sign that I have the correct beliefs, values, and actions to be the right “who” to do a service professional job. I believe that this is what is required of me and what other service professionals will expect from me. Becoming an academic researcher who spends less time “teaching the people who need to be taught” would not as easily work with my primary Discourse and so that identity fits less comfortably for me. These aspects of my primary Discourse partly dictate the way I adopt the secondary Discourse of “teacher” and “academic” and the “whos” that are easy or hard for me to do. They influence the pedagogies that I choose and the ways I represent myself to my students as a person who deserves to have the role of “English teacher.” I will discuss these traits of my own primary Discourse and the ways they influence pedagogical choices further in chapters three and four.

Clearly, however, I did not only learn how to be an academic or a teacher from my primary Discourse, as neither of my parents were academics or teachers and growing up in my house would not equal enough credentials to get a job as a social worker either. Sets of language, behavior, values, and practices are also picked up by us as we move through the various communities that we take part in outside of our first

family interactions. These are called secondary Discourses. My secondary Discourse as a service professional was reinforced and changed by my training in graduate school and my years of watching other professors and teachers work.

Secondary Discourses are those to which people are apprenticed as part of their socialization within various local, state, and national groups and institutions outside early home and peer-groups socialization – for example, churches, gangs, schools, offices. They constitute the recognizability and meaningfulness of our “public” (more formal) acts. (168)

There is often overlap between these Discourses, as Discourses are always incorporating one another. Gee argues:

The distinction between primary and secondary Discourses is not meant to be airtight and unproblematic. In fact, I draw the distinction precisely because the boundary between the two types of Discourses is constantly negotiated and contested in society and history. Many social groups borrow aspects of valued secondary Discourses into the socialization of their children in an attempt to advantage their children’s acquisition of these secondary Discourses, whether they be school-based, community-based, or religion-based Discourses, for instance. For example, many middle-class homes use school-based language and practices with their small children at home long before they go to school ... to advantage their children for school. (169)

This was the case with my primary Discourse that already contained within it aspects of the attitudes, beliefs, work practices, and speech of a service professional. Being a “service professional” or an “academic” are secondary Discourses, but these secondary Discourses are built on top of primary Discourses that reinforce or conflict with the secondary Discourses. This can mean that if a secondary Discourse one is attempting to acquire is closely related to or has been incorporated into one’s primary Discourse, one will have an easier time acquiring that secondary Discourse. Frequently, a secondary Discourse may directly conflict with a primary Discourse and even require a learner to hold a set of values or an outlook that cannot coexist with the primary Discourse. For instance, if I had tried to study to be a business man, aspects of this

secondary Discourse would have heavily conflicted with my primary Discourse as “profit” and “sales” were not respected parts of my primary Discourse. They, in fact, were more associated with the people that seemed to get in the way of and resist the works that my parents saw themselves as valiantly trying to do. As I tried to learn the secondary Discourse of “business man” there would have been beliefs, attitudes, practices and ways of talking about these things that would have been difficult for me to adopt and would have required inner conflict or living with paradox. One Discourse might even require that, in its use, a student denigrate the users of his primary Discourse. Gee gives the example of law school and the ways law school teaches students that they are now in some way better than people who have not been through law school. A person, especially in a minority or blue collar family, may hold in their primary Discourse the belief that “we” are “better” than the people in power who go to law school. (165) Learning this secondary Discourse then becomes a difficult process of juggling identities and paradoxes. Those who have the easiest time learning a new Discourse, argues Gee, are those for whom the new Discourse conflicts least with the primary Discourse. For many non-mainstream students, argues Gee, the learning of a new Discourse, whether it is the Discourse required for law school, medical school, or high school, requires not just the learning of skills but the negotiation of huge challenges to identity and values. These challenges are frequently painful, difficult, and confusing (Gee 165).

Secondary Discourses are picked up through the process of learning and acquisition. The difference between the two is, again, “not meant to be taken as airtight and unproblematic. What it really involves is a continuum whose two poles are ‘acquisition’ and ‘learning,’ with mixed cases in between” (Gee 170). Acquisition is a

subconscious process that involves exposure to models and interaction with social groups that use this Discourse. Learning is more conscious instruction by a teacher and involves analysis of parts. Learning involves gaining a meta-understanding of the Discourse. Learning is important, Gee argues, and both learning and acquisition should happen in the classroom, but:

Discourses are mastered through acquisition, not learning. That is, Discourses are not mastered by overt instruction, but by enculturation (“apprenticeship”) into social practices through scaffolded and supported interaction with people who have already mastered the Discourse. This is how we all acquired our native language and our primary Discourses. It is how we acquire all later, more public-oriented Discourses. If you have no access to the social practice, you don’t get in the Discourse, you don’t have it. (171)

As difficult as it can be, and as much risk as it requires, to learn about and acquire a new Discourse, this is the only mechanism, argues Gee, through which we can criticize and bring change to our existing Discourses. He says using a different outside Discourse is the only way in which to “seriously criticize and thus change a Discourse” (177). Discourses cannot be truly criticized from inside the same Discourse because that criticism already contains within it the values, practices, and beliefs of the Discourse it is criticizing. The only way to bring different values, beliefs, and practices to bear on a Discourse in a way that can alter it is to do it from a completely different Discourse. A person’s academic secondary Discourse could not truly criticize the academic Discourse itself, but a different Discourse, for instance a spiritual Discourse, could offer valuable critique.

We can also gain critical awareness that can lead to social change through the very process of doing the difficult and often painful work of acquiring a new Discourse.

When we have really mastered anything (eg., a Discourse), we have little or no conscious awareness of it. ... However, when we come across a situation where

we are unable to accommodate or adapt, we become consciously aware of what we are trying to do or are being called upon to do (Vygotsky 1987; 167-241). While such an experience can happen to anyone, they are common among people who are somewhat “marginal” to a Discourse or culture, and thus, such people often have insights into the workings of these Discourses or cultures that more “mainstream” members do not. (172)

It is in the process of trying to adapt to and acquire a new Discourse we get moments of seeing the places where our previous Discourses, our primary Discourse especially, clashes with the new Discourse. These moments of discomfort in which we “become consciously aware of ... what we are being called upon to do” (Gee 172) can, if we pay attention to them, offer us insight both into our generally unconscious primary Discourse and the secondary Discourse we are attempting to learn. As such, the process of acquiring alien Discourses, if we pay attention to our own responses offers critical insight towards change. As Alice Brand argues, our beliefs and values hold within them stored emotion from the formation of that belief or value. Gee argues that our beliefs and values are stored in our Discourses and that when we are acquiring a new Discourse, these beliefs and values are often challenged and even changed (Gee 165). Brand argues that when a belief or value is changed, it releases the emotion that went into its creation, and thus composition teachers need to be ready for the emotions that will come up in classrooms around the changing of beliefs and values. As such, the process of acquiring a Discourse can bring critical awareness towards social change of both the Discourse we are moving from and the one we are moving into. If we notice our emotional responses to the Discourse acquisition, we might gain additional critical insight into our Discourses that can be applied to changing those Discourses.

Finally, Gee argues, critical awareness towards social change can also be brought about through learning a meta-understanding of Discourses once we acquire

them.

One cannot critique one Discourse with another one ... unless one has meta-level knowledge about both Discourses. And this meta-knowledge is best developed through learning, though often learning applied to a Discourse one has to a certain extent already acquired. Thus, liberating literacy, as defined above, almost always involves learning, and not just acquisition. Meta-knowledge can be a form of power and liberation. (178)

It is in fact a combination of being conscious of our responses while we acquire new Discourses and then learning meta-knowledge of the Discourses that we know that lead to the type of critical awareness that lets us critique the Discourses that make up our world and so bring social change. The juxtaposition of new and old Discourses provides the opportunity for critique and the entire process of acquiring and learning Discourses provides this opportunity as well. As such, these experiences with Discourse can be a powerful tool for social change.

Gee argues that we have the responsibility to study our own Discourses and Discourse in general because of the inequalities that can be embedded in Discourses and the power that acquiring new Discourses and gaining meta-knowledge of them can have (221). This is similar to Freire's idea of working to discover and transcend our inner oppressor that I discussed in chapter one. Gee uses his own terminology to describe a similar phenomena in which the ways we oppress and harm others are contained inside of our Discourses – beliefs and patterns of behavior that we have acquired, primarily unconsciously, through people who have mentored us in these Discourses during childhood (168). Discourses, as necessary as they are, work to exclude and to keep us blind to the interests of our group or class. Gee argues that if you agree with him that Discourses contain within them injustice, “you have contracted a moral obligation to reflect on, gain meta knowledge about your Discourses and

Discourses in general. Such knowledge is power because it can protect all of us from harming others and from being harmed, and because it is the very foundation of resistance and growth” (221). He argues that working to learn Discourse is a “moral matter and can change the world. And in that regard, the book is by no means over. It’s just beginning.” If we do not do the work to make aspects of our Discourses conscious, especially our primary Discourse that so influences our behavior, then we are more in danger of engaging in the unjust practices and holding the unjust beliefs that are contained in and protect our Discourse. Freire argues that we adopt the beliefs and values of any oppressive society we live in. These beliefs and values then work through us as the oppressor inside of us, helping to propagate the same system. Read through Gee, this inner oppressor is made up of Discourse; the inner oppressor is contained within the Discourses we have acquired. Gee’s mode of making primary Discourse conscious to a large extent mirrors Freire’s ideas about moving beyond the inner oppressor. Freire’s dialogic education, an education system designed to help us learn about and transcend the oppressors inside of us and out is a way to be introduced to other Discourses and gain meta knowledge, to really *witness* the Discourses of others and be changed by them. Witnessing is a term used by Leela Fernandez to name a deep and open kind of listening to the experiences of others with the willingness to be changed by what we here. It will be further explained below.

Applied specifically to the classroom, working to gain knowledge of any aspects of our primary Discourse we can bring to consciousness (as Gee argues, Discourses are mostly necessarily always unconscious) can help us understand why we choose the pedagogies we do and why we are uncomfortable with others. Teaching Discourses are

secondary Discourses that are made up of our experiences as students in classrooms and our professionalization experiences, but they are also heavily influenced by our original primary Discourse. In chapter three, I will examine eight teaching practices and teaching values I have identified as part of my primary Discourse or my life world Discourse (as Gee argues, our non-professional Discourse) and examine the ways these Discourse traits made teaching dialogically difficult for me.

When we understand that our composition classes require our students, first and foremost, to learn and acquire a new Discourse, one that is in direct conflict with many of their primary Discourses, we cannot teach without struggling to be cognizant of this risk. When we understand how difficult it is to consistently be at the edge of dangerous emotional, psychological, and physical risk, and when we understand Freire's point that there is no individual or societal change, no true dream of a better future without risk, the question then becomes, how do we support the ability to take these risks in the classroom?

Viewed through this lens, Freire's pedagogy of dialogue is exactly this, an attempt at a system of support for both teacher and student that will help enable the immense risk it takes to change and learn. Each of the qualities of Freire's pedagogy are meant to support a learning community through the immense fear of risk. Each of these qualities of dialogic education are, at core, spiritual qualities. This is why they seem on the surface such simple pedagogical attributes and yet require such immense work to perform well.

This chapter seeks to make more explicit these spiritual aspects of Paulo Freire's pedagogy, and in so doing, define more completely what is meant by spiritually



integrated pedagogy. Because Freire is writing from a context less likely to assume complete secularism from him than is the North American audience, he is often not explicit about the spiritual foundation of his work. For this reason, it is helpful to use the work of those who argue for spiritual pedagogy in North America where advocating for a spiritual pedagogy is more controversial and therefore cannot be taken for granted and must be made more explicit. By synthesizing the aspects of spiritually integrated pedagogy described in these works and comparing them to Freire's pedagogy, we can see that many pedagogical aspects called for by North American advocates of spiritually integrated pedagogy are present in Freire's pedagogy if executed in the way that he seems to intend. These pedagogues include bell hooks, Parker Palmer, and Leela Fernandes. By doing this, I hope to develop a clear definition of spiritually integrated pedagogy and a framework for discussing spirituality in my data. I also, however, intend to demonstrate that spiritually integrated pedagogy, though not explicitly discussed, is not entirely foreign to the field of composition or literacy studies through its often heavy use in Paolo Freire's work. Through discussing the work of Freire, Palmer, Fernandes, and hooks, I also hope to point out for the fields of composition and literacy studies the reasons why we have often been blind to the spiritual aspects of Freire's pedagogy as well to the necessity of a spiritual foundation for pedagogies requiring the Discourse risk taking described by Gee.

The qualities of spiritually integrated pedagogy, as advocated by both Freire, bell hooks, Leela Fernandez, and Parker Palmer and to be outlined in this chapter, are a constant quest for self-knowledge and a commitment to equality and dialogue based on a sense of the transcendent in ourselves and our students. It also requires the

continuing development of a sense of the ever present connectedness of our classroom to the outside world, our lives to the lives of our students, and our institutions to the communities in which they exist. Finally, a spiritually integrated pedagogy requires an absolute dedication to the value of social justice and its consistent practice through the other qualities of a spiritually integrated pedagogy. A spiritually integrated pedagogy also draws on Discourse moves not traditionally available in academic Discourse. These include the ability to witness, see that conflict is sometimes an illusion, and rely on faith in the face of despair. These characteristics are drawn out of the works of Parker Palmer, Paulo Freire, bell hooks, and Leela Fernandez and taken by them mostly from their own spiritual Discourses. Though some of these qualities are not often discussed as spiritual qualities, they do in fact require a spiritual foundation to fully enact. This is true both in Freire's work and in the work of other teachers-that-write interested in them.

As European critical theory will point out, each of these spiritual behaviors, in the face of the Discourses and power dynamics in which we live, and the often invisible class and gender interests we carry, are easy to say and immensely difficult to enact. Giroux reminds us that what makes Freire unique in critical theory is that the spiritual grounding of his pedagogy provides hope and direction for how to make the changes that otherwise seem too terrifying. It has often been the role of spirituality to provide this support in the face of risk and fear. Parker Palmer in the *The Courage to Teach* writes:

Surrounded and invaded by fear, how can we transcend it and reconnect with reality for the sake of teaching and learning? The only path I know that might take us in that direction is the one marked 'spiritual.' Fear is so fundamental to the human condition that all the great spiritual traditions originate in an effort to overcome its effects on our lives. With different words, they all proclaim the same core message: 'Be Not Afraid'. Though the traditions vary widely in the

ways they propose to take us beyond fear, all hold out the same hope: we can escape fear's paralysis and enter a state of grace where encounters with otherness will not threaten us but will enrich our work and our lives. (57)

Without a spiritual foundation, facing the kind of risk of identity destruction that Gee discusses results not in a meta-understanding of Discourse or the ability to critique, not in an opening of awareness, but in a closing down. To Palmer, only with a spiritual foundation can that instinct to close down when faced with the other be resisted.

In a flattened, desacralized culture, thinking is not what happens when we are taken – or threatened – by surprise. Instead, we reflexively defend ourselves by reaching for a weapon that we know how to use, an old idea whose use we mastered long ago. To think a new thought in this moment of danger would leave us open and vulnerable, for we do not know what flank it might leave exposed. So we grab an old idea, a conceptual club we know how to use because we have swung it many times before, and we beat the surprise to death – or we run away before it can make a mark on our minds. Startled by otherness, reacting out of fear, we destroy the possibility of learning anything new by allowing the ancient fight or flight syndrome to have its way. (Palmer, 113)

As discussed in chapter one, the spiritual basis of Freire's pedagogy is rarely explicit partly because he, himself, seems to take the need for spiritual grounding much more for granted than does his North American audience. With the help of North American pedagogues who must write of spirituality in more explicit terms, we can see the spiritual requirements of Freire's pedagogy. In making these requirements visible, I hope to start to describe the qualities of a holistic classroom that effectively supports students and teachers as they move through the fear and risk involved in the type of profound Discourse learning Gee describes.

### **The Bringing of a More Self-Aware Self to the Classroom**

A well known foundation of Freire's liberation pedagogy is that any system of education, like any revolution, is always in danger of merely reproducing the same structures of violence as the oppressor. Only through being ever aware that each of us

has within us our own oppressors can we resist that oppression without at the very same moment reproducing it. This awareness of the oppressor inside requires constant inner work and vigilance. Some (who? Cite here) have pointed out, for instance, that while Freire has greater success in pointing out class injustices, he is more blind to gender politics and the oppression of the patriarchal society in which we live. But to Freire, it is the constant evolutionary process required of every revolutionary teacher to always evolve towards the critical and away from the naive. This process is a never-ending struggle of self awareness. In response to critique, he writes in (name the text):

It seems to me, however, that those who thus classify me by drawing on certain naive phrases that can be lifted out of my works – and are today the object of my own self criticism – must try to accompany me through the steps of my own evolution. In effect, I don't hold any simple or immodest illusions about reaching a state of absolute critical ability. It seems to me that the important thing is to see which of the two aspects – the naive or the critical – is imposing itself as my praxis and reflection gradually develop. (152)

In *Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks writes of Freire's influence on her own teaching, reflecting on Freire's struggle to move through the patriarchy of his own primary Discourse with which he began towards something better. "It was not that I did not see sexist behavior on his part, only that these contradictions are embraced as part of the learning process, part of what one struggles to change – and that struggle is often protracted" (59) This spiritual journey towards more self awareness is a journey of growth and one that, far from bringing self-condemnation is a process of joy for Freire. He writes, "Rather than feeling disappointed and frightened by critical discovery of the tension in which my humanity places me, I discover in that tension the joy of being" (129). For Freire, this constant search for self-knowledge is a requirement not only for teaching but for being happily alive. On the other hand, hooks writes, this very

necessary attribute of a teacher, the need to have an ongoing quest for enlightenment, wasn't at all shared by most of her professors. hooks found, in fact, that there was a direct connection between those professors uninterested in enlightenment and those professors most resistant to the work required by liberatory pedagogy:

There was fear that the conditions of that self would interfere with the teaching process. Part of the luxury and privilege of the role of teacher/professor today is the absence of any requirement that we be self-actualized. Not surprisingly, professors who are not concerned with inner well-being are the most threatened by the demand on the part of students for liberatory education, for pedagogical processes that will aid them in their own struggle for self-actualization. ... Most of my professors were not in the slightest bit interested in enlightenment. (15)

As Parker Palmer writes in *The Courage to Teach*, this quest for self-knowledge is a spiritual process, whether we label it so or not, and it is absolutely necessary for good teaching. The constant journey to go *into* rather than around the inner oppressor to find something deeper on the other side is a necessary part of a spiritually integrated pedagogy. Through this process we find a place to “connect with” rather than help to oppress the people around us. Palmer writes,

Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together. The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life. Viewed from this angle, teaching holds a mirror to the soul. If I am willing to look in that mirror and not run from what I see, I have a chance to gain self-knowledge -- and knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject. In fact, knowing my students and my subject depends heavily on self-knowledge. When I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are. When I do not know myself I cannot know my subject -- not at the deepest levels of embodied, personal meaning. I will know it only abstractly, from a distance, a congeries of concepts as far removed from the world as I am from personal truth." (2)

What Parker calls getting in touch with the “inner teacher” or the “soul” is, in the engaged Buddhism of Thich Nhat Hanh, the process of finding our true inner

bodhisattva. The part of us that is the best part because it is, in fact, the divine center common to all creation. It is only in communion with this center, this “inner teacher” or bodhisattva, that, for Palmer and Nhat Hanh, we can hope to take action as teachers that contributes to healing the world rather than wounding it. True self knowledge, then, is not merely *self* knowledge, but knowledge of the world, society, and our students.

Palmer:

When we make the inward turn, the home we find is not a closed and parochial place in which we can hide, from which we can neither see nor be seen. Instead, this home is as open and vast as the sky itself. Here we are at home with more than our own familiar thoughts and those people who think like us. We are at home in a universe that embraces both the smallness of “I” and the vastness of all that is “not I,” and does so with consummate ease. In this home, we know ourselves not as isolated atoms threatened by otherness but as integral parts of the great web of life. In that knowing, we are taken beyond fear toward wholeness. (58)

Freire’s never ending quest for self-actualization and transformation of the inner oppressor “ends” in this infinite place where escape from the inner oppressor means a never ending movement towards a lived awareness of the connections between our students and ourselves and between our writing and our readers and our classrooms and the rest of the universe.

Phrases and words like “transcendence,” “soul,” “bodhisattva,” or “infinite place,” of course immediately bring up fears of essentialism or progress narrative. An example of this type of critique is Derrida’s “On Spirit” which criticizes Heidegger’s assumption that any movement by the spirit is forward movement. Heidegger’s concept of national German spirit was used by some to justify Nazism. We cannot, in other words, according to Derrida, assume that change will always be progress. Additionally, Derrida points out that Heidegger’s use of the term “spirit” comes to mean “German

spirit” and that such words that pretend to be universal will become ethnocentric, and, as such, “essentialist” justifications for what is contextual behavior. Applied to research on spiritual teaching, how do I know if I am really teaching from some place closer to the infinite that is less mediated by my own ego or inner oppressor? How do I know I’m not just looking for a way out of accepting the social realities of my own socio-economic place in the world, just as Heidegger (according to Derrida) was appealing to the spiritual to justify the behavior of one nation? As will be discussed later, any type of truly spiritually integrated teaching does not side step gender, race, and economics but seeks to know them more deeply. Only through knowledge of the ways we benefit from and are tied to the oppressor inside of us, can we do the difficult work of separating from this oppressor. In addition, it is dialogic education that prevents us from imposing our necessarily imperfect attempts to overcome our inner oppressor on our students. Freire makes no claim to having overcome his inner oppressor, only to constantly striving to do so while truly listening to his students. It is partly because this process is imperfect that answers are not given to students in a banking model of education, but built, through each person speaking their own truths from wherever they are and then truly listening to and learning from the truths of others. In true dialogue, no one makes the claim to being worth more, or more *progressed* than anyone else, since such a thing, on any deep level, is never possible. Individual attempts to overcome inner oppressors cannot be compared since they are far too complex, recursive, and individual. That is why one can always, in dialogue, learn from listening to the experiences of others. The spiritual nature of dialogic education will be discussed more fully later.

But is such “progress” towards letting go of our inner oppressor even possible?

Is there a place for us to rest and teach from that transcends, at least at some points in time, our oppressor? Certainly much of critical theory would tell us no, and this is exactly why Giroux is right to point out that Paulo Freire's pedagogy is important because it offers not only hope, but the beginnings of a path towards that hope. Finally, however, to believe that there is such a place beyond each of our oppressors that we can move towards through any kind of pedagogy requires faith, and I can no more logically argue for its existence than could Aquinas or Pascal logically argue for or against the existence of a "God." I do, however, hope, in my narratives in chapters three and four, to "evoke" my own experience of engaging in this process as a teacher and let the reader compare his/her own experiences with my own struggle. Chapters three and four make the case that, for me, and I think my students, my attempt to do this work was better in numerous ways than the alternatives.

For all of these teachers -- Freire, Nhat Hanh, Palmer, hooks -- the natural next step (and next here is in the context of a never ending constantly recursive process) is to bring our self that is ever moving towards the self-awareness of connection to the classroom. Speaking at the law school of the University of Sao Paulo, Freire says:

Some fellow leftist of mine might already be saying, "Paulo is irreversibly lost." I would say to my hypothetical leftist comrade, "I am found, precisely because I lose myself in watching the snow come down." ... After having lost a wife whom I loved thunderously, I begin to thunderously love once more, without any sense of guilt. Yes, that is pedagogical as well! I want to say it, I did not actually have any reason for saying it, and I do have reasons for saying it. I would not have them, if my public criterion dichotomized my private life, but I do not dichotomize; I am a man who lives privately, publicly, and publicly, privately. I am more or less the same at home and here at this college. It is then important that I say that. (68)

There are reasons that this Freire who says he is found not because of Marx but because of "snow" and "love" is not as familiar or comfortable to a North American



audience. The intense criticism of and discomfort with bringing a full undichotomized self to the classroom can be clearly seen in the written responses to Jane Tompkin's CCC's essay, which she titles "Pedagogy of the Distressed," as a way of indicating its place in dialogue with Freire's most famous book. I want to respond to those specific critiques to her article in this chapter, as well as later in my data, as a way of responding to the critiques of the larger idea, represented in Freire, Palmer, and hooks, amongst others, that we must bring a truer and more self actualized self to the classroom in order to have effective classrooms that work towards social justice.

In "Pedagogy of the Distressed," Tompkins optimistically argues that while most American institutions of higher education are no longer in danger of teaching by the banking model of education described by Freire, "what we do have is something no less coercive, no less destructive of creativity and self-motivated learning" (654). The piece Tompkins believes is missing from our implementation of Freire's ideas is our selves – our "true selves" as Tompkins calls it, but I'm more comfortable with saying a less performative self. If we cannot ever be a "true self," there are at least degrees of performance. For instance, we could perform a feeling we are not at all feeling, or we could play a character written in a play, or we could perform an emotion we are actually feeling. Freire's pedagogy already focuses on our *own* beliefs and past and the ways these may lead us always back to playing the oppressor. To both Tompkins and Freire, a true pedagogy of change requires bringing ourselves to the table ready to learn, and that requires that we actually bring *ourselves*.

Tompkins has been much criticized for the article, beginning in the issue of *College English* immediately following its publication, in which Michael Carrol argues

that Tompkins' idea is all well and good for a well established professor of literary criticism who teaches upper level courses and doesn't have to deal with a heavy course load filled with students who don't have the type of preparation required to do the self-directed work Tompkins describes. More recently, Julie Lindquist, in an article about persona and emotion, seemingly worried that her article might be compared to Tompkins's work, distances herself from Tompkins, reminding her readers that Tompkins's idea of "true self" and "letting go" in the classroom has been justifiably criticized as "naïve, Utopian, and (in the end) elitist" (22). To Lindquist, the idea of bringing unexamined genuine emotions to the classroom is especially elitist and possibly damaging when teaching working-class students who must censor so much of their own opinions and feelings just to get by in a middle class university.

Yes, Tompkins is a respected literature scholar and "Pedagogy of the Distressed" is not heavily grounded in other composition research, and so it is open to Mike Carroll's accusation that Tompkins simply does not know what it's like to teach freshman composition conditions, with a heavy course load, in an underappreciated line of work. Tompkins responds in the next issue of *College English* that she *does* think bringing her true self to class and doing less performing will work at all levels of teaching with all students. She asks Mike Carol whether or not he might try thinking of himself, his work, and his students in different more respectful terms and suggests that it is not a lack of an established reputation that stops most teachers from taking the types of risks she describes in her article to be more genuine and less performative, but our own inner emotional restrictions and fear of exposure.

Perhaps it is self-indulgent that our own job satisfaction would be one aspect of

our academic research. But as many studies of service occupations have shown, the morale, working conditions, and satisfaction of those who work with people have an immense effect on the treatment workers give patients, customers, and students, and on the effectiveness of the work. Laura Micciche, in fact, makes this argument about Composition departments, making the point that the emotional work that directors of composition must engage in is not taken into account and is a form of devaluing the feminine. Micciche argues that the emotional reality is one component of the material reality of our field, a material reality that includes, as everyone knows (and no one knows what to do about) an increasingly huge underpaid, over worked, and marginalized adjunct teaching working force. But, as Beth Daniell argues, even when literacy practices and education (for instance a dissertation?) have not led to the fulfillment of the promise of material equality, “some people have used literacy to make their lives” or, I’ll add, their jobs “more meaningful. No matter what their economic or political circumstances are” (84).

Whereas Jane Tompkins was criticized for advocating bringing a “true self” to the classroom after she was an established literary critic, I would like to investigate what advocating and using a similar pedagogy entails when the teacher and researcher is a graduate student in composition with no power in his field or department whatsoever. Whereas Jane Tompkins is criticized for advocating such a pedagogy in upper level courses, my data focuses on intermediate composition, a required general education course for Wayne State students. The majority of Wayne State students are the first generation in their family to go to college and the skill level and socio-economic status of the students varies widely. And finally, whereas Jane Tompkins does not discuss

what changed in her awareness to make her come upon and desire such a pedagogy, nor does she, besides mentioning migraines, talk about what it took from her in terms of emotional work to do such a thing, in my data is a detailed story of emotional and spiritual change and the spiritual work that it took to so drastically change my classroom persona and pedagogy. Jane Tompkins says that it is not lack of status but lack of bravery to grow through emotional blocks that would prevent a teacher from trying her ideas. In my data are moments of emotional blocks and battle field retreats and spiritual cowardice that I needed to return to again and again and the effects these challenges had on the dynamics of my classroom. Often the field of composition discusses teaching technique, but rarely do we discuss the complicated relationship between our families, lives, egos, and the teaching strategies that we choose. Often these factors dictate which pedagogical techniques we are comfortable using and which techniques we attempt and abandon, whether or not those techniques are effective or consummate with our values, and yet rarely if ever do we address the fact that our pedagogical choices are not merely a result of teaching lore or having our eyes opened by research or critical theory. When we resist change to our teaching styles or persona, that resistance is as complicated emotionally and spiritually as is the oft cited and studied resistance of our students to our pedagogies, and yet we do not study or discuss this resistance, where it comes from, nor the path to accept and move through it. We need to. As I will discuss later in this chapter, reading Freire's theories of dialogic education through James Gee's theories of primary Discourse can give us a theoretical mechanism for beginning this work.

Julie Lindquist goes through lengths to distance herself from Jane Tompkins

because both writers speak of persona and emotion, but I have spent a number of paragraphs now discussing Tompkins's article in a positive light. To me, what comes across most strongly in reading "Pedagogy of the Distressed" is the unabashed joy Tompkins expresses about what she has learned about herself and her profession. There is a similar joy in the writing of Freire and Palmer, and I expect that joy is part of the popularity of those two writers. Tompkins experienced soul growing change, and it completely transformed both her teaching and research careers; the wonder and joy that came with this is evident in her article. To the accusation that to express such a transformation in a serious and intellectual pedagogical article -- or to think that just "letting go" is a kind of pedagogical tool -- is "naïve," I respond that with the awareness of naïveté<sup>1</sup> can come humbleness and the willingness to risk, and with that comes change. Of course, it is not naïveté that leads to the willingness to change, but the awareness of it. Humbleness requires that we let go, if even momentarily, of our beliefs about change, and that we practice, if only to see where it might lead us, believing that we don't already know what is and is not possible anymore than we know the road to get there.

Julie Lindquist calls Tompkins's idea "elitist." That Jane Tompkins's bringing a "true self" to class is "elitist" because it does not account for the differences in middle-class and working-class emotional responses nor the power differential of teacher to student is possible. Lindquist discusses her own class position in *A Place to Stand* arguing that even though she had a college educated mother, she grew up in a neighborhood where her peers were blue collar. The work is an ethnography of a

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<sup>1</sup> Of course in academic Discourse, naïveté is not at all a good thing in any way, and it's only read at least partly through a spiritual Discourse that this makes sense.

working class bar, and Lindquist analyzes her own class position coming into the bar saying that she has a mix of middle class and blue collar traits and that having grown up in the way that she has gives her access to the bar and it's rhetorical performances in a more comfortable way than she otherwise would have been able to gain. Despite the fact that she is doing Ph.D. work, she argues that her childhood background means that in some ways she is not out of place in the community she is studying. (10 – 19) For the time being, I make the defense of my own work that I was an undergraduate student for four years in the same classrooms on the same campus beholden to the same requirements made by the same faculty in the same city as my students are. My emotional responses are working class as far as having immigrant grandparents who worked in the auto factories will give one working-class emotional responses, and my emotional responses are not working class insofar as being a graduate student and being raised by social workers who were raised by autoworkers will make one's emotional responses not working class. I am not my students and am not the same as my students. But they are the same extremely diverse group in race and socio-economic class as they were when I was amongst them.

But much more importantly than this, I absolutely agree with Julie Lindquist that we must begin to investigate and discuss the ways that affect plays out in the classroom. I absolutely agree that emotion is important to an understanding of critical pedagogy. In Zen Buddhism, emotion, truly feeling our emotions and allowing them to pass through us without an attempt to stop them or judge them, is one of the important keys to finding happiness. (*The Art of Power* 46). But Lindquist and I fundamentally disagree, I think, when it comes to the basic premise of the origins of real learning and growth. Lindquist

suggests in her article that instructors should figure out which persona and affective response would most help students learn and then “perform” that affective response. To criticism that this is fraudulent, Lindquist suggests that the affective response performed often enough will eventually become real. I believe, and I hope my study demonstrates, that true education always begins from a place of honesty and some degree of self-revelation. I do not believe that I know who to “be” to best help my students learn. I do not believe that even if I asked them, as Lindquist suggests, that my students would know who I should “be” either. I don’t know that even once in my life have I known what I needed to experience in order to learn life’s most powerful lessons. *Had* I known who I needed to meet and what they needed to be in order to teach me, my life would have been far less rife with confusion and crying, but also less rife with surprise and wonder and the ecstasy of forced humbleness that unexpected and difficult growth will bring. In my experience, I have learned and changed most when someone else in the world has opened themselves up to learn and change with me -- not when that person has been what he/she thought I needed him/her to be, but when he/she has been who he/she needed to be. Even if I could, as Lindquist suggests, “be,” through performance that might some day be more than performance, what my students need me to be in order for them to learn, I would not do it. I have spent most of my life being what I thought other people needed me to be, as a teacher and a person, and it has taught me little except what to do in order not to grow. If? I am elitist, (I suppose to some degree I must be, as, to some degree, most of us are), I agree with Julie Lindquist that I have the responsibility to examine my behavior in class to the best of my ability and to work to remove my classist tendencies. But as everyone who has worked as a critical

pedagogue knows, we are most insidiously racist when we do not know that we are racist. I have no choice then but to bring my classist racist patriarchal self to my classroom, just as my students have no choice but to bring their classist racist patriarchal selves to the classroom, just as nobody has any choice but to bring their classist racist patriarchal selves to their intimate personal relationships. And that's where we start.

It is true that my working class students, as much as my other students, could be silenced, or more likely, silence themselves so as not to express ideas or emotions that I would find objectionable so as not to receive retribution from me who has the power and is using it to happily "be myself." And one choice, I suppose, to stop me from being classist and racist would be for me to sit and not say anything in class either. Barring that, I have only who I actually am and I have only my best effort at accepting the fact that my students have only who they are, even if I don't like it. To accept a more traditional teaching persona in which I am cut off from my own complexities, in which I pretend for my students that I do not have a lot to learn, creates the kind of feeling of fraudulence that Tompkins discusses. A teacher protecting his/her own fraudulence has no foundation from which to really engage. A more traditional teaching persona would also be equally replete with the classist, racist, and patriarchal values and behaviors that come with my primary and secondary Discourses. These attributes would merely be unexamined and buried in mystification, reified by my institutional role. I would be robbed of my opportunity to learn from my students, and my students would be unable to learn from the ways I am forced to change by interacting with them. I hope the narratives in chapters three and four will add evidence to this argument, at least in



terms of my own classrooms. Bringing who I am to class gives me the best opportunity to actually find out about the parts of myself I want to grow out of and through, and, I believe, gives the best chance for my students to learn something by interacting with me. It gives me the best chance, in other words, to fully enact Freire's pedagogy -- even if it means that my students learn a lesson I couldn't predict or wouldn't have wanted someone to learn from me. In writing the way I have chosen to write, I have needed to bring this same self to my research, and because of that have worried constantly about the ways in which my writing will demonstrate me to be patriarchal, classist, and racist as well as other things I haven't imagined. But, just as with my teaching, other than careful critical examination and slow work on my behavior when I notice something, my only other option to not bringing that self to this research would be silence. And then, having failed to compose anything to receive my degree in composition, a necessary career change.

And, finally, Jane Tompkins is called utopian. I think every critical pedagogue hopes that the things they teach are helping to make the world a better place. Jane Tompkins never makes this argument. She only says that she and her students were happier, and she thinks they learned more of real value because of the changes she made to her pedagogy and that now she's happier, too. I make a similar argument and try to demonstrate it in detail. I also, however, want to discuss at some length the ways that I see incorporating spiritual identities into critical pedagogy as doing work for real change in a more effective way than ever a purely intellectual critical pedagogy could do. And, as Freire himself argues in *Daring to Dream*,

It is part of their historically and socially constituted nature that men and women, under normal conditions, must not do without dreaming and utopia. Fatalist

ideologies are, for that very reason negating of the peoples, of women, and of men. ... There is no tomorrow without a project, without a dream, without utopia, without hope, without creative work, and work toward the development of possibilities, which can make the concretization of that tomorrow viable. (26)

As such, I think most pedagogies and ideologies that hope to bring change to society are utopian to some degree, and I include the spiritually integrated pedagogy and dialogic pedagogy I am discussing. I think that pedagogies that dream of a *significantly* better future, a future where it is more possible to love, are necessary.

### **Equality and Reciprocity**

Much has been made in composition of the need to have more student centered classrooms where the instructor has a more equal standing with students. Wallace and Ewald's "mutuality," Kenneth Bruffee's "collaboration," or even Ira Shor's critical pedagogy in which students make many of the decisions on writing content and are writing as much for the classroom community as for the instructor, each look for ways to take English professors out of an elevated position and to work towards a more egalitarian community in the classroom. Theories of composition classrooms that work towards a sort of civic democratic community, like those of Carol Edelsky, make the point that classrooms can be models for civic society outside the classroom and so should be organized around the principals of participatory democracy. As Xin Lu Gale points out, however, it is far from a simple matter for an instructor to disassociate in any real way from the power given by the institutions in which we work. Students take our classes, she argues, because of the institutional credentials we can bestow, not frequently because they just thought a second semester of composition would be fun. Gale backs up her argument with her experience teaching during the revolution in China when institutions had lost their power to bestow institutional credentials. Teaching

without this state authority became near impossible.

If we cannot escape this institutional authority, how do we work towards the kind of equal dialogue that Freire says is absolutely necessary for liberatory education? Freire tries to walk this line by separating authority from authoritarianism.

But, look, for me the question is not for the teacher to have less and less authority. The issue is that the democratic teacher never, never transforms authority into authoritarianism. He or she can never stop being an authority or having authority. [...] The question nevertheless is for authority to know that it has its foundation in the freedom of others, and if the authority denies this freedom and cuts off this relationship, this founding relationship, with freedom, I think that it is no longer authority but has become authoritarianism (*A Pedagogy of Liberation* 93).

For an instructor to keep in mind that his/her authority has its foundation in the freedom of others is to remember that power in one classroom, in one moment, in one institution, is only ever just that: a socially constructed power built, as Gee argues, on partially inherited fluency in a Discourse that has power. For Freire, any kind of authority that is deeper than this must be based on the spiritual growth of human beings and the creation of a world in which “it is more possible to love.” While the superficial Discourse-based authority of the institution may not be something we can completely escape in the classroom, teaching truly liberatory education requires we rest when we are teaching in an authority that is based on equality (this only *seems* like a paradox). Teaching from this type of authority based on equality is the second major quality of spiritually integrated teaching, and dialogic education seems to me to follow necessarily from it. Parker Palmer writes:

In a culture of technique we often confuse authority with power, but the two are not the same. Power works from the outside in, but authority works from the inside out. We are mistaken when we seek authority outside ourselves, in sources ranging from the subtle skills of group process to that less than subtle method of social control called grading. This view of teaching turns the teacher

into the cop on the corner, trying to keep things moving amicably and by consent but always having recourse to the coercive power of the law. External tools of power have occasional utility in teaching, but they are no substitute for authority, the authority that comes from the teacher's inner life. The clue is in the word itself, which has author at its core. Authority is granted to people who are perceived as authoring their own words, their own actions, their own lives, rather than playing a scripted role at great remove from their own hearts. When teachers depend on the coercive powers of law or technique, they have no authority at all. (34)

In order, then, to have an authority that finds its "foundation in the freedom of others," we must have a teaching that also has its foundation in our own freedom. The prerequisite for teaching with this kind of authority then is the kind of spiritual inner work discussed in the first section. An authority based on a firm sense of the infinite and transcendent inside of ourselves automatically requires a deeper acknowledgement of this same infinite and transcendent power in everything around us. It then becomes possible to accept the momentary and socially constructed power bestowed by the institution and inherited Discourse fluency while simultaneously understanding this power to be temporary and far removed from the essence of what we and our students are. At this place of equality we are only equal and can only be interested in our mutual liberation.

True dialogic education requires this deep sense of transcendent equality. It requires constant spiritual work to not be swept away by the ever present social hierarchy of Discourse and institution and to remain in a place of humble equality. It is *only* from this place, however, that we can engage in true dialogue, dialogue that has the potential to be freeing to all involved. From this place we can truly hear, and so have the chance to be changed by, the experiences of others. It is often our fear of the potential for truly dialogic education based in equality that keeps us locked in our own

Discourses. Palmer writes:

It is the fear of losing my job or my image or my status if I do not pay homage to institutional powers. But that explanation does not go deep enough. We collaborate with the structures of separation because they promise to protect us against one of the deepest fears at the heart of being human – the fear of having a live encounter with alien “otherness,” whether the other is a student, a colleague, a subject, or a self dissenting voice within. We fear encounters in which the other is free to be itself, to speak its own truth, to tell us what we may not wish to hear. We want those encounters on our own terms, so that we can control their outcomes, so that they will not threaten our view of world and self. (37)

We must, however, have the strength to risk this threat to our view of world and self if we wish to truly engage in liberatory education. Freire, pushing for a truly progressive church in the *Politics of Education* argues that such a church, “does not separate worldliness from transcendence or salvation from liberation. It knows that what finally counts is not the ‘I am’ or the ‘I know,’ the ‘I free myself’ or the ‘I save myself;’ nor even the ‘I teach you,’ ‘I free you,’ or ‘I save you,’ but the ‘we are,’ ‘we know,’ ‘we save ourselves’” (137). The liberatory classroom must be organized around the mutual liberation of teacher-students and student-teachers, and this requires first and foremost a sense of deep equality. It is an illusion, in fact, that we can bestow on our students some sort of critical consciousness, that we can give it to them, or “teach” them how to think critically. To Gee, real critical thinking comes from a meta-understanding of Discourse, which can be taught, but also by an acquiring of a wholly alien Discourse and this cannot be taught. Gee argues that helping someone acquire the use of a new Discourse instead requires a sort of apprenticeship in which the apprentice is consistently exposed to the Discourse and its use is modeled. Convincing use of a Discourse is far too complex and involves too many behaviors to be taught piece by piece. Where critical awareness comes in, for Gee, is when this apprenticeship is

combined with the teaching of a meta-understanding of the Discourse being acquired. It is from the ability to compare consciously the two Discourses and the power systems connected to them that critical consciousness arises. To both Gee and Freire, teaching plays a role in critical consciousness, but critical consciousness does not primarily come from the teacher, but from the individual growth experience of the student in which the teacher can at points assist by engaging in dialogue. In addition, I would add, the reciprocal is true. Engaging in true dialogue with the student can help the teacher reach a conscious understanding of her own primary Discourse and how that primary Discourse affects her teaching Discourse and the pedagogical choices she makes. As Gee argues, however, an understanding of this primary pedagogical Discourse on the part of the instructor, requires a growing understanding of a diverse range of our own actions, feelings, beliefs, and values. Freire writes in *Politics of Education*: “What is more, no one conscientizes anyone else. The educator and the people together conscientize themselves, thanks to the dialectical movement that relates critical reflection on past action to the continuing struggle.” (125) This type of mutual conscientization requires an equally powerful risk from “teacher” as it does from students. Again, the “authority” that a teacher has developed from her own imperfect work at over coming her inner oppressor is not then imposed on students, but instead is shared as an equal in a dialogue which has the potential to help both participants become more fully conscious. hooks writes in *Teaching to Transgress*:

When education is the practice of freedom, students are not the only ones who are asked to share, to confess. Engaged pedagogy does not seek simply to empower students. Any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow, and are empowered by the process. That empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks. (21)

In order to create classrooms that support the difficult Discourse changes that literacy classes ask of our students, we must then be willing to so much believe in the value of the primary Discourses our students bring to the classroom that we allow ourselves to be touched and changed by these Discourses. This can only be done if we have some ability to, at least at moments, see beyond Discourse entirely to something essential and real beyond it, and this, in turn, requires connection with that same essential thing inside of ourselves. Palmer calls this thing our heart or our “inner teacher;” Freire calls it “freedom” or “love” and hooks uses “soul” but we might just as easily find a term for it that meets our own sensibilities and Discourse. For me, moving deeply into and through, rather than around, aspects of my own primary Discourse has required the type of spiritual questing that I have previously described as the first important aspect of a spiritually engaged pedagogy. To use a more academic term, we might describe this process of “questing” as the process of learning a new Discourse: a more spiritual Discourse. It has required a set of language, behaviors, and values that could support change and allow me to face aspects of my inner oppressor I might not otherwise have been able to face. In short, I want to read the theories of Gee and Freire through one another in a way literacy studies has not yet done. I am arguing that by using Freire’s idea of engaging in honest dialogue with students and Gee’s idea of primary Discourse, we all stand a better chance of gaining a conscious understanding of our primary Discourse and so the ability to do a better job moving beyond our inner oppressor.

### **Conflict as an Illusion**

In most academic Discourses, conflict is seen as generative. “Dialogue” is not considered productive unless interlocutors are challenging one another and disagreeing.

Traditional debate is seen as a competition in which there are two distinct sides, and one of them wins and the other loses. Much of critical pedagogy for instance, focuses on bringing into light the places where groups have conflicts of interest and how some groups are victims of others. In spiritual Discourse, on the other hand, both conflict over ideas and conflicts over interests are not generative because conflict is based on illusion. As Ferndandes says:

It is a non retributive understanding of justice that is necessary for any lasting transformative change; a kind of revolutionary activism which breaks from conflict oriented models which explicitly or implicitly permeate a large portion of leftist and feminist social thought and activism. I am thinking for instance of traditional Marxist views on capitalism that are based on an analysis of the conflicts of interest between workers and capitalists. Or feminist analyses of patriarchy which focus on the conflicts of interest between men and women. Of course, material hierarchies and conflicts over power and control do exist between these groups. However, any form of activism that solely focuses on material conflicts of interest between two groups cannot make the kind of break necessary for transformative politics. In a broader spiritual sense, conflicts of interest do not exist. (46)

Here is an important distinction. It is not that conflict doesn't exist. Viewed through an academic Discourse, these conflicts between student and student, teacher and student, one group or nation against another are a central part of reality. Viewed through another Discourse, however, the truly best thing for one person is also the best thing for everyone. Everyone's existence is made less by injustice and oppression. Most classroom arguments and debates, through spiritual Discourse, are a result of ego attachment to a certain position -- an emotional and intellectual investment in a certain set of ideas. In spiritual Discourse, conflict is an illusion that we transcend when we can feel and let go our emotions and transcend our individual egos to be part of the larger whole. A fuller view of reality is seen through introduction to, acquisition of, and meta-learning of both Discourses. The differences in the sets of beliefs then come into view



and we have a greater degree of freedom to see conflicts of interest and opinions without getting tied to these conflicts or believing that a reality in which these conflicts are central is our only option. Sometimes it becomes less than a matter of performing different actions, and instead a different way of viewing the same actions. Fernandes:

However, if anti-war resistance is founded on a deeper spiritual basis that breaks with even subtle forms of retribution (such as demonizing opponents) the resistance becomes transformational because it challenges the material form of violence associated with war without producing any spiritual form of violence or injury. (65)

Viewed in this way, the protest becomes less about conflict between one group and another, between an Us who are right and a Them who are wrong and more about changing ourselves and our behaviors. As Fernandes argues:

To assess the implications of such movements in terms of the failure to prevent the war is to miss the deeper spiritual significance of such acts. For from a spiritualized perspective, transformation occurs through the practice itself rather than in the visible or material outcome of the practice. This spiritualized understanding of transformation makes our task both more hopeful and more overwhelming. More hopeful because it frees us from narrow definitions of success and failure that are a source of weariness, particularly when struggles are against what appear to be unshakable or immense structures of domination. More overwhelming because it demands a kind of practice that reaches from the smallest, most hidden aspects of our selves and lives to the most visible systemic questions of power and inequality. (120)

Taking the focus of peace movements off conflict opens the door to seeing the ways our own actions and beliefs (as dictated by our Discourses) are implicated in the system we are “fighting.” Likewise, having access to both Discourses means that when participants in class engage in debate, there becomes the possibility of noticing the ways our identities are tied to certain positions and how our own part in classroom debate may be fueled by a need to defend a position as if defending our very selves. Letting go of this type of conflict then opens the door to the possibilities for growth and

change brought on by real dialogue – which is not based on conflict.

Fernandez does not specifically discuss ways to move towards this type of spiritualized understanding of conflict and non-conflictual work, but discovering the places within our Discourses through the types of Discourse work Gee advocates might help us identify where our Discourses dictate conflict. Doing this as a way to understand and move towards Freire's dialogic, rather than conflictual, education can provide a means for literacy studies to construct new practices for our pedagogies.

### **Faith Rather Than Despair**

Most of us had a moment in reading critical theory in which we asked, "Faced with the all encompassing injustices buried in our very Discourses, institutions, and fundamental belief structures, what in the world am I supposed to do about it?" There is no room in traditional academic Discourse for an answer to these difficult questions. And yet once we are running our own classrooms, we feel it incumbent upon us to march our students right up to the same abyss. It is not enough to demonstrate how deeply rooted injustice is if that path ends in despair. In fact, it does much more damage than it does good to place ourselves in an adversarial good/evil relationship with the world outside of academia -- to offer our students our own "us vs. them" conflict in which we have only our righteous indignation to comfort ourselves. Often students take this presentation of ideas to mean that they should at least feel very guilty if not completely deprive themselves to escape this guilt. It should not be a surprise that many students then reject this world view and the demand they think it makes of them.

As Fernandes argues:

Students in the classroom are short changed when they are not given the tools, or even the belief, that they can learn and know in ways that do not simply

replicate oppressive structures. In this situation, students are either limited to the project of deconstruction (where they learn to criticize or unpack the power relations inherent in different forms of representation such as film, media images and literary scholarly texts) or they rebel against such an approach and return to a more conventional approach to knowledge – as an objective realm that is not steeped in relationships of power. ... The irony is that both sides of this false opposition impoverish the possibilities of knowledge. (78)

Spiritual Discourse provides a different set of beliefs through which to view this problem and find livable answers to these questions. Without such a different Discourse, it can be difficult to see how it is that traditional academic Discourse cuts off the possibility for real change or the individual contribution to this change. It is difficult to see, if we remain exclusively in this Discourse, how an alternative to such despair might even be necessary. Spirituality offers a vision of interconnectedness that means that each of our actions and beliefs have an effect on the whole. Thich Nhat Hahn, for instance, a Vietnamese Zen Buddhist writes of interconnectedness,

With concentration on no self – the reality that we do not have a separate self – we become aware that suffering is there not only in us but also in the other person. Not only do we suffer, but so do our children, our partners, our friends, and our colleagues. When we develop concentration on interbeing, on the interconnectedness of all things, we see that if we make them suffer they will make us suffer in return. (*The Art of Power* 24)

Through personal implication and faith that working for change at, what Freire calls, the edge of risk – or the degree to which we can currently change without endangering ourselves, we can find an alternative that brings the despair and inaction of academic Discourse into light. When both academic and spiritual Discourses have been to some degree acquired and learned about, a world view like Ferndandes's becomes possible.

How do we circumvent such large economic structures when most of us have no immediate control over the actions of wealthy corporations and the vested political interests that support them? It is not possible to find a space of pure innocence outside of the current structures of global capitalism. While it is possible to engage in a more critical reflection of our consumption practices, the

solution is also not necessarily one of embracing the kind of extreme asceticism that Gandhi advocated; extreme asceticism can itself turn into a form of violence against one's own self, particularly when it stems from feelings of guilt. Self-blame on the one hand and personal condemnations of others' lifestyles on the other are both strategies of the ego. Both evade responsibility: the first by assuming that the structures are too large to even attempt to change anything; the second by focusing on the personal failings of others, thus enabling a false sense of superiority, a kind of self-valorization that forecloses our own processes of self examination. Instead of leading to self-blame or personal condemnations, a recognition of our implication in the exploitation of others and of the global environment can be deeply productive when it serves to infuse our lives and activism with both a real sense of humility and the courage to work for real social change. (Fernandes 75)

This passages uses both critical skills from academic Discourse to challenge systems and spiritual Discourse to create a base of faith from which we have the strength to change. The Discourses, through their very different abilities to critique, contribute towards a world view and a set of actions more likely to lead to real change.

### **Witnessing and Mystery**

As I have been writing this dissertation, I have been frequently asked how I can call something "dialogue" if it does not involve conflict or argument. What makes what I am describing different from the delivering of a series of monologues? What replaces critique and disagreement on the part of the listener? The conflictual model of "dialogue" is based on the idea that the universe is knowable through empirical and analytical work. If the universe is knowable, then the teacher can know it objectively and can perhaps pass this information on to students. There are also right and wrong positions to take in arguments. Someone's perspective can be critiqued by another who knows more than the first speaker and can thus bring them closer to the truth. In a spiritual Discourse, we know very little about our own material place in the universe and how our actions fit into the whole. We know virtually nothing about the experiences of others. As such, what

we have is our own limited experience and what we have heard from others. This can be shared, but it would be hubris to think that we could explain someone else's experience to them or effectively instruct them on how to make decisions. Instead, in order to commune with others, we share our experience of mystery. Fernandes outlines how such a perspective contradicts the academic Discourse.

Imagine, for instance, if we were to allow our understanding of knowledge to sit within a sense of mystery; this is in many ways unthinkable for even traditional disciplines in the social sciences, let alone the sciences. Yet it is precisely this sense of mystery, of the unknowable, that has permeated a great deal of recent feminist writing; the partiality of knowledge which feminist thinkers have talked about is not antithetical to universal knowledge, it is intrinsic to it. For this sense of mystery, this sense of transcendent unknowability, is at the heart of understanding the universality of our existence. It is a humbling sense of mystery that can prevent us from turning our own perceptions and experiences into the colonizing will to make others conform to our definitions of life which so many thinkers have criticized; the colonizing impulse that has distorted the meaning of knowledge into a will to conquer. It is a sense of mystery that dispels the mistaken assumption that the intellectual, writer, teacher, or activist is the knower rather than a witness who is always in the process of being known. (96)

Dialogue pursued with this humbleness becomes a mutual exploration of mystery in which "witnessing" the experiences of others becomes our primary form of interaction. More traditional academic Discourse doesn't often have a place for this type of mutual exploration. Freire's dialogic education requires a spiritual foundation to engage in this practice and it was possible for him to formulate because of his access to spiritual Discourse. Fernandes draws her concept of "witnessing" from the Quaker religion.

First, the witness becomes implicated in the situation or form of oppression being observed; that is, the presence of the witness changes the dynamics of the situation at hand. [He/she] is not simply an external observer. Second, the act of witnessing represents a learning process for the witness. The subjects being witnessed, in effect, represent the teachers in this situation,; knowledge is being given to the witness. (84)

Witnessing is a mode of humble openness that (sometimes terrifyingly) leaves us open

for deep change. Witnessing involves trying to really hear the Discourses of others, their primary and secondary Discourses, complete with values, beliefs, and emotions. Really witnessing another's Discourse leaves our own Discourse vulnerable to change. It lowers the walls that each Discourse holds up against other Discourses that might challenge its presumptions and so weaken its all encompassing world view. As Fernandes points out, sharing knowledge and experience as a process of witnessing runs contrary to current academic Discourse.

To speak of witnessing as a basis for gaining spiritual knowledge is to humble the witness in ways that are currently unimaginable in traditional academic institutions. For it suggests a frightening possibility that those of us who claim to be knowers are in fact the ones being taught. Since traditional intellectuals place a tremendous stake in the power and control that comes from studying and observing others, it is perhaps not surprising that such possibilities have been placed outside the secure fences of our bounded rationalities. But it is this understanding of the spiritual meaning of witnessing that teaching, writing or other forms of social activism must engage with. Such actions involve a kind of giving away or giving back of the immense learning which the witness has received. .... Commodified knowledge is simply a material manifestation of our own attitudes and behaviors and such commodification could be undone in an instant if we could learn to enact in new ways the original, sacred meaning of witnessing. (Fernandes 93)

This concept of witnessing applies as much to the classroom as it does to our research. Witnessing enables the power of dialogic education and is the mechanism through which dialogic education brings change to the participants. In research, it means that the primary person changed by the research is not the group or person being researched, but the researcher him/herself. This is consistent, as well, with the values of teacher-research where teachers enter into the research to learn from their classroom and their students in a collaborative learning experience.

### **Developing Skills as Part of an Academic Journey**

Gee points out that the learning of Discourse, especially those Discourses that

are associated with power, is a matter of access, and so an ethical issue. Teachers have the responsibility to help students acquire Discourses of power *and* to help them learn the meta-understanding of Discourse that can lead to critical awareness. He is hardly the first to point out that learning the skills of Discourses of power is an ethical matter of access. Lisa Delpit makes this case while arguing for skills education and against the practical use of student's home languages in the classroom. Academic Discourse divides the "skills" required to be college educated into distinct hour long packages delivered in different departments that rarely communicate with one another. Each skill in this way is divided from the other skills the student is supposed to be learning. The argument for whole language is that students are done a disservice when they are taught language skills out of context. In most spiritual Discourses, however, the necessity of the context of skills development is taken even further. Each individual skill is seen as part of an overall spiritual journey in which learning new things requires the development of spiritual skills that can seem unrelated to that skill when viewed outside of a spiritual Discourse. It is through acquisition of other Discourses that we see the ways in which academic Discourse frequently focuses on isolated skills. This is the case because it is impossible to see a Discourse from inside itself. The fact that academic Discourse focuses on isolated skills can be seen more clearly if viewed from a Discourse that focuses on things more holistically, for instance any number of spiritual Discourses like the ones that influenced hooks, Palmer, Freire, and Fernandes. If we are influenced by spiritual Discourses, our attempt then to provide access through the acquisition of Discourse and the learning of meta-Discourse requires that we give students space not only for home language but for any number of other things that

academic Discourse might view as outside the realm of skills development. It is difficult if not impossible for another person to know what type of growth might be required by the acquisition of Discourse (or any skill involved in doing a Discourse “correctly”). As Gee points out, Discourse, especially when we are dealing with primary Discourse, is deeply tied to our identities, and changing one small part can require change in any number of our attitudes, values, or behaviors. This, in turn, might require a difficult process of exploration and change before the student can return to whatever the Discourse of power in question is and acquire it with less resistance.

### **Social Justice and Spirituality**

I have argued that in order to engage in honest dialogue we must always be reaching for our own “inner teacher” in order to connect with the “inner teacher” of our students. And I have connected “inner teacher” to other terms, frequently considered essentialist. But then I called spirituality a Discourse amongst others Discourses, something that can be developed if not necessarily learned, and something that is socially constructed. Still, the mention of things like “spirit” and “soul” justifiably bring up fears of a dangerous essentialism. Such terms have in the past been used to attempt to erase or obscure differences in class, gender, race – arguing that it’s all okay because we’re all just the same inside. The type of spirituality we are discussing, however, does not evade concepts of identity and power, but instead it moves deeper into them. Nevertheless, we must address the difference between a type of essentialist and pre-identity spirituality and one that, taking into account power and identity, moves deeply into identity and immerses on the other side, having transcended it.

While the deeply spiritual foundation of Freire’s pedagogy is often implicit, his



criticism of religion is much more frequently explicit. For instance, he writes:

I refer again to what we call anaesthetic or aspirin practices, expressions of a subjectivist idealism that can only lead to the preservation of the status quo. In the last analysis the basic presupposition of such action is the illusion that the hearts of men and women can be transformed while the social structures that make those hearts 'sick' are left intact and unchanged. ... The illusion that suggests it is possible, by means of sermons, humanitarian works, and the encouragement of otherworldly values, to change men's consciousness and thereby transform the world exists only in those we term naive. (*Politics of Education* 122)

Because of this, Freire could be read as having a traditionally Marxist view of religion, that it is the opiate of the masses and that its abolition would be a movement towards achieving real happiness (Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*), but this is an extremely simplified reading of Freire's criticisms of religion and the church. What Freire in fact criticizes is a religiosity that does not lead to growth and social change, a religiosity that does not have a firm commitment to social justice. A spirituality and, what he calls "prophetic vision," that *are* committed to social justice, however, are in fact absolutely necessary to real social change. The fears that stop religious leaders from being real agents of change, argues Freire, are the very same qualities that stop most teachers from being real agents of change. The process of gaining the critical awareness that is required of religious leaders is the same that is required from teachers who wish to engage in dialogic education:

Such a process implies a renunciation of myths that are dear to them: the myth of their superiority, of their purity of soul, of their virtues, their wisdom, the myth that they save the poor, the myth of the neutrality of the church, of theology, education, science, technology, the myth of their own impartiality. From these grow the other myths: of the inferiority of other people, of their spiritual and physical impurity, and of the absolute ignorance of the oppressed. (*Politics of Education* 123)

In fact, while North American writers like Daniell, hooks, and Palmer, speak in the

general terms of “spirituality,” Freire is much more comfortable making a place for “religion” and indeed for Christianity in real change. He argues in *Politics of Education*, “Christ was no conservative. The prophetic church, like him, must move forward constantly, forever dying and forever being reborn. In order to be, it must always be in a state of becoming. The prophetic church must also accept an existence that is in dramatic tension between past and future, staying and going, speaking the word and keeping silence, being and not being” (139) The conservative nature of most Christian institutions, to Freire, comes from fundamental misunderstanding of Christianity itself. The image of resurrection, to Freire, is an image of deepest social change, of dying to our former beliefs and being reborn in a world where we can love free from the need to control and possess.

The lust to possess, a sign of the necrophiliac world view, rejects the deeper meaning of resurrection. Why should I be interested in rebirth if I hold in my hands, as objects to be possessed, the torn body and soul of the oppressed? I can only experience rebirth at the side of the oppressed by being born again, with them, in the process of liberation. I cannot turn such a rebirth into a means of owning the world, since it is essentially a means of transforming the world. (*Politics of Education* 123)

In *Transforming Feminist Practice*, Leela Fernandes, too, criticizes forms of spirituality that are not directly engaged in social justice. She argues that “In the U.S., any form of spirituality that cannot confront the United States’ hegemonic political, military, cultural and economic global empire becomes a mask for the power and privilege that stems from residing in the heart of empire. It leads to a kind of spirituality which, in imperceivable ways, becomes rooted in the bounded identity of national security” (111). Yet, to Fernandes, like Freire, a true spiritual foundation is absolutely necessary for real and lasting social change. In order to accomplish this, Fernandes says we need to

decolonize (and she says critical theory can help in this) spirituality from the institutions of power that have co-opted it.

The convergence of territorialized divinity with a territorialized nation that we see in contemporary forms of religious nationalism should be of no surprise to anyone. Most critics on the left have spoken of this as an assault on modern values of secularism – that is, the intrusion of religious beliefs in the political realm. Yet what I want to suggest is that the tendency here is not with the religious encroaching on the secular but, to the contrary, the secular encroaching on the sacred. Contemporary hegemonic institutions of organized religion, in their pursuit of state power, are in fact engaging in a kind of secular colonization of the divine. Social transformation thus also requires a form of spiritual revolution that decolonizes the realm of spirituality. (104)

I will detail the ways in which Fernandes suggests we go about decolonizing spirituality later in this section. Like Freire, Fernandes sees in spirituality the necessary and missing component to movements of social change. The more traditional secular leftist position cuts us off from the transformative power of spirituality. As Fernandes points out, most of the successful social justice movements lauded by the secular left were deeply spiritual movements led by figures (Martin Luther King, Jr., Ghandi) whose actions were informed by their spiritual beliefs.

The loss of their original transformative understandings of the links between spirituality and social transformation has been accelerated due to two factors. On the one hand, nation-states have stepped in to iconize and appropriate the struggles of such leaders within state-oriented narratives of national progress. On the other hand, critics who have rightly sought to examine the limits and effects of the gender or class-based boundaries used by these movement leaders have paid less attention to the spiritual meaning of their practices. The net result has been a disruption of the connections between spirituality and social justice and a ceding of the space of spirituality to conservative religious and political forces. (9)

Of course, a similar suggestion might be made about the way in which Freire's pedagogy has been removed from its spiritual nuance in North American academe.

bell hooks, like Freire, sees in true spirituality a force of resistance, one that is counter to dominant culture and provides a needed support for non main-stream

students who are trying to negotiate the spiritually void world of academia. She argues that while she initially felt she could not discuss her commitment to her own spiritual growth in the classroom because of a fear of imposing her beliefs, she found that students of color consistently came to her complaining of emptiness, of alcohol abuse, of suicide attempts. In "Teaching Community," she writes, "When students would ask me how I survived, how I made it without falling apart, I was compelled to give them an honest account of the sustaining power of spirituality in my life " (181) To hooks, both her own spiritual quest and dialogue about this quest with her students were powerful moves of resistance.

Honestly naming spirituality as a force strengthening my capacity to resist enabled me to stand within centers of dominator culture and courageously offer alternatives. I shared with my students the basis of my hope. In Rachel Naomi Remen's essay, "Educating for Mission, Meaning, and Compassion," she speaks about educators as healers who trust in the wholeness of life and in the wholeness of people. She offers this vital insight: "Now, as educators we cannot heal the shadow of our culture educating people to succeed in society as it is. We must have the courage to educate people to heal this world into what it might become." This is the vision of transformative education. It is education as the practice of freedom. (181)

A socially engaged spirituality is a spirituality that does not ignore the differences between students, but one that through deep acceptance of differences in identity, transcends the violence and competition between different groups. Freire's call that religious leaders and teachers must renounce "the myth of their superiority, of their purity of soul, of their virtues, their wisdom, the myth that they save the poor, the myth of the neutrality of the church [or the university – my addition], of theology, education, science, technology, the myth of their own impartiality" can help us understand what this spirituality that moves into and then transcends identity involves. The teacher in Freire's quote has, necessarily, an ego that is built on the myths he describes. Before the

teacher can let go of these ties to the power and prestige that come with her social position, she must first see them. She must recognize them and accept that they are part of her identity. Only once we have taken an inventory of the ways in which we are tied to power and the ways in which we in some way *seem* to benefit from being tied to an identity, can we then begin the process of letting go of these aspects of our identity. The myths that Freire discusses are woven into the Discourse that the teacher has adopted. They are part of that Discourse and so using the teacher's Discourse requires adopting those myths and parts of that identity. Gee argues that we have an ethical responsibility to examine the ways in which our Discourse gives us power and then take action accordingly. But renouncing the myths that give us power or examining our own Discourse for advantage and abandoning it are not at all easy tasks. It is a challenge, in fact, that is very similar to the types of identity forgoing challenges that we ask our students to make when we ask them to learn a new Discourse and renounce the advantages that came from their old one.

For Fernandes, there is only one way to let go of identity or Discourse without immediately moving into an equally dangerous Discourse or an equally oppressive identity. As Fernandes points out, "The confrontation of one's own personal privilege only produces resistance or discomfort if one identifies with or is attached in some way to that privilege" (29). For Fernandes, a spirituality that does not take into account identity politics and privilege is empty, but an identity politics that does not provide a spiritual basis for transcending our identity is a dead end and only likely to lead students to despair. She writes, "it is unable to rupture the fetters of identities which are placed on us (and which we place on ourselves) and which we are socialized to believe are

necessary for our processes of self-definition” (30). What is missing is a spiritual connection with the thing inside of us that we share with the rest of the universe. The essence at which, yes, we are connected to everything else. This “idea of a spiritual essence” as Fernandez calls it does not bypass our differences or the ways that power and oppression influence us and our world; it rather confronts these things fully. Only with a foundation this strong and infinite can we have the strength to see, accept, and let go of the Discourses and myths of inequality we cling to.

The idea of a spiritual essence is the very antithesis of such an essentialism of identity, since spirit can never be contained within the limits of identity. ... It is a sense of self which contains within it a radical inter-connection between all of us that necessarily transcends narrower forms of identification. ... Universalism here does not imply sameness (the old assumption that ‘we are all the same so difference doesn’t matter’) but rather speaks to the interconnection that exists within the self: the possibility of recognizing that the world exists within each of us. The difference between this and older forms of universalism and essentialism is that the practice of disidentification acknowledges that this universal self is simultaneously present within the very real social identities, differences and inequalities which shape our locations, attitudes and visions of our lives and worlds. Speaking of a spiritual self does not dislodge the materiality of these identities; rather it requires a full and complete confrontation with the various sources of power, privilege and oppression which shape our lives so that this spiritual self can emerge. (Fernandez 37)

As Freire often argues, a revolution that is not vigilant in rooting out the inner oppressor will only reproduce, by different name, the system of violence and oppression.

Fernandes writes of Marxism, for instance:

Marx’s own original vision of communism was one which, I believe, rested on a vision that hierarchies between workers and capitalists would be transcended, leading to a just and egalitarian society. The flaw in this revolutionary project is less with the utopianism of Marx’s vision than with the inability of those who built on his work to understand that an attempt to base one’s vision of justice on a narrowly-defined realm of material analysis (that is, of the economic exploitation of workers) simply lacks the ethical and spiritual foundations necessary to construct an alternative kind of state. Hence, when socialism has been put into practice it has simply been reduced to a question of one group seizing power and resources from another group; a process which, while it does redress and

reverse some material hierarchies, leaves the underpinnings of hierarchy untouched. (64)

This type of spiritual foundation is necessary not only so that the changes we make do not reproduce hierarchies and violence, but because without the foundation, as Fernandes and hooks both point out, students, when faced with the realities of global capitalism and social theory, are left in despair.

Here we return to the critiques of critical pedagogy made by such researchers as Durst that stem from what we frequently call “student resistance” to critical pedagogy. Fernandes describes classrooms in which even the brightest eyed most idealistic of her students fall into apathy and despair during courses that ask them to look at systems of power. Seen through the lens of identity attachment, the resistance students have to critical pedagogy is actually a resistance to giving up identities with nothing to support this radical move. It is resistance to global injustices that they cannot help but feel powerless to change and that, indeed, most social theory tells them they *are* powerless to change! Who would not resist this pedagogy?

What Fernandes proposes instead is a pedagogy that is based on connectedness and feminism’s idea that the personal is political:

For any form of social activism or feminist practice to represent a form of ethical practice it must begin by linking the dailiness of an individual’s behavior with her or his more public, formal activity that is engaged in service of others. Of course it seems much nobler to speak of broader social transformation and to engage in acts designed to save others from very real forms of economic and social oppression. Yet how are we to challenge social inequalities in the world ‘out there’ if we reproduce these exclusions and hierarchies in our own every day practices? ... For instance, in both academic and activist organizations individuals often act in ways that may cause personal injury to others in more subtle everyday acts – for instance through gossip, slander, and competitiveness. While these may seem like small ethical errors compared to more obvious forms of social exclusion, they in fact mirror the same forms of power that underpin social inequalities based on race, sexuality or class, for they violate an

understanding of the interconnectedness between all individuals that is crucial for any lasting form of social transformation. (55)

Only with a writing pedagogy that is mindful of the ties between Discourse and identity, of the difficult and complicated struggle that letting go of identity requires can writing classrooms help students negotiate the complicated Discourse shifts that such courses require. This is a pedagogy that offers students an alternative to resistance in the form of hope. It is a holistic classroom that, at the very least, does not denigrate the spiritual beliefs that students already bring with them to the classroom but allows them to continue to draw strength from these beliefs while facing the difficult challenges that learning a new Discourse requires.

A spiritually integrated pedagogy engages on each of these levels. Composition and literacy studies have, through the work of Freire, approached many of the attributes of a spiritually integrated pedagogy, but because of a blindness to the spiritual aspects of this pedagogy, neither field has developed an explicit framework for such a pedagogy or a set of terms with which to engage in discussion and research about it. This work is partially intended to contribute to that dialogue by making the spiritual aspect of liberatory pedagogy more explicit and defined than it has previously been. Approaching this type of pedagogy requires first that teachers are engaged in an unending process of their own spiritual development that requires always questioning our unquestioned aspects of identity. We must work to be aware of our own primary and secondary Discourses and the ways in which these Discourses are tied to violence and power before we ask students to try to learn them. It requires a work, supported by faith, to let go of the aspects of identity and Discourse we cling to and may be leading us to reproduce dysfunctional and/or violent systems in the classroom. Finally, teachers must



approach such classrooms with an ever building spiritual sense of the essential equality of each participant in the classroom and engage with students in a dialogue based on this equality. A spiritually integrated pedagogy requires that teachers bring to the classroom a genuine authority based on a their own process of overcoming the inner oppressor, but that this experience is *shared in dialogue*, not imposed. Only with a respect that moves beyond identity into spirituality can dialogic education be effective and result in the mutuality of growth that true teaching requires.

### **CHAPTER 3 “TOWARDS LESS PERFORMATIVE DIALOGUE”**

In chapters one and two, I make the argument that it is important for the fields of composition and literacy studies to be developing a more spiritually integrated approach to their work. I make the argument that such a spiritually integrated approach is necessary to both understand and practice the dialogic pedagogy of Paolo Freire and to understand and use the Discourse theories of James Gee. I also, however, argue that often the pedagogical styles we use and are comfortable with are dictated by our own primary Discourses and that letting this happen in an unanalyzed way can have detrimental effect to ourselves and our students. Additionally, when we decide to try a new pedagogy, say for instance a dialogic pedagogy, we are often resistant to this new pedagogy because of ways it challenges the unconscious assumptions of our primary Discourse. Moving to a new pedagogy involves doing the often emotional work of sorting through these conflicts. This emotional work would mostly involve feeling and letting go of the emotions that would arise from doing things that challenge previous Discourses, especially primary Discourse. I argue that just as dialogic education can help students work through their resistance to critical pedagogy, this same dialogic work, if fully participated in by the instructor, can help lead to the realizations that make working through these blocks possible. Finally, I make the point that having a spiritually integrated pedagogy is necessary for both the students and instructor to make these moves. What we need to do, in a sense, is read Paolo Freire through James Gee. In other words, we need to understand that adopting dialogic education is not merely a matter of reading and agreeing with the theoretical ideas behind Freire's work. The fact that this is not enough is evident in the fact that the spiritual aspects of Freire's

pedagogy, so central and defining to what he does, are not frequently cited. talked about, or practiced in North America. We read, hear, understand, and practice, only what we are capable of understanding in whatever Discourses we currently function. In the absence of a Discourse that has access to spiritual practices or ideas, we necessarily interpret and understand the words of others in ways that are blind to concepts that run contrary to our Discourse. If each of us understand our current pedagogical choices (our teaching persona being a professional Discourse and therefore a secondary Discourse), as influenced by, to a large extent, our primary Discourses, then we can see developing fundamentally new pedagogical practices as requiring the learning of new Discourses. This Discourse learning requires the same difficult change process that Gee describes students needing to go through when they come to the college writing classroom. It involves not only our classroom persona, words, and actions, but, as Gee defines Discourse, also our beliefs, values, and unquestioned reactions to our own thoughts and feelings, which all stem from having begun with a certain Discourse. (Gee 3) If we see dialogic education as a foreign Discourse, then it cannot be engaged in purely through force of will. This Discourse must be learned in the same way that other Discourses are learned, through constant exposure coupled with a meta-discussion about Discourse differences. It is through hearing without judgment the Discourses of others that we gain the ability to recognize our own primary Discourse. In other words, it is through engaging in dialogic education in all that we do that we increase our ability to engage in the Discourse of dialogic education in the classroom and truly reap its rewards. Using Paulo Freire's dialogic education enables us to, with less judgment and evaluation, be exposed to and

changed by the Discourses of our students. It also helps them be influenced by and learn our Discourse, including the academic Discourse for which we are paid. But at least for me, using dialogic education effectively only became possible after and through fundamental Discourse shifts of my own, primarily through the exposure to various spiritual Discourses. In short, reading and using Freire through Gee enabled a fuller understanding and application of both.

In chapter two, these general claims are supported by the pedagogical and spiritual work of others and by appeals to logic, as far as logic can take us in such matters as education and growth. What I now want to do is make the claims much more specific. I want to move from primary Discourse in general to my own primary Discourse. I want to move from emotional work in general to the specific ways my pedagogy was damaging myself and my students and the difficult spiritual process I engaged in to start to transform my pedagogy. Doing this is necessarily imperfect. I don't really understand myself or my students. As much as I try to make the world a novel that I can use the skills I learned in graduate school to dissect and control, it won't ever give but an artificial representation of a reality too complex to put into words. Still, I am hoping the following stories evoke *some* of the experience I lived, towards providing a fuller understanding of the ideas in the first two chapters. To do this, as I discussed in the first chapter, I have used the ideas of Stephen Tyler, Ellis and Bochner and others in ethnography and experimental ethnography to help me write a form of ethnographic story telling.

Most of these narratives were originally written only weeks after I experienced them. Gwen Gorzelsky would e-mail me her ethnographic notes about a class session,

and I would use the notes to write a story to evoke my experience of teaching that day. Many of these narratives were written before I had much of an idea what the thesis of my eventual dissertation would be. In writing the stories, I used the coding methods drawn from Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw and then the writing methods drawn from Ellis and Bochner that I outlined in chapter one. The narratives I developed were the narratives that I found important at the time and the stories that seemed to ask to be told more fully than they could be told with notes alone. Later, I turned to the stories I had already written and treated them as a second set of data, coding my stories for repeating themes. This started to give me further direction for research and each time I would do significant reading in literary studies, composition, or spirituality in teaching, I would return to my stories and code them again with the new readings in mind. Eventually, the work started to take shape, as I saw that most of my narratives related to four themes: the importance of the personal spiritual exploration of the instructor, the bringing of the resultant fuller self to the classroom, the importance of a deep equality to dialogic education, and the inseparable nature of spirituality and social justice. These are the four themes that I then used to describe spiritually integrated pedagogy in chapter two. Just as I used the narratives as data to help me find the general theories and guide my reading, I now want to use the finished narratives to provide a deeper understanding of the theories.

For some of these narratives, for instance the story in the next chapter about the day my class discussed Hunter S. Thompson, the story includes all of the recorded dialogue from that day exactly as it was said. For these stories I felt it was important to relate things exactly as they had happened. For other stories, I was freer with leaving

out parts of dialogue for the sake of readability and focusing on a point, rather than getting myself and the reader lost in the multitude of things happening in class that day. Nevertheless, these stories of the second type are still based fairly closely on the notes that Gwen and I took, and I evoke the events as close to how I experienced them as possible. All of the dialogue and events did occur; events are merely condensed. Names, with the exception of mine and Gwen's, however, are changed. The two stories that are based on my experiences outside of a Wayne State classroom atmosphere, the story that takes place at the Writing Center and the stories that take place in Chicago, are necessarily more fictionalized accounts closely based on my experiences in Chicago classrooms and at the Wayne State Writing Center with details that might reveal identities changed. I would have gladly included details closer to the actual reality, but these stories are mostly based on brief encounters outside of my college classroom that did not offer the opportunity to obtain signed research permission. Nevertheless, the stories evoke experiences for me that I felt were necessary to fill in the picture of my process of working towards a spiritually integrated pedagogy. While the details that might reveal identities are changed in these stories, the dialogue and characters are otherwise actual events.

I have divided my ethnographic narratives, my pedagogical stories, into two sections. The first section, covered in this chapter, are narratives that focus on the first two aspects of a spiritually integrated pedagogy – self exploration and the bringing of a fuller self to the classroom. Chapter four covers the second two aspects of a spiritually integrated pedagogy – equality in dialogic education, and the relationship between spirituality and social justice. The narratives also proceed more or less chronologically,

and while they were edited to try and focus on only a few key themes in each story, it is also important that the four aspects I have defined as part of a spiritually integrated pedagogy are, at the very least, recursive. That is, while some of the personal exploration probably needs to be done before bringing a fuller self to the classroom or engaging in dialogic education, all four aspects are always simultaneously ongoing and without end. While I wanted the stories to be focused, I also wanted them to reflect this fact. As well, I increasingly needed a spiritual foundation to proceed through the changes I narrate, and this sense of spiritual foundation grew throughout the three years of teaching I relate. That being said, the beginnings of that spiritual exploration were, I think, necessary for some of the changes I narrate even in the first few stories. The need for engaging in this spiritual work outside of the classroom, however, increased for me as the stories go on -- each change seeming to necessitate and make possible a new, even more difficult change. I don't foresee an end to that process.

I identify five ways in which my primary Discourse needed to be modified and changed by exposure to various spiritual Discourses (Discourses that were, before this time of my life, quite alien to me) in order to bring these changes to my teaching. Again, I don't at all mean to say that these Discourse shifts brought on by exposure to spiritual Discourses are the Discourse changes any other teacher would need to move through. I am providing myself as an example -- *my* primary Discourse and the particular shifts that spiritual Discourses needed to bring to *me*. Other people, with other primary Discourse influences will have different primary Discourses that will require different changes. Each of the changes that I made came against resistance inside of me in the form of emotion and fear at the time and guilt later, for, as Gee points out, Discourse

shifts often seem a direct threat to our identity. Each of the Discourse changes, also, are things I continue to work on and grow through. I will further explicate through my discussion of the examples each of these Discourse changes, but for now, here they are presented in list form. An important factor of Discourses is that they are not frequently explicitly stated. They are rather taught through modeling and learned through the experience of them. Both the attributes of primary Discourse below and those of spiritual Discourses were learned by me primarily through repeated exposure. The spiritual Discourses of people I interacted with were influenced by Christianity, Buddhism, and twelve step work, as well as other texts on meditation and spirituality and other teachers whom I have never met but whose influence reached me through those I came in contact with.

<b>Secondary Teaching Discourse (as influenced by early family interactions, modeled by other teachers, and acquired in graduate school)</b>	<b>Spiritual Discourses (as acquired from interactions with those involved in Zen Buddhism and twelve step and learned from books on Zen Buddhism and twelve step)</b>
People exist in their professional lives primarily through the use of professional persona. To do otherwise means not taking one's profession seriously and not having boundaries between work and life.	Real learning comes from the interaction of people as they really are, including the necessary imperfections in all of us. Hiding these imperfections in professional life only robs us of the opportunity to learn from and be learned from. It robs us of the chance of any meaningful connection. It also leads to misunderstandings and pain.
When a teacher or professional experiences a gap in persona or a moment of uncertainty, that gap must be covered and dealt with later by filling the gap in persona.	A gap in persona, a moment of newness or uncertainty represents an opportunity and must be met with silence and listening to gain its benefits.
An important role of a teacher is to do what it takes to motivate students to work and learn.	The role of a teacher is to contribute to making a space where learning can happen. Real learning is motivated intrinsically and from the inside.
A leader or a teacher participates in group functioning primarily by offering evaluation	A good teacher or leader recognizes the limits of knowledge and the limits of our



as a means of guidance toward better actions by the group in the future. Positive reinforcement and guilt are powerful tools.	ability to control. Lacking the ability to effectively evaluate others, a good teacher or leader instead responds by listening and witnessing. She/He participates through reciprocal sharing and learning.
Those in a service profession are there to help others. What makes these jobs worth while is that we are putting others'needs over our own.	The universe partly guides us to growth through our needs and they are to be present, listened to, and acted on during all areas of our lives.

In what follows, I move back and forth between the narrative of a set of teaching moments and the analysis of those moments in terms of the spiritual Discourse and the primary Discourse attributes I outline in the table above.

The first set of stories focus on a 2004 service learning section of intermediate composition. Students met twice a week at an urban middle school and were paired with middle school students to work on a number of writing projects including a series of plays to be performed at the school variety show. The middle school itself was formerly a university run charter school that was then incorporated into the Detroit Public Schools, where 61% of the students were considered "at risk" by federal definition. The middle school students in the course were sixth through eighth graders whose parents chose to have them participate in the after-school program. University students read and discussed research and theory on literacy pedagogy and helped design the pedagogical approach we used with the middle school students. They also took part in planning and organizing activities and in formulating their own writing assignments to suit the program and their work. Readings for the course included Mike Rose, Geneva Smitherman, and Lisa Delpit, as well as readings on tutoring, fairy tales and ethnography. Writing assignments include a position statement on literacy, a fairy tale revision, and a research paper on an issue involving our work at the school. During the

time that the college students met with the middle school students, we worked on a series of collaborative writing and acting assignments culminating in five or six middle-schooler directed plays. While the plays had far ranging topics, initially the middle school students were asked to revise a fairy tale.

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My friend Meredith recommends a book by Augusten Burroughs called *Dry*. I realize that one of my students just the week previous recommended that I read that same book. Having now heard about it twice in two weeks, I pick it up at the book store. It turns out to be about his recovery from alcoholism. I read this:

“What about my job? What about advertising?” I ask.

She says only, “You may have to make some changes. [ ... ] Think of a puzzle. In recovery, your shape changes. In order for you to fit back into the rest of the puzzle, your life, the other pieces of the puzzle must also change their shapes to accommodate you.”

“And if the other pieces of the puzzle don’t change? What then?”

“Then,” she says, “you find another puzzle to belong to.”

Another puzzle to belong to. Burroughs’ journey through recovery from alcoholism requires a huge spiritual change, partly developed through his work in twelve step. When he comes back from rehab to his job in advertising, he finds it no longer feels the way it used to feel. He sees things that used to be okay and are no longer okay, and worse, things that would contribute to him falling into drinking again.

I don’t drink, but most of my old social group does. A lot. As I am driving to work, I am thinking I know some of what he is feeling. And I’m worried I’m in the wrong career.

I am getting heavier and heavier over the long drive. I have moved over an hour away from Wayne State’s campus and the city of Detroit. At some point my counselor said that it was time for me to find a new social group. She said that I had learned a lot,

and that I should find new people with whom to try out the new things that I had learned. Previously she had sent me out of her office saying, "Go get this book" or "Write in your journal every day" or "Start going to this support group," or "Look into these religious ideas" and all of those things were concrete and involved direct and definable action. And I always absolutely obeyed because I knew I was hatching like a wet duck, and far from having any conceivable idea that my wet down might someday be good for something, I still didn't know what to do with my large orange feet. But one can't exactly waddle out of one's therapist's office, dust off one's wings, and head off to the store to pick up some new friends. So I just gave her the look I was accustomed to giving her, one of obedient skepticism, nodded a tentative agreement, and then I forgot about the idea.

As things often work, I never made a direct decision to leave Detroit and my friends there for new friends, but between one coincidence and the next, I found myself immersed with a whole new group of people, an hour away, in the college town of Ann Arbor. My friends in Ann Arbor were all actors and writers, at least by hobby, and when we spent time together we made plays and floats for small town parades and drew pictures and we talked and nobody drank.

I subleased an apartment there for a summer but then found myself emotionally unable to pick up my things and move back to Detroit in September. So I found a roommate to split the high cost of rent and stayed in Ann Arbor. This necessitated an hour commute to work at my urban state university, but that was preferable to me than having to commute to life.

Now, driving back to my old home and my place of work, I begin to squirm in my

seat and am repeatedly changing the radio station while my eyes dart from one billboard to the next, looking for distraction. Distraction from the uncomfortable feeling digging around in my stomach and chest. It has become harder and harder over the last few weeks to wake up, to eat breakfast, to get in the car, and to come to work. And I begin to realize that the drive to work has been so difficult because I am having separation anxiety. Not from Ann Arbor or my friends, but from myself.

I realize as I am arriving in the city that it is *me* I am going to miss.

I am unwilling to let go of the Justin I am slowly learning about even for only a few hours. The Justin who increasingly and with more and more comfort tells the truth! About himself! The Justin who struggles on a daily basis to learn how to have close relationships with equals instead of trying to teach and help everyone all of the time. The Justin who uses fewer words-just-because-he's-good-at-them and instead struggles to listen more and be quiet. Over the past few days, through conversations with friends and at the rare moments I am able to tune out distraction enough to be with myself, I am getting a more and more palpable sense that the thing causing this separation is the thought of walking into a classroom.

"They're all going to be looking at me! Twenty-five sets of eyes looking at me and expecting things!" I had said the night before to my friends. And me, I strive to meet those imagined expectations. Because if I don't, they'll ... they'll what? They'll wonder why they're paying money to have to sit in a room with me and listen to me talk. Me, who doesn't know anything more about anything important in this life than they do?

So, for the first time in my life, I don't want to go to school.

A place where even in my most awkward teenage years, I had always been

comfortable, and where I always spoke the language fluently and with ease. Classrooms -- where my academic success helped hide my isolation and depression even from myself.

“It’s just a theater stage,” I say to myself, slowly walking up the stairs. “It’s a part you’ve played a thousand times. It’s a part you are extremely good at. Just walk in and do what you know how to do. What you’re good at. What everyone here knows you’re good at.”

But I don’t want to.

I want to doubt and love and be lost and be scared and breathe and I don’t want to hide any of that!

I’m tired of leaving my heart at the door of my classroom. I have become more and more loathe to leave it anywhere at all, but instead insist on carrying it everywhere with me.

“Just... play... the part... for... the money,” I say to myself.

“But,” I think, “if playing a part to preserve a lie is all teaching has become then I should instead do that in earnest.” The autumn before, on stage, I had played the part of a vampire slayer, and before that the sheriff of a small town. If I was just going to play act, I may as well do it the right way -- with make up and lights and a script. Quit graduate school and study theater instead or just run away and join the circus.

But that’s the dilemma that huge change always eventually requires. We have created lives that keep us safe in our various dysfunctions, and to change, we need to find a way out of the lives we have chosen. I created a career that absolutely suited every aspect of my primary Discourse, but I had called much of those values and beliefs

into question, and yet my career continues to do for me the same things for which I chose it.

I am trying to learn healthier ways of relating to people -- not just healthier ways of relating to other people at cafes and theaters and on my couch at home – but everywhere. Learning to be equal with my non-work relationships but still relating in the old ways in the classroom is not working.

I am losing the ability to compartmentalize my life and my selves. What happens as I get happier and healthier is that my body refuses to settle for anything less than this progression and growth I increasingly feel. I stand at the door of the classroom and the tiniest muscles in my body feel like they would each rather vomit individually than walk in the room and be what I feel the classroom requires me to be. My inner self increasingly is revolted by the very idea of teaching.

As each day goes by and I find it harder to be the teacher I have always been, I realize that the only alternative to quitting is that I must find a way to fundamentally *change* what teaching is for me. I need to take what I have always done successfully and been rewarded for and start doing it in completely new ways. I have to allow all of my current teaching practices to go into flux so that they can change and grow the way the rest of me is growing.

I don't know if it is possible.

And I am absolutely willing to quit if it isn't.

But I decide, first, to give it a shot.

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After spending the weekend trying once again to get through Aristotle's *Rhetoric*,

I had a meeting with the seminar instructor, Dr. Lorrie Menkins, to discuss my final paper for the course. I was not feeling confident about the meeting. In my first four years of graduate school, I had had no problem spending most of my time studying. Heck, I had had no problem spending most of my life before graduate school in that mode, too. But now, everything is different, and my inner complaints about graduate school sound a lot like those of an alienated freshman composition student. "This," I say hurling my Aristotle into a corner of the room, "has absolutely nothing to do with my life." I had made new friends; discovered theater, the first thing about which I had ever felt real passion; and had fallen, for the first time in my life, uncontrollably in love. Graduate school used to be easy, but now, with my insides repeatedly being turned inside out, I was retching my way through adolescence eleven years late; Aristotle was absolutely impossible. I had written the first few essays of the seminar successfully but was now at a total loss for how to make it through the final paper.

Fortunately, two thirds of the way through the seminar, Dr. Menkins herself got bored. She had declared the week before our meeting that the seminar was becoming a bit dull for her taste and that she was open to any ideas for how to make it more "fun." I was absolutely on her team -- the "fun" team -- in principle, and I looked receptive enough, I'm sure, as I sat in class and listened to her request, but my newly discovered inner undergraduate remained firm in his previous belief about the relationship between ancient rhetoric and life.

So that's where things are when I sit down in her office and she asks, "Why don't you write a play?"

The fact that I spent my evenings a few months a year in the theater had become

common knowledge in the English Department. This was probably partly the result of the fact that it was out of the ordinary for a graduate student to have time for an actual hobby, and probably partly due to the fact that I had a hard time keeping my mouth shut about something I loved so much. I wasn't sure if Dr. Menkins was making fun of me. "Well Justin," she might be saying, "since you aren't putting as much time into your graduate studies as you should, preferring instead to gallivant around theaters, why don't you just go right ahead and stop writing seminar papers altogether?"

"Um... write a play?" I ask.

"Provided you can get the course content into the play, and I'm sure you can, I think that would be fun."

"I could probably write a play," I try out, still not sure if she's serious.

"O.k., I think you should do that then. And you can perform it in class."

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"And that's why I'm five minutes late for class," I finish. My students laugh. "I was trying to tape these goat horns to this hair barrette thingy, and it was so engaging that I lost track of time. See, the goat gives a poem about rhetoric at the end of the play, and Dr. Menkins already read the script and she loves it and said that, provided the goat *raps* the poem at the end, it will be an A."

"Can we read it?" asks Carol.

"No," I say laughing, "It's really silly. And we have things to accomplish today."

"Who's going to be in the play?" Aviana asks.

"Ah that's my problem at the moment," I say, "I had some other Ph.D. students who promised they would, and they didn't show up. So I really have no idea what I'll do."



The seminar is after this class, and I still have no actors.”

“We could be in it,” says Seth. He’s joking, and people laugh.

For a moment, the thespian in me sparks. I look down at my goat horns and suppress a smile. My problem is solved. The show will go on. Then I realize how awful it would be of me to ask my students to rehearse a play. I’m an English teacher, and I have a responsibility. And really, I’ve got to stop having so much fun instead of working, in general. Rapping goats or their equivalent are showing up all over the place these days and life is not a bacchanalia.

“I think that’s a great idea!” says Gwen, my dissertation director, who has been taking ethnographic notes all semester and has never before spoken out in class.

I look up from my goat horns, startled. I’ve just been sanctioned by my boss.

“Well,” she says, “They do have to act with the middle school students. And most of us don’t have any experience on stage. If they’re going to understand plays, and the writing and performing of plays well enough to help middle school students write and perform those plays, it would probably be really great to get some experience.”

I look around at my students. A lot of them are smiling and watching me to see what I’ll say.

If they’re perceptive, they’ll see I have frightened eyes. Of course rehearsing a play in a composition classroom is completely out of the ordinary, but what’s scaring me most of all is my students reading *my writing*. I’ve taught writing, as a supposed *expert* in the subject, for years, and never once have I shown students *my writing*. Especially not fiction. There are some strong writers in this class, Seth and Alice strongest amongst them, and what if they think my play is bad? What if they think it’s not funny?

How will I possibly continue teaching the class labeled as a hack with my credibility entirely shot? When it was just a vague story about why I was late, it was safe to talk about, but having my students actually read it could be really dangerous.

“What kind of play is it?” Carol asks. “I don’t want to do this if we’re going to look really dumb.”

“I’ve read it,” says Gwen, and I’m still shocked she’s speaking in my class. I don’t have a problem at all with her speaking in class, it’s just that she’s never done it unless someone asks her a direct question. “It’s great. It’s really really funny.” I had forgotten I’d e-mailed the play to Gwen a few days previous. Her affirmation, meant to reassure the students, reassures me.

“Let’s read it,” Seth says again. “We can spend class rehearsing it.”

I look grim and serious with the power of every ounce of serious English teacher inside of me. I am channeling the strictest elementary school teacher I ever had, the one I was scared of, gave me a D in penmanship, and took us to a cemetery for the year’s only field trip so we could make crayon rubbings of grave stones. “We have a lot to accomplish today,” I repeat, “It’s very important that we cover the material on the English Proficiency Exam because you won’t graduate if you don’t pass that exam.”

I stop and look around at them. “But if we get through that material... I suppose we can discuss what we might do with this play.”

And then I launch immediately into my lecture on the English Proficiency Exam.

The English Proficiency Exam, or EPE, is amongst the most hated institutions at Wayne State University. It is an exit exam, a two hour impromptu essay required of

every student at Wayne State.<sup>2</sup> One third of the students who take the exam fail it on their first attempt. In the year before I was an English instructor, I was the advisor with whom every student who failed met to discuss their failed exam and their frustration over not being able to graduate. Before that, I spent four years as a peer tutor at the Writing Center helping students who were trying to pass the same exam. There is nothing in the world about which I am more of an expert than the English Proficiency Exam. Each semester I include a day covering it. I don't normally include it in the class schedule but instead drop the day in somewhere. I invariably choose to cover the exam on the day on which I am missing some confidence as a teacher, at the point in the semester where I have recently tried something new that didn't work or feel that my authority has been called into question.

I do this on those days because I could teach the exam and field questions about it while doing cartwheels and having bowling pins thrown at me blindfolded.

It is a dry, five paragraph essay the university asks for, and the whole process (that doesn't allow for even a smidge of Process) runs contrary to almost every established or unestablished theory or value in composition studies; it is writing instruction at its most institutional and bureaucratic. Nevertheless... on it, I am an expert.

The students have heard about the exam. And they are scared. And so after my lecture I field a lot of questions, and when they ask me what to do if there are topics on the exam they know nothing about, I challenge them with the most obscure and esoteric topics ever given on the exam, and we plan some essays together on the board.

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<sup>2</sup> The English Proficiency Exam at Wayne State was eliminated in 2007 for budget reasons. A replacement exit exam is currently being considered by university administration.

When the questions finally stop, and they are satisfied that they might be prepared, there is still time left in the class and an hour after that before my graduate seminar starts. Also, I feel pretty solidly like a serious English teacher.

“Here’s what we’re going to do,” I say, because I still feel immensely guilty for this even having come up, “I’m going to leave the room. If you guys do or do not want to do this play, that is totally fine with me. But you guys discuss it with one another, and you make a decision as a class about what you want to do.”

I walk to the door. I turn back and look, and Gwen is eagerly watching my students’ faces, ready to write things down.

“There isn’t much point in my leaving the class,” I tell her, “If you’re going to write down what they say.”

“Oh, right,” she says, and she walks out with me.

“Are you sure this is o.k.?” I ask her in the hallway.

“Don’t you normally have to spend some class time going over some theater basics anyway when the middle schooler plays start?”

“Yes.”

“So I think this will be great.”

Seth pokes his head out in the hallway and beckons me in. Gwen and I enter.

“Most of us have agreed that we want to do the play no matter what, and that we want to perform it for the Ph.D. students,” says Aviana, “There are three of us that will do it if we get some extra credit for it.”

I pretend to think about it. “O.k.,” I say, “But only because you’re going to have to act with the kids and this might help. And only five points. That’s one half of a response

paper.” It’s absolutely nothing. “Does that cover it?”

There are unanimous nods.

And that’s it. When students need to leave for other classes, they will leave. I sit on the desk at the front of the room, holding the stack of scripts in my hand and shifting nervously back and forth on my buttocks.

Mostly to stall actually showing them the script, I begin to explain the plot. I tell them about *Prometheus Bound*, the lost Greek play, I briefly describe Percy Shelly’s sequel, and then tell them I have written a new sequel to the original. I tell them that there are a lot of inside jokes for composition and rhetoric scholars, but that I will explain them, and I tell them the scholarly goals I had to meet with the play.

“Well,” I say, “How should we give parts? Shall I audition them?”

“I’m the rapping goat,” answers Mike.

Mike is my biggest success story of the class thus far. He came in writing jumbled sentences that didn’t make sense. After talking with him, I found out that he had quite complicated ideas he was trying to express and that he was putting sparse fragments of three or four pieces of each them in one sentence without finishing any of the ideas. He had had great difficulty in all of his English classes.

“You think very fast, don’t you?” I asked him.

“Yes!” he said.

“I think fast, too,” I said, “We just gotta work on keeping your thoughts slow enough for your pen to keep up with them. One at a time. Finish them before you move on. And you’ll be golden. These are amazing ideas.” I worked on slowly moving through each of his four ideas in one of the sentences. He explained each idea, while I

poured tar and molasses and finally quick drying cement on him to slow him down. And then he took each partially written phrase and wrote down the complete ideas. He beamed. He'd been getting progressively higher grades on his essays since then.

"The rapping goat, that's the one that your professor said you needed to have to get the A, right? I'm going to get you the A. Don't worry, I've got you."

"O.k., but you have to wear the horns," I say, and hand him those and the script. "The rap is on the last page," I say, "Go ahead and start learning it."

"Um, Prometheus," I say looking back at the script, "This is the starring role. He's got the most lines."

Nida raises her hand. Nida is shy, and wouldn't have been my first choice. I'm surprised she volunteered. I hand her the script, and tell her which lines to read. She does so. I ask if anyone else wants to audition for the part, but nobody does. "The part is yours," I tell her, though I wish someone else had auditioned.

I audition them for Hephaestus, asking a few students to limp across the room and growl, before awarding it to Aviana, and then I assign the rest of the parts. I'm loosening up. Smiling.

I walk to the back of the room to face the stage. I clap my hands firmly together and I feel electricity across my shoulders and into my arms. I'm going to direct!

And something happens in that moment. Something that had been building and pressing on me and stretching out my insides for months suddenly finds its first hole in me through which to shine. It is a first small breakthrough in what will be a long process. I had been trying and pushing hard against my teaching persona all semester, trying to make coming to class feel more bearable. Trying to find a way to be more myself, but

my long practiced teaching persona had stayed firm. And now, suddenly, I get a glimpse that things really *can* be different. It isn't that I have discovered the need to direct plays in my English classes. It is that, in a moment, I have realized that I can stand *inside* a classroom with *students* and yet I can bring part of Justin from home, Justin from the theater, and he can be there, too. In one moment, all of the same students are in the same room, but suddenly *I'm* there, too.

I start positioning students on stage. I explain what blocking and cheating are. And, most importantly, I start to talk to my students like I talk to my actor friends at home. I am using the language of theater but also the mannerisms and the energy. I crouch down a bit, my fingers splayed like Spider-Man, as I explain the motivation of Prometheus. How does he feel about Zeus? Why is he willing to go to such great lengths? I watch as Nida loosens up and gets some laughs from her classmates, and I gently find that spark of confidence the laughter creates and fan it. I explain Hermes to Carol.

"He's a super hero, o.k.? The guy can fly, and he's the most confident and cocky of all the gods. He has wings on his sandals, so when you come on stage you LEAP on stage and land with your hands on your hips like Super Man."

She laughs nervously. She tries it. Not quite. I model it. She tries it again. Everyone in the room knows when she gets it right. She smiles, turns away, covers her face with her hand.

And I suddenly remember the first day of class. Carol told me on the first day that she had been in a play in sixth grade. She had frozen, forgotten all of her lines, and vowed she would never go on stage again. I'd said she didn't have to act, and that

nobody was required to go on stage if they didn't want to.

I assure Carol that Hermes's jokes are funny and that people will love her. She is smiling. She doesn't remind me about her sixth grade stage tragedy.

Students study their lines. They want to know what *all* the words mean. Aviana ask me what *techne* is. "Is it work?" she asks.

"It's work to Hephaeastus, absolutely," I say, "But to Prometheus," I turn to Nida, "it means art."

Mike walks up to me and quietly asks what "phronesis" is. I tell him it's a way to use knowledge for practical application and then tell him it has to rhyme with "Reese's Pieces." "Yeah, that I knew," he says. One of the girls in the Chorus wants to know what "rhetoric" is, and I laugh to myself because Dr. Menkins said that by the end of the semester, we had to be able to answer that question coherently; I'm learning from my play after all.

We get through the play once. And then twice. And everyone is smiling. While my students always bond once we start tutoring the middle school students, this is still early in the semester, and we haven't met with the kids yet. But people are laughing and talking like friends. It is not that the energy in the room hasn't been good before this. It is that this is a different kind of good.

"Hey, this is how I see the goat," Mike is suddenly at my side again. He says quietly, "He's really a geek, but he's trying really hard to be hard core. Does that sound good?"

"Go for it," I say. He smiles.

This is a feeling I know only from the theater.



It is the feeling that comes from doing something everyone has agreed to do together, doing something that no one person can carry, but that requires that everyone carry their part to the best of their ability. It is the feeling that comes from being asked to be loud and talk and do more with one's body and voice than one normally does.

It is the feeling of creating in collaboration.

And it is in my classroom.

And part of me that couldn't breathe, is starting to breathe.

We troop down together, just down the hallway, to my graduate seminar. Nobody there was expecting me to show up with my own theater troupe. Seth ducks his head into a lecture room that has a stage across the hallway and says that it's empty. Dr. Menkins happily moves the graduate class across to this room. The Ph.D. students take their seats in the first two rows, then sit quietly, reserved, notebooks and binders held in their hands, their eyes glazed from years of channeling Aristotle and Foucault.

My students huddle together in the back corner of the make shift stage, watching me for instruction. I stand up and introduce the play. I ask for applause, and I get some. And then I go sit down, and my part is done.

The play starts. Nida is subtle and funny. She is chained to the chalk board, but she acts with her face. Her lines get laughs.

And then Carol leaps onto the stage and hits a perfect super hero pose, and I can't help it, I applaud, and the Ph.D. class applauds on top of me, so I'm the only one who knows who started the clapping. Carol beams. She forgets none of her lines. The things I promised them would get laughs, get laughs. When the earth quake hits, they stumble about just as I showed them, so that the stage looks like it's shaking.

And then Mike comes out, with his sweat suit hood up, and his tin foil goat horns. He shifts nervously on the stage and looks around, then says in a weak voice “uh... check, check... is this thing on? Check?”

Then he turns to the audience.

“Yeah, yeah!” he says, “Check it out! Put your hands in the air!”

And gods bless them. They’ve been studying Karl Marx and Jane Austen for the last four years, and most of them have been pounding out papers all day on the sophists, but the Ph.D. students put their hands in the air.

So do I.

“Yeah, Yeah...,” then in his geeky voice, “check, is there feedback on this thing?”

The he busts it.

“Episteme. Techne, one or two? To think, to make, to change, to do? If the rhetors in their work create, Prometheus would celebrate. Pff, chk, pff pa pff, chk. To take what’s given, and make it new, Tis this that he would have you do. Are corporate interests our phronesis? We’re name branded like REESE’S PIECES! Check it ouut.”

The graduate students go nuts. I go nuts. When the applause dies down, my composition students leave the room talking to one another excitedly, with what, I know for most of them, is their very first theater high. Gwen hears Mike ask Dr. Menkins quietly before he leaves,

“So did he get the A?”

But the most important shift is the one that has occurred in me and will take me years to understand. Every semester I have asked my students to share their writing and their thoughts with me, and for the first time I have shared my writing, my creative

vision, with them. And, even more importantly, we have all engaged with it and gotten joy from it.

And because of that, I no longer see my students as the same people. The next day when I come to class, I am a bit scared of them. I feel the vulnerability that my teacher's role has always protected me from. I feel the vulnerability of a writer! The vulnerability that is always everywhere in a writing classroom, dancing between people, but that eventually becomes invisible to the teacher because of her authority on all things written. The one sided nature of all of the sharing protects the teacher. On the class day after *Rhetoric Unbound* opens, I am more able to see those dancing waves of vulnerability. My students have read my silly jokes, and they have seen behind the curtain and now even know what it means to be a Graduate Teaching Assistant. They see now that I sit in a classroom with other students learning from a professor, just like them, and that I struggle to make the writing assignments / have to write meaningful while simultaneously needing to worry about a grade. And what might be even more frightening is my vulnerability as a person. Frightening... yes. At the moment, all I can manage is to sit at the front of the classroom and smile at them a bit awkwardly. But something has cracked open, and there's some scary light and oxygen coming through.

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I want to be clear about my intentions in the first narrative. What I am not arguing is that teachers should start directing plays in their classrooms or building bird houses or whatever else it is that they like to do. Since 2004, I haven't repeated this experience. What I am hoping to demonstrate is a moment of fissure where some of unquestioned aspects of primary Discourse with which I entered the field of teaching became clearer

to me. For one, though I had been having an increasing level of frustration with the chasm between my outside classroom self and my inside classroom self, I had not been able to do anything about it. I had already been exposed to ideas about this; I had already, in fact, tried to make a decision to do something about it. But actually changing something had proven incredibly difficult. This was due to the fact that my primary Discourse so heavily emphasized the difference between professional persona and private life. Because of this, changing this behavior was not merely a matter of learning a new idea. Any change in action in the classroom was blocked by a primary aspect of what I felt made my identity in the world as a good person and successful professional and teacher. This means that it was hard to even *imagine* what a different way of teaching might look like. What would a more genuine and happier Justin-as-teacher do differently? In addition, it means that whenever a move that seems to contradict primary Discourse happens there is a flood of fear and vulnerability. By this point in my life, I have come to recognize that feeling of fear and vulnerability as a good thing, as a sign that I have the chance to do something new. But without a person having experienced this repeatedly, the feeling of fear and vulnerability can rather stand to immediately shut down the attempted new action.

Here, the growing desire to rupture my teaching persona finally found an outlet. What happened was rather simple. My life in theater had provided an entirely different professional Discourse. As an actor and director, I had access to a different set of behaviors and vocabulary as well as a different set of beliefs about the world and the people around me. Being pushed to switch into *that* Discourse and the professional persona that came with it provided a first important and difficult break with my teaching

persona that was otherwise closed on itself. Bringing in another professional Discourse was not perhaps in the end what I was hoping for nor what I think I eventually ended up with, but what it did provide was a way for me to experience breaking with persona inside of the classroom, using a Discourse that was newer in my life and that I generally considered an aspect of my personal, non-teaching self.

This theater Discourse also required specific changes that brought me closer to the Discourse of dialogic education. In the theater, a director is in charge of a production, but in the examples of good directing I had experienced, this leadership is done through facilitating effective collaboration. No director can really control the performances of her actors anymore than she can control or always understand each decision made by the lighting designer, the set designer, or the costumer. There are moments in this narrative where, in my director's role, I have to accept my lack of control over the fact that only Nida wants to play Prometheus or that Mike has a different view of the character I wrote than I had. Both of these cases required me to let go and trust the creative process and the contributions of my co-collaborators. This brought me one step closer to reaching the type of equal and reciprocal dialogic education I began more consciously working towards later. That work will show up progressively in each narrative.

The other aspect of my primary Discourse that causes a serious block to new action in this narrative is one that will also be discussed in the next narrative. My immediate family is made up almost entirely of service professionals. My parents were both Catholic clergy who became social workers. One of my brothers is a psychologist who works with autistic children, and my other brother is a nurse at a veterans' hospital.

To my family, professional life means service to mankind, and it means giving of yourself to your limit. One is doing good work when one is deep in the trenches helping one's fellow man. Allowing my students to appear in my play is in clear violation of this primary Discourse. Not only have I mixed in an aspect of my personal life by bringing in theater, my students in this narrative are asking that I let *them* help *me* -- help me produce a play I want to produce and also help me with the rather bald and vulgar goal of getting an A in a graduate seminar. Letting the people I am being paid to help do something that helps me is not the sort of "day at work" that would be rewarded or would result in any self-satisfaction under my primary Discourse. Because of this, it requires the tangles and the cart wheels I do to negotiate it. After many objections, I retreat deep into my institutional role where I can be sure I am helping my students meet a concrete goal that they have with my expertise. Then I ask them to discuss and vote without my presence in the room. I need to be repeatedly assured and assure myself that working on this play will actually be helping my students meet the goals of the class. And even in writing the narration and subsequent analysis for this work, I am at great pains to indicate that this teaching move was helping the college students and the middle school students and that I never did it again and also that nobody else should either. Still, I did do it. On this one day of class the hold my primary Discourse has on my teaching is loosened. And, again, doing so moved me one step closer to a dialogic education that requires reciprocity, to a belief and the reification of that belief in action that learning only happens in reciprocity and equal exchange -- that service and learning do *not* necessarily, as my primary Discourse indicated, happen as a result of the sacrifice and giving of the service professional. What helps me move closer to this

in this narrative, however, is something much more vague. It is what I describe in the narrative as a “different kind of good.” My classes had been good, but this was a different kind of good. It was a good I could feel but didn’t understand yet. It was a good that involved vulnerability, lack of control, and equality, but it was only an early step in that process.

What was first necessary to start making this change, however, are the changes in my sense of self and my social world that I describe in the first chapter. I have focused the narratives in this work on the classroom world, but in including the story about how I felt driving to work and what had been happening to me at that time, I at least want to point at the nature of the work I had been doing for some time outside of the classroom and continued to do throughout the span of these stories. The change that happened for me around “Rhetoric Unbound” was a result of deep work on understanding my social patterns and the unproductive holes I was digging for myself in my personal life. This was, though I was only just coming to understand it, a spiritual struggle. The move I made in class in this narrative was brought on by a consistent discomfort I was feeling, and without this discomfort, I would never have had the required impetus to change. The discomfort was caused by the influence of other Discourses that gave me a fuller view of my own primary Discourse and the places it had led me. This was a first awkward attempt to bring the profound Discourse changes happening in my non-work world into my work world.

Through the exposure to spiritual Discourses, I had been coming to understand in my social world that relating to people required equal revelation, and that the revealing and acceptance of the revelations of others was what brought comfort with

friends. Doing this was just not something that was part of my relational Discourse (part of my primary Discourse developed in my family) until this time in my life, and so it was not part of my teaching Discourse. In addition, my teaching Discourse was built partly by twenty years of being a student to other teachers who relied on performance and a seamless teaching persona. My undergraduate year of college I remember approaching a psychology professor whose in-class performance I admired and seeing him wither in front of me with the prospect of having to actually engage in a conversation with me.

Peter Elbow argues that good teachers are good teachers partly because they cannot help but like their students. I have always liked almost all of my students. But what Elbow's contention misses is that it is easy to like people who have to treat me pleasantly because I can grade them. It is easy to like people who don't know me and will never know me and will disappear when the semester ends. But the new vulnerability in this class was brought on by the fact that having shared a creative experience with this group, I now liked them a little differently. If I still was not quite able to like them in the way one likes an equal, I also did not like them from the same position of safety. Liking students is not the same as liking friends, but I also had to learn it wasn't like being fond of my favorite baseball cards either. Real interaction, inside or outside of the classroom, requires an exchange, a dialogue, the risk of mutual vulnerability. I had to struggle with not only this vulnerability, but the vulnerability that came with being a teacher in quite a different way than would have been dictated by my primary Discourse.

As I say in the narration, in a writing or literacy classroom I think this work is



especially important, as the Discourse threats to a student's identity are so much more overt than in other classes and so the emotional process of negotiating these threats can feel so very personal and so near the surface. In a writing class, part of a student's primary Discourse is put on paper, frozen and irretrievable, handed over for analysis, criticism, and judgment. Often it can seem to students that the sole reason for putting Discourse on paper is so that an authority figure can tell them in vague, difficult to understand terms that there is something seriously wrong with it. For many students, even this isn't as difficult as the fear that their written Discourse will be seen and exposed to classmates as flawed and representative of a lack of general intelligence. For a teacher acting and moving in an academic Discourse with which they are familiar and using their own primary Discourse to dictate classroom style, it is very easy to forget how much these threats to Discourse, and the vulnerability and resistance these threats can cause, act in every single interaction, every turned in paper, every peer conference, every grade. I don't believe we can teach classes that support growth if we don't do what we can to renew our awareness of this as often as possible. For me, sharing my own writing and one of my passions with my students was an effective way to momentarily remove my blinders. This is another reason why it is important for writing and literacy teachers to remain in writing groups of their own and to work to find ways of being introduced to Discourses outside of the ones with which they are comfortable.

I also want to draw attention to the role that Gwen plays in this narration. As I noted in chapter two, I was in an institutional position at Wayne State that did not have the same power that Jane Tompkins' had. Not only did the teaching personas of other

teachers exist as an often unquestioned model in my head, but in an institutionally vulnerable position, sticking with the previously observed model feels like the safest thing to do for future job security as well. Without the encouragement of someone who was in a position to institutionally defend me, my desire to start to make the changes I was starting to make in this narrative would have been more difficult to act on. The pedagogical changes I talk about in this dissertation are often unique and individual from teacher to teacher. I do not at all intend to describe or subscribe a set of teaching techniques but instead to talk about the particular teaching that resulted from me when I pursued teaching with a certain set of values. And yet, in this narrative I hope to make it clear why encouragement for holistic pedagogy and for risk taking is important at the departmental and college level. As bell hooks notes, spiritual enlightenment, and even the development of social skills, are not part of the academic Discourse on teaching. Instead, at the level of Discourse in and about academia, the socially inept and awkward professor is an accepted trope. Making the “whole teacher” a part of the Discourse around teaching can help make this process easier for everyone.

In the next set of narratives, I want to be more specific about what the process of doing this was like for me. The following narratives attempt to evoke the experience I had trying to move through two aspects of my teaching Discourse that were informed by my primary Discourse: my use of positive reinforcement in the classroom and my shift from *covering* empty moments or moments of uncertainty to *listening* to them.

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No one understands the power of positive reinforcement like someone who has spent his life dying for approval. From my very first day at the front of a classroom,

positive reinforcement was one of my primary teaching tools. When a student came up with a good idea, put a text to good use, defended an idea with an example, asked a complex question, or said anything that made me feel like a good critical pedagogue or writing instructor, my eyes would get wide, and I'd give a bit of a hop on my toes and a, "Yes!" followed by "What else!?" As I got more comfortable in my teaching persona, the little hop turned into complete positive reinforcement dance routines. The students who got this positive feedback felt it immediately (at least in my imagination): a charge of energy. My classroom was infused with this energy, whatever it was. "That's brilliant!" "Excellent!" "Nicole has such a clear way of expressing ideas!" "Mike, you always get RIGHT to the important stuff!" "Mary I can't wait to see how this material ends up in your essay!" "What a joy it was to read your story!" "Yes!" "Exactly!" "I love that idea; I'd never have thought of it."

When we are dying for someone to approve of us, or more so to accept us, exactly as we are, know exactly how to hit the dying-for-approval weak spots of other people. I got some hint of the dangerous emotional ground this treads in my very first semester. Like most first year teachers, I blundered and stumbled my way through my syllabus. I never knew exactly what would come out of my mouth until I said it. I didn't know which lectures would be interesting and which ones wouldn't. That semester I had a student, Karyn, who always sat at the front of my class and listened raptly to me speak. It wasn't just that she looked up to me as her young college English instructor, it was the fact that she *wanted* to look up to me. I would feel her from the front row, willing me to be a teacher -- a real teacher, a good teacher, despite the fact that only a few months previous, I'd barely had the energy to drag myself off the couch through the

thick fog of my depression and apply to graduate school. In the middle of a lecture, I would slip. The still newly formed teaching persona which had been operating so automatically a moment before would abandon me, and I would be Justin standing in front of the room. Justin who? What am I doing in front of this classroom? Why are these people listening to me? I want to go home! And then invariably, involuntarily, I'd glance up to meet her eyes. She would nod and indicate, "Go on." And it always felt like she was saying, "You're doing just what an English teacher should be doing. Have some confidence in yourself." And then I'd find my place in whatever it was I'd been talking about, and I'd continue, stumbling along until thankfully we ran out of time.

At some point in the semester, I gave her a "C" on a first draft of an essay. In my mind, it was a great first effort, but one that hadn't incorporated a lot of the techniques we'd been talking about in class and that would certainly be an "A" if she put some work into another draft. That's what I wanted the "C" to communicate. It communicated something else to her. For the next two weeks, she sat in the back of the class with her head down on the table and her sweatshirt hood pulled up.

This was my first time trying to pass out grades. Apparently they didn't communicate what I thought they would communicate. But the problem was not just pedagogical. When I offered approval to my students, they came to want that approval. But when my students offered approval to me, I came to want *their* approval, too. How else was I supposed to know I was acting like an English teacher? I didn't give another "C" that semester on first drafts, choosing to leave grades off of first drafts and only give comments with a request for revision. It wasn't that I gave only high grades; I just put off the actual grading until I had squeezed lots of revision out of students and had

gotten them to take their essay as far as I thought it could go. Like this, over a period of years, I continued to revise and refine my use of approval with my students. I also continued to revise my classroom persona and teaching methods, getting stronger and stronger and getting more and more universal approval from my students. When I would stop in to the departmental office to pick up the anonymous student evaluations of my course, I would ask the departmental secretary for “my love letters.” Then I would read about how inspiring I was, how enthusiastic, how interesting my class was, and how much everyone had learned. “The best course taken at this university.” “The best English course I’ve ever had, I really really hope you never stop teaching the way you teach, it’s wonderful.” “You have great eyes.” And I’d smile, and know I was good at my job, and know I was a real teacher, and know, on top of it, that everyone liked me.

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Laticia was the leader of her group of seventh grade friends. A number of them initially registered for my after school class only because Laticia had. For her part, she enjoyed the company of the college students and their attention. When class required acting games, she was loud and confident and funny, if sarcastic, and participated most of the time. She had, however, not written a single word. I wanted her in the class because she was smart and got along well with the college students but also because her presence guaranteed all of her friends would stay in the course, and that semester I was struggling for numbers. But because she was a leader, I also wanted her full participation.

One day, before class, I followed an impulse and sat next to her. “Laticia,” I said, “You’ve got an amazing stage presence. You really could be a good actor.” I meant

what I said. When I give positive reinforcement in class, I always do mean it.

Laticia's mouth fell open. She gaped at me. Her eyes wide. It was an expression I didn't recognize at first. I was accustomed to sarcasm from Laticia, and it took me a moment to see the absolute bare sincerity and her pleasure at what I'd said.

"Thank you very much, Mr. V!" she said, "That is so nice of you to say!"

"Well it's true," I said.

She gaped again then smiled so big that she had to suppress it in order to continue speaking, "My mom always says I'm a drama queen," she said with pride.

I hadn't expected the sincerity or gratitude, or the peek at a Laticia who needed approval as much as I did. I walked away feeling confused, with the sensation -- or the shadow of a sensation... the barest reminder -- of a deep old wound in me.

As the class hour progressed, and all the middle school students were busy talking and writing with their college students, Laticia watched me as I walked around the room. Eventually I walked over to where she was "working" with two college students and asked how things were going.

"She's not writing anything," said one of the college students. "She's just drawing pictures."

"I am not!" said Laticia, covering her page with her arm.

I have no idea where the response inside of me came from. In the semesters I'd taught college students and middle school students and elementary school students, I don't know that I'd ever said anything quite so obviously manipulative. But I heard myself say, "Ah well, that's O.K.. I'm not sure that Laticia does write very well. I mean she's a darn good actress, but I have no idea about her writing. It's possible she can't."

Then I turned and walked away, catching out of the corner of my eye Laticia's reaction. She sat up straight, stunned, gaping again, but an entirely different gape this time. Then her eyes narrowed.

As the hour went on, I forgot about Laticia. I was engrossed working with another college student/ middle school student pairing. A play that was starting to slowly, line by line, show up on paper. I was helping by asking open ended questions to get more idea generation and was completely lost in the work. Suddenly there was a tap on my elbow and I stood and turned and Laticia was right in front of me handing me a stack of paper. "Read it," she said. I did. It was good. It was six pages long.

"I'll be darned," I said, "You can write." She gave me an I told you so smile and took her papers and marched proudly back to her college students.

Laticia continued to work on and flesh out her play, a modern retelling of Cinderella that took place at a middle school. When we performed the plays at the end of the semester, Laticia's play was a big hit, and the students voted it to be one of the two plays to be performed in the variety show. Laticia was entirely engrossed in both the writing and the directing work of putting on her play; the play went quite well, and I was proud of myself.

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I am walking with the movements of a patched up rag doll brought to life by an inconsistent source of electricity. My life is a hodge podge of old friends and new, old behaviors and new, new realizations jammed up with old stubborn habits. I'm an atheist who knows he's got to give in to something more than that eventually and is worried he won't respect himself when he does. I can think about atheism; whatever is beyond that

makes no sense to me at all. I am already vomiting pieces of my old self up. Sometimes it is absolutely liberating. Sometimes, it just feels like vomiting. All of my relationships are in flux as I am introduced to new healthier ways of sharing with people and hearing them. I am at dinner with my friend Sara, another graduate teaching assistant in English. Sara is reading some of the same books as me. Enough so for me to talk to her about what I'm going through, though at the moment we are discussing work.

"... and after that," I finish, "she wrote the rest of the play, and it won the contest. This semester, she's absolutely intent on winning again."

I'm feeling very strange about the story as I tell it.

Sara seems uncomfortable, too. I'm not sure if this is because she doesn't like the interaction with Laticia I've described or because she's picking up how uncomfortable I suddenly am with it.

We sit and look at one another with our mouths pursed like we just accidentally ate a whole bitter bay leaf off our dinner plates.

"I know," I say, "That sounds terrible. Isn't that awful? I mean I did what I was supposed to do. She wasn't writing. I got her writing. She started writing at home and writing in class. She got completely involved in it. I mean that seems like it should be a success."

Sara still looks at me like she has eaten a bay leaf.

"Bleck," I say.

In class, later that week, I watch Laticia. She is intent on winning the contest again this year. She is, in fact, a little fevered. She has written her whole script, argued



with me about censorship repeatedly, and is now exasperatedly trying to keep her rehearsal together as people get distracted. There is a boy, Andre, who won the contest two years previous, and he expected to win last year, but lost to Laticia and another girl. He, also, is intent on winning the contest. Andre wants to be a writer when he grows up. He has talked to me about writing for an audience; why didn't he get votes last time? What will get him votes this time? We have spent whole hours working on conventions of dialogue. He has put no time into rehearsing or casting his play, but instead has written multiple drafts of his play, trying to pair down his complicated vampire story line to an understandable one act play. Laticia and Andre each consider the other their major source of competition. There have been unkind words exchanged, and Andre at one point, has gotten hit on the head with a binder.

This is not the collaborative, creatively generative classroom that I have had in the past. Or that, at least, I thought I had had. My contest and the variety show, which had been such a great motivator, has also had lasting effects on both the rhetorical and emotional purposes of the writing.

I understand Andre's writing fervor. He needs to preserve his identity as a "writer." He thinks of himself as a writer. And I understand Laticia's, too, which is for the spotlight and the attention and status that the play will bring her. I have wanted what both of them want.

I am realizing how manipulative Laticia's censorship arguments with me have been. This variety show will be in front of hundreds of parents, and there are certain jokes that I have asked her to tone down. After accusing me of censorship, she has tried withdrawing her once enthusiastic approval of the class. She doesn't like writing.

She doesn't like acting. She doesn't like the college students. And all of this is dumb. She checks to see if this is having an effect on me, and when it isn't, she tries simply disapproving of me myself. She is rude and dismissive and has succeeded, on a couple of occasions, in hurting my feelings. I have responded by not spending any time focusing on her play, and by indicating, one time out loud in words, that I really don't care what Laticia thinks about my class and that she can just take a different class instead if she doesn't like this one.

I am realizing with a sickening feeling that I am the one who established this dynamic. In the name of encouraging her to work on what I want her to work on, I have reinforced for her this mode of relating to people. I have modeled it, and I have helped us slide into a dynamic with which we are both familiar from our lives outside of the classroom. We give and take away approval to get our way. All honest communication between us has eroded until there is only manipulation and hurt feelings.

We are coming to the end of the semester, and, as I have recently found out, it will be my last semester, after three years of teaching the after school class here. The school, once a charter school, has been incorporated into the Detroit Public Schools, and the school board has demonstrated little enthusiasm for continuing to financially support the after school program of which my class is a part. The funding is being choked. The after school program, once an integral part of the culture of the school, has been marginalized, and every semester there have been fewer students that stay after school. Although it doesn't affect me since I am being paid only through a course release, none of the other after school teachers have been paid, and they are rapidly quitting, their students being divided amongst the remaining classes. After three years,

the writing class I have built will end.

As we approach the variety show, the energy in the class always gets more and more frenetic. Also more exciting and warmer, as no one is any longer shy and many friendships have been made. But there is a moment half way through today's class when I come up for air from all the bustling activity around me. I ask myself, as I am learning to do recently, what is the niggling feeling inside that I seem to be running away from? And I realize that I am sad. I have worked with Andre for three years. Laticia for two. A number of my college students have remained part of the program after their own class ended, taking on positions as after school instructors themselves, and retaining relationships with me, our classes sometimes collaborating. The variety shows have been immense and exciting collaborative efforts that make me happy and absolutely exhaust me for days afterwards. There is a lot to miss. Amidst all the smiling and laughing around me, I am suddenly sad. And being honestly in that feeling helps me see something else.

As the semester is ending, Laticia has gotten more aggressively dismissive of me. At a couple of points, she has purposely walked into me as if I were invisible. Even if we have not always been kind to one another, Laticia and I have worked on writing and plays together, and I have been a source of adult approval and attention. Maybe I'm wrong, but standing outside of the frenetic activity and having one of my rare moments of being connected with my feelings, I suddenly see Laticia walking into me not as dismissive, but as an awkward expression that she is going to miss me. At any rate, I'm going to miss her.

I sit down next to her, "Laticia," I say, "I am realizing that I have been teaching

this class for three years, and I am going to miss it. I'm a bit sad."

"So?" she says. I sting for a minute, and then remember that however insecure I am, I've got tools for getting through insecurity now that Laticia doesn't.

"So," I say, "It's been good to work with you on these plays. I'll miss it."

Laticia doesn't say anything, and I stand up and go back to work.

It's little or nothing. It's just one moment of honesty after two years of being locked in a competitive dynamic. It's just one moment of being a human being instead of whatever it is I have been thinking a teacher should be. I don't expect it to do much in the grand scheme of things, but it will help me learn for next time. To do better next time. And Laticia does pretty much stop being so mean.

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On the day that the plays are to be performed, Laticia is sullen. She withdraws her play from the voting. One of the places is won by Chris, who, after two and a half years in the course, will have his play performed for the first time. He is the strongest writer in the class, effortlessly weaving techniques like foreshadowing into his complex narratives. Unfortunately, these narratives have generally been ill-suited to the short format of the variety show plays. He is thrilled to win. I find out after the variety show that his parents have decided to move him to Detroit's Center for Creative Studies for his high school career. He is pleased he will be able to continue to work on his writing. Andre's vampire play wins the other place. I am pleased about this because I watched how Andre handled losing the year previous. He had expected to win that time, assumed that he would win. He was quiet for a while after the vote totals. Then he happily accepted a role in one of the two winning plays and worked quite hard on the

role. On the day of the variety show, he sat down next to me and asked me why his play hadn't been voted for, what was it missing? I tried to have an honest conversation with him about what I felt had gotten votes, and why this year's play hadn't been quite as strong as his previous one. He thought seriously about it, and when he returned to my class after the summer, he had the majority of his new story-line already written. I admired this. I admired that he had given one hundred percent of his artistic energies to his project, and then accepted the outcome, however disappointing. . I admired his open and enthusiastic participation with the plays that had beaten him. And I admired even more his ability to try again, putting in even more energy, even in the face of a previous failure. I had spent much of my life making serious attempts only at the things I knew I would succeed at while managing to ignore or not "care about" things at which I thought I might fail. Andre's grace in this situation was something I wanted for myself.

I am able to convince Laticia that after the work she has put in, her play should still be performed for the class, but I do respect her wishes and let her not have it included in the voting. I cannot, of course, pretend to know why she came to class sullen. Or why she did not want her play voted for. But I suspect she didn't like the way her rehearsal process had gone and that it was difficult to face the potential of not winning. Laticia had soaked up every moment of her play's success and the attention it brought her the previous year.

I get lost in the preparations for the variety show. It's one of my favorite times of the year, and it's my last one. But after the excitement dies down, reflecting on my two years of interaction with Laticia leaves me really uncomfortable about my teaching.

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The narrative about Laticia above is a narrative primarily about the way I identified an aspect of my primary Discourse and made a first step towards teaching out of a different Discourse. I was just starting to come to the realization that the ways I used positive reinforcement in the class held with them a primary Discourse belief that positive reinforcement, and the withholding of that positive reinforcement, could be used to guide/control other people. Before I could start practicing an alternative, however, I needed the experience of “teaching” Laticia to jar with spiritual Discourses I was now using outside of the classroom. I could not have hoped to change the ill effect my misguided use of positive reinforcement was having unless I first noticed that I was doing it, which required a Discourse to compare it to. Without the introduction of spiritual Discourses, the way I was using positive reinforcement would have necessarily remained invisible to me. It had never occurred to me before this time in my life to think about how and why I praised. The use and removal of praise carried with it, for me, the belief that I could control someone else. I suspect there are many Discourse forming dinner tables around the world in which praise is used as an attempt to influence the actions and path of children. My brother, who has a Master’s degree in behavioral psychology would, I’m certain, tell me that selective positive enforcement is a great way to modify behavior. My narration is less about whether or not selective positive reinforcement works (in this case, ¿it did?) and more about how damaging an unexamined primary Discourse can be to a teaching Discourse and so to students. My primary Discourse, a Discourse that also produced a behavioral psychologist, relied heavily before this point on positive reinforcement. Such a Discourse seemed benign to me and was extremely natural. The damaging aspects of using my primary

Discourse without having it seriously challenged by a spiritual Discourse are more apparent in the narrative of my work with Laticia because of her age, but I think the same dynamic existed when I worked with college students as evidenced partly by the narrative about Karyn in my first semester of teaching. While originally praising Laticia's acting and withholding praise about writing pushed her to write, the writing task was then done merely to receive that approval. Throughout the narrative, this pattern remains not only in my interactions with Laticia, but in Laticia's continued relationship to writing. In the teaching environment built partly by *my* primary Discourse, the reason for writing is to gain my praise, and then students are asked to write for the acceptance and praise of their classmates, the college students, and finally, the wider school and their parents. Because in my previously unquestioned primary Discourse, the purpose of writing had always been to receive acceptance and praise from first my family and then an academic community, it was a natural way for me to motivate students to write as well. While the actual act of praising might look the same in either case, there are two kinds of praise here. In the first, the belief behind the praise is that giving praise can change the behavior of other's. It can "guide" them to put it nicely or "control" them to put it more starkly. This is the belief that I acquired around praise in my previous Discourses -- probably primarily my primary Discourse, but certainly not exclusively. I certainly was a student in many classes in which praise was used in this way. The second type of praise may have the same words, but it lacks the connected belief that praise might control or guide someone else. Both twelve step and Zen Buddhism call into question the belief that we can guide and control others in any sort of meaningful way using actions like this. In both twelve step, sponsorship, and in Zen Buddhism,

teaching, are done primarily through honest sharing and living well. As such, my comment to Laticia about her ability to act would have been made without the intent to change her behavior in this Discourse.

Laticia's primary Discourse in this specific way was probably not all that different from my own, and so we worked "well" together. The results over two years of writing, however, are, to someone coming from any number of primary Discourses that aren't mine, probably predictable. For me, however, it took, again, the jarring feeling of my classroom work not matching what I was experiencing in spiritual Discourses outside of the classroom. When Andre gets hit on the head with a binder because of the rather emotionally distressing competition I'd designed, I'm left wondering why my classroom no longer has that "new type of good" feeling that it had during *Rhetoric Unbound*. Worse than this, I'm forced to wonder if maybe the atmosphere that had appeared positive to me through my primary Discourse might always have had these negative traits, but they had been invisible to me because of my immersion in my own unquestioned primary Discourse. After all, the moment when Laticia hits Andre is not an isolated moment but occurs in the context of two years of carefully planned classes. Whatever the size of the role I played in dictating the rules of the game in my classroom, the pursuit of art and communication for the sake of approval certainly seemed to me to eventually kill any joy that might have existed in written work for Laticia in my classroom.

Thus far, I haven't explicitly talked about how such a change is spiritual. The relationship isn't easy to discuss in academic terms. In this case, for me, learning that there was an alternative to the way I used positive reinforcement came about through introduction to various spiritual Discourses. For instance, trying to experience a



connection to things around me and to nurture a belief in the inherent worth of everything (including myself) created a moment of conflict between that experience and a belief inherent to my primary Discourse. This belief was that *sometimes* we can be good *when* we do the *right* things and that, as a teacher, I should reward other people for doing the right things, too, as a way to get them to do more right things. For one, a spiritual understanding of the world dictates that existence is far too infinite for a human being to hold or understand. If I can't possibly hold the whole universe in my head, how can I know which are the actions that should be rewarded and which not? And how can anyone else know that about me? It wasn't so much this *idea* that made me start to *feel* differently about interactions such as the one with Laticia. It was more so that I was beginning to experience in my life the way my attempts to control others or situations invariably ended in failure or painful experiences like the one with Laticia. Meanwhile, letting go of things I didn't understand so that something greater than me could take care of it usually enabled things to work out better, as things did in the *Rhetoric Unbound* narrative and some of the narratives to follow.

Also, as James Gee points out, learning a Discourse means far more than learning a new language set. Along with learning and practicing spiritual concepts, I was starting to be more in touch with my body and my feelings. In the narrative, it was not during the first semester working with Laticia that I had a sense that something was going wrong. I hadn't developed any alternative spiritual Discourse fully enough to help me provide a critique. To the combination of my primary Discourse and my academic and other secondary Discourses, the interactions seemed fine to me – even successful. It was later, after much listening to signals inside of me as part of trying to feel

emotionally and spiritually connected to the world that I felt the sourness of the experience in my body. Again, my primary Discourse that dictated that I carry a seamless professional persona into my work stood to resist the work that I needed to be open to what Laticia's responses to my teaching could have been teaching me. From a spiritual Discourse, such moments of discord, like Laticia purposely walking into me or me snapping at her in an attempt to retain the control my use of approval, would necessarily bring up a moment of pause. The jarring feeling caused by the two Discourses (one telling me to continue to motivate Laticia to write by giving and removing approval, the other telling me that change is self motivated and an atmosphere of meanness and violence means something has gone wrong) could have caused me merely to tighten my teaching persona further, trying even harder to make my learned ways of responding to students work. Instead, my experiences in spiritual Discourse gave me the option of stopping, listening, and waiting.

In addition, my primary Discourse had in the past led me to carefully guard my professional reputation in the English department, doing what I could to control my reputation through what I shared or did not share in departmental meetings or with colleagues and superiors. The spiritual Discourses I was experiencing, however, helped me see that this belief and behavior that had made up part of my secondary Discourse (strengthened by my primary Discourse) was not the only option. Spiritual Discourses called for sharing honestly and humbly with the hope that that honest sharing with colleagues would lead to growth for both of us. Acquiring a spiritual Discourse and learning about it helped me see these aspects of my secondary professional Discourse (strengthened by my primary Discourse) and call them into

question. Under a Discourse of spirituality, sharing my honest stories did not mean I was not a strong teacher, but it in fact meant quite the opposite. My decision to tell my colleague Sara a teaching story that had been troubling me, rather than one I felt proud of, was influenced by this Discourse and by the books on spirituality both Sara and I had been reading and discussing. The interaction with Sara, while hardly a perfect example of dialogic education in the tendency we both still had to judge and evaluate, was, at least, something different than I had been doing previously and helped lead me to change my behavior.

I also want to point out about the narrative of Karyn during my first semester of teaching that my interactions with that student and my own need for her approval mirror my later use of approval with students. In the first narrative, Karyn and I, both locked in needing one another's approval, her as student, me as teacher, both have our hands tied. She ends up with her hood over her head in the back of the classroom, and I end up going through contortions in my teaching to avoid going through a similar interaction with her or another student. That is, it is the primary Discourse that I act in, one in which I pursue approval, that influences the teaching Discourse (a secondary Discourse) I teach with, one in which students write for my approval.

These narratives are primarily built out of the first moments of change, of those jarring moments in which outside secondary spiritual Discourses cause the first discordant moments with my the assumptions I teach with, the assumptions built into my secondary teaching Discourse and rooted in my primary Discourse. The changed actions are then necessarily small, and while they become more visible in later narratives, their fuller fruition is only visible in my current teaching practices, which I

want to briefly discuss in chapter five. For now, the brief moment of silence I take to listen to myself in this narrative where I notice my own sadness and then gain insight into Laticia's acting out stands as the important teaching change and shift in the balance of the teaching Discourses I am acting from. With Laticia, I try the same behavior I did with Sara and was trying with other of my friends in spiritual Discourses outside of class. I stop, notice how I am feeling, and I tell her. While my initial pattern of praising Laticia and removing praise is intended to motivate her and control her actions in class, the act of telling Laticia that I'm sad and will miss the class and our work together is a moment of me acting out of faith in a new Discourse (faith in a something bigger than me, but let's call it Discourse in this sentence). I did not know what effect it would have. Because I have not spoken to Laticia about this, I still don't know what effect, if any, it did have. I said what I did out of an early attempt to follow what felt like a true impulse, to let go of the control I was trying to exert over Laticia and her writing and classroom choices and instead be honest.

In that light, I think I understand now part of the alternative to the pain that Laticia felt at the prospect of losing the accolades she had received for her writing the previous semester. Staying in contact, for me, with the connection of all things and the inherent worth of the whole of the universe has helped me move in the direction of being able to gracefully take the risks that Andre could take. No loss of positive reinforcement or accolades, nor a challenge to any part of my identity (as writer, actor, teacher, friend, etc) can completely leave me scrambling if I am able to stay in contact with that sense of inherent spiritual worth. Knowing the reality of that has helped me move away from the thought that I can control my students by selectively praising them.

It has, additionally, made me question whether there is much worth to an action that is engaged in only to receive the praise or approval of an instructor. In the case of Laticia, the dynamic I set up to encourage her to write was not sustainable and any joy of creation that she was taking from the class by the end of her last semester seemed, at least to the outside, pretty limited. It was this event along with the work I was doing to understand my *own* writing (which is covered in the next narrative) that led me to believe that sustainable growth as a writer, and interest in writing, might need to come from a different place.

In the following story, I want to demonstrate how the work I was doing in understanding the experience with Laticia came to manifest the next fall in my teaching. This narrative, more so than the narratives about Laticia that occurred over many months, was built around the verbatim transcribed dialogue of one class period. I did not cut or add, merely filled in my own internal reactions to the dialogue as it occurred.

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It is a year later, and Gwen and I have found a new middle school to work with in our service-learning courses. We have held meetings with the administration over the summer and made a plan that everyone seems excited about. The school administration likes my ideas, and I like theirs. In addition to setting up a new after school literacy program, I have had a year of doing intense spiritual and emotional work, had the opportunity to rehearse a musical all summer, fallen in love again, and have been engaged in endless study sessions for my qualifying oral exams for my Ph.D. program. I am refreshed and feeling good about the potential for the semester as I come to class for our fourth meeting. My students have read sections of Mike Rose's

*Lives on the Boundary* for class. I have used Mike Rose for a number of years because of the way he complicates the definition of literacies and also gets us thinking about the multiple ways to teach multiple literacies. These are things I need them to think about before we meet with the middle school students. The discussion goes very well; I'm feeling pleased about this new batch of students. They have read the text and are engaged. We talk about grammar instruction and how to do it and what it means; we talk about creativity and its place in the writing classroom; we talk about cultural literacies and standardized tests and their biases. These are all things I am accustomed to discussing using Mike Rose. It is a two-hour class, and discussion carries on well for quite a while. At some point there is a lull. A moment of silence. And I am struck with the feeling I am always looking for in my personal life now. The feeling that a window has opened a crack, and it is time for me to try something new I haven't tried before, something scary that might make me grow. It's difficult to describe the feeling, except that it is like I am standing on a dull wooden platform surrounded by blue sky, white clouds, and sunshine, and that I suddenly know that a trap door is about to drop out from under me. I can let myself drop through the door with the hope that I will be able to fly, or I can just spend the rest of the afternoon lounging on a small wooden platform with no where to walk like I did yesterday. In my non-work life, I am increasingly choosing to drop. Drop. Drop. Drop. I get the feeling less often in the classroom than I do in my personal life. But it's there now.

"I want to be... selfish ... for a second," I say. Selfishness, I am learning, is something my life has been sorely missing. It is... o.k... to do things ... for me.

I was once on a blind date, sometime during my second year as a graduate

teaching assistant. I had been set up with an elementary school teacher by a long time friend of mine. We had a very nice time at lunch and had been talking for quite a while, and I told her all about the class I taught and how the college students taught the middle school students and how great it was for both groups. I also told her how I was working at a senior center, running a radio drama group for senior citizens. I suppose I thought these things were impressive.

“Let me ask you a question,” asked the elementary school teacher, whom I would never see again after this lunch, “Do you feel like you can do a job just because you like it? Do you think it’s O.K. to choose a career just because it gives *you* something even if it doesn’t bring anything to anyone else?”

I was nonplussed. Why was this her response to all my impressive stories of service to mankind? I thought about people who did work just for themselves. Business people and stock brokers and people who sold things that nobody needed. This was just the opposite of what I was trying to do with my work. “Well, no,” I said completely honestly, “I don’t, I guess.”

She leaned forward, and said quietly, “You can, you know. Do work that’s for you.”

In retrospect, this was probably the reason the universe had been so silly as to put me on a blind date in the first place, to hear her say this and to experience the sudden confusion that came with being introduced to an elementary school teacher whose paradigm on teaching I didn’t understand.

Since then, I had found out that, at least in theory, she was right. And that my naïve incomprehension was one more symptom of my lack of a spiritual life. How to

bring selfishness to my teaching, however, is still something I am in early experimentation with.

“I’m going to be a little selfish,” I say, “But that’s O.K. I give myself permission to do that.”

Said laughs.

“I want to talk about something from Rose’s book that I’ve experienced both as a student and as a teacher. Let me read you this one part.” I have to spend some time looking for it because it had not been part of my plan, and the passage has never struck me as worth discussing before. When I find it, I read it out loud to the class.

“Teaching, I was coming to understand, was a kind of romance. You didn’t just work with words or a chronicle of dates or facts about the suspension of protein in milk. You wooed kids with these things, invited a relationship of sorts, the terms of connection being the narrative, the historical event, the balance of casein and water. Maybe nothing was ‘intrinsically interesting.’ Knowledge gained its meaning, at least initially, through a touch on the shoulder, through a conversation [ .... ] My first enthusiasm about writing came because I wanted a teacher to like me.”

One might wonder why this feels so selfish to me, to read this quote and ask my students to discuss it with me. It is selfish because I do not at all immediately see how discussing this quote will lead to my students becoming better writers or helping the middle school students do the same. It is not about literacies; it is not about grammar. If the passage *does* have an immediate application to our purposes, I am blinded to it because of the emotional relevance it has for me. I am thinking about Laticia and my growing discomfort with the ways I use approval in the classroom. But I am also feeling



frustrated with reading stacks and stacks of books on composition for my oral exams. I am wondering why I am in the field I am in, and what makes all these books worth me spending the last few years of my twenties reading. Because I am often not feeling they are worthwhile, I also am having trouble planning classes to teach. I no longer feel like I know which knowledge is worthwhile or what I should be teaching. While my classroom persona is slowly getting more comfortable, I am dissatisfied with much of my course design and am unsure how to fix it. My dissertation, meanwhile, and the immense amount of “knowledge” I will have to use and create, feels anything but intrinsic and anything but possible to write. These are the reasons I find the passage interesting and want to talk about it with someone. And I don’t know what that will teach anyone.

We have to pause to talk about what intrinsic means. Then I ask, “Well? Is Mike Rose right? He says that nothing is intrinsically interesting? That what makes something interesting is the relationship that comes with it. Is this true?”

“I think so,” says Marvin. “It’s like what we talked about earlier. Like what Cara said about the purpose of writing. The greatest writers are inspired to communicate, to persuade.”

“I don’t agree at all,” says Tim. “Sometimes a kid just sees something that sparks his mind and he just wants to go with it.”

“This is interesting,” I say, and as class is almost over I add, “Maybe you could all think after class about things that you really love to do, and why you love to do them.”

“Yeah,” says Marvin to Tim, ignoring me, “But if you wrote about that thing that sparked your interest, the reason for *that* would be social. Wouldn’t you be trying to convince your readers to like it, too?”

“O.k.,” says Tim, “I’ll agree with that, but what got me initially interested was that I want to do it. And you know, even with writing, I like to do it because I like playing with words. I like the challenge it presents.”

“Okay, let’s take your yo-yoing,” says Marvin. Tim is a champion yo-yoer and on the second day of class, I asked him to demonstrate to the class, which he did to large applause. “You practice your yo-yoing to get better, to excel beyond other people, to impress your audience.”

“Actually, that’s really not why I do it. I yo-yo because of the challenge. It’s a form of meditation. When I really get involved in it, it’s a form of meditation; sometimes I can completely stop thinking. I learn new tricks for myself, not to impress an audience or be admired. The competition I told you guys about in Germany, I sort of ended up in that by accident.”

My heart is beating quickly and I’m enthralled with Tim and Marvin’s conversation. I really wanted to talk about this, and I’m pleased that they do, too. “This is one of the most interesting class discussions I’ve been in,” I say smiling. For now, that stands as my contribution to discussion.

“You know,” says Evelyn, “It’s not necessarily true that people try to get better to impress other people. When I dive, I *hate* being watched. I love diving. I can get lost in it like Tim says. But I hate being watched. But I also think it can work the other way. I really don’t like history, but I took a history class where the teacher was so animated that he made it interesting.”

“I agree,” says Tim, “Nothing is absolute. I had a philosophy class where the same thing happened.”

“O.k.,” says Marvin, “I guess I could see how both could be true, but you know, even with your yo-yoing, when you do it for kids, don’t they all want to yo-yo, too? The reason the kids who see it want to do it is social. And Evelyn, maybe when you dive you don’t want people to watch you, but when you talk about diving, people think that it’s really cool because of your passion. I just think writing, especially, is focused on communication.”

“O.k.,” says Maryam, “I have a question for Evelyn and Tim. What if everyone in the entire world died, would you still want to yo-yo and dive?”

“Well since I hate to be watched, I don’t think that would affect my diving... although I guess it would eventually get boring because how would I learn new techniques?”

“I think I see what Marvin is getting at though,” says Said, “If you like something, you want to share it.”

“Exactly,” says Marvin, “You can’t have a passion and not want to illuminate other people.”

“Tim, doesn’t having people watch you and give you feedback when you yo-yo make you better?” Said asks.

“Sure, but that’s not the main way I get better which is by getting lost in the yo-yoing itself. It’s very Zen-like.”

‘Yeah,’ says Evelyn, “I stop thinking so hard when I’m diving because thinking just messes me up.”

“Dancing is like that,” I say, “And acting can be, too. I know it doesn’t seem like it because it’s always for the audience. The audience is right there watching, and sure

you like the applause. But when it's really going right, it's like you disappear. You go into that world, and you're just gone. I would really have to think about it to decide whether or not, at that point, the audience matters."

"Why would you even be doing the play if the audience doesn't matter?" asks Marvin.

"I have to think about it," I say.

"That's like writing," says Tim, "One way to write is to find out what your reader or what your teacher wants you to write. But that's different than really writing from your own voice."

"Wow, yeah," I say, "That really matters. But I don't know how, as a teacher, to have my students not writing things for my approval. With grades, it's hard to avoid that."

I am thinking about Laticia again and why she wrote her plays in my class. I am trying to understand what kind of learning lasts. I am learning how important relationships are; we absolutely need healthy relationships to be happy. Mike Rose says teaching is all about relationships, that people learn because of relationships. But is the proper role for relationships, for my engagement with students, as a motivator in the classroom? And me, I succeeded in school for so many years out of a desire to prove that I was worthwhile. And the way I knew I was worthwhile was the positive feedback of my teachers. If I was never sure that deep down I was "good," at least I had the simple communication of my A's and the admiration and pride of my teachers over my academic work to tell me that I was a good and successful person. But now I am learning how that pattern had me trapped! How it got in the way of me finding the

things that I really needed to do. How hours and hours alone in my room reading and studying and trying vainly to somehow get enough approval to finally feel better about myself had left me isolated from people and the world and from all the things and lessons that could *really* teach me things I needed to know. That approach to education had led me to this career. And I no longer knew if I wanted this career nor could I give any coherent intrinsic reasons as to why I was here. I was trying to go back now and rebuild my life from my own heart. If there was intrinsic education, I had to find it. Had I done more harm than good by motivating my students to write and read through the use of my approval? Could Mike Rose be right that relationships are important to education, but wrong about what sort of relationships did the most good?

“If you’re really passionate, it doesn’t matter if there are other people,” concludes Evelyn.

Passion. If there is one thing that is right in my world, one thing that is taking me in the most growthful and exciting directions, it is passion. This makes sense to me.

“Well,” I say, glancing at the clock, “I guess that’s--”

“I know class is over,” says Evelyn, “But could we keep going just a little bit longer? This is interesting.”

“Um,” I say, “I mean that really isn’t up to me. Class is over, and I can’t hold you here. But you guys are free people and nobody wants this room, and if you want to keep sitting here talking about that, that’s up to you. I’ll stay, too,” and I add with a smile, “But I’m not going to act like the teacher anymore.”

People glance at one another and there is a lot of nodding. “I know people are staying past time,” says Cara, “So I’ll try to be quick, but I had a few things I wanted to

add.”

Cara takes Marvin and Said’s side. Then Clarissa does as well. They each give examples. Tim describes the competition in Germany and what it felt like, and people ask him about the state of Zen yo-yo and if he gets it from other things, too, and what it feels like. Someone asks Said about boxing.

“I box to win,” says Said, “I’ll tell you that. But I’ll take the recognition, too. Let the girls come over here,” he says with a wink. Everyone laughs.

“I have to make a pedagogical decision, a teaching decision, about this, too,” I say. “I think a lot about this. Mike Rose talks about putting that hand on a student’s shoulder, and teaching being about that moment of connection. I think about how I do that a lot with middle school students. Right down to putting my hand on their shoulder. I wonder if that’s how I motivate students. I wonder sometimes how much they’re writing so that I will like them. And I wonder if that’s the best thing for people. I’m just asking these questions right now.”

After they leave, I am left high. I am buzzing and talking to Gwen at a hundred miles a minute. It had been a very good class discussion the entire two hours. I would have considered it good at any point in my teaching career. But it had *really* gotten interesting when I decided to ask the questions I really cared about. “I got that impulse, and I followed it, and look what happened,” I say to Gwen, “That is so exciting.” This kind of high is a teaching tool in itself. Adreneline flows through our brains and makes all memories we have during these highs more vivid and more powerful. So I won’t forget. It will be even easier for me the next time.

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As I say at the beginning of this chapter, my primary Discourse heavily dictated that, in the professional world and out, actions are worth the most when they are done for others. I don't mean to be judging or evaluating the values of my primary Discourse, only to argue that being immersed in the ideas and experiences of spiritual Discourses provided an alternative for me to this Discourse. Breaking, even in the small way that I do in this narrative, with my primary Discourse, helps me move one step closer to what I see as dialogic education. Where the earlier set of narratives sees me realize that the purposes for which I and my students were writing were leading to places that were no longer feeling right to me, here I am moved to try an alternative. My confusion over how to bring intrinsically valued writing to my classroom goes no where until I suddenly take a moment of claiming intrinsic value for myself in reading, teaching, and discussion. When I move from asking questions that I think will help my students to asking a question that I want to ask for myself, my students suddenly take over class discussion, no longer performing for me to the same degree and finding their own intrinsic enjoyment in the conversation. Despite the fact that it had felt so much like my own intellectual/emotional/pedagogical problem that I brought up in class, the turns in the discussion demonstrate that the class almost immediately takes ownership of the discussion. Most questions are asked by students of other students and Marvin, Evelyn, and Tim become the important reference points in the discussion. Not only would positive reinforcement from me have been meaningless, I think it would have been more or less ignored. Because of my initial break with my primary Discourse in which I act in my own interest even *while* doing my service work, I am for at least one class period, moved out of my usual teaching Discourse entirely. I lose, what I think would seem to

many to be, control of the classroom. I am left giving contributions to the discussion like any other person in the class about my own experience and thoughts on the idea, and my ideas don't seem to carry any further weight directing the discussion than anyone else's. The one moment my authority is necessary seems to be when I am asked for my sanction on them proceeding with their discussion even after my class has ended. This leaves me to listen to the discussion about issues that were so close to my heart and my current pedagogical and academic struggles. When Tim talks about the state of Zen yo-yo and refers to it as meditation, I found what he was saying interesting, but I did not understand it. Even if at the time I *thought* I had meditated, I had not, not in the sense that Tim meant it or in the way that I have since learned to do. I was in a place of listening and trying to take in an entire reality that was outside of my experience. It is not that I had not brought up issues in class that were of interest to me before, but that this issue was so immediate for me that it was no more than a tangle of confusion in my head. I asked about something that was in process for me, not something that was resolved. Again, my primary Discourse would dictate that purposely bringing up something about which I was confused would be likely to lead to flaws in my teaching persona and to me losing authority as a teacher. From spiritual Discourses, however, I had learned that honest sharing in our vulnerability leads to growth.

Here, as brief as it was, was the breaking of a spiritual Discourse into my teaching, and from it came a spontaneous moment of dialogic education. Set on a similar topic that I introduced to class, student/teachers and teacher/student pursue a line of inquiry as equals, not to gain one another's positive evaluation, but for the more intrinsic interest in the topic and desire to understand it better. In such a dialogic



classroom, the content of my sharing does not influence the perspectives of students in this class as much as the contributions of others students in the classroom seems to. I am an active part of the pursuit, and I am engaged not to teach my students, but because I am desperately interested and filled with excitement at having a discussion about something I don't understand.

In such a way does breaking from primary Discourse create opportunities for other breaks from primary Discourse. My previous lessons about Laticia and my willingness to be open to the vulnerability of sharing those experiences leads me to my renewed interest in the text I am reading and another moment of listening to my body. Then I take the risk to share openly, and, most frightening for me in this narrative because it was still so new, a moment of selfishly pursuing my own education. Each of these moves is a break from my primary Discourse. They are a separation from it that allows me to turn and look at it and see it for the first time and so have options for different actions. This possibility is brought up by my immersion in spiritual Discourses. Each of these moves builds on and is not possible without the one before it. Each of these breaks from my primary Discourse was necessary before I could engage in the type of dialogic education that took place in this class or the classes that followed.

Tellingly, the affirmation that I receive that I have done well in trying something new and moving out of my primary Discourse comes not this time from my superior, but from the very concrete decision on my students' parts to forgo the institutional boundaries of the class for the sake of their intrinsic education. They stay late. Quite late. I think, at this stage in my education as a teacher, that something so clear and demonstrable as this move by my students was necessary to reinforce for me the very

difficult move I had made and to help against the backlash that later comes from all serious moves outside of primary Discourse. I don't include in this particular narrative the fact that acting out of a new Discourse almost always brings about feelings of guilt for betraying identity later. Something so concrete as my discussion about intrinsic education leading to my students staying late to intrinsically pursue their education helped me fend off that guilt.

All of this had required practice in my non-classroom life as well as experiences like the one surrounding "Rhetoric Unbound" where I felt the power of really being present, not just as a teacher, but as an expanding soul, in the classroom. Finally, it required the faith that I *could* learn something of value from people who were younger than me and who were currently in the role of being my students. This, too, required practice on my part outside of the classroom, but I believe it is absolutely necessary for anything resembling actual dialogic education. In support groups and spiritual discussions, I needed to experience repeatedly learning from people I had multiple blocks to learning from. My invisible class and race and status and education and gender identifications were never so painfully visible as when I faced moments of needing to learn from someone and realized that only a moment earlier, I had been, for multiple reasons of difference, closed to really learning from that person.

Perhaps *actually* being open to immediate and vulnerable learning as an instructor in the classroom seems like a very simple idea and a given for some people. It is difficult to listen as equals to the experience of another when any one of our primary or learned Discourses seems to indicate that that person is not truly an equal. The ego and identity attachments we carry are insidious, and the unquestioned ways in which we

gather esteem and a sense of our place in the world from our status and careers lock us into certain modes of behavior. Giving up that status or letting it shift is not a simple matter, for, as I discussed in the second chapter, anything tied to identity and ego, anything tied to a Discourse with which we identify, is going to be tied to emotions and involve resistance when change is required. And while we often talk about resistance to pedagogy from students, it is important that we be ready for and aware of those emotions and that resistance in ourselves.

Finally, I want to point out that in this narrative, dialogic education and Discourse learning worked in the cyclical relationship I describe at the beginning of the chapter. My learning of a new Discourse causes a rupture that lets me see a new aspect of my primary Discourse and change something. I bring this changed behavior to the classroom and engage with my students as an equal learner. This results in my students engaging in an intrinsic dialogic moment of all of us learning from one another. In this moment, \*I\* learn further what it means to be engaged in dialogic education. My students share with me what intrinsic learning is to them, and while I don't yet understand its implications for teaching, I am exposed to it and changed by it. This reciprocal sharing with my students and moment of dialogic education allows for further breaks in my primary Discourse (and possibly in the primary Discourses of others in the room!) and allows for further moves towards dialogic education as the semester progresses.

I am very grateful that this was not an isolated moment in this classroom, but something that we had the opportunity to build on, and from which I learned a great deal. It contributed to the opening up of possibilities for pursuit and interaction later in the

semester. In chapter four, I return to a different narrative of this particular class to examine the ways that dialogic education built from this moment and carried forward with its own increasing momentum.

Chapter four looks further into dialogic education and tries to provide detailed examples of what dialogic education started to look like in my classroom. It also looks at the necessary relationship between a spiritually grounded dialogic education and social justice.

## CHAPTER 4 “SPIRITUALITY, DIALOGUE, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE”

In the run up to the war on Iraq, a lot of us protested. I tried hard. I remember asking people in my grad seminars, other people studying to be writing teachers, how can we fight it? We know rhetoric and writing! “So how do we use it?!” I demanded. I didn’t know how, but one of my fellow grad students *had* to know! What good were we if we couldn’t even make one single contribution to stop people from being bombed and killed!? But everyone was mute. They looked at me with expressions I still don’t understand. Horror or helplessness... or pity at my naivety. I don’t know. I was assistant directing the Writing Center at the time, and I talked to the director of the Writing Center about some ideas and then put up flyers around the campus with notices that the Writing Center would help students write effective letters of protest to newspapers and congressmen. Nobody ever came in. I spoke at campus peace rallies. And my class that semester read MLK, Chomsky, social protest writing, arguments for civic engagement and social justice. The students were really energized by the class. But to do what?

I went to peace rally after peace rally, always expecting to see more members of my faculty and grad student colleagues there and always seeing the same two faculty faces at every rally. I guess it made me feel better that I was doing more than my colleagues -- the balm of righteous indignation. I walked and marched and wrote. I went to candle light vigil after candle light vigil. One night, I came home from a candle light vigil that had made me feel hopeful. There had been so many people! And we had all spoken quietly and with shared conviction. It felt strong and real. I came home and

set my things down and paced. What else could I do? What now? I walked into my living room and turned on the television. A special report.

And there were those... fluorescent green night vision camera shots. All the cameras set up to catch the start of the slaughter. They waited. I waited. They were saying it was going to start, but maybe it wouldn't. Maybe it wouldn't. And then it did. All at once the lights started flashing and the missiles started flying, and we had failed. Everyone with conviction, or with not enough conviction, all of our stupid ideas and candles and marches and winter hats and signs. We were dismissed in the newspaper by the president as a focus group. And we had failed. And now a lot of people would die. In my name. I started sobbing. That isn't really the right word. I have sobbed over a broken heart; I have grieved the end of something good and those tears have always felt healing. Necessary. Life giving. Almost filled with joy at being alive. These tears stretched deep into an endless dark chasm of ache inside of me. The further I went into it, the further I felt I would sink, and I didn't know if I could ever stop the descent. And the more I cried the more I ached and the more dead and hopeless and useless I felt. I was powerless. I had failed.

The next semester, I dropped Chomsky and social justice from the syllabus. I taught the *Wizard of Oz* instead.

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In this chapter, I further discuss dialogic education. I demonstrate the ways in which reciprocity and spiritual equality are absolute prerequisites for real dialogic education and the ways that dialogic education, spirituality, and social justice are inexorably tied together. They stem from one another, and feed one another; opening

the door to one, even a crack, does, if you let it, open the door of the other two.

I will be discussing this in terms of two models of working for social justice through education. One is represented in the narrative above and is the form of working for social justice that is indicated by traditional academic Discourse -- that is an academic Discourse that is based on conflict, violence, and ego. As I argue in chapter two, I was, as many people are, introduced to this academic Discourse early at the dinner table as part of my primary Discourse. In traditional academic Discourse, social justice is represented as a fight. In it, there are good and bad guys, there are battle plans, there is excitement and even the illusion of camaraderie. But there is also ego attachment as we gain a sense of identity from this camaraderie and from our fought battles. And there is, inevitably, failure. Not only are these methods of social justice unlikely to move or change injustice, when there *is* movement it is *always* towards a world that mirrors the world we have been fighting. In my opening narrative, I am resisting the good/evil dichotomy that was created to fight the gulf war, while simultaneously creating another good/evil dichotomy -- my own belief that I can destroy "evil" if I am only smart enough and enough people join my side -- in other words, the false dichotomy that those who support the war are "evil" and those who are against it are good . Fernandes points out that in order to have academic practices that work for social justice, we need to fundamentally change the ways we think about conflict in the practice of knowledge making.

The task of engaging in non-violent knowledge practices cannot be reduced to a simple set of curriculum or methodological guidelines; what it requires is an approach which infuses the entire process of research, writing, teaching and learning with the philosophy and principles of non-violence. (94)

In other words, what is necessary is both the acquisition of spiritual Discourse and a

meta-knowledge of traditional academic Discourse gained partly through their juxtaposition. When academic Discourse is viewed through the lens of spiritual Discourse, the moments of difference make visible aspects of the academic Discourse that were taken for granted and that frequently are tied to self-gain and social injustice. In chapter two, I described some of the places where the alternative beliefs and practices available in spiritual Discourse bring aspects of academic Discourse to light. In academic Discourse, conflict, between ideas, students, and teachers, is seen as generative. As I argue in chapter two, in spiritual Discourse, conflicts of interests are not generative because this type of conflict is only an illusion hiding the fact that we all have the same interests. In academic Discourse, especially critical pedagogy, the teacher's role is to help students see large scale systemic injustice. It offers, however, no answer to the cynicism and despair that can come from seeing such injustice without having the tools or agency to work towards a solution. Spiritual Discourse provides the concepts of risk at the edge of safety and personal implication without shame to help students move beyond cynical paralysis. Finally, academic Discourse concerns itself with access to Discourses of power as a matter of social justice. Spiritual Discourse reveals that learning academic (or any) skills is almost always part of a larger personal spiritual journey on the part of the student. Spiritual Discourses gave me, at least, the belief helping students with the acquisition of Discourse and the learning of meta-Discourse requires that we give students space for any number of other struggles that doing that work entails. This work might include the release of emotions tied to belief that Brand argues are likely to come up in a composition classroom. Spiritual Discourse would argue for space for students to go through this process as part of the skills



development. Similarly the identity (or Zen Buddhism would say ego) paradoxes that Gee argues learning a new Discourse can cause (151). that Finally, academic Discourse thinks of discussion in terms of argument, advice, and problem solving. This becomes clear when we understand the concept of “witnessing” in spiritual Discourse. Witnessing entails deep listening, or listening from a place of disidentification, from which the listening can result in change.

I hope to demonstrate in the narratives that follow the results when classrooms attempt to transcend conflict towards a true dialogue based on faith at the edge of risk is brought into academic discussion. When I say “faith at the edge of risk” I am referencing Freire’s call, discussed in chapter two, that we always be at the edge of what we can handle in terms of risk, and that we support our dialogic work with a faith in each individual’s ability to become more fully human. Students are given a way to process the “truths” of academic Discourse without falling into cynicism and despair, which then allows for moving slowly forward through new ideas rather than resistance. I also hope to demonstrate the ways witnessing can change the nature of classroom discussion and writing work as well as composition and literacy research. I will also demonstrate the process of access to Discourses of power through a lens of spiritual Discourse. I hope to evoke some of the experience of working with students on the entire process of Discourse acquisition and learning as it relates to both their and my whole personal spiritual journey.

When we use spiritual Discourses in order to problematize academic Discourses, the resultant form of education for social justice is described by Leela Fernandez, but it is Freire’s dialogic education that provides its instruction manual. It is a form of social

justice education based always on non-violence, on reciprocity, on the deconstruction of dichotomies, on the detachment of the ego, on community, on patience, witnessing, and on faith. It also frequently focuses on the ways each of our personal decisions and emotional reactions to the world reflect, influence, and create our larger social realities. I have arranged the major differences between academic and spiritual Discourse that will be discussed in this chapter into a table.

<b>Academic Discourse</b>	<b>Spiritual Discourse</b>
Conflict over ideas is generative	Conflict is used to set boundaries to maintain safe learning atmosphere
“Us vs. Them” world view	Change proceeds from identifying our own implication in injustice and taking personal responsibility
Ideas/ideology as separate from personal interest, ego ties, and emotion	Ideas represented as always tied to personal interests, ego ties, emotions
Giving as much time and energy as possible	Giving with boundaries
Job of instructor is to introduce social injustices without providing solutions – cynicism an acceptable outcome	Instructors introduce concept of personal implication, change at the edge of risk, and hope through faith in something
Teacher’s role is to know	Teacher’s role is to explore mystery with students.
Academic skills (just like artistic skills or sports) are narrowly defined and treated as separate from the rest of the person.	Academic skills (like artistic skills or sports skills) are tied integrally to overall spiritual journeys
Unasked for advice, problem solving, analysis or pretending understanding of another’s experience are acceptable responses in a dialogue	The job of the listener in dialogue is to witness/listen deeply (Fernandes, Thich Nhat Hahn)

I want to demonstrate the first steps I took towards finding a different way to approach

not just social justice but knowledge in the classroom -- one developed together with my students. This approach is a result of the juxtaposition of academic Discourse -- a Discourse that is often part of my primary Discourse -- and spiritual Discourse. The result was an alternative to the despair that made fleeing to Oz seem the only alternative to continuing to fight.

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In the fall semester of 2005, my service learning class is in danger of a train wreck. The school I have attempted to connect with as a community partner drops the ball. My contact at the school, who assured me he would be able to recruit a large class of middle school students to work with us, forgets about our program. I spend the first portion of the semester asking my students to study techniques to tutor middle school students and ethnographic methods, so that they can write about their own work at the site. But when we show up to the school for the first session, we do not even have a classroom reserved for us. The contact has forgotten to inform parents and students about our program. He never passed out the flyers. There are no students. He assures me that if we come back in a week, things will be ready for us. When things are in the same state a week later, I realize that the service-learning class is bust. Gwen suggests I wait another week or so, but I can sense it's over, and I don't want to go through the extra frustration. Plus, I have a strange sense of excitement about having my class be a complete blank slate. I'm not sure if I should trust the feeling, but it's part of what drives me on. I start talks with the principal of the school about what we might do differently next year, and I cut my losses. I suddenly have no syllabus, no reading and writing assignments that aren't about the tutoring experience, and no back

up plan. What I do have is a group of students who have been working pretty well together up till this point. I go to my students, and I tell them what happened, and I say that, while I am disappointed, I'm offering them the chance to build a new class with me. I suggest the option of them each working on their own independent study projects, but Marvin, one of the African-American students in class, objects.

"This was supposed to be something we were going to do as a community," he says. "This was about doing something together. I don't see the point of us all doing our own thing."

The class agrees with him. So I ask them for other ideas.

The class decides that they will all bring in one piece of writing that has influenced them in some way. Each student gives a brief presentation on the style and content of the piece, and then the class votes to cover two of the pieces of writing as class texts. Tim, the competitive yo-yoer brings in a piece of gonzo journalism by Hunter S. Thompson. Because it is available on-line and because I have heard of Hunter S. Thompson (though not read him), I assign it and tell my students I will send them the link to the article.

That evening I read the article, my heart increasingly sinking as I read. Hunter S. Thompson's own despair seeping into my bones and my gut. At least its effective writing, though effective writing to convey, what seems to me, an extremely depressing outlook on life. An outlook on life I want to present to my class about as much as I want to deal with the homophobia and racism rampant in the article. It uses language I wouldn't have chosen under any circumstances to have in my classroom. I immediately start trying to think of how to handle the article in class, but I'm stuck in anxiety. Was I

giving lip service to the fact that we would be learning collaboratively from one another, that each of our writing experiences were meaningful and worth sharing, or did I mean it?

If I disavow this article, I disavow Tim. If I disavow Tim, I've lost the class and the semester. I make the faith they have put in my offer of collaboration seem silly and shallow.

I am up most of the night, uselessly trying to spin out solutions that go nowhere.

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It's difficult for me to sort out in this narrative the multiple levels on which dialogic education, spirituality, and social justice are already playing into each event and moment. As I said, I hope to demonstrate that these three things *are* inexorably tangled together. This class is the same class in which the narrative in chapter three about Mike Rose and Zen yo-yoing occurred. In that narrative, I follow up a selfish impulse to explore an idea in which I am interested, and the class took control of the discussion, even remaining after the class ended to continue to discuss. In the weeks following the discussion on Mike Rose, the energy of that classroom seemed to be building in power, as students grew more excited about tutoring and about the prospect of working together. I was excited each day for anything different that might happen, for the new levels of agency my students were taking in running class discussion and for the increasing levels of selfishness and furthering my own education I was allowing myself in class. When the program I had planned seemed as if it would not happen, it felt less like a failure to me, and more like a chance to really let this energy blossom in new directions. When suddenly the course was derailed, I felt anger, frustration, and a stubborn desire to continue to insist that the middle school administrator get his act

together. I could still feel an older set of Discourses working in me that wanted to *make* things work and that wanted to *fight* for my program. At the very least, I felt the compulsion to martyr myself in front of my students, paint myself and our class as a victim of other irresponsible people. According to a more spiritual Discourse, however, both of those moves would have created sides, a conflict, and wasted emotional energy. The whole point was to work *with* community partners not *in conflict* with community partners – especially when that conflict would have largely existed in my head, as a way to cover up what part of me, responding to an older Discourse, couldn't help but read as a very public, personal, professional failure. The new spiritual Discourses I described in chapter three gave me the option of a different set of responses. In these spiritual Discourses unexpected events were neither good nor bad, but opportunities for something new -- if I only had enough faith to let them happen. The failure of the partnership with the middle school only gave me an excuse to ditch a syllabus I'd used many times but now seemed constrictive. I could take advantage of this moment to hoist up the rock of stale pedagogy and see what might have grown up under it while I wasn't looking. In the past, I felt a large degree of guilt if I didn't carefully plan my classes, as if I could only prove I was a dedicated teacher by carefully planning (the way some teachers prove they are dedicated writing teachers by taking hours to correct hundreds of grammar mistakes that their students just get overwhelmed by and so ignore). The unexpected events in this class however, gave me a chance to shoot from the hip guilt free. And I was dying for that opportunity. Letting myself have that opportunity meant moving forward into new possibility instead of getting hung up in useless conflict with fellow professionals, all trying to do their best. This decision on my

part represents me practicing a new method of acceptance rather than conflict, something I am increasingly understanding as a more effective means of creating change – for social justice or otherwise.

Hoping that the type of dialogic dynamic that had been growing since the conversation on Mike Rose would continue, I turned the dilemma of what to do now over to my students, with no clear idea where we might end up. This, I believe, only added to the dialogic feeling of the class, and contributed to the dynamic of the discussion that follows. Nevertheless, what I hope the earlier narrative in chapter three -- in which my students ask if they can extend class to continue pursuing the topic of intrinsic motivation-- indicates is that what followed was something that we were building all semester.

Despite my excitement, I was genuinely scared. Gwen Gorzelsky writes of the way racial tension can play out in a Detroit classroom when the topic is broached. In her article, a very close knit class that was working well together completely polarizes when the topic of Detroit's race riots come up. What had been a positive atmosphere where a diverse classroom was mixing, talking, and even flirting across racial lines ended in, as Gwen describes, black students sitting against one wall, white students against the other, and Asian students looking uncomfortable and trapped in a corner by themselves. It was my knowledge of the racial tensions that are so close to the surface in Detroit that led to my anxiety about using the article. Had I been making my own choice of class reading, I would have never brought something so potentially divisive as the Hunter S. Thompson article into class at such an important moment in the semester when we were embarking on a new project together. But standing where I am standing

now and looking at this through the lens of spiritually engaged dialogic education, it is absolutely unsurprising to me that this is what happened. As Leela Fernandez and Paulo Freire both argue, true spiritual education is necessarily engaged in social justice. It cannot be otherwise. Fernandez argues, ““From the eye of the disidentified subject,” which is the subject who has gone deeply into identity until it is transcended, “there is no possible separation between spirituality and social justice. The presumed separation in fact is only an illusory boundary which has been produced by the edifices of power of various religious political, economic and social establishments. ... Indeed, from the eye of the disidentified subject, this form of transformation is not a game of an inventive imagination but a realizable possibility” (38). Freire argues along the same lines about the Christian resurrection story in *Politics of Education*, “The lust to possess, a sign of the necrophiliac world view, rejects the deeper meaning of resurrection. Why should I be interested in rebirth if I hold in my hands, as objects to be possessed, the torn body and soul of the oppressed? I can only experience rebirth at the side of the oppressed by being born again, with them, in the process of liberation. I cannot turn such a rebirth into a means of owning the world, since it is essentially a means of transforming the world” (123). This type of spiritual transformation is necessarily dialogic for Freire. He writes of his own vision of a spiritual Christian church in *Politics of Education*,

In contrast with the churches considered above, it rejects all static forms of thought. It accepts becoming, in order to *be*. Because it thinks critically this prophetic church cannot think of itself as neutral. Nor does it try to hide its choice. Therefore, it does not separate worldliness from transcendence or salvation from liberation. It knows that what finally counts is not the “I am” or the “I know,” the “I free myself” or the “I save myself;” nor even the “I teach you,” “I free you,” or “I save you,” but the “we are,” “we know,” “we save ourselves.” (137)

As such, people move together in groups, through shared knowledge and the



witnessing of that knowledge, towards their mutual liberation. To have let go to the extent that I let go, allowing my class plan to be completely changed, allowing students to discuss and make choices about the new design of the class, and to have expected the class *not* to engage in the social issues closest to their lives would be to misunderstand dialogic education.

The ethnographic notes from the first few days of this class remind me that I promised my students a community experience. During this time, I was commonly saying on the first day of most of my classes,

I was an undergraduate at this school. So I know what it's like. I know what it's like to get out of your car, come to class, and sit for two hours without talking to the people next to you. Then to get up and go back to your car and drive to work and then home... where you hang out with the same people you hung out with in high school. If you don't do something on this campus like play a sport or join a club, the danger is you go through four years without really taking advantage of what a university can offer. Look around you. We're from everywhere. We have every kind of experience. Because of what I learned from being a student here, I consider the English classroom at *this* university to be a place where part of your education is based on just hearing what the other students around you have to say. Just listening. You'll know the names of your classmates by the time this semester is over. And because this is a service learning class, you'll work together to accomplish something with the people in this class. People who aren't the same people who grew up in your neighborhood. For me, gaining what we can from that is one of the goals of this class.

That my class turned down the opportunity to do directed studies and agreed with Marvin's argument for "community" could not have been just a result of this first day promise but also of discussions we had already had, where students really were learning by listening to one another. If they were paying attention, they could not have helped but notice that *I* was learning from listening to them, too. For instance, in the zen yo-yoing discussion, I draw my students' attention to the fact that I am struggling to apply their ideas about intrinsic activities to my teaching of middle school students.

Without having had an opportunity in class to practice the dialogic education I was preaching, I don't think students would have bought so fully into the idea of changing the class the way that we did. This, I think, added to the feeling that, yes, learning by listening, as a community, was possible, which I think is why students took the reading assignments brought in by their fellow students so seriously.

The following narrative reproduces the dialogue of the October 26, 2005 class of Intermediate Composition exactly as noted by Gwen. I transcribed the dialogue, and then without changing or omitting anything except the pieces of dialogue Gwen did not fully capture, wrote the narrative around the dialogue.

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I am still scared when I get to class.

But everyone is there. And everyone looks calm. Nobody looks like, "I just got back from the Chair's office, and boy is he mad at *you*."

I sit up at the front of the class like I do every day and make small talk with students. I talk about procedural and scheduling issues. I stall and try to hide my nerves and lack of sleep. Then there is nothing left to stall with.

"Let's put the desks in a circle," I say, "Let's do it." We circle up the desks. Everyone pulls out their article that they had printed off the web, though I hadn't asked them to print it. This only increases my fearful feelings of responsibility. "They're really taking this seriously; I can't let them down." I watch Tim out of the corner of my eye. He sits straight, anticipating. Like the others, he flips pages, but he isn't looking at them. He looks out at his classmates with an open expression, looking from face to face, waiting to see what people will say.

“Um..., first.....,” I start, “Let me just say that this is a controversial article, of course. There’s a lot of sort of... dangerous stuff in here. A lot of potentially explosive stuff.” I look around at each of them. I try to say with my eyes that we are a team and going in this together. I purposely don’t look at Tim, but I can see him anyway.

“What the heck are you talking about?” he seems to be saying.

“A lot of stuff that might be difficult for us to talk about but.... I think we can do it. I think we can talk about this in a way that brings up all these issues but is respectful of all of us.”

I sound scared. I sound tentative. My voice sounds weak. And Tim shifts in his chair and has turned his body towards me, wondering, I know, if he is being sold out. I don’t look at him. But it’s o.k., I tell myself, because that is the end of the disclaimer. It is time to close my eyes and take the step...

“We’re going to do this discussion a little differently,” I say. “I read some research about a different way to do discussions.” Wallace and Ewald’s research on mutuality. I had no idea I was going to say this. I have used Wallace and Ewald in previous semesters, to really fun result, but I have always chosen the safest discussion topics to use it with -- the topics I was most comfortable discussing. “I’m not allowed to talk unless two people make substantive comments first -- comments that really MEAN something. Then I can talk. Then two more people have to make really good comments before I can even open my mouth again. If that works, we’ll up it to more. Oh, and, um... whoever is talking, you call on the next person. And me, too. I have to raise my hand and get called on.” People smirk and look at one another.

In the end, this is the only real response I can come up with to my fear. After a

night of tossing and turning and a commute to campus that brought no answers, I fall back on faith that, one way or another, everything is going to be alright. Since I can't think out a way to handle this article, since I was unable to come up with an approach and a plan, I will open my chest, take a deep breath, and just let it go.

"O.k.," I say, forcing a smile, "Go ahead." I indicate with my eyes the texts sitting in front of them. "What do you think?"

I lean back in my chair and turn the palms of my hands up and out, to indicate I am turning it over to them. Then I wait for someone to express how pissed off they are about the "n" word.

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In Thompson's story, "The Kentucky Derby is Decadent and Depraved," published in the magazine *Scanlan Monthly* in June of 1970, he goes to the Kentucky Derby as a journalist. It was the first article referred to as "Gonzo" journalism, a term eventually used by Thompson himself to describe his journalistic style and thereafter by anyone who seemed to write similarly to him. It uses subjective writing, satire, and elements of fiction mixed with mostly truth to drive points home. It is sometimes considered part of Tom Wolfe's New Journalism, though, until student Tim told me this, I had never studied Gonzo journalism and didn't know. Thompson goes to the Kentucky Derby ostensibly to cover it as a sporting event, but has brought an illustrator with him and has his own stated goal. "So the face I was trying to find in Churchill Downs that weekend was a symbol, in my own mind, of the whole doomed atavistic culture that makes the Kentucky Derby what it is" (1). This face is the "mask of the whiskey gentry" (1) and represents Thompson's own disgust with the aristocratic Kentucky society he

comes from. Shortly after arriving, he meets a homophobic and racist man named Jimbo. Because he is irritated by Jimbo's ignorance, he uses his press credentials to give him credibility and then tells Jimbo that the Black Panthers are planning on attacking the race, and that the army is also present to resist the Black Panthers. He succeeds in tricking Jimbo, and then proceeds to get drunk and say a bunch of homophobic and racist things himself. I have no idea what the point of the whole ugly mess is. This might seem disingenuous, but it's true. All night I focused on the racist language and the despair the article made me feel and my guilt over introducing such a despair drenched article to class without reading it first. The question of what the author's intent was kind of fell by the way side amidst the other problems I was worried about. If someone had asked what the article was really about, I would have replied that I didn't know – that it just seemed depressing to me and had a lot of racist and homophobic language that I was scared to deal with in class.

“What happened to the Black Panthers?” Said asks. “There was all that talk about this riot that was going to happen, but it didn't happen.”

“He just made up the Black Panthers,” says Tim, “He was just messing with that guy.”

“There were no Black Panthers?” asks Said flipping through his pages looking for the missing Black Panthers the way one checks the coffee table for the hundredth time for a missing set of car keys.

“He was just telling that story to the guy, Jimbo,” says Cara, “Because the guy was homophobic and so oblivious of everything going on in the world, and he just wanted to scare him. To me it's like the war in Iraq now, you know? All those people at

the Kentucky Derby were just trying to forget and make a lot of noise while meanwhile there's this war going on, Vietnam, and they don't want to think about it."

"Right," says Evelyn, "That's why the article is called Decadent and Depraved. Because what he's trying to show is what's decadent and depraved is American society."

My mind is suddenly racing. I'm looking between Evelyn and Cara while my literary studies trained mind is pouring back over my mental copy of the Hunter S. Thompson article. I feel silly for not seeing it before: Thompson attacks Jimbo because of Jimbo's homophobia and racism. He's disgusted by the decadent depravity around him, and he's trying to find a clear picture of it at the races, one face, to show the world depravity, but by the end of the article...

"What happens at the end of the article?" I ask, holding back my excitement, "What's decadent and depraved?"

Steve, who doesn't talk often in class, says, "Monday morning, after all his drinking, when he wakes up and looks in the mirror."

"Exactly. What happened?"

"He looks in the mirror and says *that's* the face I was trying to find," Steve says.

Good lord. I hadn't understood the image at the end of the article. Thompson comes to the races searching for a particular image of a decadent depraved person that he wants to capture. At the end of the article, he looks in the mirror and sees it in himself, and *that's* why the portrayal of himself in the later stages of the article is so disgusting and horrid. I'm thinking rapidly, trying not to squirm in my chair and blurt out my forming ideas as they come to me, trying to slow them down and think about how to teach them. Nevertheless, I'm slowly feeling more comfortable. Particles of the

pressure I've been carrying since the evening before are suddenly jumping off my shoulders like tiny yipping bunjee jumpers. The reason he starts using Jimbo's homophobic and racist language at the end of the article--

"I thought it was like... the Black Panthers," says Said. He's lost at a basic level of understanding of the article, I think. Which is frustrating. Because I'm sprinting. "I thought it was a race war."

"What's funny is that he made all that up," says Tim good humouredly explaining the joke for the second time.

Said takes in breath, claiming the floor, then pauses for a moment. "The way you just explained the whole situation just blew me away because I didn't look at it that way. Was he talking about that? Was he looking at himself saying I'm the person that's depraved? And I gotta change *myself*?"

I immediately take back every bad thing I've ever thought about Said. (which isn't very much. Said and I are fond of one another.) His thoughts are moving faster over longer distances than mine are. Neither of us understood this article at home. Both of us were miles off. And both of us are suddenly tumbling into understanding at the same time. I'm thrilled, and so I have to work very hard to keep my speech slow.

"Let's say that's our thesis statement," I say. Ah ha, I *am* a composition teacher. "Hunter S. Thompson uses the Kentucky Derby as a reflection of American society. Hunter S. Thompson is a reflection of American society." I don't quite have this straight for myself yet, I realize. "Can we find examples to defend this thesis?"

Mike raises his hand, and I call on him. "It's almost like he had this idea *before* going to the race, but once he got there, he got so confused about what it was he

wanted, that he became this drunken blur. The next day he woke up and realized what he'd done. It's like the war. We had these ideas about going to Iraq at the beginning, and now we're saying 'Was it really terrorism? Was it for oil, gas, and stuff?' And we're getting caught up in all the emotions."

"Hunter is very very anti-war and very left-wing," says Tim, "A lot of his writing is very pessimistic because he thinks a lot of American culture is going to hell."

"Just to add to that," says Cara, "Everyone gets swept up in this. He hates war, but he gets swept up in it, too."

This is pretty good, I think. They're making modern parallels with the text. If I were, at the moment, as interested in left wing critical pedagogy as I once was, I'd be quite pleased. I'd help them tear into the war in Iraq. I hate the war in Iraq. But I've spent semesters as a critical pedagogue. The semester of teaching before the bombing started I had my students reading Noam Chomsky and Martin Luther King Junior and discussing the efficacy of peace rallies, but none of it came to anything. I already know I can do that. I already know they can do *this*. My excitement starts to wane.

"I think he's showing the inevitability of how things are," says Marvin, "Getting drunk trying to deal with so many emotions at one time. The only way you can deal with it is to drown your emotions. This is the way society is, so you might as well try to ease it."

For the second time in ten minutes I'm stunned to silence. I almost recoil from Marvin. From the class. Not a violent recoil as one might make from a snake. But the sort of recoil one might make from a wrapped birthday present that looks an awful lot like it might be what one dreamed of receiving, but wouldn't have dared ask for. There



is a momentary thrill as I start to realize this article is rife with important things to say about addiction, which I have been studying recently. And I hadn't seen it before.

"Were the Black Panthers even there?" asks Said into my silence.

Tim again, with the love of a passionate teacher: "No. He's basically a trickster." He tries a new tact with Said. "He blurs the line between fiction and reality. He makes a story to reveal the truth."

I don't realize it, but Tim and Said move unknowingly from my content interest to one of my method interests. My flight is blocked. My flight away from learning *with* my students, my flight away from letting the class take its own path and trusting that if that coincides with what *I* need right now then that's o.k. That it is, in fact, great.

Out of fear and guilt, I don't pick up Marvin's comment about addiction.

But I am relieved to pick up Tim's about method. And to finally step up and help him with Said, too.

"What's going on in that part of the article? The part with the Black Panthers?" I ask.

"American society and people don't care. He was trying to get a rise out of this guy, and all he got was 'This is gonna ruin my day,'" says Cara.

Erica adds, "Jimbo doesn't even know that much about current events to put common sense into it. He believes this is going to happen because this one guy said it. Somebody with a journalist badge said something, so it's gotta be true."

Woah, I think. He's speaking as a journalist to Jimbo, just like he's speaking as a journalist to us, waving his journalist badge and expecting *us* to buy his story for the same reason.

“Evelyn that’s interesting, did you— No! Sorry. I didn’t raise my hand.”

People laugh. But I’m just irritated because it’s a really good idea, and I want to say it. I meekly raise my hand. Erica smiles at me for a second and then calls on Mike. We all laugh. Mike talks. I raise my hand. Mike calls on Said.

“So were the Black Panthers really there?”

This is good for me. Because my eagerness to control and direct the conversation is frustrated, I calm down a little bit and let go.

Tim explains about the Black Panthers again. And then finally calls on me.

I bring up the point about Thompson treating *us* like Jimbo, and then, because who knows when the heck I’m going to get to talk again, I say I have a second question, “Is the image Thompson makes of who he is, really who he is? If it’s an image, do you feel lied to as a reader?”

“No, it doesn’t matter who he is,” says Marvin, “It just depends on the emotion it brings out of you. The effect of the article.”

“I believed the Panthers were coming, too,” says Cara, expressing solidarity with Said.

“I’m just thinking ... ,” says Said, “Professor I think it’s really cool. Really fun. I didn’t realize that there was hidden meaning, that he’s looking for a specific person to represent his culture or his identity, right? So he ends up getting caught up in all the turmoil, then realizing it’s him. Is that what he’s trying to say? Just the swearing ... it’s all like real. The style of writing, it’s believable. Is he drunk when he’s writing?”

“Yeah,” Tim says, “I’ve seen his notes, and he does take notes like that. But he’s story telling. This is the first instance of the kind of journalism that he started. Gonzo

journalism. He doesn't believe that journalism should be objective at all, so taking the writer out of the picture is like being untrue because you're subjective by virtue of you being you, so your writing should be subjective."

I smile. "Remember I put the chair in the center of the room and talked about subjective and objective reality?" I ask the class. We're dueling side by side, Tim and I. I don't want to miss the opportunity though to pick up on Said's comment. And with his swearing reference, I feel it's the perfect moment to slide the racist language issue in and put my fear to rest for good.

"What I didn't realize when I read this," I say, cause I didn't, "is-- well, Said stated it really strongly. He's looking to get a reflection of this culture, and he finds it in himself. He's trying to say, this is what's wrong with society, and he comes up with this image in the mirror, and he says, 'It's me.' For instance, American society is racist and homophobic. This bothers him at the beginning of his article. But by the end of the article, he's drunk, and he's completely racist and homophobic himself! He's using all these terrible racist homophobic words for people, and even getting in fist fights with people over it. Not only is he saying, 'I can't separate myself as a journalist,' he's saying, 'I can't separate myself from my culture. I want to stand outside American society and say what's wrong with it, but when I'm so drunk that I don't have any resistance, I'm those things, too! This critique of America is really me. I'm racist. I'm homophobic. I drown all my problems in alcohol!'" I allow myself that last comment, then look at everyone around the room, "How am I racist without knowing it? Homophobic without knowing it?"

"That's pretty understood," says Marvin, who is African American, and has just

casually moved on beyond the point he thinks is obvious.

So... it's apparently only me that's slow and took a day to get it. That's O.K.

"But what's the point of all the exaggeration?" Marvin asks.

Tim picks up, which is good because after the reception of my little lecture, I'm taking a break. "He's a story teller. Not just writing stream of consciousness. The way I thought about it, it's not only him not being able to remove himself from the writing, but to draw the reader *into* the writing. Commenting on the writer and reader relationship."

"Is he drunk while he's doing it?" asks Said.

"Sometimes. Sometimes not."

Cara laughs. "Tim is his best friend."

Tim smiles, "I've read almost everything he's ever written. He's really influential for my writing."

The class is quiet for a while. Everyone seems pretty happy. I'm pretty happy, too. It's like I imagined -- except it's better than that. Tim brought in this article, and the class has embraced it more than they've embraced anything else. And Tim is teaching! And the whole class is teaching me. Maybe it's this quiet moment of realization that finally gives me the courage to pick up Marvin's comment from what probably seems to the class is a hundred turns ago.

"Marvin talked about the emotions," I say. "The emotional impact on the reader. What was the emotional impact for you? For me... it made me really sad." Maybe it's the exhaustion, from all the worry and the release. But I don't sound like an academic, suddenly. I'm talking, and I even hear the change in the tone of my voice. It's not my classroom voice. "I felt it really pulling me down as I was reading. I think, for both Said

and I, that moment of realizing things have to change is really important at the end. Does anyone remember... there's a brief mention of what's going on with him just before he gets totally smashed?"

"We don't want to live in a world that's all racist and homophobic," says Cara, "He was trying to get people to realize, but he got sucked in. I personally don't think there's a positive spin. We're all part of the problem."

"He's really pessimistic," Tim agrees, "He killed himself this year. I read him as an ethnographer describing what *is*, rather than suggesting what can be done about it."

"Anyone else on the emotional impact of the article and what feeling it left you with?" I ask. There's some silence. But not all that much. I'm stuck on my point, and I want to talk about it. I flip through the article. "It goes by so fast, and to me it's so important to the article." I find it. 'From that point on, the weekend became a vicious, drunken nightmare,' I read. 'The main problem was my prior attachment to Louisville, which naturally led to meetings with old friends, relatives, etc., many of whom were in the process of falling apart, going mad, plotting divorces, cracking up under the strain of terrible debts or recovering from bad accidents. Right in the middle of the whole frenzied Derby action, a member of my own family had to be institutionalized. This added a certain amount of strain to the situation, and since poor Steadman had no choice but to take whatever came his way, he was subjected to shock after shock. ... I don't have a single sober moment the rest of the trip.' I stop reading. These are all people I care about, and I'm back in the middle of all these old patterns. But instead of saying he couldn't deal with it, he says this was really difficult for *Steadman*. I'm back home with my family, and they're a mess... and at the moment he puts the focus on Steadman and

away from himself, he says, "I don't have a single sober moment the rest of the trip."

"But isn't that how most people deal with things anyway?" asks Cara. "A lot of people don't deal with their problems. That's just showing how American society is. Steadman is upset by this because he's from a different culture."

Said, meanwhile, has been lost in thought. And *his* language changes, too. "He leaves himself and pushes it off," he says. "It's his family. He doesn't say I feel badly. Steadman was shocked. Pushing his problems away. Shock value on somebody else. Coming back and looking in the mirror and saying, 'It's me.'"

"Do you see the parallel?" I ask, "The way American culture deals with our wars, our violence, our poverty, and the way he deals with his own life? There's some awareness here that those two things are related!"

Cynthia now; she hasn't spoken previously. "In American society, we've got our problems, you've got your problems. He should've explained his problems, what he's dealing with, then he could seek help. You choose your environment. I tried to go into his mind a little bit. You have all this, but yet you have a core 'me' mentality, nobody cares about my feelings. I'm getting sucked into the system."

"I can see why he committed suicide," says Said, "He's looking for the answer, and he's not getting it."

"These things are just an image that Hunter creates," says Tim, and while I didn't mean to be attacking Thompson, I realize Tim is defending him. He's agitated and sitting forward in his chair, speaking to the class, but looking at me. "I've read letter exchanges between his brother and mother and him, and they're fine. His brother and mother are fine."

“Or they seem so,” I say. If I’m not attacking Thompson, I’m also not surrendering my line of inquiry.

“He’s creating an image to make a point. What’s important is the point he’s making.”

“I want to come back to Said’s comment for a moment. If the place he’s looking isn’t the answer --.”

“God,” says Said.

God didn’t have to be the answer to that question, I say to myself. I really had intended it to have hundreds of possible answers. If spirituality could have been one of them, why shouldn’t it be? But it’s also true that in the time leading up to Said’s one word answer, both he and Cynthia, who hold their respective religions of Islam and Christianity as an important part of their identities, were much more actively involved. As if the conversation had been spiritual for some time before my half-formed question. Again my delight at the possibility of bringing this Discourse into the academic classroom is immediately doused by guilt and fear. I can contribute only silence.

“God,” says Said again, “You gotta go with God man. If you can’t find it on the earth with people, you’ve gotta find a higher power to fill that void. Did he really commit suicide?”

“Yeah,” Tim says, “I think the way Hunter answered that question was in two ways: he wrote so people could see what’s going on, so they could make a change. And then he just did a lot of crazy things and lived an amazing life. He figured if he can’t change things, he’ll at least enjoy himself.”

“So a lot of highs and lows,” says Said, “He was a genius in his own way. I’m

thinking like bipolar. The article was really cool. I just brushed off the negativity.” I realize that Said picks up here Tim’s earlier need to defend his hero against my accusation of dysfunction. In a far smoother more respectful way than I had earlier, Said prefaces his continued exploration of the spiritual questions involved in Thompson’s article with a validation of both Thompson’s talent and his cool factor. Like Kerri did earlier, Said makes a move to unify us as a group in valuing Tim’s contribution and exploring it together as a team. “And it’s so funny, man! The things he does. It’s hilarious. And it’s trying to show we have to look in the mirror and change ourselves before we start judging people. The highs he had, I’m not surprised he committed suicide. His life... he’s looking for these highs in the wrong way. He’s empty, getting high, trying to find this answer to his life question, his emptiness. Shifting blame here and there.”

“It’s also the way that you read this article and enjoyed the humor and Justin got despair out of it. It’s pretty amazing the layers you can get,” says Tim. If I had been given a week to think, plan, and manipulate a way out of this part of the discussion, it couldn’t have come out better than this. Tim understands Said’s move. And because Said has validated Tim’s reading, Tim validates not only mine and Said’s ideas, but the power of a multiplicity of viewpoints shared.

“It comes back to emotions,” says Said, “And how it affects different people differently. Hey professor, can I do my response paper over again?”

“Yes,” I smile.

Cynthia raises her hand. I try not to cringe a little before she speaks. Cynthia speaks in mixed up syntax. Her sentences often change topics half way through. I



frequently don't know how to follow up her comments. Nobody else in the class ever seems to get frustrated trying to understand her though. "My overall concern is for the spirituality," she says, "He could look to God, through Jesus. Because even though in the end he may receive some answers, some he might not. Sometimes God doesn't reveal all the answers to us for different reasons, but some he reveals in different ways, people in our lives. But to me there is always hope."

"Drinking," says Said to Cynthia, "Doesn't that make you more vain? When you drink, doesn't that make you more vain? If you're looking for the answer in vanity, coming back to yourself in selfishness, is that gonna give you the answer? You're not God, and you're coming back to yourself."

"Maybe that could be one interesting critique of the Thompson's writing," I say, "That it becomes more and more about himself."

Cynthia again, "I think sometimes we want every answer to every single question, but sometimes it can't be. We may just overload. But it's like since he just tried to get a temporary high, then what else?"

Said answers her, "Depression. But where do you think he went wrong ... Because he's like a genius, looking for answers with all these people in high society that he didn't really like. Trying to find some sort of answer, to change society. At the same time, some sort of quest to change his own life. Like you said, he's left with his own life."

"I think that he's very humanist in his views," says Tim, "Because he's done everything. He's been so poor he had to borrow money from his mom to get groceries. But he's also been so rich that he was hanging out with Johnnie Depp. I think being so humanist as he is, he's disillusioned with religion and all the pedophile priests. He just

sees despair in it, all the bad things that happen.”

Marvin then: “I agree 100% with that. He’s trying to show that society is operating off all these ideologies. He’s showing how he has tried living these different ideologies. But none of them really led to his happiness. I thought it was significant him telling that story to Jimbo in the bar. This is what’s happening. You wouldn’t wanna see race wars breaking out in the street, but you don’t care because you’re so caught up in your ideal life, going to the Kentucky Derby. But that doesn’t work either. He tries all of these different ways to be happy, but happiness is just an ideal; it doesn’t exist.”

“So kind of like Tim said that *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* is about how the American Dream is falling apart.” Then I can’t resist coming back to Tim’s comment about pedophile priests. I don’t know exactly how it was intended, but I don’t want it to be a pat answer to the ideas that Cynthia and Said have brought up either. “ There are so many things I want to comment on. Cynthia you used the word spirituality and also Jesus. Said you said Higher Power. Tim referred to pedophile priests. Are these different terms referring to different things?”

“Religion,” says Said, “Isn’t it manmade? And higher power is just between you and God?”

“Also like religion is an organization, and higher power is beliefs,” says Tim.

“Exactly,” answers Said “What’s in your heart between you and a higher power.”

Again, I’m amazed that Said and Tim have found common ground on something on which I had assumed there was conflict. I relax back into my seat.

“But, I want to come back to the question of what is it that Thompson is trying to pursue,” says Marvin, “About all the different lives Tim says he lived. Being rich, being

poor, being famous. What was he looking for?”

“It seems like if you look at his work,” I say, “he was very interested in the dreams people construct for themselves and the ways they pursue happiness.”

“But do you think he was ultimately *looking* for some sort of peace and happiness?” asks Marvin.

“Maybe,” says Tim, “I think he was looking for the American Dream.”

“Which is what?” asks Said.

Tim starts to describe the typical American dream as a certain level of success, then he adds that this isn't *his* vision of happiness. Cara raises her hand and says that she believes that different people are made happy by different things and Said agrees with her. This sparks a discussion where various students give visions of the things that make up happiness for them.

“What about you?” Marvin asks, turning to me. “What do you think happiness is?”

I know in speaking that my answer would be different on any given day, so I don't really pause very long to think it out. I just give today's answer. “For me? You know that image of looking in the mirror and all the self-loathing he felt? Happiness to me would be being able to look in the mirror... see my image in its entirety... and then say ‘okay.’”

Tim raises his hand and says that he wants to add to his original description of the American dream. He says that Thompson saw civil liberties in America as being run over and destroyed. “I think part of what made Thompson feel the American dream was no longer possible was the fact that we're being so stripped of our civil liberties.”

“Of course it's not just that blatant,” says Marvin, “Americans just bending over

and taking it and then they lose the American dream. It's also that the American dream kind of fools us into letting go of our liberties."

"I like that," I say, " Like the American Dream is a veil pulled over your face -- hiding the depravity, the debauchery, the poverty in our own society. It could also protect us from seeing the effect our life style has on communities in the rest of the world."

"It's a complicated relationship," says Marvin. "We create it and we're influenced by it. It's like the *Invisible Man*, by Ralph Ellison. Ellison's conclusion was that he could wear the role of college student, business man, bum, but who are you in the end? I don't have any identity. I'm just a result of whatever I come across. I think that's a lot like what Thompson is saying here about the way he can't help but be the same as the culture around him."

"Great comparison, Marvin," I say, "I own *Invisible Man*, and I keep meaning to read it, but I haven't read it, yet."

"You should. It's a great book."

Cynthia then, "I've got some notes to add. A person could have their name and doctor after it, but if you strip all of that away . . . concerning my religion, cause I'm Catholic, having a heart knowledge of Jesus Christ. When it comes down to it, who are you? If you strip all that away, clothing, money, jewelry, focus on you, what have you done. Focus on what's what about you."

"Yeah," says Cara, " But he may not look at it the way you do. He may not think he has to justify himself to a higher power. You don't know."

"I think what you should really be asking yourself is what is happiness to you,"

says Marvin, "People are going after ideals set out by other people instead of asking themselves that question. Cara and Steve, maybe this could link into your guys's research project about how people do or do not find satisfaction in their careers."

"Nice suggestion," I say.

There's a moment of silence. We're near the end of the period.

"Professor, what do you think?" says Said suddenly.

I smile. "Are you looking for my Jerry Springer moment?" The class laughs. I kind of lean forward and look fake profound. The class laughs again.

"You know, I've shared a lot of my thoughts on this article already. I'd like everybody to take a moment and appreciate that what happened was, everyone brought something to class. I feel emotionally moved right now, not just intellectually moved, and that doesn't happen all that often in classrooms. That came from Tim bringing something he was passionate about, and somebody else saying I wanna know what Tim is passionate about. Then all of us brought our own life experiences and perspectives to it. It's part of that process Cynthia described where we don't have all the power on that journey."

"Okay," says Marvin, "But then I want to know, why did you feel depression when you read this?"

I think for a moment. "To me, there's this striving, passionate trying to find answers, this brilliant intellect and wit trying to find answers. That's a nice first step to finish with the loathing of who I am. But for me, that's not enough, for life, for learning. I told you guys, I want to get to the place where I see an honest reflection in the mirror when I look at myself, and I accept that image. I felt that he ended in a moment of

despair, and I absorbed a little of that. The other thing that's important for me. As a teacher, I wouldn't have brought this to class. I hadn't read Hunter S. Thompson. I was nervous about teaching it because it's so deep and complicated and has so much potentially explosive stuff in it. I was scared about that. I'm proud of myself for having the trust to handle that and of you guys for the great discussion we had."

After class, Tim comes up to me. He tells me that as much as he already knew about Hunter S. Thompson, he was really happy to see that a class discussion could lead him to thinking about so many layers of his work he had never thought of before. I thank him for all I learned from reading the work and discussing it, too. We shake hands.

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It hadn't at all been my plan to use Wallace and Ewald's pedagogy of mutuality with this class discussion. My stalling at the beginning of the class was due to fear, and I think I felt I had only the choice of closing things down or having faith and moving forward. In chapter one, I discuss my belief that teachers choose to use or object to certain pedagogies based on which pedagogies are close to their primary Discourse. If a pedagogy has a great deal of distance from primary Discourse, it is sure to bring up difficult emotional and spiritual blocks. These blocks might come in during the practice of the pedagogy, or they might prevent a teacher from seriously considering a new pedagogy. I found myself very theoretically attracted to Wallace and Ewald's ideas, but often when I try to practice them, I have a very hard time following the rules that I have set. As I discussed in chapter three, I have a strong desire to give positive reinforcement. Not being permitted to speak after each conversation turn means that I

have to let many student comments, even student comments I want to reward, go by without any reaction from me at all. Additionally, using a pedagogy of mutuality brings up an intense fear of loss of control. If a discussion is directed after each student speaks, it is never far from the hand of the instructor, but if three, four, seven students speak before the conversation returns to me, I can never be certain what the discussion will look like by the time I'm permitted to participate again. This need to control discussion, a need that is motivated for most teachers by a real and sincere belief that it is the responsibility of the teacher to maintain a focused and rigorous discussion, makes Wallace and Ewald's pedagogy of mutuality more difficult than it seems at first.

All of that taken into account, I surprised myself by turning to it during this particular class period when I had not used it with these students previously. At the very moment when my fear of losing control of the class discussion was highest and I felt paralyzed, I responded by giving up further control. This ran contrary to all the planning I tried to do -- staying up all night, running in circles in my head trying to come up with a way to direct discussion down safe and productive avenues. In previous courses, and in class sessions that followed this, we accomplished discussions that consistently went seven or eight turns without my input. Here, I chose to start with two turns, but even this insured I'd have to do some sitting and watching. Because I frequently have a difficult time with mutuality, I have developed the habit of drawing attention in class to the moments when I've broken the rules. I think this accomplishes a few things. First, it helps me see the places where my primary Discourse is conflicting with the pedagogy I want to use. Second, it points out to students that my pedagogy is in fluid motion, constantly changing, and that I'm learning as I'm teaching. I avoid pretending that I am

*not* in a process of growth as a teacher, and this prevents there being a veil over the actual reciprocity that is happening. In the above narrative, these things happen at the moment where I realize I've jumped into conversation out of turn without raising my hand. While at first students smile and exchange sly glances making a sort of community decision to keep me out of the discussion for a while, they also then continue the discussion with renewed seriousness, demonstrating to themselves and to me that they don't really need my direction to have fruitful discussion. All of these dynamics are some of the very dynamics required for successful dialogic education. There is a greater degree of reciprocity evident, in which I am struggling to learn something new from working with my students, students have a greater ownership of the direction of discussion and there is greater weight put in each of their contributions. Additionally, I am restricted from making evaluative comments that would be a barrier to me and others truly listening without judgment. All of this has made Wallace and Ewald's system a valuable tool for me in moving towards dialogic education, despite and probably because of its occasional distance from my primary Discourse.

Finally, I think it is clear in this narrative that the students were capable of far more, both in terms of working together as a community and doing complex analysis of the text, than I was giving them credit for. A discussion in which I provided more of the direction than I did, given my anxious mindset and narrow view of the text, would have been a much worse class period.

Though I already draw attention to them in the narrative itself, I want to briefly discuss the frequent moves that class members make to demonstrate solidarity with one another and respect for one another's view points and intellectual struggle. While



Tim patiently and respectfully brings Said to understanding what happened to the Black Panthers (far more effectively than I could have given my level of frustration), Cara carefully expresses her own previous confusion so as to let Said know that he's not the only one struggling with the article. Said then consistently validates Tim's reading of Thompson's works before raising his own points of query. Again, Said does this more effectively than I could have, given that at these points I have gotten wedded to a particular reading of text and am bound and determined to defend it. This brings up defensiveness in Tim, and so Said's move to validate the worth of the article and Thompson's worth as a person, brings us all back to the same table as equals on the same quest. Tim and I both drop our conflict. Though Cynthia's comments in class were often difficult for me to respond to, her comments are consistently picked up and woven into discussion by her classmates. Marvin brings in the research project that Steve and Cara are doing together and points out a place where they can link Thompson's work to their own research. This spirit of placing the group's shared intellectual quest to understand Thompson, his writing, and its relation to our own lives, over each individual's need to outdo one another or win a point Caras over into the potentially more fraught ground of discussing spirituality. In many classes, students are understandably reticent when spirituality or religion comes up in class as most of them have probably experienced how easily feelings are wounded and conflicts begun when such topics are expressed. Though the class clearly comes from a number of different religious and spiritual perspectives, the discussion on the nature of happiness proceeds in a way that lets everyone contribute from their own perspective without any perspective being rejected. Even the comment from Tim about pedophile priests is

followed by him agreeing with Said that there is a difference between man made institutions and individual beliefs. Cynthia's inclusion of her beliefs in Jesus are mostly allowed by class, checked only by Cara's respectful reminder that Cynthia has a good point, but that not everyone shares her belief system. She does not say Cynthia's view is wrong or that her religious perspective does not have a place in the discussion. This respect for one another's ideas and our shared purpose is also of course seen in the fact that the class all read Tim's contribution to class, and almost without exception brought in a printed copy of the text to discuss.

This learning community atmosphere is an aspect of a dialogic approach to learning. In dialogic learning, learning stems from the collected members' ability to listen to one another and work as a team to approach a topic. There is no need to reject the view point of another if our focus is on learning by hearing an honest expression of that view point, especially when we know our own view point will receive the same respectful audience. When a teacher puts his/her own view point above the view point of others, there is not the same room to engage with that view point. But when a teacher instead works to rhetorically give importance to the voices of classmates -- partly just by shutting up-- students can engage with those ideas as equals, which creates the type of active learning for which Freire consistently argued. This atmosphere was created in class partly by consistently (and sincerely) making the case to students that the class discussions and materials are inherently important in life *outside* the framework of the course. It was also done through asking students to bring in their own texts, and modeling ways to talk about a text in terms of personal, emotional, and spiritual relevance. When Tim brought in his text, students were

convinced that Tim wasn't just picking some text to fulfill the assignment but a text that mattered very much to him. In addition, the course had been discussed since day one as a communal endeavor in which we would learn far more from one another than I could possibly teach them alone and in which great gains would be made in terms of knowing the world through that communal work. This atmosphere is also created through the consistent sharing/modeling I do during the discussion of this text, the Mike Rose text in chapter three, and other texts. In a traditional academic Discourse, such things as my emotional reaction to a text, the fear that came up when I thought about teaching it, its relation to my own pedagogy or acting career (as in the case of the Mike Rose text), or the ways it jarred with or was in sync with my primary and secondary Discourses wouldn't be considered appropriate content for class discussion. But demonstrating the way I am using the text encourages students to make the texts relevant for themselves in whatever way that happens for them and to share that relevance with others. Students come to expect me to be understanding my own life through our discussions and readings and to be learning things that are important to me as we go. This is evident in Marvin's repeated questions about my own emotional and spiritual reactions to the text. When my interactions are presented this way, they are less the definitive and objective reading of the text, and more part of my own confused fumbling towards mystery – something that invites others to do the same. This clumsy personal fumbling towards mystery, or the ways that emotional and person interaction with texts on the part of the teacher can contribute to successful dialogue is something that happens here, but that I hope to more fully explore in a later narrative. Finally, I provided my students with a structure for class discussion and justified it through

Wallace and Ewald. The discussion format was presented as an organic and challenging process (for me, too) of exploration. Students then take advantage of the opportunity to question one another or, as Marvin, Tim, Cynthia, and Said do here, to raise new lines of inquiry for the group or to come back to previous lines they don't feel received a full exploration. They also begin to find enough intrinsic meaning in the writing work being done in class to do as Marvin does here when he makes suggestions about the writing Cara and Steve are doing. Students begin to relate meaningfully to research and writing, their own and others, because they begin to feel that the reading and writing they do matters to their classmates and to our collective knowledge.

Certainly this Hunter S. Thompson article seems particularly well suited to be discussed dialogically and to bring up the connection between social justice and our personal emotions and reactions to the world. Again, however, I think that this dynamic happens repeatedly when we open the door and invite dialogic education. Early on in this discussion, the modern parallel to the war in Iraq is raised by Mike. It's a good parallel. Here, I'm tempted as a teacher to move into a more traditional leftist critical pedagogy, where I tap into the anger and despair I describe in the first narrative of this chapter. Instead of saying, "Good! Let's look at the ways Thompson's critiques of the war in Vietnam can apply to our current war in Iraq," I let the comment go. This lets my students move to a deeper level of analysis both of the article *and* of the war. Thompson's article clearly means to point out a connection between the personal and political. He implicates his own racism, inability to face difficult emotional truths, and desire to numb out from existence for the war in Vietnam. This was not something that I understood in my own reading of the article, but it is an understanding that class

discussion helps move me towards. Because of this, our own racist beliefs and our own personal responses to injustice become important to the discussion, not in a way that is detached from the political reality, but in a way that is integral to that political reality. As Marvin points out, we could use immersion in our own ideals of happiness to shield us from the social injustices of the world, but if we do as Marvin suggests and go deeper into our own ideologies and Discourses, we can also use this exploration to help us understand our place in those social injustices. As Gee argues, every Discourse has the interests of our particular group embedded in the Discourse. These interests remain invisible to us unless we learn competing Discourses and gain a meta-understanding of our own Discourse and Discourses in general. This is one means of doing the constant self-analysis that Freire recommends to transcend the inner oppressor. We act as this inner oppressor, regardless of our class, as long as we are acting in an unquestioned Discourse. This is not dissimilar to Fernandez's idea that neither ignoring our identities nor becoming wedded to them works effectively for social justice. For Fernandez, only transcending our identities by going deeper into them until we can detach from them enables us to truly work for social justice. Instead of the critique of the rationale for war I may have pushed my students to engage in some years previous, one that would have created an us (students and teacher) vs. them (power hungry racist patriarchal others), we end up turning the lens towards ourselves. How much do we numb out from personal and social realities? What do we believe happiness is? What ideologies do we personally believe in and which ones do we question? How much are we being influenced by these ideologies and how much are we creating them? This is no placid acceptance of social reality but direct engagement, starting with self-reflection. As

Marvin points out, social injustice is not merely a matter of “bending over and taking” the ideologies of power that we meet; instead, we accept social injustice out of a skewed vision of self interest. And as Thompson seems to argue in his essay, the inability to clearly see social reality parallels our inability to face painful realities in our personal lives. Thus, happiness and justice, emotions and politics, relationships and wars are tied together, and progress in one can lead to progress in another. If we can witness the different view points of our classmates, we *are* doing something to unlearn the lies that lead to injustice.

While no one in class needs to adopt Cynthia’s or Said’s method of turning to a higher spiritual reality in the face of despair, it is important that room is made in discussion for this alternative. For students like Said or Cynthia, or even Tim with his Zen Buddhism, to discuss overarching social injustice and deep personal unhappiness without the ability to move into the spiritual requires a one dimensional conversation that does not even allow access to many students’ realities. If we are demonstrating and practicing witnessing, then there is room for Cynthia and Said’s spirituality as well as Marvin’s insistence that no ideology go unquestioned and Tim’s distrust of religious institutions. These different view points are not then in conflict, but instead part of a larger picture. They become a community response to injustice through non-judgmental witnessing and an acceptance that we have all come to the table with the desire to learn more and then use our new knowledge to prompt self-reflection and change in our own actions.

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This next narrative takes place in the following semester of class – the winter of

2006. Because I was interested by what had happened the previous semester and wanted to explore it more, I entered this class with a more fully fleshed out pedagogy. This time students brought in pieces of writing early in the semester, and each of my classes voted for six of their classmates texts to read. Some of these texts were provided online or in photocopy, but the students were required to obtain their own copies of the novels.

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I've come to class on Monday a bit tired and cranky. Despite the fact the play I wrote opened this weekend and the audience reaction was very warm, I have had a difficult weekend. There has been some tension in my relationship with my girlfriend that we have been unable to place or find a way to talk about, and despite the fact that we have both expressed our desire to find out what's going on and talk about it, we have fallen into silence for lack of anything to say but "I love you" and "I gotta go now."

I am sitting on the table in front of the class grimacing and stalling rather than starting class. "What's the matter with you?" asks Sida.

"Bah, I'm peeved at my girlfriend," I say, "And I don't even really know why. But now we aren't talking."

"Oh I'm sorry," she says.

I shrug, "Let's circle up the desks," I say. We're discussing *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho today. It is Sida's contribution to the class content. On the basis of her description of the book, the class voted to read it. It is the story of a shepherd named Santiago who heads into the world on a quest to find his true reason for being -- what Coelho calls a Personal Legend. It is a very spiritual book and there are students

writing essays in class about the parallels between Coehlo's fable and Christianity. In the book, Santiago learns to trust the world and the signs that it sends him for how to live. He learns that as long he follows his passion (in pursuit of his treasure) and listens to his heart, he will learn the things he needs to learn about life. He also falls in love and learns that love can only exist without possession. The book helps me think about a lot of things that are important to me, and I have stopped being surprised by this point that my teaching and my life would hold helpful conversations with one another. That the class has voted to read Paulo Coehlo, despite my affection for the book, seems right and good to me.

The class discussion thus far on Coehlo has been interesting. It has been wide ranging and has provided an interesting foil for Jean Paul Sartre's work, which the class also voted to read. Not all of the readings have been as esoteric; a student brought in *Maybe He's Just Not That Into You* by one of the writers for *Sex and the City*, and the class voted to read that, too. I had no qualm voting against it. I find the work appalling, and every time someone brings it up, I have a difficult time balancing my need to respect student contributions to course content with my impulse to wretch. If a boy isn't calling, he's not that into you, says the book, and adds that if he doesn't want to have sex with you right away, he's not that into you either. One evening I work out carefully what I want to say to my class about my response to the *Sex in the City* book. It is important to me to do it respectfully, but also to allow myself the freedom to respond to the ideas honestly. I tell about bell hooks and how she believes that women are taught to value love and relationships and spend their lives talking about love and relationships and communication; they practice and they learn. But she argues that when we leave



love and relationships in the realm of the feminine, then men do not do this practice. They do not learn how to do the talking and the communication. They are taught not to value love and relationships. The leaving of relationship work to the female gender cuts off an important level of the human experience for both genders. It means that both men and women will have less than satisfying relationships until we change this system. *Maybe He's Just Not That Into You*, I tell my class, seems to simplify and belittle the terrifying and incredible experience of intimacy and explain the male inability at communication and love as natural and something to work around.

Somewhere during the discussion that follows, Ashley exclaims "But you're like a girl!!!"

The class all laughs. I laugh, too. But then everything erupts. Everyone starts speaking at once. I can't make out much of what is being said, though a number of students are defending me, and a number of students are angry, and the guys are mostly silent and laughing. Sida, who always gets the floor when she wants it, and has the respect of her peers as one of the strongest writers in class, protests on behalf not just of me but also of her brother, who, she says, is "sensitive."

"You misunderstand," says Ashley, "All I meant to say was that I didn't know guys could talk like that or that they think those things."

Eventually the discussion moves on, but after class, Ashley comes up to me. "My dad is really big and has a beard and wears flannel shirts," she says, "I just didn't know men care about or talk about those things. I didn't mean to insult you."

I'm not insulted, and I let her know. Ashley ends up reading a whole bell hooks book as well as a number of other books on love and relationships from different fields

and then writes her essay on love. Another student, Cindy, who initially expressed an opinion in class that men are men and women are women, writes an extremely well researched and well written essay that I would have given an “A” in a graduate seminar about the various historical definitions of masculinity in American society and their connection to the changing economic roles that men have played. She tells me after the class has ended that one of her theories is that men who are writers become more capable of understanding and expressing their emotions. She says she has this theory mostly because she realized both me and her boyfriend write a lot.

As the discussion on *The Alchemist* moves on, we come to discuss the section of the book where Santiago’s quest takes him to a desert oasis community where he falls in love at first sight. Love is described as coming from something higher than ourselves. As a communion of souls. Eventually, Santiago must continue his quest, and leave the girl at the oasis. She encourages him to do this, saying that real love *never* gets in the way of discovering our Personal Legend nor the pursuit of our treasure. In fact, she *wants* him to go. She will just wait for him to come back because he *is* her treasure and love never entails ownership. The class discusses this representation of love for a while, and I enjoy listening to the discussion. Eventually I add,

“You know, I really like a lot of what this says about love, but I also think that there’s something that needs to be said which is that Santiago has a treasure that is out in the world and he has to go and find. Whereas the girl, her treasure is Santiago. That doesn’t seem fair to me. If he is going to go in pursuit of his treasure to find his Personal Legend, why is she just going to wait for him? Why can’t she go find *her* treasure, too. Why is Santiago her treasure?”

Sida bristles. She loves this book and she brought it to class.

“The book isn’t *about* her,” she says, “It’s about Santiago. Coehlo can’t just follow the girl on *her* quest, too, because that would make the story disorganized and confusing. This book isn’t *about* her quest.”

“That makes sense. I could see if her quest went too long it would disrupt the narrative, but I could also see Coehlo just adding a sentence like, ‘And then she went on her own quest for her treasure, but that’s another story,’ and then he could get back to Santiago. I think it was an artistic choice to do that, and to have made that choice was a little irresponsible.”

“I just think he had something he wanted to say in this book and he was focusing on that. He was trying to make the point that love is freedom and we do not possess one another, and so she is in the book to demonstrate that. She’s not the main character. He writes about other things in other books, and you haven’t read any of those other books. You should read *Eleven Minutes*. The heroine in that is a girl. If you read that book you would never say Coehlo was irresponsible about gender.”

“O.k.,” I say, “I will read that.”

“Also,” Sida goes on, “You don’t understand the culture of the desert community in which she lives. In that culture, women *are* all about their men. Their relationship with men *is* their treasure. That’s how the culture is, so Coehlo would not be being realistic if he portrayed it otherwise. My mother, for instance, her focus in life is her family and her husband. And I don’t see anything wrong with that. You just don’t understand Eastern culture.”

“It’s true I haven’t read as much Coehlo as you and that I don’t know as much

about that culture as you do,” I say, “But when you say that women making men their focus is just part of Eastern culture I disagree. I think it’s part of western culture, too. I think for most of our history men have been expected to go out into the world and achieve something and women are supposed to support in that endeavor while not achieving things themselves. If you look at Western stories, it’s the same thing.”

There are some nods in class and some grimaces. A few people make comments agreeing or disagreeing with the idea that Western culture is built this way.

“Look at our fairy tales,” I say. And then I slide into a lecture I used to give all the time about Snow White and how she cooks and cleans and primps until finally she is the perfect woman lying beautiful and perfectly still doing nothing at all as if dead and *then* finds her love and is happy. I’m orating at this point and doing it well.

“And you may ask me,” I say, “You may ask me, who cares? They’re just stories. They’re just fairy tales. But you don’t think they matter? Ask your nieces and little sisters what movie they want to watch or what dolls they want. Go to the toy store and see all the Snow White and Cinderella dolls and this whole princess *THING* that’s out there with the wall paper and the bed sheets and the princess this and the princess that. And you don’t think those stories have an influence? And what about the men in those stories? They hardly even show up. They aren’t real. When they do show up it’s just to be LOVE and the answer and it’s simple and easy and they have no weakness and they never cry...”

And then I’m like a Warner Brothers cartoon. I look down and there’s no longer any ground underneath me. I stop mid sentence out of breath, and everything is quiet and I’ve chased myself right out into open air.

“... and that’s why I’m mad at my girlfriend,” I add quietly.

And nobody says anything. I lower my eyes a moment, but then I lift them back up, and I look around at everyone. And nobody says anything. “Jesus,” I say and laugh a little, “I had no idea why I was mad at her. Isn’t it funny how things work?”

A semester full of Justin’s ideas on gender and intimacy. His well articulated points backed up by published intellectuals. His careful social critique. And I think for a moment that it must seem to mean nothing to them now because Justin was just struggling to work out his relationship with his girlfriend. It isn’t socially or universally relevant at all. It’s personal. It’s Justin’s issue. And no wonder he was so passionate about this, but now the rest of us can just forget about it.

But then I quickly change my course of thinking. That isn’t it at all. Every impassioned tome of scholarship in the world comes from something deep inside of us that we want to figure out or understand. And most of the time when we write our articles, we leave that part out. And when teachers choose course content, they choose course content that is personally meaningful, but maybe not even the teacher knows she’s done it. We leave out our experience. We leave out the fact that we started reading books and talking about them in the first place to try to understand our own lives and our place in the universe.

I smile. “I just got in an intellectual argument with Sida,” I say, “And I didn’t even know I was partly driven by the fact that I’m frustrated with my relationship right now. I’ve been walking around feeling all stopped up and frustrated for two days and didn’t know why. You know we were at my play this weekend, and she made a comment about how I had my legs crossed. It wasn’t the guy’s way. I had them crossed the girl’s

way,” I say, “And all through class now, I’ve been sitting here with my legs crossed the guy’s way and trying to keep them that way. And... and this weekend, I started to cry at one point, and I felt like she bristled. Maybe she didn’t bristle. Maybe I imagined it. But I stopped crying right away.”

All of my articulate expressions of the importance of gender equality. “I didn’t know guys could talk like that,” Ashley had said. And now they see I can’t negotiate traditional gender roles in my own relationship.

“I won’t ask the guys to say anything about this, but I know the females can attest to it, can you imagine going through life without crying? It’s impossible. If I can’t cry there’s no release for the sadness. If I can’t be sad, I can’t live. I can’t be a human being.”

There are a lot of nods from the girls. The guys are looking at the ceiling or looking out the corner of their eyes at the girls next to them and grinning.

“Boy,” says one of my non-traditional students, in her forties, “You gotta break up with that girl.”

“I don’t want to break up with her,” I say, “I’m going to talk to her. And tell her what I felt. But hey,” I add smiling, and with my cool recovered, “Okay, so I was arguing because of a tie to my personal life... but... I think... everything we pursue with a passion, in our work or our art, needs to be connected to our emotions and our lives, and that makes it worth more. It just helps if we’re aware of what we’re doing.”

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I include this narrative partly because I wanted a representation of the fact that I was continuing to develop the dialogic techniques I had been developing in the previous

semester. I was, by and large, able to recreate much of the same dynamic over an extended period of time in class. Students were just as rigorous about their text selections, striking their own balance between secular western intellectuals, spiritual writers, social issues, and more popular texts on issues that were important to them. Between the two classes, students chose to read selections from a book written from prison by a member of a notorious Detroit drug ring, three chapters of a Sigmund Freud book, the novel *Lovely Bones* in its entirety, two chapters of Ayn Rand, and Marx's *Communist Manifesto* in addition to the books described in the narrative above. Yes, there were one or two students who did not put much thought into the selections they brought to class, but by and large, students took choosing the class texts as taking serious responsibility for their education. I think part of the reason this occurred was, again, the promise of community of equals pursuing things that matter to us. Each student made the case for the importance or value of their text in class, and often other students who had read or heard of the text would add to that case. In many cases, students were quite convincing. I won't say that I did not contribute to the discussion at all, but I made an effort at objectivity in my comments (About Marx and Freud: "Two of the most influential writers in modern western thought.") Or I indicated my comments as clearly subjective: "I've read that. I liked it." I also allowed myself to vote, though votes were done with heads down, so nobody knew what I voted for. I suspect I ended up feeling like many of my students at the results: I was looking forward to some of the books and dreading others.

I also included this narrative to give an indication of where things can go wrong. As I argue in chapters two and three, personal reflection and exploration on the part of

the teacher is incredibly important to effective dialogic education. Here, I step outside of dialogic education in two ways. While in the Thompson discussion I go out of my way to demonstrate respect for all views, here I get more fully embroiled in conflict, again because of an emotional ego attachment to a view point. Regardless of the rhetorical show of listening to her (making comments like “I see your point” and “That may be true, but...”) I engage in heated debate with her. I have a vested interest in winning the argument because my ego is *firmly* attached to my side. It is attached so firmly, at least in part, because I need my interpretation to be right in order to keep alive the dichotomy that is supporting my anger in my relationship in which *she’s* wrong and *I’m* right. This is the same type of dichotomous thinking that led to my anger and conflict over the Iraq war. I am well aware at the start of class that I have entered class in a bad place, coated in unresolved issues and pain, but because I didn’t resolve these issues before class, they contribute to an ego attachment to my side of the argument. The second thing this causes me to do is pull rank, taking advantage of the teacher’s ability to lecture. I fall into a banking model of education here, not because I’ve made a clear decision that this is a good place for an informative lecture, but because I am defending an area of my own psyche that is suffering – thereby, of course, letting it remain in suffering. Certainly, Freire makes room in dialogic education for instructors to speak on topics and to contribute to choosing topics; they are, he says, part of the dialogue, after all (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 120). The problem here is my motivation in lecturing; I didn’t of course know my motivation at the time I started speaking, but it was partly out of an aggressive need to protect an aspect out of my ego. This, rather than the fact that I lecture, is the problem, I think.



Again, to pretend that my pedagogical decisions in this interaction were a result of careful theoretical decision making based on the advantages and disadvantages of each pedagogy would be to fall prey to a shallow illusion.

It is, in fact, only my willingness to engage in the moment with the ways traditional gender roles are confusing my own life that saves the class discussion from the “us vs. them” direction my lecture has taken it in. Even worse, I am in danger here of shutting down open discussion all together with the force of my institutional role and rhetorical bluster. Sida’s experience of Coehlo’s work is different than mine and influenced by different factors: her knowledge of Coehlo’s body of work and her own cultural tradition, as well as, as she points out, the life, values, and beliefs of her mother. Here, instead of sharing my perspective on the book and the things that influence my reading and then witnessing Sida’s, we become locked in a moment of conflict. This conflict is caused by our own emotional ego ties to our perspectives and identities. Sida has no way of knowing that she is tapping into a source of pain for me over my current romantic relationship. I, meanwhile, am challenging her admiration for and identification with her mother, her culture, and her favorite author, all at once. Helpfully for my analysis (though not for good pedagogy), this conflict immediately goes in the direction that conflict in the classroom over ideas frequently goes. In one moment, I lose my goal of mutual exploration of mystery and become intent on winning my point. This engages Sida in a struggle to win her point. Only, of course, I’m the instructor. I have, if I want it, control of the floor, and access to a filibuster type lecture. I can control the direction of debate. Sida has read more Coehlo than I have and so I swiftly move the discussion to Western style fairy tales (Where did THAT come from?!) because I’ve read more of that

than I'm sure Sida has and now I can talk without being challenged and I can win. In so doing, I not only retain my unchallenged position as "knowledge giver" in the class, but I also get to protect the piece of vulnerable gender identity that Sida's comments hit. This is an example of conflict in the classroom, debate, and maybe what some people call dialogue, but I hope what is apparent is the closed off, almost violent nature of this debate. It leads to further defensiveness rather than an openness to hearing one another and approaching mystery together.

Then something happens, however. My diatribe gets close enough to the real source of anger and confusion for me to see it. In that moment, as I pointed out in chapter three, there is the compulsion from my academic Discourse and the primary Discourse to which it is tied, to cover up this weak spot. Everything I have just been trying to achieve by lecturing, retaining my intact identity and my role as knowledge giver, would be undermined if my students knew *why* I was giving the lecture and *why* I had been arguing with Sida. It is only access to a spiritual Discourse that gives me enough moment of pause to do something other than cover. It is the sense that my spiritual Discourse gives me that this type of conflict is not generative, that it might be *okay* for me to be a fallible teacher with a confusing lived life, and that telling the truth is more likely to lead to a positive outcome and a more productive class. . This is supported by the beliefs in Zen Buddhism that conflict is an illusion and not generative. Practice with this belief helps lead me to doubt that the conflict I am engaged in is useful or going to make a positive difference to either the student or to myself. Additionally, twelve step discourse involves a process of apologizing and making amends for actions, no matter how uncomfortable that apology and amend making might be. Here, I need

to admit that the motivation for my anger is not the person that I'm arguing with. This was a slowly learned behavior for me that I was practicing outside of the classroom with friends when conflict would start. For a long time, the moments of understanding what had caused anger and conflict frequently came days after the actual argument. Slowly, I was learning to do this more quickly as I became more accustomed to the new behavior. This material is covered across many of the steps of twelve step, but it is focused on in the ninth step. (Codependents Anonymous National Website) These are the beliefs and behaviors from spiritual Discourses that support the move I make to say to my students, "...and that's why I'm mad at my girlfriend" and then tell them the story.

Once I introduce my personal confusion, it undercuts my diatribe. Rather than my personal revelation being a bad thing, it makes the entire discussion more complex and rescues me from my dialogue squelching oratory. That work with social issues begins with a focus on our own emotional and spiritual state is a central tenant of Thich Nhat Hahn's Zen Buddhism. He argues repeatedly that no good effect can come from action that is not mindful, and mindfulness requires first feeling and releasing our emotions. (*Nothing to Do, Nowhere to Go, The Art of Power, No Death No Fear*). Here, the social structures I am working in are around gender, but the first thing I need to do to work with them are to sort through my own emotions around this issue. Gender roles are partly based on primary and secondary Discourses, and my own gender identity and relationships are as awash in those competing Discourses as everyone else's. Certainly gender is complex, and I don't mean to argue that it is only defined by Discourse. However, just like we learn to be a member of a family, a member of a social group or professional group, we also learn, as part of our Discourse how to speak as a

“who” who is a male or a who that is female. There are many ways in which maleness or femaleness can be performed, and these behaviors are modeled for us as part of our primary Discourse. They can also later be influenced in, for instance, a professional community in which the appropriate ways to be gendered are further modeled. For instance, as a male in a particular work place, do I wear a tie? Is it frowned on when males interrupt females during group interaction, or is this an accepted behavior that I see modeled and unconsciously adopt. My comment here about the way my personal relationship struggle is influencing my academic reading of the text is a break from more traditional academic Discourse. My realization, whether I had shared it or not, removed my motivation for conflict and helps me stop getting in the way of more dialogic education in which I am reciprocally learning from class discussion. It becomes, instead, much like the moment in the discussion about the Thompson article where I eagerly jump into conversation without raising my hand then apologize for it. Once I have removed myself and my rhetoric from a position of authoritarianism, my comments after this are less arguments designed to convince than experiences and feelings to be shared and brought up by the intersection of a text with my own real life. This type of contribution to discussion leaves the door open to other view points and leaves *me* open to learning from the dialogue, which I did. Such a move was only possible because of experience acquiring spiritual Discourse and seeing such things work in other contexts. I needed a new Discourse to support the new behavior that would not have been supported by the academic Discourse or my primary Discourse it is sometimes tied to.

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In the fall of 2006, we have developed two new community partners – an elementary school and Latino Family Services. Students have a choice of where to do their community work. We are no longer doing the same service-learning work together as a group, and that requires an adjustment to reading and writing assignments. We start out with the same basic texts on the philosophy and ethics of community work in general, and then students move in different directions depending on the type of service work they have elected. Although this is a class of intermediate composition students, like the classes in the other narratives, our service-learning program had moved this semester to the honor's college, and about half of this section is made up of honors students.

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The first essay of the semester asks students to ask a research question about literacy work. Students are to think of a question that arose during their tutoring and that they feel has not been adequately addressed in class discussion or readings – a question which they feel it is important that the class, as a knowledge-community, have a better answer to. I asked students to detail for us what our course readings have to say about the topic, what has been covered in class discussion, and what they learned from experience, and then to show us why that information isn't enough to answer their question adequately, and why it is important that we find out a better or fuller answer. Students are working in groups of three to peer workshop their papers. We have spent the first weeks of class going over tutoring strategies to help writers, since many of them (though not all) will be tutoring elementary school children in writing. I have now asked

them to apply the tutoring abilities they are learning to one another. For my part, I take a copy of an essay from each group and try to plan my time so I can be in each group for one workshop session each so that I can model. The second group I sit down with consists of Ryan, Jenny, and Denise. Ryan cracked a lot of jokes on the first day of class, told me after class that he struggles with writing, and asked me to assure him he would get an A in the class because he wanted to maintain his scholarship. Because of this, his is the first name I learned in class. I was ready to have struggles with him. Denise had already spent time tutoring at Mayberry Elementary School on her own through another program and was excited to get the chance to go back there in this class. When I come and sit down with them, Ryan and Jenny are staring at Denise, who is looking at her paper with a defiant expression.

“Well?” I say, “Where are you guys with this?”

“We told her it’s boring,” says Ryan.

I expect something like this from Ryan, but then Jenny, who has been nothing but sweet to everyone, nods in agreement. I have read Denise’s paper, and I thought it was strong.

“I thought there were a lot of strong things about this paper,” I say.

“Yeah, there are,” says Ryan, “But it’s boring.”

Jenny nods again.

“Um...,” I say, “Did you tell Denise why you think it’s boring? Or what would make it more interesting?”

“Yes!” says Jenny, “We did.”

“There’s no personal experience,” says Ryan. “It’s dry.”

“And I told them I don’t write like that,” says Denise.

“But,” says Jenny, bursting forth, “Your stories are so good!! You come to class discussion and you talk about working with the students and you inspire me every week! You do amazing things with them and you talk about it and I can just see it. You’re like my big sister, Denise! But then I read your paper and none of that is here.”

“But talking isn’t like writing,” says Denise.

They all look at me.

“Um...,” I say, “I’ll say that I thought this was a really strong essay. Let me say that first. But... then I want to say, Denise, you have far more tutoring experience at Mayberry than anyone else in class. In this community, you have the right to speak from experience. IF you want to.”

“I don’t feel like I do have a lot of experience. Like I know anything about that. And that’s not how I write. I read all the readings, and they have been talking to one another in my head, and this is the only question that they led to.”

“You know, what works so good about this paper,” I say, “Is that that dialogue between the articles is here. It’s not at all like you’re going through and just telling us what you read. In each paragraph, the articles speak to one another and inform one another and question one another. And to me, that’s what makes the essay interesting. That formalized conversation that happened in your head that we can see. So for me, this is going to be an “A” essay. And you can add personal experience if you want to. Now... you guys are right, that is a way to make an essay interesting, but I think everyone has different things to contribute to a conversation. Think about how Richard Rodriguez tells his stories and what a different kind of argument that is than the

empirical sociology study we read. But they both tell us something. So I'm fine with both. And, you know, my dissertation has personal experience stories in it, but if you asked one of my other graduate student colleagues to do what *I'm* doing they'd think you were nuts."

"Well, what DO I need to revise?" asks Denise.

"Talk with me about the phrasing of your question, later, though I have to read your essay again more carefully first, and your introduction isn't setting up your paper right now. We spend too much time wondering what you're getting at."

"We told her that," says Jenny, "About the intro."

"Yeah they told me that."

"Good work," I say, "And... And I want to congratulate all three of you. For doing such real work talking about Denise's paper."

Ryan puts out his fist for Jenny to punch, and then he punches Denise's fist. Then Denise and Jenny punch fists.

"And for somehow having the courage to do that in front of me. Before you knew what I thought of the essay, you had strong and productive things to say about it. That was a risk."

"Well," says Ryan, "That's cause of how you are. You don't stand above us. You just sit down with us. So it's easier." I smile, thrilled with the compliment. Ryan hesitates a moment, then puts out his fist for me to punch, too.

I punch it.

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Here, the principals of dialogic education are applied not to the texts of others,



but to the writing of the students. In the same way as we work to respect both the voices of the authors we read, and each of our classmates' voices in discussion, we work to respect one another's voices when we write. As much as we can become invested in texts written by others (Sida and Tim's investment in Coelho and Thompson respectively), identity investment in our own writing can be even stronger. This can make discussion of and critique of student writing even more potentially fraught and prone to difficult emotions that can lead to conflict and/or withdrawal and disengagement. Ryan and Jenny's response to Denise's paper is based partly on the community we have established in class discussions. Because discussion is a place where putting our experiences in communion with texts are valued, Jenny and Ryan push for Denise to take advantage of her experiences – experiences that both Ryan and Jenny have come to value. Even in Denise's equal and alternate model of writing her paper, she conceives of her essay as a conversation where all of the sources we have read are 'talking to one another.' Her essay is a synthesis of this conversation between sources that has gone on in her head. Each source is respected and listened to as a separate view point, and then she gives her view point. My role here is only to further argue for the multiplicity of view points and styles and the value of listening to them and to one another.

I already draw attention in the narrative to the strong opinions Ryan and Jenny give about Denise's essay. In less dialogic classes I have observed and taught, I don't think that such active voices in peer workshops are a norm. Not only were Ryan and Jenny pushing Denise before I arrived, but they continued their critique, even after probably being able to see body language cues from me that I probably didn't

completely agree with them. Ryan's end comment about my teaching makes the narrative much less subtle than I'd have chosen to write it if it were fiction, but it does demonstrate that Ryan is aware that it is appropriate in this classroom to have and present ideas about writing because of how I position myself as the teacher. Finding a way to have what Freire calls authority without moving into authoritarianism is absolutely necessary for dialogic education.

But, look, for me the question is not for the teacher to have less and less authority. The issue is that the democratic teacher never, never transforms authority into authoritarianism. He or she can never stop being an authority or having authority. [...] The question nevertheless is for authority to know that it has its foundation in the freedom of others, and if the authority denies this freedom and cuts off this relationship, this founding relationship, with freedom, I think that it is no longer authority but has become authoritarianism. (*A Pedagogy of Liberation* 93)

The way I work towards an authority based in the freedom of others is portrayed in some of the narratives I have already discussed. I do not pretend to be objective; I am open to changing and learning in class; I draw attention to the fact that I am learning from teaching the class; I work to not hide flaws or the ways my intellectual concerns cross with my lived life; I strive to limit the amount of evaluative comments I make, instead focusing on hearing and being changed by my students. These things require constant effort and coming to class as ready to be mindful as I possibly can. That's why I was so willing to accept Ryan's fist pump, as a member of a dialogic learning community.

I also think this narrative stands as a response to the possible critique that valuing community and listening over conflict will result in students coming to placid agreements that do not really deal with difficult issues. A common critique of Bruffee's work on collaborative education, for instance, is that consensus can override important conflicts that still exist. (Johnson; Beade) But what I am arguing for here is not consensus. It is openness to other view points and a willingness to be changed by them, but in a way that does not require consensus. Ryan and Jenny do not retract their previous statements, and in this narrative, as in the narratives before it, there are moments of anger, stubbornness, and ego attachment. But after Denise has heard Jenny's and Ryan's critiques of her paper, and after a multiplicity of view points is valued, even after there has been anger, Ryan reaffirms that all of this has been done in the context of a community struggling to grow and hear one another. Each of the members of the group fist pump as a recognition that A.) They have done a good job voicing their view points and hearing the view points of others regarding a topic they have chosen to learn about, i.e. writing, and Denise's essay specifically. And B.) They have done this together, with the overall goal of becoming better writers as a group and as individuals. The fist pumps signal that despite some conflict, the community dialogue takes precedence and will go on. Though this was a class in which about half of the students are honors students, I have had similar peer conferencing sessions in technical writing classes at Wayne State as well as in non-honors intermediate and beginning composition classes at community colleges in Chicago. That being said, while I don't think this interaction was unique to an honors class, it also does not happen in every class. In classes where, for a number of reasons, there is never

created an atmosphere of collaborative knowledge construction, self motivated writing, and the sense of a knowledge community within the classroom, students tend to be much more passive in peer conferencing. This happened in my first semester of teaching in Chicago, for instance. Being in a new atmosphere, unsure both of my job security and the differences in student population I would find, I attempted to maintain more control over the class out of fear of the number of unknowns I was facing. Perhaps, my fear reaction was only me acting at (what to me) was the edge of risk in a teaching community and job position I did not feel sure of. In the second semester of teaching, peer conferences were more like the one I describe above in which students are very active in asking questions about and exploring their classmates papers. I do not have data to support this because these experiences are from classes I am teaching while I am writing this dissertation.

Of course, making attempts to stay away from authoritarianism in the classroom brings up problems of its own, and we are most in danger of enacting authoritarianism when we feel we have conquered it. Freire argues:

And it's very interesting. The students in a certain moment test you. They are so conditioned by authoritarian professors that when you come and say we in this class are different, we have the right to think and to ask questions and to criticize, not only the right but the duty, it's possible that one of the students (and it's beautiful!) makes the first test! He or she does that in order to know whether what you said is real. If you punish that student, you really were not honest. Your speech did not have any value. But, if you do not say *anything* to the student, your speech *also* did not have value. Do you see how difficult it is? (*Politics of Liberation* 93)

In the following narrative, from the same semester, I hope to evoke as much as possible... how difficult working through this dynamic can be.

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I have asked students to share stories about their service work. Most students have already shared, some telling stories about their literacy tutoring work at a nearby elementary school, others about their more varied work at Latino Family Services. Jenny raises her hand to talk. I'm always a little nervous just before Jenny speaks because though she seems at first quiet and shy, she is unfailingly honest about her own thoughts and experiences and seems unafraid of public criticism. Earlier in the semester, during orientation at the school, having some anxiety about the tutoring she would do, Jenny felt she'd be fine as long as the students wanted to learn. So she raised her hand and asked the literacy specialist at the elementary school: "Do these kids *want* to learn?"

Jenny begins without hesitation, "I have a student who won't do any work."

Up until now, everyone has been sharing success stories. "What have you asked him to do?" I ask.

"I tried writing assignments, and reading assignments and vocabulary lists and..."

"You know... Jenny... you've only had two sessions. Did you take a chance to just get to know your students? Just talk a little?"

"Yes, we did that. But he walks around the school and goes to talk to other students and says he doesn't have to listen to me." This is said simply, without shame, and she waits to be told what she should do.

"He walks around the school? Oh... O.K... yeah you can't let that happen. You guys are in a tough position because you're not teachers, and that can be a good thing, but you do have to have *some* authority. Well what are some things the rest of you are doing to keep students interested and respecting the tutoring sessions?"

Students immediately raise their hands -- some to talk about drawing out students' interests; how they spent the first two sessions mostly talking and then drew a writing assignment out of the talking. But then Yan raises his hand and says to Jenny, "Just give him a little time with me. I'll talk to him. He'll be fine then."

Students look to me and I shake my head to indicate this is not a serious suggestion. Another student says, "Or put the student with me. He just needs to work with a guy."

"I have female colleagues," I say, "who have seen me teach and have said that they can't do what I do because I have a power granted to me as a male, to sit here so casually, give up so much authority in my classroom; they say my ability to do that comes with my gender. They say it's different when you're female. That may be somewhat true. I don't know. Maybe students are sometimes more willing to accept authority from a male teacher. But saying those things isn't going to help Jenny in this tutoring situation."

Some more students give tutoring suggestions. I'm ready to let things move on, and then I take a moment to think what I, Justin, would do, if I was volunteering in an after school literacy program and my student was making me feel useless and disrespected, and I didn't have experience being an authority figure and I was out of ideas.

"Jenny," and I speak very slowly, not really sure about what I'm saying, but trying to trust myself, "You know, it's possible that this situation will get worse. Your student was testing you. And when that happens, you have to be able to set lines. You have to be able to set boundaries. And if you don't have experience doing that, things can get

out of hand pretty quickly. This stuff, it's about experience. We're just learning. I spent a year being a substitute teacher in elementary schools, and I can't tell you how many times the neighboring teachers had to come into my class and they'd look around like, "What bozo is running this show?" and there'd be things flying by in the air." I mime watching the things fly by and the class laughs. Then I jump up and point and yell, "Put that bunny back in its cage!" This gets more laughs, and I laugh, too, cause it's a true story. I sit back down. "Anyway, Jenny, I often needed to GET that help from the teacher next door or the principal. Talking to Denise about your student and asking her to come by and watch your session and offer suggestions might be a good idea. Denise would be happy to do that, I'm sure. But I also want to say, if you get to the point where arriving at the school starts to feel awful and you hate it.... well... you're working with a difficult student to work with. I want this service work to be positive for you. You've only had two sessions, so if this student has just told you that he doesn't want to work with you and that seems like where things are going to stay, it's okay if you just tell Denise you'd like to work with someone else."

"Well I don't want to abandon him like other people have abandoned him!" she says.

"Sure," I say, "but it makes sense for you to put your energy in a place where it's going to do good. It would be great if you could work with this student, but you're just learning how to do this and--"

"I disagree!" interrupts Alice suddenly. She hasn't spoken today, or very much in class discussion at all. She does fabulous work in writing and is socially concerned to boot. She started her schooling in Germany and brings an interesting perspective to

class. I enjoy her writing because it deals with complicated issues without pat answers. But she makes a lot of irritated faces during class that I try to ignore, but I don't always manage to stay detached from them. The truth is, I don't know what they mean. "I disagree! If you quit, if you give up, then you're saying they're right. That women can't do this. That women can't do what men can do! You can't give up."

The onslaught is fast, and it's confusing, and I was doing something that was new for me in advising Jenny this way, and because of that newness I was vulnerable in that moment. I feel hurt. I have asked for their feedback for Jenny, but this is different. I understand that Alice is mad about some of the comments from male students about the student doing better with a male tutor, and that I probably didn't do a good enough job dealing with those comments, but I can't let someone in my class tell someone else what to do in that way.

"Alice," I say, speaking slowly again, "It's about experience ... "

"You can't quit," she says again, addressing Jenny, "I babysat an autistic boy. I've been spit on and pee'd on, and I've been bit. But you just put up with it," to Jenny now, "You can't give up on him."

I am shaken. I am accustomed to a classroom where students disagree with me. I try to have students write about topics that have many possible appropriate and sometimes contradictory perspectives. But to tell another student how she has to handle her tutoring work in direct contradiction to the advice I gave. I am suddenly wondering if my democratic classroom is a sham. If this is what it *really* would be like to give up authority.

Of *course* I needed to help Jenny with strategies for dealing with her tutoring



work; that's one of the things a service learning class can provide. Along with Denise, I am part of the institutional support system that makes such difficult literacy work possible for students who don't have experience with it. Was I then wrong to ask for the class's feedback in the first place? Wrong to ask that we all talk about this? No, no, I wasn't, and we're building knowledge as a class, and it was necessary to do that. So I can't completely shut down Alice because I can't just simply say that what I said mattered and what she's saying doesn't. I start speaking again, needing to FORCE myself to look at Alice and not down at my desk.

"Alice, but you have experience with working with kids. You *have* that experience with the autistic child. So sticking in and setting boundaries would be the right thing for *you* to do. But it might be that the right thing for Jenny is something different."

Alice shakes her head. "No, she can't give up."

"Jenny," I say, turning to her, "This is good. You can listen to Alice's perspective on this. You can hear what *she* would do in this situation. But just take it as that. You're a different person with a different set of experiences. And I am telling you that it is okay for you to keep working with this student, to ask for help from Denise, and also that it would be okay for you to ask for another student to work with. But you should make that decision based on what feels right to you." I take a breath. If the tension in the room is thick, I don't know it because I'm just waiting for my head to stop pounding.

"Okay," I say. I look up at the clock; there's only about five minutes left in class. "What else?"

There is a period of silence while I hope that someone will speak so that I can rest and that we can leave on a different note. Someone does. People talk. And class

ends. Jenny walks up to me immediately.

“I want you to know,” she says, “I’m going to keep trying to work with him for a while. That’s what seems right to *me* right now.”

“O.k.,” I say, “That’s fine. Keep me informed.”

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One of the places that the teacher’s real authority is needed in a dialogic classroom is in setting the rules of dialogue and occasionally setting boundaries that maintain a safe atmosphere for exploration and sharing. I fail in that authority role early in this dialogue when two different male students make highly inappropriate and patriarchal comments about Jenny’s tutoring and I do not more directly address the inappropriateness of those reMarvins. This is more challenging because at least one of the male students probably did not know that there was anything sexist about his reMarvins and taking an authoritative stance with someone who is inadvertently sexist would have done more to shut down further discussion than keep it safe. While dialogic education is based on sharing and witnessing rather than on conflict, there are points where boundaries need to be set. Setting boundaries can lead to conflict. This conflict is not the learning itself, but may be necessary to preserve the space in which exploration can happen. The disapproving shake of my head I give to Yan is a relatively passive move that doesn’t directly enough engage the reasons why those two comments are inappropriate. In fact, my effort to bring up the comments of some of my colleagues as to how my teaching style influences my teaching would certainly be appropriate elsewhere in a conversation but *not* as a response to the challenge that those two male students made to female teachers and to Jenny. I point this out to

demonstrate the difference between seeing conflict and argument as part and parcel to “dialogue” (as in academic Discourse) and conflict as a sometimes necessary result of setting a boundary (as in spiritual Discourse). The first is contrary to the goals and effectiveness of dialogic education, the second is sometimes necessary to preserve it.

That being said, students also have the responsibility to set their own boundaries, and Alice’s response to both those two students and to my passive reaction seems to be a way of setting a boundary about class discussion on her own. Because of this, it is even more important to preserving the dialogic atmosphere than it would otherwise be that I work through Alice’s challenge for myself without shutting her down. As in the narrative about Sida and Coehlo, I again have to deal with an ego challenge, this time to my identity not only as an effective teacher, but as an effective teacher of teachers. This has the effect of momentarily making me want to shift into a more comfortable traditional academic Discourse that is more closely related to my primary Discourse. Negotiating the difficult moment of dealing with my own wounded ego, while needing to set a careful boundary with a student to protect classroom is not something I could have done without practice at spiritual Discourse. The spiritual Discourse gives me a way to be less interested in winning a power struggle with Alanna than in maintaining the integrity of the dialogic class. My ego wound at being so directly challenged is something I have to feel and let go of, which, too, is a Discourse move, so that I can witness her and respond in a way that respects her point of view.

Alice’s boundary setting also came in the form of telling another student what she “must” do. This is not something she can do in a dialogic classroom anymore than I can do it outside of assigning assignments and maintaining the learning atmosphere.

Alice's comment is also something that it's my responsibility to set a boundary about in order to preserve class discussion about our service-work and writing. Just as, in a less emotionally fraught conversation in the earlier narrative, I worked to respect Ryan and Jenny's ideas about Denise incorporating her experience in her paper while also setting a boundary around Denise's right to write her paper in a way that is in line with her own beliefs about writing, here I must walk that same line. Alice's perspective on tutoring students based on her own experiences is a valuable part of our class dialogue but is not something that anyone *has* to do, and we don't get to order one another around in that way.

Jenny, seeing my difficulty at ego detachment and at walking this balance, is kind enough at the end of the narrative to let me know that neither the comments from the two male students, nor the advice from Alice and I, have taken away her agency to listen and make her own decisions. Alice, too, remained engaged deeply in class, and wrote me some time after the class had ended to thank me for a good learning experience.

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When Denise came to class on the first day and found out we were tutoring at Mayberry elementary school, she was thrilled. A year ago, she had, on her own, already been tutoring at Mayberry as part of another literacy program. She was excited to see if she could work with the same kids and see them again. On the second day of class, she brought me in some literature about tutoring strategies for ESL students she thought I might find useful to use as class texts. When she did her introduction of herself to the class that day, she talked about her love of film, especially African film,

and said she'll find a way to work in film for her career somehow. The introductions went around the class, and when it was Alice's turn, she said she was hoping to make a documentary about homelessness in Detroit, and to plan an art exhibit on the issue. Denise called out to her from across the circle, "Do you want help with that?"

"Sure," said Alice.

"I'll talk to you after class," said Denise.

"And maybe you guys could write about it for the...class...somehow and..." I trailed off. Denise and Alice were both giving me the confused looks anyone would give the person who had just interrupted an exciting personal conversation. "Sorry," I said meekly, "I just wanted to be part of the collaborative.... I'll get my own project. Moving on."

I don't want to have a favorite student, but Denise takes to my class immediately. To her, teaching is supposed to be progressive, it is supposed to be experimental, and it is supposed to be artistic and spiritually grounded. She sometimes get frustrated when I pull back into more traditional ideas. One day she tells me that she took a second pottery class from the same teacher, "Just cause I like the energy in the room when he teaches. It's good for me."

We are reading about civic involvement and volunteerism. *Why* people get involved and what function it serves in society and what kind of work according to whom is useless and what kind of work isn't, and do we do more damage than good if we don't look at political and ideological causes of poverty and illiteracy, and what's the difference between activism and volunteerism, and who benefits and what's the point? We also read the Vietnamese Buddhist Thich Nhat Hahn for *his* theories of where social

change comes from. Thich Nhat Hahn argues, amongst other things, that by tending to our relationships and to our own right thinking and mindful actions, we send out ripples that change the world around us. In the course of that discussion, Denise lets the class know that she doesn't own a car, no small feat in Detroit where the auto industry historically blocked the development of an effective mass transit system. She explains that she tries to be mindful of how much gasoline she uses in her life.

I have my students write a paper in which they are to use the texts we have read as a starting point to detail their own philosophy of civic engagement and how it plays out in their lives, or, how they would *like* it to. The papers are a tremendous success. The writing is strong and the students clearly read and engaged deeply with the texts, integrating them into their own experiences in their communities (each of them defining their community differently.) I am delighted reading the essays, and feel happy to be an English teacher. I come to class the next week and tell my students this. Denise is outside the room when I say it, and she has turned her essay in late, and so I haven't read it yet. I ask the students if the experience of writing the essays was a good one and if this was a good assignment I should use again. I quickly see four students nod their heads enthusiastically, and only a couple grimaces, so I take that as good, cause I want to believe the assignment worked anyway.

Denise walks back in the room and sits down, and I say, "I was just telling everyone I liked reading these essays and was asking them if this assignment was a good one. What did you think?"

She frowns. "Honestly? I didn't like it at all."

My face falls; I know it. Because I'm so surprised and let down. I figured she'd

like the assignment most. “You didn’t like it?”

“No, I really didn’t,” and she says it in a way to indicate, “That’s all I have to say about this topic.”

“Well,” I say, “Thanks for being honest. Maybe that can give other people courage to share other ideas about the experience of writing this?” I look around, nobody says anything.

“It made me feel bad,” says Denise, speaking again, “Writing it. It made me feel like I don’t do enough.” She frowns and looks crumpled.

“Denise,” I say, “What was it that Thich Nhat Hahn says? About the north star? He says the north star shows us how to get north, and what is important when we are following it is that we keep moving north, but we’re never going to get to the actual star. We kill bacteria when we boil water. It’s good if we just always find a way to be moving forward.”

“Yeah,” she says, “Reading Thich Nhat Hahn made me feel bad,” she says, “like I don’t do enough.”

“Denise, you’re the only one in class who even *thinks* about how much gas you use. I told you, I told my dissertation director I did everything I could to prevent the war in Iraq, and she reminded me of how much gas I use. I struggle with the fact that I drive an hour from Ann Arbor to teach here and am not willing to move closer. And just yesterday, for the first time, I finally read the recycling directions for Ann Arbor even though I’ve lived there two years. I found out I haven’t been recycling all the things I could be.”

She nods, looking like she feels a little better.

“You know,” I say, “I was reading Paulo Freire last night. He’s a Brazillian teacher who writes about libratory pedagogy -- teaching that makes people more free. He says that there are monks that lock themselves in caves because that is the *only* way they can think of to not hurt the world around them.”

Denise’s eyes get a little bigger and she nods sadly, as if to say, “I have been considering that option.”

“But clearly *that* can’t be the answer, right?” I say to the whole class. People nod.

“And Freire says, I just read this last night, he says we always have to be aware of limits. Of the limits of the environment and people around us. Of the limits of what we’re willing to risk. Because there’s always those limits. So we just come up to the limit, and that’s okay, and then we move forward more when we can. Because... because he says... otherwise, what did he say? He said that otherwise, seeing the limits and feeling our fear..., we’d be in danger of not doing anything at all. Of just thinking, I can’t change anything, so I’ll do nothing.”

Denise nods. She smiles a little. There are other nods, too.

Then we start a conversation about our research papers. I check with each student about where they are with their paper topic, and what they’ve done so far, if anything. Students give advice to one another or suggest things to read, as do I. When we come to Denise, she reminds me that I told her she could read a whole book by Thich Nhat Hahn as the basis for her paper.

“Yes,” I say, “That’s good. We all just read two articles. But you’ll have read a whole book, so you can be the class expert on Thich Nhat Hahn.” She scoffs a bit at this. “And then in reading your paper, I can learn, too,” I say.



“But,” she says, “What am I supposed to do with the paper?”

“I don’t know,” I say, “You’re really good at reading a few things and then letting those things talk to one another and letting your paper come from that discussion. That’s one of the ways you think. So I bet that will happen with this, too. And, of course, you could take this position paper about your philosophy of community involvement and how it plays out in your own life, though I haven’t read it yet, and you could read Thich Nhat Hahn and then rewrite the position paper more fully informed by Thich Nhat Hahn’s ideas.”

“But,” she says narrowing her eyes a bit, “Isn’t that narcissistic?”

I laugh loudly. I asked the same question, in the same way, of my dissertation director, about my dissertation. “Ohh,” I say, “Ha ha, I may not be the person to ask um...hah.”

Denise sits and looks at me seriously and waits for an answer, so I have to stop laughing. “Well,” I say, “Think about it this way. Thich Nhat Hahn says that one of the ways we make social change is by being mindful of our own actions, our thoughts, our own feelings. The ways that we relate to the world. In what ways do we work towards peace in each of our interactions. So, I *think* that Thich Nhat Hahn would argue, Denise, that by doing careful work to look at your own life and relationships in terms of mindfulness, you *are* doing work for the world around you. That *is* one of the best ways to make sure you’re contributing to the world. And... um... I’m a better teacher... when I’m happy,” I add.

Then I suddenly worry about something. I’m not sure what. That I’ve gotten preachy or am trying to turn Denise into a little me. “I’m sorry,” I’ve suddenly changed

tones and am looking for what it is I'm sorry for to finish my sentence.

"No," she says, interrupting me, and smiling, "No that answered my question. That's what I'm going to do."

"And," I say, "If it matters – nobody has called my dissertation narcissistic. Yet."

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I wanted to include this narrative because Denise was so open about the struggle with despair that engaging with social issues was causing her. After the narrative about Hunter S. Thompson, I make the point that allowing spirituality into the classroom as one of many Discourses, allows students one response to the despair that Hunter S. Thompson portrayed in his essay. As I say in chapter two, many in composition have pointed out the resistance students have to critical pedagogy, and Leela Fernandez argues that this resistance is in large part due to the fact that without access to a spiritual dimension, facing an onslaught of social injustice *does* lead to despair. It has led me to despair on more than one occasion. The response to this despair can be a return to denial and disengagement -- like my move to covering the *Wizard of Oz* in class or Denise's apparent desire to live in a cave – or it can be a move to anger and conflict, the identification of an enemy and the beginning of a fight, which is only likely to once again lead to despair.

Freire's alternative of working for change but respecting the limits of our selves and our environment is an alternative to this. Doing this requires a degree of faith that what we *can* do is what is enough for *today*, and when we are capable of more, more is what will be called for. Without this larger picture, it would be difficult to feel that we are ever doing enough, and it is easy to understand Denise's despair. Thich Nhat Hahn's

vision of a world in which each of our personal decisions and relationships has ramifications for social justice is also an alternative to despair or needless conflict. Just as in various moments in the above narratives, I or my students turn the social problem gaze inward to the ways that our interactions with one another or in our communities feeds into damaging ideologies or power structures. While doing this type of honest inventory of our own behaviors is difficult, it is not despair inducing if we have a spiritual faith that these small behaviors in our life can be changed if we get help, if we are introduced to new Discourses, and if we have the willingness. There are a number of Discourse moves that I make in this narrative that are influenced by spiritual Discourse and run contrary to academic Discourse. For one, my inclusion of writings by a Buddhist monk amidst the more traditional sociology and critical theory texts we were reading. Thich Nhat Hahn becomes the touch point then in this conversation, a set of unfamiliar Discourse practices we can all refer to and talk about. Second, my assignment, though I did not think of it this way at the time, is asking students to take a careful look at their own current behaviors as regards to social justice, to look at themselves and their behaviors in relation to their communities and larger world. I drew this assignment from spiritual Discourse practices I had watched those in twelve step and other spiritual traditions do. Step four in Twelve Step practices, for instance, requires the writing of an inventory in which people write down their behaviors with other people, both good and bad, as honestly as possible. My assignment then goes further though in asking students to create a vision for their future in which they engage in their communities differently than they do. Something they would like to see happen in the future. This is not an assignment I learned through my education as a teacher or from

other teachers. Again, though I wasn't thinking about it explicitly at the time, this assignment was drawn from practice that a friend in another spiritual tradition had been encouraging me to try in which positive written visualizations were used to bring about change and a focus for energies. It is an exercise based on a fundamental faith that positive change is possible. Additionally, Twelve Step directs members to identify character defects through a written inventory and then to ask a higher power to help them let go of those character defects. Again, by this point in my teaching, spiritual Discourse was less unfamiliar to me and was starting to become part of my pedagogy in ways I wasn't always conscious of. The assignment's focus on the ways we interact and change as part of a community is also part of multiple spiritual traditions including Twelve Step and Zen Buddhism in which people are asked to think of change as supported by and always connected to everything around them. Concentrating on these things keeps our focus on the behaviors that can be changed instead of on the things that we simply cannot single handedly change as well as well as removing the illusion that anything is ever done in isolation.

During the actual discussion, I ask Denise for her take on the assignment, and then do not mask my disappointment at her answer while also sincerely thanking her for her honesty and reMarvining that I hope it encourages other honest answers. I do not, as I might have done in a more traditional academic Discourse or in my primary Discourse, defend the assignment or ask students for feedback in writing where I can deal with it alone. I just thank her for her comment. I think this is part of what encourages Denise to go on although she originally seems to indicate she is done speaking on the topic. While referencing Thich Nhat Hahn and the north star doesn't

seem to do much to cheer Denise up, my own sharing of my recent very real struggles with finding and pushing at my own limits does. I had not been able to change my driving behaviors, yet, but had recently pushed myself to recycle more. In one case, there was a limit to socially conscious change that I did not yet know how to make, in the other, I could push my limit further. With this example, I introduce Freire's ideas about risk as well as his example of people who live in caves so as not to harm the world. Because I am operating at this point partly in a spiritual Discourse, I also quickly point out that this type of withdrawal from the world also cannot be the answer. I indicate there *has* to be a positive course of action to take. This is contrary to an academic Discourse in which it is not the responsibility of a critical class to point out concrete ways to make change, only to point out the size and all encompassing nature of injustice.

Finally, as Denise and I move back into her writing assignment, we move back into the inventory taking and visualization behaviors that, in spiritual Discourses, make change. This takes the talk of social injustice to the level of personal implication, but, I hope, not in a blaming or shaming way. As Fernandes talks about, there is a difference between acting to escape shame, and simply learning about and accepting new responsibility. And I remind Denise of the unique things she has to contribute to our class knowledge base that we had discovered in the peer review session in the previous narrative. I emphasize Denise's unique agency as part of a knowledge community in the face of difficult social injustice. Again, I think this goes further than an academic Discourse without spiritual Discourse could go towards supporting Denise to continue moving forward in her exploration and her growth towards a more integrated and

socially responsible life. Something, again, that I let her know I'm engaged in with her.

I've been promising since chapter one that a spiritually engaged dialogic education can offer students a response to the despair that comes up from introduction to critical pedagogy. For me, that response is the same response I give Denise in this narrative. Do a careful inventory of who you are and what behaviors you have that lead to destructive social and personal results. Read and move outside of your own Discourse because learning a new Discourse will enable you to see past the blinders that your primary Discourse necessarily creates. Do another inventory using the skills learned from your new Discourse of your feelings, thoughts, and actions, both positive and negative. Set out a vision for where you would like to be, and then let go of what you cannot yet do or cannot do alone. Accept limits in the context of a commitment to continual growth and work towards social justice, a commitment to *ever* expanding limits. This is the spiritual core of Freire's pedagogy. Dialogue, true dialogue that involves witnessing and sharing, enables introduction to new Discourse which enables the expansion of limits. In addition, the community that is formed through true dialogic education, through its commitment to learning with and witnessing one another as well as those outside the community, is then a community of growth and change that, as a whole, has more ability to affect the world than any one person could possibly have.

The final narrative in this chapter is included to better explain and evoke the concept of witnessing. This next narrative evokes the process of working with students to achieve Discourse acquisition in order to achieve access.

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I am sitting by myself in the Writing Center. My two hundred dollar a week

teaching assistant salary has left me broke, and I am working some summer hours as a writing tutor in order to afford shoes without a sole/body separation.?? It has been a slow day, which suits me pretty well.

Then a student walks in the door looking frightened and wide eyed. She is perhaps in her mid forties. She doesn't say hello, but instead stands with her fingers splayed at her sides and her shoulders stiff. An older part of myself, the part of me from my primary Discourse that says I have to give and give until I am exhausted, is scared. I don't know if I can give in a way that leaves me energy to live the rest of my day. I immediately wants to run. She is missing pieces, things that could only have been fixed if her mother had hugged her more. And I can already tell she isn't well versed in social cues. My pre-spiritual Discourses self warns me to get her out of the room as quickly as possible or there may be nothing left of me by the time she leaves. It tells me I don't know how to protect myself from giving too much. I can feel my lips curl just a bit as I plan to be rude and cold -- my only way out. But then my spiritual Discourse reminds me that I am capable of setting boundaries. I do not have to be rude to this woman because I can give her of my time and energy only what I want to give her and no more. When things cross my level of comfort, I will be able to end the conversation and remain myself with my energy still intact. I relax.

Still wide eyed she says, "So this is where I can get help on it?"

"On it?" I ask.

She nods.

"On the English Proficiency Exam?" I offer a guess. She nods again. "Yes, this is where." I smile. This smile, a smile that is a limited invitation instead of a wall, is only

possible because of spiritual Discourses. It is a smile allowed because I know I'm allowed to say no.

"I can't believe I walked in here," she says. "I can't believe I finally walked in here. How many times I thought I should come in here but couldn't do it."

"So have you taken the exam yet?" I ask.

She shakes her head no. "I try to practice," she says, "I try to write. But as soon as I try to do it, my apartment is too hot, and I can't sit still. I can't focus."

"Well, do you want to have a seat, and we can talk about the exam?"

She glances around the room again and holds up her hands in a 'not so fast' motion. "Oh no, it took me enough just to walk in here. I'm not ready for that yet."

I'm reminded of a memory. "You know," I say, "One day I decided I wanted to dance, and I walked into a dance studio. When the instructor saw me he said, 'You don't have to worry any more. You walked up those stairs. The rest of this is easier.'"

Dancing, like singing, had been something I had always wanted to do. Something I had been blocked in a million emotional psychological ways from doing all of my life. One morning the impulse was strong enough to push me through my resistance. I called a dance studio and the instructor on the phone told me to change into sweats and come right over because his ballet class was about to begin. I was planning on jazz or maybe tap, but I felt comfortable on the phone, so I got dressed and walked to the studio. When I arrived, after praising my courage to enter the studio at all, he added that he had heard in my voice that we were dealing with a small window of opportunity. "I had to get you in here now or years might go by without you dancing." Taking those dance classes had been one of the most liberating experiences of my life.



They were a small culmination of work on many levels. I had to overcome my mom's relationship to dance and my own relationship to my mom. More concretely, if I hadn't started working-out at the gym months earlier, I never could have looked at myself in a dance mirror. I even had to be starting to believe that I was lovable. Lovable enough to have the strength to risk exposing my awkward body, to try something I knew I wouldn't necessarily be good at. Just to stand on that floor in my stocking feet and do one plie had required a million rebirths.

Hearing what my dance instructor said about entering the studio, her eyes grow wide again and her mouth falls open, agape. She still isn't moving to sit down. I wait. Then she says:

"My sister used to make me cook her grilled cheese sandwiches. I was only four years old. And they would all be in the other room, all of my brothers and sisters, watching the Little Rascals. But I couldn't watch. I had to make the grilled cheese sandwich and if it came out too cooked or not enough, I would get yelled at and have to do it again and be alone in the kitchen. I remember leaning over the stove and just staring at the sandwich. It's so vivid."

I nod. I don't understand the story. So I continue to wait.

"My sister could make that sandwich no problem. But I couldn't. And I knew she could have. And my sister could do good in school. And if I take this test, and I fail it, then that will be the proof. It really will be true that she's better than me. That I can't write. So it's been years, and I don't take the test."

I nod.

"Do you think that's why?" she asks, "Do you think that's why my apartment feels

too hot when I try to write?”

“Could be,” I say.

I take a breath and try sitting in a different position, while I search for a sign in myself as to whether or not I want to say anything else. “Why did I just tell you that story?” she asks, “I’ve never told anyone that story. But you told that story about dancing and I just...”

I take another slow breath and go back to the way I was sitting before. Then I test out slowly,

“This is what I believe about learning.” I say, “If we are driven to learn something, anything important... then that means that we have to learn a lot of other really important things on the way there. Things we might not even know we have to learn. Things that might not seem like they have anything to do with what we wanted to learn, and yet we have to learn them.” I wait a moment to decide if I want to go on. “I fell in love with the theater,” I say slowly, “And so in order to get parts that I wanted in musicals, I had to learn how to sing. And so I signed up for voice lessons. And then in order to learn to sing, I had to get better posture. I had to start going to the gym and get in better shape, so that I could breathe better and stronger. So that’s what I believe about all learning. Even writing. Maybe in order to learn how to write you’ll have to learn about your relationship with your sister.”

This is how Stacey, my voice teacher, sees learning. I have learned this from her. I had tried another voice teacher first, and not made very strong process, but with Stacey...

My own personal sensei, Stacey would consistently ask me to do things that on

the surface would seem to have nothing to do with singing. She would hear repressed emotion in my voice, and after we talked a little about whatever had happened that day I could sing better. Though I had tried repeatedly and failed to stick to an exercise routine, Stacey asked me to improve my cardiovascular in order to improve my breath support, and I started a routine I stuck to. Then I had to do crunches to improve my abdominal muscles. I had to work through, using visualizations, the way I fit into my group of actor friends, so that I could remove my blocks to auditioning in front of them. Learning how to sing meant I had to become a stronger person on all levels, and Stacey took this for granted. The more I experience this type of learning, the more I take it for granted, too.

“O.k.,” said the woman standing in front of me. “So then what do I do?”

“Well,” I said, “I’m not sure. But the next time you try to write and you feel that anxiety and the room feels too hot, try just being with that. Just sit and feel whatever comes up. About grilled cheese sandwiches or your sister or whatever it is. Don’t get up and do something else, just feel what’s there.”

“And you think that will help?”

“Sometimes just being aware of whatever feelings come up to block us does ninety percent of the work to removing the block. Even telling me the story about the grilled cheese might have already helped.”

“I feel all...” she said, opening her arms and making a motion to indicate her skin has been peeled off. “I can’t believe I told you those things. I feel all...”

I shrug. I shrug to communicate to her and to myself that the feelings of vulnerability she now feels aren’t anything I can do anything about. I can’t fix it.

“I got up this morning,” she says, “And I said, ‘I’m not going to get any food out of any vending machines today. And I just walked right by them. And then I went to the gym to sort of scout out the equipment, you know? And then I came here.’”

“Sounds like you’re ready to do some growing,” I say.

There are the beginnings of tears in her eyes, and she looks to the side and asks quietly, “How does someone... love someone... but let them just go live their lives?” She looks back at me. “Did you see that movie, Forest Gump? How he just loves that girl, and he lets her go do all the things she needs to do, and let’s her leave, but he just keeps loving her. How does someone do that?”

I take in breath to speak because speaking is my default when I want control over a situation, but what is there to say? Why has the conversation about learning we’ve been having caused her to ask this question? I’m confused partly because there seems to be no link, but more so because... to me... there *is* a link. Trying to figure out how to be close to people in a way that doesn’t stifle my growth has been a huge spiritual struggle for me and taken lots and lots of work.

“I think,” I say quietly, “That is one of the most important things to learn in this life. I work on it every day.”

Sometimes I think part of the reason I am in a service profession is because I needed to be with people *somehow* before I knew how. And entering relationships where I am helping is what I have seen and know from childhood. This work allowed me to connect in the way in which I felt safe, where I was in charge, had control, and was helping. And teachers ... teachers have the extra bonus of having their interactions in discreet semester or year long packets. We help, then they’re gone and we never have

to do anything more human than that. We get a new batch of students who have not seen our flaws, to whom we can (re)present ourselves as teacher -- persona not cracked by days of interaction – together, untouchable.

“What I think,” she says, and then stops, “You’re going to hate me for saying this,” she says. “What I think...,” she starts again. “I don’t know if I can say this. I’m going to go out there,” she points at the door, “And I’m going to think about if I can say this. And then I’ll come back.”

“Alright,” I say.

I sit at the desk and feel uncomfortable. Partly because I’m still worried I won’t be able to make her go away. And partly because of the uncanniness of the conversation. I have been talking to her about teaching and about learning, and she asked the question that strikes right to the core of that for me. What happens to teaching and learning if I step outside the walls I set up. What if I no longer taught as a way to stay separate and removed? If I stopped teaching to give answers to save students with? Whether it be grammar or some demystified critical consciousness that I am giving. What if I am no longer teaching, in part, in order to replace the connections in my personal life that I don’t feel safe enough to make? Then what happens? Then what is the classroom, and what is the teacher, and how does it all change?

Learning is growth. And growth requires freedom. To have and give freedom requires...

She steps back in the office. “O.k.,” she says, “What I think is,” and the tears return to her eyes, “That in order to do that, you have to look in the mirror. And you have to say, you have to say... ‘I’m...my best....friend.’”

I nod.

"I'm...my best....friend," she says again. "I'm my best friend. I'm my best friend. I can love you," she says to a person she is visualizing at her side, "And you can go. Because I'm my best friend. I'm my best friend." It's a mantra.

"Yeah...", I say, "That's... that's got to be part of the answer." I am thinking about the Hunter S. Thompson article and what I told the class about my vision of happiness being able to look in the mirror and love the whole picture.

Enough time in the forest. I want to get back to the trail. I want to grab an information packet for the English Proficiency Exam and get us back to tutoring.

"You're not a therapist," she says suddenly.

"No," I say smiling, "I'm a writing teacher."

"Do you think... do you think maybe I should start seeing a therapist?"

"I saw a therapist for a lot of years," I say, "It can be really good." I look it up and then give her the number for University Counseling and tell her that it's free for students.

She nods. She's not leaving yet.

"Where did you learn that," I hazard, "About the mirror?"

"Can we use the computer?" she asks.

We go over to the computer and she pulls up the bible, on-line. She reads a passage from Corinthian about loving and letting go. I'm surprised to see the ideas there. It's interesting. But the Bible is uncomfortable ground for a man who spent his twenties immersed in existential philosophy and atheism. I may be O.K. with spirituality, but the Bible still reminds me of Republicans.

"Well I'll look forward to seeing your writing," I say, by way of ending the

conversation. I walk with her to the door.

“Just go home and when the apartment feels too hot, just stay with it and see how it feels?” she asks.

I give a half shrug and say, “That might be a place to start.”

But she’s still feeling very vulnerable, and she hesitates to leave. I pick up my book bag, adding, “I’m going on my lunch break now. Good luck with the writing.”

“I can’t believe I said all that,” she says again, “I’m still all,” she makes the same motion of removable skin.

And I’m still leaving.

I promised myself I would take care of myself. I am tired now. And can’t keep my focus, and need to set a line and go feel safe somewhere. I’m a little bit irritated that the best way I could find to end the interaction is to leave for my lunch break early. But at least I’m doing that. Her problems and the feeling of exposure she has are her own to deal with. “O.K.,” she says, “Have a good lunch.”

When I return to the office, she is sitting in a nearby computer coral, and she is writing. I work with a few more students before closing the office for the day to go to a meeting. On my way out, she beckons me over. I think, “You promised yourself. You wouldn’t get trapped.”

“I’m on way to a meeting,” I say, “So I only have a moment.”

“I just want you to see this,” she says, and gestures at the computer screen where she’s been writing. I read some of what she’s written and smile.

“You’re going to be O.K.,” I say, “On the exam. You should come in and go over the format that they want with either me or one of the other tutors, but I think you’ll be

fine.”

“I’m good,” she says, “But I’m just starting.”

I nod.

“But you,” she says, “When are you going to start acting professionally?”

“What? Oh, no no. No. It’s just a hobby. No.”

“Don’t talk like that. You have to believe in yourself.”

“No. No, that’s not. No.”

“And what about your writing? Are you going to try to get published?”

“I... oh, maybe someday. When I write something I’m really happy with, I may send it out to an agent.”

“It isn’t a question of the writing being ready,” she says, “It’s a question of *you* being ready. Then it will happen.”

“Well, I—“

“I’m good,” she repeats nodding at her writing on the screen, “But when *you* write, it’s like a symphony.”

“But you’ve never read my writing!” I laugh.

“When you ...write...,” she says slowly, “It’s like ... a symphony.”

“You haven’t read--”

“I don’t have to read it,” she says. “This is how it works. You gave to me. And so now I’m giving to you. Just listen to what I’m saying. When you write... ”

I open my mouth to speak again but nothing comes out. What possible good would arguing do? And why is it, exactly, that I feel the need to point out, to both of us, her flawed reasoning. She hasn’t *read* anything I’ve ever written. Her compliment



doesn't make any rational sense, but then again, I suppose neither do grilled cheese sandwiches blocking the writing process.

On top of that, she's right. That *is* how it works. There is no real giving unless the giver receives. There is no real teaching, unless the teacher learns. She sat, and she thought about her vulnerability, and she came upon the thing that equalizes relationships.

Reciprocation.

Then she found something to give me back. "So... Justin," I think, "Accept it. Stop thinking. And stop resisting the message she wants to give you. It was alright for you to give, so open up just a little bit and receive something. Why not just try to believe the universe wants me to know -- ."

"Your writing is like a symphony."

She holds direct eye contact and waits.

"I hear you," I say. "Thank you."

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As Gee argues, access to Discourses that are associated with power is a social justice issue. I included this narrative because it demonstrates how complicated the blocks to learning a new Discourse can be as well as the ways that spiritual Discourse can support teaching moves that can enable students to move towards acquisition and learning. As bell hooks points out, secular traditional academic Discourses can alienate students who come from religious backgrounds. Academic Discourse also does not take into account the range of emotional, spiritual, and identity issues that the student in the narrative is having just coming in to sit down in a Writing Center.

The first spiritual Discourse move that was still new for me at the time that I needed to employ in order to have this learning moment take place was believing in my own ability to set boundaries. As I discussed in chapter three, both of my parents were social workers and I had modeled for me in my primary Discourse the necessity of giving, quite frequently to the point of exhaustion. This had left me in the place where I start out when the student in this story enters the Writing Center. I sense immediately how much work the interaction is going to be, and because my primary Discourse dictates that I give as much as I have, I don't feel like I can protect myself. The spiritual Discourses I was learning and acquiring at the time, however, were teaching me a different way of seeing my role in the interaction. In Zen Buddhism, for instance, the connection of all things means that doing what is truly best for ourselves ends up being what is also best for our community. There is no dichotomy between the two, no conflict. This means that if I give what is really in me to give and then draw a line at that time, it will be better for my student than if I give more than I want to give. Twelve Step teaches the same lesson where over involvement in someone else's problem takes our focus away from our own spiritual journey while getting in the way of the necessary growth of someone else. In both of these Discourses, saying no is a powerful, liberating tool that is beneficial for ourselves and those around us. It will sound clichéd, but I'm not sure "no" used in this way was a word that existed in my primary Discourse.

Without the knowledge that I can say no, and the spiritual Discourse to justify it, I would have followed the set of actions I started with, which was to act vaguely rude in a way that would make the student leave without too fully implicating me in turning her away. The entire interaction that follows happens only because I feel I can say no to her

when I've had enough and this will be better for her and for me.

Next, my sharing of my own experience learning to do ballet is out of my spiritual Discourse. As I point out in the narrative, this is something that I learned from teachers outside of academia. My voice teacher was engaged with many of the same spiritual texts I was reading, and provided me with a pedagogical Discourse outside of those I'd experienced in the university. Sharing a bit of experience learning something difficult with the student is an offer of engagement despite the fact that she has declined to sit down. It also sets the tone for how I will approach learning Discourse with her – as a complicated process with difficult emotional blocks. This acts as an invitation to her to get into what, for her, are some of the real issues why she has avoided the writing exam for so many years. These issues are outside of those traditionally accepted in academic Discourse as reasons for being unable to take an exam.

When she introduces the story about the grilled cheese sandwich, I don't understand what it has to do with the exam she wants to prepare for, but instead of saying so, I wait. The story does end up having clear relevance for her and her writing process and instead of redirecting her towards the writing task, as my Writing Center training would have dictated, I indicate that it might be important to sit with the feelings that come up with this memory. Again, this is a spiritual Discourse move that exists in both Twelve Step and Zen Buddhism where rather than getting involved in the emotional process of others, teachers/sponsors advise sitting with and noticing feelings. In both traditions, the intellectual understanding or analysis of the emotion is not important as it might be from a psychological process. Instead, it is often enough just to fully feel the emotion and "be with it" until it passes to become free from the block that

was preventing growth. This move is something I gained from being taught by spiritual teachers and acquiring this Discourse and not something I would have access to in an academic Discourse or in my primary Discourse. It isn't my role to indicate to the student what's going on with her or what blocks her; my non-committal "could be" answer to her question leaves the process in her own hands.

Had I been writing something that was purely fiction, I probably would have included the fact that the student doesn't actually ever enter the Writing Center until she comes in to show me section from the Bible. As it is, that moment actually happened that way. bell hooks points out that academia's sometimes strenuous occlusion of questions of spirituality, happiness, or peace alienates many students who feel then that academic Discourse has nothing to offer them and directly contradicts the most important aspects of their primary Discourses. I think that effect is partly illustrated by this example. Despite my discomfort, my willingness to be introduced to the religious text from which she gathered her ideas about intimacy is what finally lets her enter the Writing Center office. It is also the Discourse, it seems that gives her the courage to reciprocate – to give back to me on equal ground. As Lizabeth Rand argues, composition tends to belittle and marginalize the spiritual work of students. Here, it is partly the student's spiritual Discourse and the clearly spiritual journey she is on that gives her the bravery to approach the Writing Center at all. Without the support from that Discourse, this might have been more difficult to do. In addition, it is probably also her familiarity with spiritual Discourse that moves her to find a way to reciprocate what she feels she has gotten from the interaction. Whereas I am at a loss for how to deal with her discomfort at having been vulnerable (and my discomfort probably contributes

to her discomfort at having revealed) her spiritual Discourse gives her access to an answer – giving me something important back for my own spiritual journey. The idea, new to me as introduced by spiritual Discourse, that reciprocation is necessary for teaching and learning, is something she moves to here and in so doing, strengthens my own ability to access spiritual Discourse and to bring it into my academic work. Also, The Writing Center then, as represented by me, if not entirely welcoming of the Bible, at least does not reject its existence or its ability to teach useful things. And as such, it is a less hostile environment.

Finally, the spiritual Discourse move to which I offer the most initial resistance in this narrative is that of witnessing and receiving from my student in a reciprocal relationship. Initially, I don't want to notice her feelings of vulnerability or think they have anything to do with me. When she tries to press me on my acting career, I resist her, not only because I'm not particularly interested in receiving, but also because I was highly invested at the time in believing I didn't want to act at a professional level and probably wasn't talented enough to do it. To believe that I was talented enough or that I had the desire to do it would have required changes in my life and risk taking that I wasn't ready to take, i.e. a whole new set of auditions at a new level. I barely even let her finish her sentences when she brings this up. When she moves to writing, I still resist the compliment for probably some of the same reasons and am easily able to rationalize it as ridiculous and uninformed. In neither case do I want to just give a sincere thank you to her compliment and her encouragement to pursue any and every dream. Whereas she was able to be open on this particular day to learning something from me and accepting the help that I could offer as a writing tutor, I am less willing to

complete the circle and receive something from her. The fact that I can do it, is a result, partly, of her persistence; she is patient in waiting for me to understand. It is also the previous exposure to the spiritual Discourses I was being immersed in, including Paolo Freire, that were teaching me that teaching required learning from students and that growth comes with the support of other people. This student, however, in bringing her own background in spiritual Discourses to the Writing Center, becomes part of a community of people that is helping me acquire this Discourse. She models a behavior for me and waits for me to find the appropriate answer to her compliment. There is also a block to receiving from students in academic Discourse because having other people be in a position of vulnerability while refusing all vulnerability one's self, is a position of perceived power. My eventual ability to thank her sincerely for her compliment closes the circle of the teaching moment and allows me to be changed by the interaction.

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In the winter of 2008, the university cut the English proficiency exam for which I had taught the last few summers. It had always been guaranteed summer work for me as the administration trusted few teachers to teach the class. The exam was cut due to state wide budget cuts as Detroit, and the country, headed into recession. I realized that I would be far from immune to Detroit's failing economy. Progressively more of my income was being made through doing acting and theater work, and I had also been feeling the need to try my hand in a larger theater community. And so in the summer of 2008, I packed up whatever would fit in my car and moved, without a job, to a small studio apartment on the north side of Chicago.

After seven years of teaching writing courses every semester, and with my

dissertation still in process, I thought I would wait a little while to go on the job Marvint as a writing teacher. I also was still working out many of the pedagogical and spiritual ideas I was writing about in my dissertation. Sometimes in my last few semesters it had felt like the demands of my new pedagogical ideas were outpacing the emotional and spiritual maturity I had to sustain those ideas. Both my reading for and writing about the connections between spirituality and social justice was ongoing, and while I firmly believed in their absolute necessity to one another, I did not have these ideas theoretically developed. I think I felt somehow that my life needed to catch up to my pedagogy before I stood in front of a classroom again. As most prophets in any religion will tell you, it is far easier to talk about spiritual ideas than to live them, and I wanted to work on living them for awhile.

I had the idea that maybe I'd take a job at an organic grocery store until I found my bearings in Chicago, but one look at my resume, my level of education, the seven years of teaching, and they saw what I was sure to be -- a temporary grocery store employee. In retrospect, they were right not to hire me, and I'm grateful.

Barack Obama was running for president at the time, and one evening, still out of work, I caught his speech at the Democratic convention. He spoke about helping our brother, reaching out a hand, our social responsibility, and in that context he talked about illiteracy and students struggling in our schools. It was an important reminder. Of what I could do, of what I thought I was capable of as a teacher. I changed my focus and took a number of part time jobs in the Chicago Public Schools tutoring and teaching during the day and after school. As all real learning and teaching does, I was humbled by my first year working with these students. It helped me put the ideas I had been

developing in the university classroom in a wider perspective and also showed me where some of my current limits were. I want to represent these experiences, but because they were lived outside of my college classrooms and the ethnographic permissions I had there, these stories have all identifying details changed. By literary convention, the italicized portions of this narrative are taking place in my head while the non-italics event is occurring.

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I am making about a quarter of what I need to make to pay for my rent and groceries. As the school year draws to a close, much of the tutoring and teaching work I have been doing has ended. And though the exterminator has come twice, my apartment building, in a rather nice neighborhood of Chicago, has bed bugs. In the evenings, after teaching, I jump on the train and rush to rehearsal where I spend twice as much time rehearsing a play for which I am getting paid one seventh what I would have been paid in Detroit. Still, I love all the work that I'm doing, and I'm struggling to balance my concerns about my financial situation with how much I'm loving my life.

I have spent the morning reading Leela Fernandez's book *Transformative Feminism* about how spiritual development is necessary for any truly effective social justice work. This morning I am caught up in her ideas on research and ethics. She writes about Spivak and the subaltern not speaking and acknowledges all of Spivak's concerns, but then she argues we are equally unethical if we stay silent. Fictional stories, she writes, changing names and publishing in journals that the people we are writing about will never see or hear about isn't enough, she says. She draws a model from the Quaker idea of witnessing. When we research, our responsibility is to witness



and be affected. I am still struggling with the idea as I am riding the bus the ten minutes to work, especially because it is not just an idea. It calls for a frame of mind, or, more so, a frame of heart, of spirit, more than any choice of research method.

I'm happy to have the work I have today. It's a one hour class on the northwest side of Chicago, only ten minutes from my apartment, at a high school I haven't been to before. I am subbing for the regular after school instructor for the last two classes of the year. I don't expect many students will show up to an after school class that the regular teacher isn't attending on a beautiful spring day. The private company for which I am teaching is being funded by the government for tutoring at failing schools. Their idea of tutoring is fifteen students at once, being tutored to pass standardized exams. The company cares mostly about the head count they get funding for and less about my tutoring methods. I arrive to an empty classroom. In a moment, the "site manager" assigned by the private company to this as well as two other schools, pokes her head in and delivers me one student she has managed to snag in the hallway. He is grinning at having been caught trying to get out of the school.

"But I'm the only one here!" he objects. Still, he sits down.

The site manager sets a pizza on the table at the front of the classroom. "Well," she says, "There's pizza. That means you two get to split the whole thing."

She sits down and busies herself with some paper work.

I look at the student. He's young, Latino, probably in ninth grade, his hair spiked up. He and I are going to have to find a way to productively get through this hour. At the moment, I have no idea if he's going to make the hour hard for me. I don't really blame him if he does.

"I'm Mr. V.," I say.

"Juan," he says.

"I figure we can do one of a few things," I say, "I can teach you some writing stuff. Some stuff that will help you with your writing and that college writing teachers look for. Or you can work on your school work, and I can help."

"I don't really have any school work," he says.

"Great," I say, sitting down beside him, "So let me show you some stuff?"

He shrugs. He's about as thrilled as any ninth grader would be with the situation. I start in on the world's most ridiculous comma lesson. Truly unbelievably ridiculous. For one, I only really know how to teach grammar well in context and with a student's own writing in front of us. For two, in the absence of his writing, I have scribbled out a story about an octopus attacking the high school and left the punctuation out so we can practice on it. He looks it over.

"You write this?" he asks.

"Yes," I say. "It's um... really dumb. The point is the punctuation." He nods non-committally, which is about what the story deserves. The comma lesson gets worse, and then worse still, and I start to realize that his literacy skills aren't any where near high enough to be bothering with commas. I've never thrown commas at a student like this before, and I realize I've let my nervousness over the situation lead to utterly useless teaching. Still, with the site manager sitting nearby, I continue the pointless comma lesson, trying to make it as painless as possible. In a few moments, the site manager says she has another school to check on and leaves. I trail on a little bit with the lesson, then wrap it up with something that sounds like an ending.

We both stare at my octopus story for a while. Then I stand up and go get a piece of pizza. I sit on a desk.

"I'm happy for the pizza," I say, "I don't have much work right now. Free meal is great."

"What about this job?" he asks.

"It's only an hour," I say. "And it's the summer soon."

"I get that," he says, "My uncle worked at a cemetery and they just laid him off. It's hard to find a job right now."

"Right," I say, "I'm a college teacher. I'm just starting to look for jobs doing that. How has this program been? Good?"

"Yeah, it's alright."

"You learn stuff? Stuff that made your classes easier?"

"Yes."

"Good teacher?"

"Yes. We had like 48 students at first." I nod. "I like this school," he says, "It's a good school. My cousin wanted me to go to Lake View with him. But I like it here."

"That's great," I say, "Not many students say they like their school."

I eat pizza in silence for a while. He stands up and moves to a desk closer to me. He sits on it.

"What did you want to be when you grew up? When you were a kid?"

I'm surprised by the question. Not only does he not resent me for the fact that he is here, he's actually going to take part in driving conversation. I realize stupidly, again, how much I let my nervousness about the site manager, the one student, the subbing

role, screw up my initial interactions with this student. I barely let him speak before just cramming useless junk down his throat.

“Well,” I say, “In elementary school I wanted to be a scientist. You know, invent a solar powered car to save the environment. But then I found out I didn’t like science as much as I liked English. And so by high school, I wanted to be an English teacher and an actor. And... and I guess I am those things. You?”

“A mechanic,” he says. “My parents say I can do what I want. I don’t have to go to college.”

“Nice to have parents that support you to go after your own path,” I say.

He nods. “You got brothers?”

“Two,” I say.

“They live with you?”

“No. Other side of the country. You?”

“Two brothers and a sister. One older brother, two younger...”

“So you’re in the m--”

“Well... my older brother is dead.”

We stop talking for a moment. I maintain eye contact and nod. He takes a breath and makes a quick decision, and then he’s off. “I saw it,” he says, “I was there. He got shot. We were at a party.

*Over forty Chicago Public School kids have been shot and murdered this school year, and the year isn’t over yet. I follow the death tally in the Tribune. People write articles about how we’re going to start getting numb to the numbers. Obama campaigned on gun control, citing the many deaths in CPS as the reason, but the Tribune reminds us*

*he has backed off on the issue because of pressure from the NRA...*

"I was there. They were waiting in a car. We saw them when we came in to the party. They were waiting in a white car. They were there the whole time. My brother, he was good, he didn't do nothing bad. He wasn't ... He wasn't involved in any..."

*I am leaving a school on the south side of Chicago after teaching a class I am struggling with. I have learned quickly authority does not operate the same in a high school classroom as it does in a college classroom. I am walking to the bus stop and a few of my students see me. "Mr. V," says a girl, "What are you doing? You're not taking the bus are you?" I say that I am. "Not around here, Mr. V. You gotta get a car. If I was you. At least then I'd know I could get to the parking lot, and I know I'd get home, Mr. V. You can't do that around here." Her boyfriend agrees with her. I'm not naïve. I taught and lived in Detroit. As a freshman on campus, I got mugged one night, beat up and locked in a car trunk. I keep walking to the bus stop. The chances are higher of me getting in a car crash than getting mugged. It's only a twenty minute walk. Twenty minutes.*

"They shot him six times in the chest. My aunt was... when the ambulance came they started to try to do something and my aunt said, don't bother, he's gone. They took him away. Someone else got shot, too, but he didn't die."

*"Hey, Mr. V., why did you move to Chicago?" asks a male senior student.*

*"This is a good city."*

*"This? This is like the worst ghetto in the world! You could have gone anywhere! Why are you here?"*

*"Naw man, he don't live here," says another senior, "He lives in the north where*

*the rich white people live. It's different there."*

*The student turns to look at me, waiting for my answer. Confused. Is that true, Mr. V? ... that it's different? That you live there?*

*"My brother wanted to be a mechanic. That's why I want to be a mechanic. He wanted to be a mechanic. That's why my parent's say, okay, be a mechanic. I'm going to graduate high school. I'm going to stay in the good. My parents, they don't have papers. So I have to help them."*

*I am walking in the hallway of a middle school. A sixth grade teacher who I have never once seen smile is walking in the opposite direction. Though I do not know her, I respect her because her students respect her. Most of my kids are in my after school class because she told them they had to be. They don't think to question her. On the first day of class, I feel humiliated when she has to bring two of my students back to my room who have run off into the hallway. Great... I'm one of those teachers. As we cross paths today, she stops. She doesn't usually. She starts walking with me.*

*"You're doing good work," she says, "You're doing very good work with these students. I know. Because they talk about it. They bring the things you show them to class. They show the other students."*

*I am beaming. I can't find any words to respond.*

*When I get to class, I'm still feeling pleased. My sixth graders are all sitting working on math problems I have prepared for each of them individually. While they work I say, "Hey, what would you guys think if I was a seventh grade teacher? Like, a regular teacher at this school?"*

*"You don't want to teach here, Mr. V.," says one.*

*"Huh?"*

*Another student, not looking up from her problems adds, "Yeah you don't want to teach here, Mr. V."*

*"Why?"*

*"Bad kids," says a boy.*

*"Yeah, bad kids, Mr. V.," says another.*

*"Bad kids?"*

*"Really bad," says the girl.*

*"A girl just got shot one block from here," says a boy.*

*"Yeah, she just got shot," says another boy. Nobody looks up from their math problems.*

*"I couldn't really move for a long time. I didn't eat. I didn't leave my room. I just sat on my bed and stared at pictures of my brother. But you gotta let go. You have to let go. I love my brother. I love my brother. But you have to let go."*

*My brother and I aren't speaking. My brothers look up to me in a way I will never completely fathom. Stop. I've got to witness.*

*"My brother used to take care of me. He would write me stories. I... I have all his stories. Three little pigs. Some other stories. And a song, but he didn't write the song. We used to have his pictures, trophies, but my parents put them in the basement. With a lock on the door. We don't want a sad house. You have to let go. When my mom got sick, he took care of me. He would tell me we were going to be mechanics together. That we would always be together. That we would die together."*

*I'm going to cry. What would he think of me if I cry? I've got to witness. I don't even know what that means though.*

"I told my little brothers what happened. You can't lie. It just stays in you if you lie forever. So I sat them down. I told them about their brother. I showed them the stories that he wrote. I read them his stories."

*We have nothing in common. I know we have the same soul. But I can live in the worst neighborhood in Chicago and not have a dime or a job and I still will not know this experience. I will never ever know this experience.*

"My cousin got killed that same week. They came to his house. They knocked down the door. They shot his whole family."

*I do not, cannot, know what it is to live his life. If I witness, it will change me. Sometimes I'm scared of how much I'll have to change. I can't shut my eyes, but leaving them open means the change never stops.*

*I'm eating in a Chinese restaurant. Then someone in the window wordlessly asks for food. For the eight hundredth time. He just points at his mouth. I don't want my meal disturbed. But I find a moment of silence and I know his soul is my soul, and I look up and I am struck deeply ... see the hunger, the longing ... I nod. I stand up to walk to the door and he meets me there. I hand him some bills without looking in his eyes again... I walk back and sit down and he calls out to me. I turn to look. He walks through the restaurant. What else does he want? He's at my table. I look up. And then he grabs me and pulls me to him. He hugs me. Really hugs me. And I feel it. And then I'm numb. And he's gone. And then I'm crying. What does it mean, where will it sweep me? Freire, Transforming Feminism, Thich Nhat Hahn, Martin Luther King,*



*Gahndi, Jesus, they all say the same thing. There is no spiritual work without work for social justice. There is no social justice without work for spiritual truth. Witness. And it changes you. And you let it. Or you die. And peace. And happiness. And love. And humanity. And social justice. And healing. Are one and the same.*

“I love my brother. But you have to let go. I’m happy to be alive. I like my life. I’m happy to be alive,” he says. “I’m happy to be there for my little brothers. You have to let go. That’s all.”

*Witness.*

“Thanks for telling me that,” I say.

We sit in silence for a while. He looks at the clock. The class is over. We look at the pizza. “I’ll split it with you,” I say, though I feel dumb about it. “I’ll take three pieces. You take four.”

He smiles. “I’ll take three pieces,” he says, “You take four.”

Great. Fuck. Okay. I’m going to take the kid’s pizza. But that’s how things are now cause I made the dumb comment about the free meal and because he’ll think I’m pitying him. We split the pizza. I take my four pieces. He starts walking to the door. “Thanks,” I say, “For sharing that.”

“It’s my experience,” he says, “That’s why I told you.”

I go to rehearsal. I can’t feel anything at all. I hear myself tell a girl in the cast that love doesn’t really exist. I don’t know why I said that. I don’t believe it, do I? I go home and go to sleep and in the morning I feel like I can’t move. I drag myself through my shower and breakfast rituals and to my car. I sit staring, cold and dead. And then suddenly the tears start. Witnessing means you really listen, you stay present, and you

hear. But doing that means you have to change, or you die. I cry for a long time; I feel my insides shifting and changing and the fear rises again... how far will this go? How much will I have to change? But I know, too, it will only be as much as I can handle, and I relax. This isn't the type of crying that is attached to a bottomless pit of despair. It's the type of crying that is part of growth, so I embrace it, and then, thank God, I'm alive again.

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Fernandes says of witnessing:

The act of describing or analyzing experiences of oppression for a wider audience is not in itself necessarily transformative for the group or individuals who experience this oppression. Postmodern critics have rightly pointed out that not only does such knowledge rarely benefit its subjects, it may actually harm them through stereo typing, essentializing and colonizing strategies of representation. The simple truth is that it is the witness describing the oppression of less-privileged groups who is most likely to undergo a transformation. (84)

I want to first discuss this narrative as a narrative and a piece included in a work in composition and literacy studies. As Fernandes argues, it seems unlikely my inclusion of this story will help the students of Chicago or will somehow reduce the rampant gun and gang violence or the systemic inequalities in the school system based on race and class, even from one neighborhood to the next. It's possible my narration does as much harm as good in the way that Fernandes describes. What is clearer to me, however, is both the experience and the writing of the experience were transformative for me, but only because of the process of witnessing that I gained from spiritual Discourse. The first draft of the narrative was written while I was still sinking into numbness and depression from the experience. I had been reading Fernandes the day that this experience had happened, and I made a conscious effort during the student's story to

keep my heart open. I succeeded to some degree, given the way processing the emotions involved changed me, but I also shut down at some point during or just after hearing the story.

It's clear to me now why I shut down my emotions. That my emotions were shut down is evident to me by my sense of numbness at the following rehearsal, at which I even told someone I didn't believe in love. This numbness is a result of having been brought to an emotion during Juan's story that I chose to avoid feeling. Hearing this story and putting it together with the rest of my experiences that year meant powerful emotions that were terrifying partly because I knew on some instinctive level that one didn't experience such things unchanged. And I didn't want to change. As I say in chapter two, my primary Discourse taught me that it's partly my responsibility, as a service professional and otherwise, to be sacrificing until I am exhausted and resentful. Because of this, I am still sometimes afraid that I'll have to give more than I am capable of giving and give up my own happiness. and I didn't want the lines between me and the world further shifted. Shutting out the experience, however, meant a kind of spiritual death over the next day during which I was not even recognizable to myself and eventually couldn't take any joy in anything I was doing, including things I was passionate about.

In order to witness this student's experience and respect what he had told me, I had to open the doors that had swung shut. Without the Discourse practices I had acquired through spiritual Discourse I would not have had the means to do this. For one, the faith I was building in the universe, that events were not random and chaotic as I had once believed, helped me know that I would not have ended up in this classroom

with one student (twice with the same student, I only wrote about the first time) had I not been intended to hear this story. I also had a dim awareness that my strange compulsion to write him a grammar exercise that was a story about an octopus was partly what brought up his brother who used to write him stories. I needed the faith that I was supposed to be affected by this story in order to have the strength to open myself to witnessing.

At the end of the narrative I write about the spiritual principal that people only receive what they can handle; this is a common Twelve Step mantra. This belief too allows me to go deeply into witnessing, knowing that I won't be swept away by the experience or changed into something that is too much for me. I also have to have the faith that the change that comes from truly hearing someone's experience and Discourse will be a positive change towards growth – that I will be a better person afterwards who is more capable of socially responsible actions, and, also, of love. I will be one step closer to living a fully engaged life that is not shut off from the souls of those around me. These Discourse practices give me a way to do what I advised the student in the Writing Center in the previous narrative. I sit with the experience. I let it touch me and change me as it will without trying to control it, box it in, analyze it, or understand it.

In either my primary Discourse or the academic Discourse it is sometimes tied to, I don't have access to this interaction with this student or the means to process it afterwards. Additionally, purely academic Discourse would not have given me a way to write about the experience in either content or form. Nevertheless, it is a very real experience of what being a teacher requires for me and is part of the world that the

more academic skills oriented work takes place in.

Learning how to write and teaching how to write are spiritual practices. If we divorce writing instruction from our own complex spiritual journeys or from the complex spiritual journeys of our students, we are stuck trying to teach one dimensional writing to fabricated one dimensional people in a one dimensional world. Doing such, we are doomed to fail, even if it seems we are succeeding because our definition of success will be narrowly defined and miss aspects of growth and learning that are not available to academic Discourse alone. Teaching writing spiritually requires a shift in what we think of as academic Discourse. The acquisition of spiritual Discourses and a meta-understanding of academic and spiritual Discourses allows the frequent one dimensionality of academic Discourse to come into view. It also provides a set of alternative behaviors and beliefs that can facilitate a more holistic classroom that supports students to approach their own Discourse acquisition in all its complexity with all of the risks to identity that entails. Paulo Freire's dialogic education provides an example of a spiritually integrated pedagogy. In order to effectively teach in such a classroom a teacher needs the Discourse moves allowed by spirituality of connectedness over conflict, hope and personal implication over despair, witnessing over advice or problem solving, reciprocity, and the integration of academic skills learning with our own and students' broader spiritual journeys.

## **Chapter 5 “Towards a Dialogic Teaching Community”**

In this chapter, I discuss some of the implications of the work in the first four chapters for the teaching of college writing. In chapter one, I explained how Paulo Freire’s dialogic education has a spiritual foundation that often seems invisible to North American audiences. Certainly, this spiritual foundation was invisible to me on my initial readings of Freire before I had been immersed in various spiritual Discourses that gave me a way to see and understand those aspects of Freire’s pedagogy. For instance, Leela Fernandes’s concept, drawn from the Quaker religion, of witnessing helps clarify the type of spiritually based listening required in Freire’s dialogic education. As I outline in chapter one, Freire has a number of spiritual concepts that he says are necessary for dialogic education. He argues that his pedagogy relies on a spiritual love of people as they are rather than on control of them. It requires an open ended and critical pursuit of answers that is always informed by the fact that there is much about life and the experiences of others that we do not and/or cannot understand. Freire’s pedagogy is also based on the faith that progress, growth, and change are indeed possible and that the potential for that progress exists inside of each of us. Chapter two points out that these concepts aren’t explicitly developed in Freire’s work but that the same concepts are more explicit in the work of some North American writers. In that chapter, I point out that dialogic education requires, in addition to witnessing behaviors, engaging in an individual spiritual search. It requires bringing this more spiritual self to the classroom, and working during dialogue, at least partly, at the level of spiritual equality and reciprocity. These behaviors are necessary, in part, to work against the force that

compels us to reproduce the injustices of larger society, played out through our inner oppressor.

As is the case with most spiritual concepts, these ideas are simple and easy to say, but can be very difficult to practice. While Freire argues having these things is necessary to do dialogic education effectively, he doesn't go in any depth about how to move from where we each start towards the places of more spiritual awareness, humility, and love. How do we work at becoming the types of teachers that Freire asks us to be?

In chapter two, I made a link between Freire's concept of the inner oppressor and James Gee's theories of primary Discourse. As I argue, Gee's concepts give us a way to access our inner oppressor. Gee points out that Discourses involve more than just language usage, but also contain within them behaviors, beliefs, and values. If we have within us an inner oppressor, then this oppressor is made up of Discourse within us. Accessing our deeply held, unconscious, unquestioned, beliefs and values that lead us to act in ways that recreate injustice and inequality requires getting into our primary Discourse. This is because our behaviors hold within them Discourse beliefs and values that are part and parcel of those behaviors. Gee argues that immersion in new Discourses along with gaining a meta-understanding of those Discourses can help create a critical eye that can incrementally change our behaviors and beliefs. Our inner oppressor is made up of these values and beliefs, and Gee provides one way to think about accessing and changing this Discourse. He says that doing this work is a moral responsibility. It is not the function of his writing, however, to provide tools or mechanisms for doing this extremely difficult work. Again, while the ideas are not complicated, they are much easier said and understood than practiced.

A common Zen Buddhist saying is that there are many equal roads to the top of a mountain. Everyone's spiritual journey as a teacher and student is unique. This is partly the case because we all have a unique combination of experiences that make up our primary Discourse and then an equal variety of combined secondary Discourses. In Zen Buddhist terms, we all have individual egos that are constructed through our unique experiences and biology in the material world. Even if my little brother and I, coming from the same family, were to both be professionalized as teachers, we would not have the same primary Discourse or the same combination of secondary Discourses. Such things arise from lived lives, and nobody lives the same life as another. Even raised in the same environment, two people do not take the same lessons from that environment. Similarly, the path to becoming aware of harmful aspects of our teaching Discourses, then, is different for each of us.

My purpose in chapters three and four was to point out how individual the work of gaining meta-understanding of our Discourses and moving towards spiritually integrated teaching must be. Additionally, as Gee points out, the lines between primary and secondary Discourses are fluid and always blurred. Most of our Discourse behaviors will always be unconscious. The best we can hope for is moments of fissure where real exposure to another Discourse and meta-learning about Discourses can make aspects of our Discourse behaviors visible to us, but this is a constant process of growth and can never be done perfectly. As Thich Nhat Hahn says in *The Art of Power*, spiritual growth is always a matter of following a North Star that we do not reach but guides us forward. Taking perfect facilitation of dialogic education as our North Star, in this final chapter, I identify key practices for teacher development that can help teachers move



towards dialogic education and spiritually integrated pedagogy. These might be exercised within academic communities or in academic departments in workshop form, amongst teachers with similar goals and a willingness to experiment. Many of these practices, however, can be engaged in as individuals or with one other teaching colleague. These workshop activities are based on the work of Freire and Gee and designed to give a structure to the spiritual and Discourse work they advise. The exercises attempt to move through three layers of awareness and existence: thought, feeling, and spiritual core.

As Freire points out, when people are working for liberation of themselves and others, they must face their oppressor inside because

the very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped. Their ideal is to be men; but for them, to be men is to be oppressors. This is their model of humanity. ... At this level, their perception of themselves as opposites of the oppressor does not yet signify engagement in a struggle to overcome the contradiction; the one pole aspires not to liberation, but to identification with its opposite pole (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 46).

He goes on to say that, “the oppressed suffer from the duality which has established itself in their inner most being. They discover that without freedom they cannot exist authentically. Yet, although they desire authentic existence, they fear it. They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized” (48). The oppressor, meanwhile, must risk “an act of love” (50) in order to participate in changing things. For both oppressor and oppressed, “One of the gravest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge human beings’ consciousness” (51). In order to bring about any kind of real change that doesn’t reproduce the same types of violence and

injustice we are fleeing, Freire says we have to do work to overcome the system that exists not only outside of us, but has come to exist inside of us as well.

Gee uses his own terminology to describe a similar phenomena in which the ways we oppress and harm others are contained inside of our Discourses – beliefs and patterns of behavior that we have acquired, primarily unconsciously, through people who have mentored us in these Discourses during childhood (168). Discourses, as necessary as they are, work to exclude and to keep us blind to the interests of our group or class, and Gee argues that if you agree with him “you have contracted a moral obligation to reflect on, gain meta knowledge about your Discourses and Discourses in general. Such knowledge is power because it can protect all of us from harming others and from being harmed, and because it is the very foundation of resistance and growth” (221).

What “reflection and meta-learning” with Discourse does Gee advise? Gee demonstrates ways in which institutions of education value the primary Discourses of some elite groups over disadvantaged groups. Gee reminds teachers:

If one cannot acquire Discourses save through active social practice, and it is difficult to compete with the mastery of those admitted early to the game when one has entered it as late as high school or college, what can be done to see to it that meta-knowledge and resistance are coupled with Discourse development? The problem is deepened by the fact that true acquisition of many mainstream Discourses involves, at least while being in them, active complicity with values that conflict with one’s home and community-based Discourses, especially for many women and minorities. (180)

Gee suggests we provide students with apprenticeship in academic Discourse, and also with meta-learning about the differences in Discourse. Meta-learning, he argues, provides students with an ability to reference the rules of the game, “psyching out” gatekeepers and throwing them “off their stride” (180). The rest of the time, argues

Gee, we do the best we can to apprentice students in mainstream Discourse enough so that they can fake their way through a Discourse they will never really master as well as students who have aspects of more powerful Discourses as part of their primary Discourse.

But how do we do these various types of work that Gee suggests? How do we become conscious enough of our own Discourses in order to teach meta-knowledge of Discourse differences, especially when so much of our Discourse is unconscious and acquired, rather than learned? And how do we apprentice students in academic and mainstream Discourse while also working with and taking into account the fact that this *will* for many students bring up conflicts with their primary Discourse and the resistance and emotional reactions this entails? How do we bring aspects of our own primary and secondary Discourses into consciousness, so as better to teach and transcend those aspects that are causing harm and have in them oppressive patterns? Beyond the specific aspects of minority and mainstream Discourse patterns that Gee specifically draws to our attention by referencing studies like Shirley Brice Heath's ethnography of literacy behaviors. Gee does not tell us how to become more fully aware of Discourses. He makes us aware of the difficult work our students are doing in questioning their basic beliefs through academic and mainstream Discourse, but he does not offer ways for writing teachers to teach towards this brave and risky Discourse work.

For Paulo Freire, the process that students and teachers can engage in that can help both groups overcome the oppressive reality that has also informed our inner realities and responses is dialogic education. Certainly in later work, Freire came to the conclusion that work *within* institutions and the work of educators as a whole was

necessarily limited – just one small piece of a larger economic and spiritual change that the world needed to go through. But for educators, Freire’s prescription is dialogic education.

If it is in speaking their word that people, by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which they achieve significance as human beings. Dialogue is thus an existential necessity. And since dialogue is the encounter in which the united reflection and action of the dialoguers are addressed to the world which is to be transformed and humanized, this dialogue cannot be reduced to the act of one person’s ‘depositing’ ideas in another, nor can it become a simple exchange of ideas to be ‘consumed’ by the discussants. Nor yet is it a hostile, polemical argument between those who are committed neither to the naming of the world, nor to the search for truth, but rather to the imposition of their own truth. Because dialogue is an encounter among women and men who name the world, it must not be a situation where some name on behalf of others. (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 89).

It is through this form of education that Freire says we participate in “creating” (89) the world, but he cautions us that our attempts to do dialogic education can, like other forms of education, merely reproduce the oppression we are trying to find our way through. This is because both students and teachers have these oppressive patterns inside of them. As such,

Dialogue cannot exist in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people. The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love. Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself.(89)

To Freire, true dialogue *is* love. It is the ability to humbly speak one’s truth and then really hear the truths of others, in a shared endeavor to create a better world. As I point out in chapter one, Freire argues that dialogic education requires of educators faith, hope, humility, love, and critical thinking. As important as Freire indicates developing these skills as an educator is, he doesn’t go further into the process of developing them or what educators might as individuals or collectively to work on bringing those qualities

to our teaching.

Freire does not go into further detail about how to develop these qualities, either as individuals or as communities, in his later works. In the introduction to *Teachers as Cultural Workers*, Macedo and Ana Maria Araujo Freire write “Freire’s view of education as revolutionary futurity also requires other fundamental skills, skills that he discusses in this volume but that are seldom taught to us in our preparation as teachers” (xviii) In this book, too, published after his death, Freire lists these required skills as humility, lovingness, courage, tolerance, and a joy of living. While he explains why each of these is necessary, he does not tell us how teachers, as a community or as individuals, might work on developing them or at least making them part of our community conversations on teaching. (*Teachers as Cultural Workers* 39 - 46). What he does remind us of, however, is that we should expect it to take us work and time to develop these skills.

Gee and Freire do not provide methods of doing the work of making our teaching Discourse conscious or teaching with faith and love when the oppression around us and its reflection inside of us would dictate otherwise. In fact, Gee points out that becoming aware of our Discourses is an immensely difficult and sometimes painful process because it will challenge aspects of our identity. To make matters more difficult, the tools necessary to engage in this kind of spiritual work are not something that traditional academic Discourse has easy access to. Indeed, some of this work can even be frowned on by academic Discourse. Work with emotions, for instance, is frequently frowned on in academic discourse. Even engaging in, and being open to trying these exercises can bring up conflict with the academic secondary Discourses that many of us hold in common. For one, spiritual texts often look very different from academic texts.

As early as an intermediate writing class, college students are taught how to evaluate sources by academic standards. We teach, not incorrectly, that in an academic atmosphere, texts of value are texts heavy with verifiable citations; texts that discuss spiritual practices often are not. These are learning objectives for intermediate writing at all three institutions at which I have taught. Where spiritual texts do offer citations it is often to older religious texts in order to offer the argument that these ideas have been around for a long time and are in many major religions.

Academic texts are often intellectually complicated and we teach students, and were taught ourselves, to value them to the extent that they are. Spiritual texts typically state that the important ideas are simple. It is a common saying in spoken twelve step Discourse that false answers are “easy and complicated” and real answers are “simple and difficult.” Thich Nhat Hahn repeatedly (*The Art of Power; No Death, No Fear; Nothing to Do, No Where to Go*) makes the point that while there are many aspects of continuing happiness and peace that require practice, this state is also immediately available to everyone by changing the way we are experiencing this very moment. By its very nature, academic Discourse answers problems with further thought and research. Thich Nhat Hahn says that peace is only available in a state of “no thought.” *Not thinking* is the opposite of what writing instructors are encouraged to help their students achieve. These differences between the two Discourses create a huge barrier for many academics to accessing or experimenting with the tools that spiritual texts offer.

Perhaps most difficult for myself when I was first introduced to spiritual Discourses like twelve step or Zen Buddhism, was the fact that such Discourses consider “acceptance” of the world as it is to be fundamental in reaching peace. The

study of critical pedagogy, or even the less politically charged concept of “critical thinking” seem to preclude any such acceptance. As I point out in chapters two and three, the work for social justice is central to the ideas of Paolo Freire, Thich Naht Hahn and other spiritual Discourses, but this is, in a way, a paradox. We must simultaneously accept the world as it is and stay “engaged” in making it better and working for the “happiness of others” to use Thich Nhat Hahn’s terms (*The Art of Power*) or “change the things we can and accept the things we cannot” in the terms of twelve step. Parker Palmer makes the point in *The Courage to Teach* that learning to accept, to sink into, to live “paradox” is centrally important to good teaching. Academic Discourse teaches us to think our way out of paradox rather than to stew in it, and Palmer runs teaching workshops that focus on the sole skill of accepting the paradoxes of teaching (61). As early as elementary school, many of us learn in academic atmospheres to critically think our way through problems, to value the complicated over the simple, and to reject acceptance of the things around us as complacency. For those of us that come from families of university educated parents, these skills and values are even more ingrained.

I am not, again, arguing that these academic tools and skills are not valuable and worthwhile. I am not, for instance, challenging the worth of heavily cited complicated texts. I am only pointing out that such Discourse beliefs sometimes block us from considering modes and practices of knowledge that seem contrary to what we have learned. But academic Discourse, in isolation of spiritual Discourse, does not have access to the power of “no thought” or the paradox of acceptance and change. In addition, getting exposed to a Discourse that is so different from academic Discourse can be very difficult. If spiritual Discourses bring up resistance for these reasons, or

others, this resistance should be expected and, as much as possible, accepted. As Thich Nhat Hahn and twelve step both teach, resistance to suffering only makes our resistance, and our suffering, stronger. (Anger 169 - 169 and 173 - 176)

The exercises that follow are mostly drawn from spiritual traditions and teachers and applied here to the work of becoming dialogic teachers. As I discuss in chapter two, the truly spiritual nature of Freire's pedagogy can be better understood by comparing it to the works of spiritual pedagogical writers in North America like bell hooks, Leela Fernandez and Parker Palmer. In addition, the spiritual aspects of Freire's pedagogy can be seen clearly when we compare it to the spiritual, but not religious, group practice of twelve step. Because, as I point out in chapter one, the practices of twelve step are very similar to those of dialogic education except with their spiritual nature made more explicit, I am drawing on some of the practices of twelve step that are designed to help members engage in dialogue with more of the qualities of faith, humility, and love. I am also drawing on practices recommended by the Vietnamese Buddhist writer and teacher Thich Nhat Hahn. While Nhat Hahn does not teach in a university setting like Palmer, Fernandes, and hooks, he does write about teaching as a particularly spiritual pursuit. Nhat Hahn heavily values the ability to listen deeply from a place of mindfulness; these are different words to describe the concept that Fernandes calls witnessing. Nhat Hahn writes extensively about the spiritual work needed in order to slowly move towards the ability to listen in this way. As such, I have also drawn on his recommended practices in order to develop workshops to help groups work together to become dialogic educators.

As I pointed out, many qualities of spiritual texts run counter to the values of academic



Discourse, but it is for this very reason that they become valuable here. Gee argues that “when we come across a situation where we are unable to accommodate or adapt, we become consciously aware of what we are trying to do or are being called upon to do. ... And of course people in our culture can have such experiences apart from classrooms (and often have them in classrooms when it is the classroom, school, or teacher that is causing the maladaptation)” (172). Spiritual Discourses can be this jarring Discourse for academics that helps bring to light meta-knowledge of academic Discourse. In addition, they are the texts most concerned with the concepts Freire brings up such as faith, love, and humility.

Of course, simply reading and references to spiritual texts or reading spiritual texts is not the same as being immersed in a spiritual Discourse. Gee points out that “First, for anything close to acquisition to occur, classrooms must constitute active apprenticeships in ‘academic’ social practices as they are also carried on outside the ‘composition’ or ‘language’ class” (180). An apprenticeship, says Gee, is a practice wherein “the teacher scaffolds students’ growing abilities to say, do value, believe, and so forth, within that Discourse, through demonstrating her mastery and supporting theirs even when it barely exists” (178). The point here is that Discourse learning is a social practice which requires consistent exposure to other people who are using that Discourse and will help you learn it. This is much the same idea that is one of the foundations behind twelve step group meetings which makes twelve step a useful source for workshop exercises. Our current Discourses, mostly our primary Discourse, but certainly secondary Discourses, too, have led to a certain set of behaviors. Changing those behaviors requires the learning of a brand new Discourse, in the case

of twelve step, a spiritual Discourse. But learning this Discourse requires the meeting on a regular basis with others who have been learning this spiritual Discourse. Members practice using the twelve step vocabulary, taking speaking turns in a new way, listening in a new way, feeling and expressing feelings in a new way, as well as countless other behaviors that other people in the meeting are trying to do. (Beattie, *Codependent No More*; National Alcoholics Anonymous Website). Twelve step also involves the role of a “sponsor,” a mentor figure who shares experience, meets with, and helps scaffold new members in the Discourse of recovery (I’m using the word Discourse for the purposes of this chapter, even though that’s not a word used in “recovery” literature). Gee points out that it is simply not possible to acquire a new Discourse without this social experience of immersion. So, too, Thich Nhat Hahn consistently reminds his readers that their work at meditation, mindfulness, and becoming more spiritual in their behaviors should be engaged in within a community of like minded people who are also engaged on the same task (*The Art of Power; No Death, No Fear; Nothing to Do, Nowhere to Go*). He says, “If we have several friends sitting with us, the positive collective energy of mindfulness will be even stronger. It will be much easier for us to allow our pain, sorrow, and despair to be embraced by the collective energy. That is why it is so pleasant and helpful to practice in a community where everyone knows how to do the same thing” (*Art of Power* 52). Whether viewed through the lens of Gee’s linguistics, Thich Nhat Hahn’s spiritual mindfulness, or Freire’s dialogic education, the learning or acquiring of new Discourse/behaviors/values is a social practice that requires the support of people familiar with the new Discourse and working to learn it as well. As Gee says, “If you don’t have access to the social practice,

you don't get in the Discourse, you don't have it" (171).

As such, drawing out some of the practices of twelve step, Zen Buddhism, and other spiritual Discourse practices, the intent of this chapter to provide groups and departments of writing teachers ways to work together to move toward meta-knowledge of Discourse and dialogic education. These exercises are drawn from spiritually based texts and practices and modified somewhat to apply more directly to teaching, but they are intended as growth practices for anyone interested. Since spiritual work is a life long journey, these exercises are designed to be part of a year long workshop that might work towards creating a departmental social community of spiritual teaching practice.

Many of the practices and exercises are similar to activities I engaged in around and during the time of the experiences evoked in chapters three and four and during the writing of this dissertation. As such, I will reference back to chapters three and four for parallels.

### **Inventories**

Thought is the most limited level at which we can access the inner oppressor or our primary Discourses. Our thoughts are made up, to a large extent, of our primary Discourse, and so using them to access that same Discourse can be an exercise in futility. Still, there are methods by which we can use what we do consciously know about ourselves to make headway into the spiritual realm and to learn about our inner oppressor and the ways it is woven into our primary Discourse.

Many spiritual traditions, including Zen Buddhism and twelve step, encourage the use of regular self-reflection. Twelve step tradition calls this taking an inventory. In a twelve step inventory, all behaviors related to the addiction are written down in as much

detail as possible and the negative consequences of the behaviors are listed as well. It is equally important to note positive behaviors or positive changes that have been made. The idea behind writing down this regular self-reflection is that we remain honest with ourselves about our choices and behaviors. We bring as many behaviors to conscious light as we are capable of bringing to light. In Zen Buddhism, the belief is that behaviors we do not bring into consciousness can block our mindfulness and our contact with our spiritual selves. If we look at the same concept using Gee, what we are doing when we take inventory of our behaviors is trying to make unconscious Discourse decisions conscious. Gee:

Most of what a Discourse does with us and most of what we do with a Discourse is unconscious, unreflective, and uncritical. Each Discourse protects itself by demanding from its adherents' performances which act as though its way of being, thinking, acting, talking, writing, reading, and valuing are "right," "natural," "obvious," the way "good" and "intelligent" and "normal" people behave. ... When we unconsciously and uncritically act within our Discourses, we are complicit with their values and thus can, unwittingly, become party to very real damage done to others. (221)

We have a moral responsibility, says Gee, to "reflect on" (221) and "gain meta-knowledge about our Discourses and Discourse in general." In other words, we have the responsibility to bring whatever we can of something that is largely unconscious into conscious light.

We begin with any aspects of our primary Discourse that may already be aware of. Taking inventory of a set of behaviors is hard and time consuming work. Inventories require detail and as much investigation into our behaviors as our conscious mind will allow. There are likely to be difficult emotions that come up with inventorying certain behaviors, and this can require patience and time to work through. Gee argues that Discourse protects itself and its entire set of behaviors and values by demanding that

these behaviors seem normal (221). Inventorying these behaviors is likely to bring a whole set of choices and behavior patterns into question that our Discourses require remain unquestioned in order to protect the Discourse as a whole. And as Alice Brand argues, beliefs and values hold in them the emotions that went into their creation. Bringing to light these behaviors is likely to touch on these emotions.

Additionally, an attitude of non-judgmentalness and gentleness is necessary in doing all such work. This is the case because in uncovering our Discourses, we are uncovering behaviors and beliefs that were, Gee argues, formed in our early childhood and not at all a matter of conscious choice. (168) Still, the temptation will be to blame ourselves or blame other people when certain aspects of Discourse comes to light. It is important to remember that, as Gee argues, “all Discourses are false – none of them is, in fact, the first or last word on truth” (221). As such, it is helpful not to blame ourselves or others for the fact that we carry a Discourse that has within it falsehoods or protections to relations of power. All of us have this. Freire, too, argues that we all begin our revolutionary process from a place of having internalized the oppression around us. (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 46). This is the place we should expect to start and to continually need to return. This is the nature of primary Discourse especially. We are merely trying to be honest about what is. But this requires an underlying faith that “what is” is okay for right now, provided we have a commitment to grow. We must honestly look at what our starting place is: what are the behaviors of past and present that have brought us success or good feelings, healing to ourselves or a relationship, and what are the behaviors that have caused us or others harm? Because this work is difficult and time consuming, to be done effectively, it should probably be done over a

period of several months. Inventory worksheets, like the ones I will describe, can be offered before meeting in workshop so that teachers have an opportunity to prepare this work carefully beforehand.

There are two major inventories that I am recommending for workshops on dialogic education. The first is a primary Discourse inventory, and the second an inventory of our teaching behaviors. According to Gee, our primary Discourses are formed by our early family interactions. If we wish to become conscious of as many of these behaviors and beliefs as possible, it can help to write down descriptions of early family interactions. Times of group interaction, around the dinner table or wherever it was that the family interacted can be described. It can help to ask some of the following questions: How were conversations conducted? How were contributions to group conversation initiated? In what ways did group members react to contributions to conversation? Who could initiate a new topic? Were comments addressed to the group or to one person in particular? In what ways were questions used? What were your own goals in such conversations?

When answering these questions, it is important to do so in a spirit of non-judgmentalness. All of us have primary Discourses formed by early family interaction. We are all influenced by these primary Discourses when we teach. Our primary Discourses are complicated and are made up of many complicated Discourses that were combined to make up the primary Discourses of whoever raised us. There are aspects of each of our primary Discourses that are healing in some situations, harmful in others. We are not, in other words, doing an inventory of dinner time conversation to blame or to point out “dysfunction.” We are merely trying to be honest about early

Discourse forming experiences that helped create the ways we interact in group discussion. We are equal to others in this way, for our growth is not created by the specific combination that made up our primary Discourse nor by what type of societal oppression shows up in our primary Discourse, but by the work we do to increase our access to this initial forming Discourse.

An inventory of such early family “discussion” can be helpful, but taken alone it is limited because of the aspects of primary Discourse that will necessarily remain invisible and unconscious. The nature of primary Discourse is that it is taken for granted by definition. It is the slate on top of which other Discourses are written. Our teaching practices are of course made up of more than just our primary Discourse. Throughout our lives we are introduced to secondary Discourses that we adopt in order to work or live in different communities. Gee argues that the line between secondary Discourses and primary Discourse is blurry, but that our behaviors and beliefs are made up of a mixture of our secondary and primary Discourses. Our teaching Discourse is made up of various secondary Discourses that mix with our primary Discourse. For instance, by the time we are teachers we have participated in any number of classrooms as students. Something as early as our elementary school classroom teaches us a secondary teaching Discourse as we see teaching behavior modeled for us. This teachers’ behavior is itself a result of a Primary Discourse mixed with the modeling of all of their previous teachers and their explicit education in an education program at a university. Like most Discourses, teaching Discourse stays primarily unconscious and the ways in which we teach like our elementary school teachers did or like our first college instructor far outnumber the places where we have parted ways with our predecessors due to

introduction to new Discourse. It is simply that we are more aware of the differences than we are of the behaviors that are in line with what we have modeled for us. We have acquired teaching Discourse then, as apprentices to all of the teachers we have been exposed to. We also at times “learn” secondary Discourse teaching behaviors explicitly education in our graduate schools and that we picked up at orientations. These behaviors, however, do not feel as natural to us as we have not adopted them through acquisition, but learned them as meta-knowledge on our own teaching Discourse. For instance, I remember a G.T.A. who was some years ahead of me in my program mentoring me during some micro-teaching exercises. After watching me teach for fifteen minutes, he commented that I was an auditory learner and had brought these practices to my teaching. He reminded me I would always need to work to be consciously aware of teaching towards visual learners. Through dinner table conversations with my father, who was a trained public speaker, I had learned this method of information presentation and reception. This behavior was reinforced by other instructors I observed as a student. My colleague’s comment stayed with me, but always as something that I need to consciously work at changing in the classroom. I frequently point out to my students on an early day of each semester that I am an auditory learner and will always be working to write things on the board and pass out written instructions but that I would appreciate being reminded when I forget

We have more than one reason, then, for taking careful written inventory of our teaching behaviors. This is the second important inventory to take for a workshop on dialogic education. Fourth step inventories in twelve step literature provide numerous formats for this, but the format is less important than the intent. Melodie Beattie, a



leading figure in addiction literature, writes of inventories (the fourth of the twelve steps in alcoholics anonymous):

This approach (covered on pages 64 through 71 of Alcoholics Anonymous, *The Big Book*.) is the original approach suggested for a Fourth Step. This version calls for an honest stocktaking of ourselves. It is simple and straightforward. We write down the names of people we resent, and why. We write down what part of our lives we feel those people have affected or harmed. On our list of resentments, we include "people, institutions or principles with whom we are, or were angry." For instance, "I'm resentful toward my friend because she doesn't call me often enough, and that affects my social life and my feelings of well-being. In this Fourth Step, we may want to cover all the troublesome areas of our lives - anger, resentment, fear, sex, and money - reviewing each area thoroughly and with an attitude of self- acceptance, not shame. (Beattie 73)

The function of an inventory is to be as honest as possible about the negative feelings or suffering we have created for ourselves or others. Beattie suggests adding to this traditional fourth step, a parallel list of our assets. This approach transferred to the classroom would mean doing a reflection on recent or important moments participants have had in the classroom of feeling resentments, anger, or fear. An inventory can describe what brought about the feeling of anger, resentment, or fear, followed by any action that we took while feeling this feeling. The inventory should list any ill effects that our teaching action had on ourselves or our students. Looking for memories of these negative emotions that surfaced can be a way to locate moments when an aspect of our teaching Discourse was changing or was threatened. It can also help us identify moments when we may have been less than our best in the classroom due to taking actions while having a negative emotion. As Beattie points out, this should be done out of an attitude of acceptance, and making a parallel inventory of teaching moments that came out of a sense of peace, faith, or love, can help us do this. Parker Palmer points out "Looking at our 'failings' is always hard, but it is easier when done against a

backdrop of our strengths. It can even be fruitful, as I hope to show in a moment, when we use paradox to transform a litany of failings into a deeper understanding of the identity from which good teaching comes” (70). Palmer argues that:

Every strength is also a weakness, a limitation, a dimension of identity that serves me and others well under some circumstances but not all the time. If my gift is a powerful analytical mind, I have an obvious asset with problems that yield to rationality. But if the problem at hand is an emotional tangle with another person and I use my gift to try to analyze the problem away, the liabilities that accompany my gift will quickly become clear. The point is not to “get fixed” but to gain deeper understanding of the paradox of gifts and limits, the paradox of our mixed selves, so that we can teach, and live, more gracefully within the whole of our nature. (72)

In other words, as Gee argues, no Discourse has an ultimate claim to truth. (221) Everybody’s teaching Discourse has in it things that will work for us and things that don’t. Taking an inventory brings out the important Discourse behaviors as are ready to be brought to the conscious mind. It helps us honestly know who we are in the classroom right now and what aspects of our primary and secondary Discourses we are acting out of. It does this by locating important moments in the classroom that brought up significant emotion and then honestly writing down the overall effect of these moments on ourselves and, to the extent that we know, to our students.

The collection and coding of the data in my dissertation partly served this function for me. For me, it was helpful to think about my relationships with students and with the class as a whole as relationships and to hold my interactions to the same standards of growth to which I was holding my relationships outside of the classroom. Freire argues that dialogic education must be built on a foundation of the recognition of the basic humanness and equality of each participant. “Founding itself upon love, humility, and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust

between the dialoguers is the logical consequence. It would be a contradiction in terms of dialogue – loving, humble, and full of faith – did not produce this climate of mutual trust, which leads the dialoguers into ever closer partnerships in naming the world” (91). As such, it helps to view my teaching relationships with students not just as I would in my own acquired teaching Discourses, but as I would in my acquired spiritual Discourses, so that I may then have the same goal of equality, mutual trust, and an ever closer partnership. Freire also makes the point that there is no dialogic education unless the teacher is truly open to being changed by the dialogue and transforming as well. As such, I must inventory my relationships with students for my own growth and the results the teaching interactions had for my development as a teacher and person.

Viewed only as an interaction between teacher and student, in the way that many people think about teaching, my early interactions with LaTanya, the middle school playwriting student I write about in chapter three, were successful because they led to more engagement in the class on her part, large amounts of voluntary writing and the willingness to work with college students to improve her writing. But when I view the same relationship in the way I would view a relationship outside of class, it appears very different. Viewed in that way, I draw attention to the bad feelings created on both sides and the frequent hostility and conflict between us. These remembered feelings of anger and hurt signified to me, even years after the fact, that there was something here from which I needed to learn. Inventorying the negative feelings that those interactions brought up, as well as my teaching actions around those feelings helped me see the interaction more clearly.

By honestly writing down the effects that my teaching actions had on myself or

the classroom atmosphere at the time, I gained insight into an aspect of my Discourse out of which I was acting. In that case, I became more conscious of a primary Discourse behavior around positive and negative reinforcement that I was bringing to the classroom, as well as a secondary Discourse value about what makes for success in a writing classroom. Both of these Discourse behaviors then came into question, and over time I was able to try to make conscious decisions about how I used motivation or measured success when working with middle school writers. I was able to identify goals for growth as well as areas where I was happy with changes that I had made. As such, I think whenever possible while taking a teaching inventory, it is important to be specific about behaviors and moments associated with negative emotion in the classroom, and then to remember that our work with students is work *in* relationships with other human souls, before it is anything else.

Again, a spirit of gentleness and non-judgmentalness is required to do this work effectively. We are writing down behaviors that are, as far as our conscious mind can tell, what “is.” We need to be honest about where we are starting in order to move forward. As Freire points out, no one escapes having aspects of oppression written into us. As such, bringing shame to discovering this is not helpful. We need the faith in the human potential to grow that Freire references in order to keep in mind that what “is” is okay because in bringing things to light, we are changing them and moving them forward.

Comparing our teaching behaviors to our written descriptions of our primary Discourses can increase our understanding of both. Moments of similarity between the two Discourses can be telling. This happened for me when, for instance, I noted that

my goal of dinner time conversation was frequently to gain approval. I could easily compare the way this approval was given and taken away to the ways I was giving and taking away approval in my classroom. Early in my teaching career, I viewed my ability to effectively motivate through positive reinforcement as an unproblematic strength. Seeing the behavior linked to conflict and hostility in my inventory helped problematize it. Further, seeing the behavior in my primary Discourse helped me see behaviors that were leading to conflict that I otherwise would not have seen. It did this by helping me to identify deeply rooted patterns, patterns that were formed by my primary Discourse and carried through into numerous secondary Discourses, especially my teaching Discourse.

I want to mention here something that will be even more relevant later when I am discussing sharing these inventories in workshop. The academic mind is trained for analysis. The temptation for many will be to treat written inventories as texts to be dissected and thought about in the same way as we would a piece of literature. These inventories, however, are not literature, and it is not our goal to gain insight through analysis. Being honest is one step. Juxtaposing Discourses is another. While some limited analysis might be called for to examine this juxtaposition, getting pulled into endless analysis of our own behavior and our written representation of it is counter to the goal of making unconscious values, beliefs, and behavior patterns conscious. We have written down what our conscious mind knows. We can rest assured then that our thoughts have done their work, and let the inventories and the juxtaposition of the inventories bring up further awareness without too far removing ourselves or treating ourselves like texts. In spiritual terminology, Thich Nhat Hahn writes repeatedly that the

state of “no thought” is the state from which we gain real insight. Academically, Gee argues that meta-knowledge only takes us so far in understanding our Discourses and Discourse in general. The acquiring of Discourse is largely unconscious, partly because Discourse is too complicated for our analytical mind to completely operate or understand (176). In addition, our analytical mind has been trained by academic secondary Discourses and we are trained to teach analysis as a primary mode of approaching texts (and in cases like mine, trained to do this also by my primary Discourse) and as such analysis is an aspect of our academic Discourse and so ill equipped to question academic Discourse. Discourses protect themselves, and so gaining “insight” into them (and here I use “insight” as Thich Nhat Hahn does in all of his works, as knowledge that comes from mindfulness and meditation) cannot be done only from within the Discourse one is attempting to question. The mere act of writing behaviors and their consequences down and seeing them next to one another may bring certain previously unconscious patterns and behaviors into our awareness, but thinking about our inventories overly hard, with all the powers of academic Discourse, will probably only lead to more thinking. I do not at *all* mean to be degrading the power or importance of literary or data analysis to accomplish much good work and positive change. However, sometimes it is good to deemphasize a skill set when it has previously been emphasized. As such, workshop participants should be asked to simply notice any tendency towards rigorous analysis of inventories.

### **Moving Beyond Thought Through Sharing**

Thus far, workshop participants have worked to make concrete the conscious knowledge we have of our primary and teaching Discourses. Gee suggests that it is

through immersion in and meta-understanding of other Discourses besides the ones with which we are comfortable that can lead to critical awareness. As I argue in chapters two and four, one of the primary mechanisms through which to do this is through witnessing. Witnessing allows us to be exposed to and changed by the Discourses of others with less of the resistance that would otherwise be there to protect our Discourse. In a witnessing state, we do not react to the sharing of others, but work to really hear and be changed by this sharing. This can help us get past the Discourse differences that would otherwise lead to judgment or control. Witnessing allows us to hear and experience the Discourses of others with an open mind and heart. If we remain entrenched in our primary and secondary Discourses, than other Discourses we are exposed to will meet with resistance where they seem to conflict with our previous Discourses. If we, however, look to be in a peaceful state of witnessing, during which we try to let our spiritual core truly hear and be changed by the experiences and Discourse of others, we have the opportunity to lower our resistance and be changed by others. Hearing the Discourse of others in this state of being, our Discourses are touched by other Discourses that call them into question; but instead of having these questions be threatening and thus shut us down, we listen without judgment. We accept the experiences and Discourse of others as different from, but as valid as, our own Discourses. Thich Nhat Hahn uses this type of practice, for instance, at his Plum Village, where he brings together, Israelis and Palestinians to share their experiences and learn from one another. Participants are not expected to be able to witness perfectly, but to witness as much as they can, and then when they feel anger or judgment rising, they excuse themselves saying that this is all they can hear mindfully

today, but they will return on the next day to attempt to hear more mindfully. Nhat Hahn argues that eventually, through concerted practice of this sort, participants learn to hear the experiences of one another and so to acknowledge the humanity of the other group of people. Without then needing analysis or argument, but only through sharing and listening, Discourse is changed to the point participants view one another with less hatred, violence, and aggression. (*Peace Begins Here* 15 - 18).

If participants attend workshops with inventories already taken, there is a mechanism for this type of deep sharing of Discourse. The fifth step of the twelve steps asks for the sharing of our inventories. It is extremely powerful to write down inventories of behavior, but we really access the power of inventories when we share them with someone who is willing to witness us. Someone willing to hear us, our teaching Discourses and experiences, our primary Discourse and experiences, as we represent them. This takes as much real spiritual work and bravery from the witnesser as it does from the witnessee.

The fact is, to a large extent, even our conscious knowledge of our primary Discourses stays secret within us. The Discourse practices of dinner tables in many households remain forever locked within those individual houses except as they are passed on through generations. Shame or fear can prevent us from really sharing these Discourse behaviors, beliefs, and values. And classroom teaching Discourse can be subject to the same type of shame and fear. Teaching is fundamentally an experience with other people. But the unique attribute of teaching, one many teachers, including myself, are very comfortable with, is that we close our classroom doors to other teachers. As such, our successes and failures are witnessed only by our students.



Our weaknesses and strengths as teachers are things we can keep to ourselves, or we can doctor experiences for representation to put us in the best light. What *really* happens in classrooms, and how we feel about what happens, is only known by others on the rare occasions of outside evaluation, team teaching, or teacher research.

Parker Palmer makes the point in *The Courage to Teach* that every person with a calling to teach has amazing moments of success in the classroom during which we facilitate learning just in the way we always wished we would. (1) But *every* teacher *also* has moments when we think, as he writes, “that my claim to be a teacher seems a transparent sham. Then the enemy is everywhere: in those students from some alien planet, in that subject I thought I knew, and in the personal pathology that keeps me earning my living this way” (1). The moments when far from facilitating learning, we actually do work to get in the way. Palmer writes of running workshops with teachers where the entire workshop was based on the honest sharing of teaching *failures*. “Remembering such moments,” he writes, “is the first step in exploring one of the true paradoxes of teaching: the same person who teaches brilliantly one day can be an utter flop the next!” (67) Palmer asks teachers to gather in groups of three or four and share a success. Then the group identifies the teacher’s strengths that led to this success. The group then each shares a failure, and they in turn identify the teacher’s weaknesses. (Often, says Palmer, they are the same thing! Our strengths *are* our weaknesses!) (68). This is powerful, for one, because it is one thing to understand the concept that we all have immense successes and painful failures in the classroom. It is quite another to really witness this in another teacher without judgment. Just doing this work of sharing and witnessing classroom experiences can rid teachers of much of the

shame and fear that Jane Tompkin's describes needing to cover up in her classroom. These are the feelings that we are a fraud, as an academic and a teacher, and that only a great deal of careful performance can cover that fact up. Palmer makes the point that sharing is best done face to face or it is robbed of much of its power. (67)

Because this work can be so potentially terrifying, some talk about witnessing must be done in workshop first. The concept can be explained, and pairs of workshop participants might practice witnessing one another on some less professional and frightening experience. Even *really* hearing what breakfast was like for someone, really witnessing it, without comment, judgment, analysis, or advice, can be a changing experience for both people.

Workshop participants should also be paired with people who are their equals in the academic hierarchy. This work would be nearly impossible to do if one *feared* one's future job prospects might be on the line if the wrong teaching experience was shared. Thich Naht Hahn certainly advises in the *Art of Power* that bosses and supervisors and captains of business learn these behaviors of deep listening and practice them with their employees as a way to run a mindful organization (122). But we are starting small, and rewards are given in hierarchies, and trust in this process must be built. As Freire argues, real dialogue *builds* mutual trust (Pedagogy of the Oppressed 91). Again, this is not to belittle the extremely important role of hierarchal teacher evaluation in departments; these workshop just have a very different set of goals and we want to do what we can to facilitate those different goals. Thich Nhat Hahn says of listening to co-workers, "You don't care only about their work performance, because the quality of their work depends on the peace and well-being inside of each of them" (Art of Power 121).

Fifth step sharing in twelve step is done to remove the shame around anything participants might feel makes us a “bad” person or unworthy of human or divine love. It is also done because true witnessing brings a spiritual light to experiences and helps us see our own behaviors as part of a whole, amazing, and ever growing universe.

Once workshop participants are introduced to and have tried witnessing, they can be asked to honestly share their teaching inventory with another person and to witness the teaching inventory of another. Again, listeners should notice any tendency towards judging “good” or “bad” when hearing an inventory. They should also notice any tendency to want to give advice or to compare another’s experience with our own. Participants are, again, *not* analyzing one another. To the best of our abilities, we are *witnessing*. This type of interaction has a power that extends beyond the conscious mind and the power of analysis. By doing this, we can truly be influenced by the Discourse of another and hope to access the aspects of our primary Discourse that would otherwise be blocked by a more conscious “discussion,” “debate,” or “analysis” of or about teaching experiences.

In terms of speaking after hearing, witnessers should merely “thank” sharers for their willingness to honestly share a set of experiences. Sharers can thank witnessers for witnessing. Anything more risks bringing value judgments or comparisons to the sharing. Doing this type of sharing work is how we bring what is already conscious, further into the light, and helps us use it to access teaching Discourse moves that are informed by our primary Discourse, or by our inner oppressor. It does this, in part, by removing the shame that can surround difficult teaching times and helping us know that our efforts as teachers have been heard and accepted by someone else. This can

remove blocks to delving deeper. In addition, by *really* hearing the teaching inventory of someone else, without judgment, our own teaching Discourse cannot help but be effected by the new potentialities we have learned. Those teaching experiences we might not have thought were important or the set of teaching behaviors that had previously been invisible, can come into the light. This can happen when we hear things that we wouldn't have thought to share or make problematic. But it can also happen because, as Palmer argues in *The Courage to Teach*, our true acceptance of the human and flawed teaching experiences of someone else increases our acceptance of our own human and flawed teaching (67). This removes one unconscious barrier to seeing clearly who we are as teachers.

In Gee's terms, witnessing in this way gives us access to the inner and outer teaching Discourse of another teacher that we would not otherwise have had. Even our moments of judgment and emotional reactions to the sharing of others, can, if we are aware of them, then lead us to understanding our own assumptions as teachers. This is a way to make our unconscious Discourse become conscious. We gain a meta-understanding of Discourse when we see how the Discourse differences of others bring up in us judgments or emotions. Those judgments or emotions are like a sign post letting us know that there is an unconscious Discourse belief or behavior here that we can notice and make conscious. Without such work of witnessing and noticing judgments and emotions, these assumptions stay locked inside the Discourses that created them.

### **Gaining Awareness Through Feeling**

Thought gives us one layer of our experience, but feeling is another layer of

experience. Feelings refer to those sensations that are neither solely in the body, nor only in the mind, but exist in the body in tandem with (whether caused by or the cause of) cognition. Feelings are closely connected to unconscious beliefs. Nico Frijda, a psychologist writing in *The Handbook of Emotion*, describes the “tenacity of beliefs” as it relates to emotion. She argues that it would do little to rid the arachnophobe of a fear of spiders merely to explain to him/her that most spiders cannot hurt him/her. The fear exists on a deeper level than the cognitive knowledge of spiders and their bites. Alice Brand, writing in the field of composition, creates a taxonomy of the aspects of self for the purposes of writing teachers. She moves from “feelings” (defined as we are using the term here) up through aspects of the self that require greater and greater degrees of cognition. She demonstrates that even at the level of “belief,” emotions play an integral role in their formation, and in changes to a person’s belief system that occurs. Not only do emotional experiences help form beliefs, but, argues Brand, if something succeeds in changing a belief, this always results in emotion. And so anyone working to change beliefs (and here Brand is not speaking specifically of critical pedagogy, but gives as an example a writer’s belief that he/she is just no good at writing), needs to be ready to understand and work with the emotion that went into the formation of that belief as well as the emotion that will come when it is changed. We can easily see here the usefulness of emotions in getting beneath our current conscious awareness of our teaching Discourse. If we look at Brand’s concept through the language of Discourse, the moments when something succeeds in changing our beliefs are the moments when something fundamental in our Discourse has changed. According to Gee, this would happen when we are immersed in an alien Discourse that conflicts with our primary

Discourse.

According to Brand, the moments when an outside Discourse is working to change one of our unconscious beliefs can perhaps first be recognized by the appearance of a feeling. This is the case because, as Gee argues, when we acquire a new Discourse, and here he is using an example of the professional Discourse of law school, the Discourse contains within it “the ‘mentalities’ learners are meant to ‘internalize.’ Immersion in such practices – learning inside the procedures, rather than overly about them – ensures that the learner takes on perspectives, adopts a world view, accepts a set of core values, and masters an identity often without a great deal of critical and reflective awareness about these matters, nor, indeed, about the Discourse itself” (167). The problem of course is that we have also adopted values and beliefs and an identity as part of our acquired primary Discourse, and this secondary Discourse identity we are expected to adopt can conflict fundamentally, causing the person to reject the new Discourse or to, as Gee says, be forced to live in “paradox” (165). “The conflict, then, is not just that I am uncomfortable engaging in a new practice – much as a new physical activity may involve using new muscles. Rather, the conflict is between who I am summoned to be in this new Discourse (law school) and who I am in other Discourses that overtly conflict with – and sometimes have historically contested with – this Discourse.” Gee does not specifically say that these moments of conflict bring up emotion, but as Brand argues, our basic beliefs and values are formed with emotion, and store emotion. She argues that when these beliefs are challenged or changed, the emotion stored with the value or belief is released. As such, the moments of Discourse conflict and paradox that Gee describes can partly be recognized the moments of anger,

defensiveness, or grief that come with needing to let go of an old belief, or simultaneously hold a conflict belief.

As I argue in the first two chapters, it can often happen that new pedagogies we wish to try, including dialogic pedagogy, may be hard to adopt despite our conscious intent to adopt them. This can happen when the pedagogy calls for significantly different behaviors or reactions than does our primary Discourse. Becoming aware of the places in our body where we are feeling resistance to a set of pedagogical behaviors can help bring awareness, especially when used in tandem with the inventory practices discussed above. At a place where a belief about teaching or about ourselves in groups is being pushed to change, we are likely to have feelings when we try the new behavior anyway. We are getting in touch with, for one, as Brand argues, the emotions that were present at the formation of the belief that dictated the old behavior. For two, as Gee argues, we are likely to feel anger or fear when asked to change something that is as fundamental to our identity as a primary Discourse behavior.

Spending some time focusing our awareness on our emotional reactions to participating in dialogic pedagogy can help us become more conscious of our own blocks to this pedagogy. Workshop participants form into groups of six or seven individuals, so that everyone in each group has the opportunity to participate. Each group should choose someone to be the facilitator of the dialogue. The topic to be dialogued on should come organically from the group. If the workshop is made of writing instructors, it seems likely topics in composition end up being chosen, but the topic is less important than the fact that there is some involvement from all participants in choosing the topic. Before dialogue begins, the facilitator should remind participants

of Freire's prerequisites for dialogue: love, humility, hope, and critical thinking. Participants should also be reminded that Freire's end goal for dialogue is a world in which it is more possible to love. In addition, if the previous workshop activities have been done, participants should be reminded by the facilitator of their previous experience of witnessing and that witnessing, rather than argument, is the goal to work towards in hearing others speak in the dialogue.

Participants should each have a blank piece of paper in front of them on which they can record any 'feelings' during this process, including the topic selection and the reading of dialogic values. Already there may be feelings regarding these concepts or the request that we engage in dialogue in this manner before the dialogue itself has actually begun. Once dialogue on the topic is begun, participants should continue to log any feelings that arise. This might happen during our own sharing in the dialogue or when hearing someone else share. Feelings might come up regarding the topic being discussed or the manner in which it is being discussed.

At this point, again, it is important to point out that these feelings should be logged without ascribing values to them. In order to gain any insight into where dialogic education is jarring with our primary Discourse or where the dialogue is asking our beliefs to be changed, we have to log all feelings equally. In such a context, there are not good or bad feelings, only unconsciousness of the feelings or consciousness. For those participants with more experience being in contact with emotional responses this may be easier to do than for others. As I said above, feelings are responses that are a combination of cognitive and body responses, so noticing feelings requires awareness focused on the body. Participants should try to notice sensations of heat, tightness,



pressure, or other changes in the body as the dialogue progresses.

Once feelings are noticed, both twelve step and Zen Buddhism recommend immersing oneself in the feeling, focusing on it and letting it be. For some emotions, this may take longer, but for others, just noticing the emotion may be enough to have the emotion dissipate. Participants can take some time at the workshop to try sitting with a particular emotion. If an emotion seems difficult to dissipate, this should be practiced further at home. Intellectualizing the feeling, or even sometimes talking about it, can serve to keep block the feeling rather than letting it pass through us. If the feeling is part of the stored energy being released with a change in belief, or a piece of primary Discourse that has been changed or threatened, than the goal is to move *through* the emotion to the other side. If it is an emotion that comes with a threat to primary Discourse, then feeling the emotion will release it and leave the path to change that much clearer. There may of course be layers of belief and emotion stored in a primary Discourse belief, and feeling and releasing emotions may have to be done repeatedly in order to make the sought change.

### **Beneath Thought and Emotion**

The final level of awareness that is required to develop the skills called for in dialogic education is that reached through meditation. Meditation is neither thought nor feeling, but seeks to tap into conscious awareness itself. In Shapiro, Brown, and Astin's "Toward the Integration of Meditation into Higher Education," meditation is defined as an umbrella word that refers to practices with the common goal of "training an individual's attention and awareness so that consciousness becomes more finely attuned to events and experiences in the present" (7). This state is frequently called mindfulness.

Shapiro, Brown, and Astin's review of meditation research in higher education points out that meditation has been found to help concentration and information processing. One study even found that when a group of randomly selected students practiced meditation each day and were compared to another randomly selected group of students who had the same starting grade point average but did not participate in meditation practices, the meditation group ended the semester with a significantly higher G.P.A.

Even more pertinent for characteristics of dialogic education being discussed here, meditation has been found to aid in interpersonal relations and the development of compassion.

Practices for the cultivation of empathy, compassion, and other qualities with consequences for interpersonal behavior have a long tradition in the meditative disciplines (Walsh, 1999). Mindfulness practice, for example, is believed to lead to a felt sense of trust and closeness with others and an enhanced ability to approach stressful interpersonal events as challenges rather than threats (Kabat-Zinn, 1996), perhaps by promoting a capacity to witness thought and emotion so as not to react impulsively and destructively. (Shapiro, Brown, and Astin 21)

The ideal state to be in while doing dialogic education is this trusting state of closeness with others in which we can witness thought and emotion without needing to react to it. This is the frame of mind required by Leela Fernandez's "witnessing" which she drew from the Quaker religion. Meditation, argues Shapiro, Brown, and Astin, is a piece of all of the world's major contemplative, spiritual, and philosophical traditions. But, as they argue, it is also now being developed as a secular practice outside of these religions. All of these traditions, whether secular or religious, recommend practicing and developing this skill of mindfulness through meditation.

Though certainly there are some that say such a state of mindfulness can be

achieved and sustained in an instant (and indeed there are many stories in Buddhism in which people do) generally practice is recommended. One can imagine how difficult it might to be sustain such a state of mindfulness in a complicated discussion with all kinds of possible challenges to primary Discourse. Shapiro, Brown, and Astin divide meditation practices into two major categories: meditation for concentration and meditation for mindfulness. It is mindfulness meditation that can be practiced to aid in witnessing during dialogic education. Shapiro, Brown, and Astin define this meditation practice as “opening and expanding to an awareness of thoughts and feelings as they pass through the mind, but not focusing on a specific purpose” (8). Shapiro, Brown, and Astin say it is this type of meditation particularly that seems to lend itself to the development of empathy of the ability to witness.

Participants in workshop can be introduced to the concept of mindfulness meditation, but they can also take time in workshop to practice this type of meditation. Different mindfulness meditation practices work for different people, but the end goal is to achieve a state where there are no thoughts. Shapiro, Brown, and Astin say that mindfulness meditation “asks that we be completely aware of each thing that we are doing, thinking, and feeling ... consciously, purposefully regulating attention. Sustained attention to the present moment without interpretation, discrimination, or evaluation” (8). Thich Naht Hahn suggests one way this can be done is by choosing a location like a pine tree, and then mindfully walking to the pine tree, conscious of, and enjoying, each step that we take, but he often adds that anything we do and draw our attention to completely can be mindfulness mediation, for instance drinking a cup of tea. (Art of Power 52).

*'You only need to sit'* is an exhortation of Tao Dong (Soto) meditation. It means that you should sit without waiting for a miracle—and that includes the miracle of enlightenment. If you sit always in expectation, you cannot be in contact with or enjoy the present moment, which always contains the whole of life. *Sit* in this context means to sit in an awakened way, in a relaxed way, with your mind awake, calm, and clear. Only this can be called *sitting*, and it takes training and practice. (*The Blooming of a Lotus* 8)

If thoughts pass through the mind, even this should be experienced without evaluation.

The thoughts should be noticed with our awareness in the same way that we are attempting to notice the world around us. As different practices work for different people, after attempting mindfulness meditation for a period of time, participants might discuss their experiences and what techniques worked and which did not.

Shapiro, Brown, and Astin's second type of meditation, concentrative meditation, can be used towards dialogic education in a different way. This is a type of meditation in which people focus on something specific like breath or a certain sound or sensation (8). This meditation practice can be used in tandem with the insights gained from the workshop practices of inventorying and feelings logs. Unlike meditating for mindfulness in which everyone will more or less be practicing on their own, here participants can be guided in meditation. Each participant should be asked to pick a particular teaching issue or pedagogical block that came up during the previous practices. Participants can then be guided through a meditation that brings awareness to that issue as it exists in our bodies in a way that moves beneath our conscious thoughts of the issue. Our teaching Discourse, as a secondary Discourse, is primarily unconscious to us, as Gee argues. Accessing conscious awareness of that Discourse and the places where we can change towards an ever less harmful teaching Discourse requires finding ways to either bring aspects of Discourse to consciousness or to bring change to the

unconscious practices.

Concentrative meditation can bring awareness to us, what Thich Nhat Hahn calls “insight” by accessing the knowledge of our body and bypassing analysis. Simply, Nhat Hahn advises thinking the following while being aware of our breathing. “Aware of the hair on my head, I breathe in. Smiling to the hair on my head, I breathe out.” Then repeating this, “Aware of my eyes, I breathe in. Smiling at my eyes, I breathe out” (33 *Blooming of a Lotus*). This continues to move across the body in this manner. Nhat advises that this exercise may seem overly simple, but to try it anyway. Our bodies, he says, have in them awareness that we don’t have with our mind. By being aware of each part of us, and accepting and being grateful for that part of us, we are making room for that awareness to come to the surface.

But by breathing consciously and putting ourselves in touch with all the different parts of the body, we come to feel and understand the body and we learn in a concrete way how we can bring it peace and joy. The peace and joy of the body is nothing other than our own peace and joy. (*Blooming of a Lotus* 35)

After this type of meditation has been done, it can be focused on a particular teaching problem. Each participant should be asked to focus on one teaching issue or problem, individual to that person, that has come up during the course of the workshop. Participants should then be directed to return to awareness of the body, and to notice any change that comes up in the body once the problem or issue is thought of. Questions can be asked of the body, but answers do not come in words, rather in “insight.” After each question, participants should merely continue to be aware of their body, especially any part of the body that has changed with thoughts of the teaching issue.

After doing this exercise, participants should be advised that, as in the other

practices of the workshop, an answer to the pedagogical block may come now, but it also may also arrive later. Again, participants should be asked not to seek an answer in thought, but merely to continue to work on awareness of the problem and an insight will eventually arise. After this exercise, there should be some down time before asking participants if they had experiences doing the meditation they would like to share. This would probably be most comfortably done in small groups rather than in front of everyone.

### **Goals Work**

Freire writes in *Daring to Dream* that, "There is no tomorrow without a project, without a dream, without utopia, without hope, without creative work, and work toward the development of possibilities, which can make the concretization of that tomorrow viable" (26). Freire argues here that looking forward to and visualizing a better world than we currently live in can help make our dreams "concrete." As a means of wrapping up the workshop, participants can be asked to reflect back on any insights that have arisen as a result of the exercises. It may be that hearing the Discourses of others while witnessing, noticing emotional states during attempts at dialogic discussion, meditation for mindfulness or for concentration and body insight have brought up some new issues or problems. Perhaps a block to doing dialogic education better than previously has been discovered or a new set of set of teaching possibilities came up through discussion with other teachers.

Rather than have the potential of leaving any difficult issues that have arisen with negative feelings or frustration, it can be helpful to frame them as goals. Again, Thich Nhat Hahn gives specific practices for framing in group work the hopes and dreams that

he says are required for a tomorrow that is better than today. Nhat Hahn writes in *Blooming of a Lotus* of visualization exercises in which we see ourselves doing the new behaviors we wish to adopt. For example, "Seeing the necessity for consuming mindfully, I breathe in. Determined to consume nourishing foods, and no longer to consume physically damaging substances, I breath out" (102). Another example would be, "Seeing myself determined not to water these seeds [the poisons of anger, jealous, and suspicion in my consciousness] anymore, I breathe in. Determined to do things like breathing, smiling, and walking mindfully, and no longer to do things like judging, blaming, comparing, in order to weaken and transform these poisons, I breathe out" (104).

The workshop facilitators can suggest a similar phrasing of awareness and acceptance of the present, coupled with a set of specific actions that are goals for the future. These would of course be specific to doing dialogic education and developing further our abilities at teaching with love, humility, and faith. For instance, after realizing that I have a desire to overly control class discussion rather than letting issues unfold on their own, I might write something like, "Seeing the necessity for faith in my students and their own individual learning processes as well as the unique learning process of each group, I am determined to practice witnessing in the classroom so as to be more fully mindful during class discussion while also opening myself up to being surprised and changed by the content of classroom dialogue." The instructions following each exercise suggest they can be done with pencil so that we can work on being specific about the new actions we wish to see ourselves taking. Like with other exercises in the workshop, these goals and visualizations can also be shared in small groups. Thich

Nhat Hahn writes: "It is best if we can share this exercise with our families or the people with whom we live" (*Blooming of a Lotus* 105). Here, where the goals are regarding our professional practice as teachers, we can share our positive reinforcements with our colleagues.

If we accept Gee's argument that becoming aware of our own mostly unconscious Discourse is a "moral" matter and can "change the world" (222), then we must look for concrete ways to pursue this goal as communities of writing instructors. Freire argues that true learning and teaching only happen as a result of mutual dialogic pursuit of knowledge. If we are to practice what we teach, the investigation into doing better dialogic education must be a community matter that we pursue through mutual investigation and witnessing of one another's Discourse and experiences. This dialogue, like the dialogue in our classrooms, should have as its North Star the goal of ever greater humility, love, and faith. These practices, drawn from a dialogic tradition of learning in community (12 step) and from a Buddhist teacher who focuses on the spiritual aspects of teaching, provide a place to begin a community and departmental spiritual dialogue. It is my hope that this dialogue will open up a new academic Discourse that helps students and teachers gain fuller access to the spiritual aspect of social justice and learning.



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**ABSTRACT****TEACHING WITH SPIRIT: FREIRE, DIALOGUE, AND SPIRITUALITY IN THE  
COMPOSITION CLASSROOM**

by

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This ethnographic study examines the role of spirituality in the composition teaching process and in Paolo Freire's dialogic education specifically. Work to acquire some aspects of spiritual "Discourse," as the term is defined by James Gee, is needed in order to make this spiritual foundation visible and practicable. Through a series of ethnographic narratives of a classroom, this study demonstrates the necessity of spiritual work on the part of the teacher to develop the mind frame and skill set necessary for dialogic pedagogy. A series of workshop activities based on Freire's spiritual prerequisites for dialogic education are proposed.

**AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT**

Justin currently teaches composition in the City Colleges of Chicago. He really enjoys it and is grateful to be a teacher. He also does a lot of other things like acting, playwriting, singing, playing sports, and working to have good relationships with the people he cares about. He managed to *keep* doing a lot of these things while he wrote his dissertation. Now that his dissertation is done, however, he has a lot of other goals as a teacher and writer that he wants to work for and is very excited about what's next.