

PREPARING URBAN STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE-LEVEL WRITING: A NARRATIVE
INQUIRY AND SPATIAL ANALYSIS OF TWO HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHERS'
PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE

BY

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Submitted to the Department of Curriculum and Teaching in the School of Education
and the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Kansas In partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This qualitative study was a narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006) into the storied landscapes of high school teachers' experiences and knowledge as they prepared their urban high school students for college level writing. The study took place during the last three months of the school year in a Midwestern urban high school and followed two English teachers as they taught junior and senior level classes focused on preparing students for college-level writing. Methodology included researcher-participant collaborative writing of classroom stories based upon interviews, classroom observation, teacher journals and classroom artifacts. These narratives were organized as meganarratives and small stories (Olson & Craig, 2009), illustrated through the use of story constellations (Craig, 2007) and analyzed through the use of theories of spatiality (Lefebvre, 1991). Five meganarratives were found: the narrative of transformation, the narrative of poverty, the narrative of relationship building, the narrative of testing and the narrative of teacher autonomy. Within these meganarratives were charted and analyzed four small stories of teachers' daily classroom work. Through the small stories it became clear that in the teaching of writing, there were constraining or "frozen" meganarratives such as those stories of testing and poverty. Other meganarratives allowed for movement, authorship and appropriation, such as those of relationship building, transformation and teacher autonomy.

For Bob,
who now will sail.

Acknowledgments

Before all others I must thank the English teachers and principal at Monroe High School. These teachers and their students often brought me to tears and made my heart grow as I watched the work they did or listened to their earnest voices. I feel blessed and fortunate that Allison and Samantha entrusted me to share their important stories of possibility and professionalism. Their voices are unique, but in many ways they represent the stories of thousands of other teachers who not only educate but transform and care for the children many others have forgotten.

I would not have accomplished this work without the support of my committee. The many ways they have supported me will be long-lasting lessons as I work with my own students. Many thanks go to Dr. Frank Farmer, Dr. Amy Devitt, Dr. Barbara Bradley and Dr. Suzanne Rice. For years to come if I ever doubt myself, I know I will hear Dr. Heidi Hallman's voice in my head saying, "I think you can do it. Yep. I think you can." As my advisor and committee chair she said this many times to me when I felt uncertain, and every single time she was right.

I am thankful for my mom, Janet Keeney, who exemplifies successful teaching and mothering, and who taught me to stand strong. I am thankful for Richard Keeney who twenty years ago held my hand helping me start over again when things looked awfully dark. My sisters, Julia and Kim, listened to me rattle on asking just the right questions to help clear my thinking. I am blessed to have more friends than I deserve; each touched this project in their own ways, but my deepest gratitude goes especially to Jane Greer, Britton Gildersleeve, and Thomas Ferrel.

Finally, I share this work with Charlie, Simon, Georgie and Pete who loved me even when I was cranky and bleary-eyed and who lifted me with hugs and snuggles when I felt heavy. This work belongs to Bob, my beloved and my soul-mate and the very, very best teacher and story-teller I know.

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Chapter One:

Introduction

High school English teachers aspire to enormous endeavors; they work towards seemingly unachievable goals. In their classes these teachers work to prepare primarily heterogeneous groups of students to write in a variety of settings, for different purposes and with correct usage and deliberate structure. They work to increase students' vocabularies, oral communication skills, critical reading strategies and understanding of digital literacies. While doing all this, teachers are also asked to help students pass an assortment of standardized tests, prepare them for college and learn to love and appreciate reading and writing for its own sake. And they are to do this for upwards of 150 students each year. The job of a high school English teacher is complex, and it is easy to see how certain aspects of this job can vie for more attention, become overlooked or even squeezed out.

One central concern of a high school English curriculum is writing instruction. Recent reports created by the National Commission on Writing have portrayed the importance and complexities of writing instruction in American schools. This commission's reports over the last decade have explained that writing is essential for learning and urged educators and policy makers to make writing instruction central to school curriculum:

American education will never realize its potential as an engine of opportunity and economic growth until a writing revolution puts language and communication in their proper place in the classroom. Writing is how students connect the dots in their knowledge. Although many models of effective ways to teach writing exist, both the teaching and practice of writing are increasingly shortchanged throughout the school and

college years. Writing, always time-consuming for student and teacher, is today hard-pressed in the American classroom. Of the three 'Rs,' writing is clearly the most neglected. (National Commission on Writing, 2003, p.3)

The writing instruction currently promoted in our schools is academic writing instruction. This writing instruction currently emphasizes essayistic prose that is particular to what Elbow (1995) and others have defined as “writing for school” or writing as a narrowly defined “school-sponsored activity” (Emig, 1971) which often limits genres of school writing to non-fiction, argumentative texts: writing to explain rather than writing to render experience (Elbow, 1991) or assignments based upon skills rather than authentic literacy performances (Brannon, L., Courtney, J.P., Urbanski, C.P., Woodward, S.V., Reynolds, J.M., Iannone, A.E., . . . Kendrick, M., 2008). More recently we have begun to narrow our focus from writing for school to writing for college. The new National Common Core State Standards for K-12 English Language Arts and the College and Career Readiness Standards, published in 2009, must be adopted for states to receive federal education funding under Race to the Top¹. They include writing as a focus, but have identified this focus in a narrow way (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010). The K-12 standards and the College and Career Readiness Standards focus only on research, narrative and argumentative essay writing, and have entirely excluded forms of creative or imaginative writing. Perhaps somewhat in response to these Common Core State Standards, three major organizations, National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the National Writing Project (NWP) and the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) have collaborated to create the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*, a document that

¹ Race to the Top (RTTT) was announced by President Barack Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan in 2009 and was a 4.35 billion dollar education reform program. Under Race to the Top, states competed for education funding by creating applications showing educational reform plans which fit into a particular RTTT model. One stipulation of this model was that states adopt the National Common Core State Standards and implement these standards within all public schools.

describes, not standards, but “habits of mind” that will prepare students for college-level writing. These habits of mind described in the Framework are: curiosity, openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, responsibility, flexibility and metacognition. As explained in the Executive Summary to the Framework, “The concept of “college readiness” is increasingly important in discussions about students’ preparation for postsecondary education. This Framework describes the rhetorical and twenty-first-century skills as well as habits of mind and experiences that are critical for college success” (Framework, 2011, p.1). Due to this current thrust in public education policy, high school English teachers are being asked to prepare students for college level reading and writing. This may not be bad in itself, but the reality stands that with this focus on college readiness, other curricular concerns are being left out, and the sole purpose for high school is being redesigned as a place to prepare individuals only for academia or work.

Because of this, various programs are finding their way or further expanding into high school English classrooms. The most popular programs across the country are Advanced Placement (AP); International Baccalaureate (IB); dual credit or concurrent enrollment; and early college high schools. In the Advanced Placement program, students work through an advanced class with a specially trained teacher, and then take an exam at the end of the term. The test score can be accepted for credit by a college or university, allowing students to “test out” of introductory English classes. The training and oversight for these classes is done by a for-profit testing organization, The College Board. The College Board recently described the growth of their programming in U.S. schools:

- In 2009 American high schools offered an average of 10 AP courses mainly at the junior and senior class levels

- In 2004 19.9% high school graduates took an AP exam
- In 2009 26.5% high school graduates took an AP exam

A second example of the growth of college credit or college preparatory curriculum in high schools is the International Baccalaureate program. In this program, students receive a specialized diploma. Again, teachers are trained to oversee a particular and very traditional curriculum, and students often have to take additional summer school classes to complete the requirements. The English in this program is basically literary critique and students are evaluated by the program's specially trained teachers as well as outside evaluators. If "passing," students can test-out of a variety of introductory college classes. IB is sometimes described as a private school within a school.

Dual credit or concurrent enrollment classes are provided by local universities, allowing students to dually enroll in high school and college credit. The best of these programs work to create consistent curricular demands between high school and college settings, and because of the growth and variances of such dual credit and concurrent enrollment classes, National Accreditation of Concurrent Enrollment Programs (NACEP) was created in 1999 to develop standards and an accreditation body for such programs.

A final example and more recent development is the Early College School. In this program, students leave high school with 12-24 college credits and many experiences that allow an easier transition to higher education. High schools partner with institutes of higher education to provide credit and college campus experiences. This movement has been focused upon making college accessible for low-income first-generation college-bound students. Organized through the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, and based upon a model out of Princeton, since 2002,

200 schools in 24 states have been started (The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, 2007).

As these programs expand more high schools see it as their duty and focus to prepare their students for college. At the same time, because of cuts in education funding, fewer teachers are being hired, and high school class sizes are increasing rapidly. The stakes for standardized testing are increasing, and students are coming to school with more variances in backgrounds and language skills than ever before.

Farris (2006) describes the intricacies of college level writing classes as they are taught in high schools, and describes many factors that affect the teaching and curriculum when the same course is taught in different contexts. She explains, “the positions secondary English teachers occupy in their institutions, the sources of their authority with students and colleagues, and their attitudes toward the university intersect with old and new knowledge about the teaching of writing . . . it is not the same course as it is delivered into different sites” (Farris, 2006, p 107). This is true; however, Farris fails to address those issues which are somewhat unique to a high school teacher’s focus: the attention to students’ background, individual needs and culture and the importance of the school context and community expectations. Knowledge of these issues come from a teacher’s experiences within a particular school and these experiences often affect the ways a teacher sees herself providing a bridge from high school to college writing.

If we think of college preparatory writing as a curricular bridge from one context to another, the high school English teacher is the architect of that bridge, and the construction of it depends upon the experiences she has with both banks. The bank of her high school context is the most familiar and so often these experiences and stories she tells herself of students and high school are where she lays her plans. The far bank, where she and her students are headed, is

understood from afar and often comes from stories and experiences that are also spatially distant. Perhaps these are stories from her own college writing classes, or perhaps these are stories of successes or failures of past students. That bridge, however, is usually firmly rooted in the familiar and closer bank as a teacher reaches with her students towards what she envisions as college level writing on the far bank.

The construction of the college preparatory writing curriculum within one context and the work to bridge contexts comes initially from the experiences (Dewey, 1938) and the stories of these experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006; Polkinghorne, 1988) that are lived out by classroom teachers. The purpose of this study is to capture the layers of stories and their influence within two urban high school English teachers' college preparatory writing curriculum.

The unique contexts of high school classrooms affect the ways English teachers construct their writing curriculum. High school English teachers have intense class loads compared with many college composition instructors. They are constantly reminded of many high stakes tests for which their students must be prepared. Finally, there are community, administrative and departmental expectations placed upon them which affect their autonomy and decision making. While current K-12 reforms tend to focus upon standardization of the curriculum, there is much less standardization in writing instruction at the college level, and so English teachers who are preparing their students for college-level writing must carefully learn to inhabit very different curricular spaces and prepare their students to do the same.

Farris (2006) contends that twenty-five years ago innovations in K-12 and college-level writing instruction were more in sync because of the agreed upon focus on the process-writing movement. Today, there is less agreement especially regarding the definitions and place of academic writing. In the attempt to better define college writing (Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006;

Sullivan, Tinberg & Blau, 2010; Thompson, 2002; Yancey, 2006) there are often arguments based solely upon assumptions of disconnection between college and high school writing instruction. At the high school level, teachers define college-level writing through multiple sources: their own college experiences, their textbooks, and college entrance or equivalency exams to name but a few.

Recently several scholars have focused directly on college-level writing as it takes place in the high school English classroom (Alsup & Bernard-Donals, 2002; Daddone, 2008; Farris, 2006; Hansen & Farris, 2010; Joliffe & Phelan, 2006; Simmons, 2005; Stratchen, 2002; Thompson, 2002). Most of these discussions have been theoretical however, positioning college composition as a bridge rather than a gate-keeper (Yancey, 2004) or theorizing how specific programs such as Advanced Placement should be situated in the high schools as transitional rather than exemption courses (Joliffe & Phelan, 2006). Farris (2006) focuses her work on dual-credit enrollment and describes institutional and economic issues for both high schools and colleges. Most of the current discussion surrounding college writing in the high schools is through exploratory, theoretical and critical discussions of the curricular and institutional issues.

Research Questions

There are no in-depth empirical studies that focus on individual high school teachers' construction of college preparatory writing curriculum. Because Advanced Placement and other college preparatory programs are more prominent in affluent or suburban schools, also absent from the discussion are issues of urban students, poverty, and race. While these issues cannot be fully covered within one study, I am interested in positioning myself within the silent spaces of this discussion. I hope to move beyond the mainly theoretical discussion of college level writing in high schools by capturing the stories of English teachers as they make choices (both macro

and micro) in their writing curriculum. I also chose to work with teachers from an urban school, serving a diverse student population who also lived in poverty. The research questions that guided my study are:

1. How do English teachers in urban high school envision and story their experiences teaching college preparatory writing?
2. How do teachers create and define curricular spaces by their personal stories and experiences teaching college preparatory writing in an urban high school? In what ways do the storied landscapes of high school English teachers affect their day-to-day teaching of college preparatory writing?

Overview of Theory and Method

This qualitative study is situated within the theoretical and methodological stances of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006), and draws from Polkinghorne's (1988) theories of story-driven ways of knowing which are undergirded by Deweyen (1938) concepts.

Polkinghorne built upon Dewey's experiential learning through his theory that psychological understandings of experience are created through plot-driven constructs. Further, Polkinghorne described two types of narrative research for the social sciences: Descriptive and explanatory. Descriptive narrative research aims to create "an accurate description of interpretive narrative accounts" (p 161) of participants. Explanatory narrative research takes this a step further and examines connections and causality among events within a narrative account.

Based on Polkinghorne's theory, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) identified how the theory of storied experience is connected to teachers' professional identities and knowledge, and they created a methodology for this particular form of qualitative research. Therefore, within the theories of Polkinghorne and methodologies of Clandinin and Connelly, it is through teachers'

stories of their lived experiences that they are able to make decisions, both macro and micro, in their teaching. The collected stories of teachers in this study are used to portray the experiences, knowledge and day-to-day decision-making. They are also used to portray a more macro depiction of teacher identity and teachers' understanding of instructional context.

We create narratives to make sense of our experience and what we assume to be the experience of others. Stories are especially important to teachers because they portray professional knowledge through narrative structures. Layers of stories overlap, conflict, and “bump up against each other.” A teacher's stories about college writing may come into conflict with the stories of others or the larger stories such as policy or culture that she is working under. We must consider not only the grand narratives of policy, school history and culture, but also the larger stories of a teacher's own college experiences, what she hears from her students who contact her from college, what she sees in college textbooks, what she hears from other teachers, what particular programs expect her to do (AP, dual credit), what she thinks her particular students need. Additionally we must equally attend to the smaller stories of day-to-day teaching and what a teacher learns from her in-progress experiences; these multiple stories all fit together to construct a teacher's professional knowledge and instructional practice of college level writing.

This study inquires into the stories of two urban English teachers, Allison Manning and Samantha Wisemann, who teach college preparatory and college level (AP) writing to junior and senior level high school students at Monroe High School. The data was collected during the last eleven weeks of the 2010-2011 school year and included classroom observations, interviews, teacher reflective journals, and the collection of classroom artifacts. Longer preliminary interviews were conducted with each teacher-participant at the beginning of the study. These

preliminary interviews were used along with interviews of the other English teachers at the school, the school principal and the district level high school English Coordinator to construct an overarching narrative of the context of Monroe High School. Then over the course of the study, shorter interviews, classroom observations, teacher journals and classroom artifacts were used to portray the smaller stories of day-to-day teaching of college writing in each teacher's classroom. Final reflective interviews were conducted the week after school was dismissed for summer vacation. In these final interviews, Allison and Samantha reflected upon their teaching, and narrate their understandings of their teaching during the last three months of the school year.

Definitions and Notes on Terminology

The following terms require some explanation regarding how they are used within the present study. My use of these terms is based in the scholarship I will also plant my research within. This should be further clarified through my literature review. However, I feel it is important before moving forward to briefly explain my use of the following ideas and corresponding vocabulary:

Story/narrative: These terms will be used interchangeably as will the terms and phrases: to narrate/to story, narration/storying. Based on the theories of Clandinin and Connelly (2007), a story or narrative “is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Viewed this way, narrative is the phenomenon studied in inquiry. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience” (p. 477). Therefore, this study will be collecting the storied experiences of classroom teachers, and these stories or narrations are considered to be the realities through which individuals live and see the world. The use of the word “story” involves a sort of double meaning as well, and this is intentional

especially as consideration of stories and storying in this study becomes layered and deep. As an architectural structure is one structure with many independent layers, many stories, an individual's narrative knowing can be portrayed spatially as well as within storied layers and levels of stories.

College level writing: This phrase is used to describe the curricular goal of writing in the context of a college setting. It is understood that writing varies at different universities and colleges, and in different subject areas within post-secondary institutions. I acknowledge that this is a vague term, yet it is also a stated goal for many high school English teachers, that they prepare their students for writing beyond high school. For this study, college level writing is used for categorizing and observing the various ways this is defined and lived out in actual teachers' minds and classroom settings. I do not propose an uncomplicated or overarching definition of what college level writing should be or is, rather when I refer to college level writing this is an umbrella term used to mean college-level writing on a college campus for which teachers are preparing their students and it also could mean the college-level writing students are participating in while still in high school and enrolled in an Advanced Placement (AP) course.

Curriculum: This is used to describe both the district and state instructional goals, and the day-to-day lesson plans and unit goals of classroom teachers. Curriculum also will be used in terms of "hidden curriculum" describing how certain unspoken institutional goals become a part of what is taught in classrooms. This hidden curriculum is beyond (yet still affects) the more overtly stated curricular goals and objectives.

Space: This word is used in two ways. First, there is importance associated in the concrete geographical space of school: where a school is located in a city or community, where students and teachers are physically located in a classroom. Second, I will use the term 'space' in

a more metaphoric sense as I inquire into the spatiality of teachers' stories. According to Lefebvre (1991), stories create and recreate the spaces one lives through and within, and spaces create and recreate stories one also lives through and within. These stories and spaces are mutually dependent and yet independently configured in relation to one another. It is within and through these metaphorical spaces that we see the impact of teachers' "stories to live by" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006) and how these stories impact the day-to-day work in the metaphorical and geographical spaces of schools.

Organization of the Dissertation

Following this introduction, chapter two provides a review of the literature that situates this study within two areas of scholarship. First, I review writing pedagogy and theory as it has been historically framed in high school and college settings. Second, I review literature describing the teacher as professional, curriculum-creator and knowledge-creator, and how this understanding of teaching can be portrayed most effectively and thoroughly through the use of narrative inquiry.

Chapter three explains the methodology, including a thorough explanation of narrative inquiry as both a philosophical stance and a methodological structure and its position within the realm of qualitative research. I also describe how I gathered and analyzed data. Finally, I present the teachers and administrators, the major and minor participants of the study, and I describe the context of the study at Monroe High School.

In chapters four, five and six, I present findings and the ways stories were layered and lived by the two central participants, Samantha and Allison. Chapter four is focused upon the meganarratives of the English department of Monroe High School. The term "meganarratives" comes from Lyotard's (1984) theory of narrative knowing and was coined by Olson and Craig

and in their 2009 narrative study on teacher accountability. These meganarratives are larger, shared narratives which frame and story the way English department teachers work and live in the school. The five meganarratives are: the narrative of transformation, the narrative of poverty, the narrative of teacher autonomy, the narrative of standardized testing, and the narrative of relationship building. Chapters five and six integrate the “second wave of narrative analysis” (Georgakopoulou, 2006) by examining the smaller day-to-day stories of two English teachers at Monroe High School, Samantha and Allison. Samantha’s small stories show us the ways that she provides individual instruction and motivating experiences to her students in order to prepare them for college writing. Allison’s small stories show how her identity as a teacher is somewhat in flux as she negotiates the competing goals of preparing students for standardized testing while providing them with what she describes as “authentic literacy experiences.”

Chapter seven aims to connect the meganarratives with the smaller stories through the interpretive lens of Lefebvre’s (1991) theories of spatiality. This chapter also considers implications of this study and how this study could be extended into future research projects.

Chapter Two:

The Teaching of Writing and Teacher Knowledge

The scholarship most pertaining to this dissertation study follows two strands. The first is the historical and theoretical inheritance of the teaching of writing in high schools and colleges. This strand examines where the commonalities and contradictions have occurred between and among high school and college writing classrooms. Most important in this strand is the impact of the writing process movement and the ways high school and college contexts have created differing interpretations and implementation of process theory. The second strand, which is somewhat connected to the writing process movement, is the examination of teacher knowledge and teacher as knowledge creator and curricular assessor. The writing process movement was generated by practicing writers and classroom teachers who began to look more closely at their own teaching and writing. These individuals also conducted research within their classrooms. Therefore the positioning of teacher within a writing process-based classroom became one of teacher-as-writer and teacher-as-researcher and teacher-as-reflective-practitioner. This is a very different sort of position from the traditional teacher role as knowledge-purveyor or one who assigns and grades student writing without inquiring upon or participating in the processes of text creation.

Part One: The Teaching of Writing in High School and College

Historical perspectives in teaching writing.

Until the 20th century, the high school English curriculum was based solely on major literary works and since most students did not attend high school unless they were planning to attend college, the curricular content primarily focused around the works of literature defined as necessary for college entrance (Squire, 2003). In 1911 the National Council of Teachers English

(NCTE) was organized to protect high school English teachers from the adherence to college requirements and to encourage freedom to create content based upon the needs and interests of high school students. This tension, however, has never totally dissipated; most high school English teachers are aware of the current academic needs of their students versus the goal of preparation for college entrance and achievement.

Due in part to the progressive movement in education, secondary English began to move from being content-focused to becoming more functionally-based. As Harris (1997) described, there was a “shift from a view of English as something you *learn about*, to a sense of it as something you *do*” (p. 1). While many English classrooms answer to particular content objectives such as grammar, the literary canon and the modes composition, these are usually taught within one class and under the philosophy that the content pieces function together in the realm of “communication arts” for the broader purposes of better communicating and critiquing one’s linguistic world.

It seems that we have recently cycled back to focusing on content, as the teaching of writing in high schools at least has become very dependent upon the idea of “college readiness” college equivalency, and advanced placement. Though there are certainly important social justice and political issues connected with preparing more (and perhaps historically marginalized) high school students for college level writing, this may also be narrowing the curriculum of traditional high school writing and changing the way writing is taught and even conceptualized in the high school classroom. To understand where we now stand, we must consider the past movements in writing instruction at both the high school and college level, and we must consider where these have aligned, where they have differed and why.

The writing process movement.

The writing process movement was revolutionary in the way it portrayed not only the writing classroom, but also the role of teacher and the relationships between teacher and student and theory and practice. Maxine Hairston announced a paradigm shift in her famous 1982 article, *The Winds of Change: Thomas Kuhn and the Revolution in the Teaching of Writing*. She declared,

we are beginning to find out something about how people's minds work as they write, to chart the rhythm of their writing, to find out what constraints they are aware of as they write, and to see what physical behaviors are involved in writing and how they vary among different groups of writers . . . We are seeing only a tiny part of the whole process, but from it we can infer much about what is going on beneath the surface. (p.12)

Hairston went on to identify the twelve principle features of this emerging paradigm shift, most of which have become accepted pedagogical features in writing textbooks and classroom practice. These principles portrayed writing as a recursive activity of both rational and intuitive thinking that occurs over a sustained period of time, with teachers occasionally intervening to guide and assist. It also described writing as a way to both generate meaning and clarify thinking, and a craft that should be evaluated holistically and practiced in a variety of modes. Finally, Hairston expressed the rhetorical basis for all writing and the necessity of writing teachers to be writers themselves (Hairston, 1982). Scholars such as Faigley (1986) and Berlin (1988) went on to identify three conceptions of writing process theory: The expressivist view, the cognitive view and the social-epistemic view. While the expressivist view has been the most influential in K-12 writing instruction, the cognitive and social-epistemic views have been more influential at the

university level and allowed theories established through the writing process to adapt into other theoretical stances.

Today, almost 30 years after Hairston's article was published, we can see that some of these principles became translated in subtly different ways than they were first presented. As with any theory, or any educational reform, the ways these ideas play out in classrooms often look somewhat different from the original explanations published in academic journals and books. Through years of critique, reevaluation and contextual changes, we have seen an evolution of how writing process is taught (Applebee & Langer, 2009; Nystrand, 2003; Yancey, 2004). Though our classrooms still have strong ties to the process movement, discussions like those between David Bartholomae and Peter Elbow (1995) regarding expressivism and academic writing have affected our pedagogies by calling process theories into question. Arguments like those made by Maxine Hairston attempted to keep the process writing movement "pure" and to fight the cultural studies movement which, according to Hairston, envisioned "writing courses as vehicles for social reform rather than as student-centered workshops designed to build students' confidence and competence as writers" (Hairston, 1992, p.179). Besides these theoretical critiques, changing contexts within our secondary classrooms based upon the standards movement and high-stakes testing have forced teachers to adapt the writing process into a more distilled version of early scholars' work (Applebee & Langer, 2009; Squire, 2003). Finally Kathleen Blake Yancey points out that rather than "a wind of change," we are now "in the midst of a tectonic change" (Yancey, 2004, p. 298) because of new technological contexts of writing and literacy.

The original writing process movement and principles can be traced back to influential scholars such as James Moffett, Janet Emig, Mina Shaughnessy, Peter Elbow and others. I will

describe and trace these scholars individually and in more depth later. Although they had much in common, these process writing theorists had slightly different perspectives and created slightly different classroom responses. However differently these ideas may have been adapted, it is still true that this movement created a paradigm shift in the teaching of writing. Current language arts textbooks and state and district standards include the pedagogical stance and terminology of writing as a process. A recent study by Applebee and Langer (2009) on the current state of the teaching of writing found that the writing process is now the prominent pedagogy in both middle and high schools. They state, “by 1992, process oriented instruction had become the conventional wisdom” (p. 24). The data showed in 1992, 71% of students in 8th grade reported process writing as a central form of instruction and 26% described it as being a supplemental form. When this survey was repeated in 1998, the results were basically the same. Hairston was correct then, that we were undergoing a paradigm shift in the 1980’s. With Applebee and Langer’s findings, of writing process being either a central or supplemental form of writing instruction in 97% of classrooms during the 1990’s, it is safe to say the paradigm shift is now complete.

Though contextual issues have forced the writing process to look somewhat different from the way it was envisioned in the 1960’s and 1970’s, other aspects of this movement have become further deepened and expanded. When early writing process theorists began looking to their own classrooms to understand the teaching of writing, they provided for the first time a model of teacher as meaning-maker and curriculum developer that was based upon the specificity of one’s own students and classroom. When writing process theorists implored teachers to write with their students and share their process as a model for student writers, they may not have realized the power of that proposition. The teachers, who learned about the writing

process from actively engaging with it, also began to find their own voices on the page and commenced to share their classroom knowledge with a wider audience. While the writing process certainly transformed the way secondary teachers envision writing instruction, an equally important legacy of this movement is the way it complicated the roles of teacher, researcher and student, and blurred the lines between research, theory and practice.

Before the writing process movement of the 1960's and 1970's, writing was *assigned and evaluated*, not *taught*. Focus was upon the final product and the correctness of the text. There was little regard or understanding of what the experience of writing was like and how that experience could be more effective, fulfilling and intrinsically motivating. With the writing process movement's new understandings about what writers do when they write, there came many calls for reform which put students at the center of instruction. In secondary classrooms in particular, Donald Graves (1983), Nancy Atwell (1987) and Lucy McCormick Calkins (1983, 1986) described a particular image of a writing classroom most often referred to as "writers workshop" where teachers were encouraged to:

- Write with their students and make their writing processes visible models for students
- Allow students to select their own topics and genres
- Explicitly teach invention strategies
- Provide teacher and peer response to student writers during the writing process
- Teach grammar and mechanics in ways that were integrated into students' own writing (rather than from worksheet and drills).
- Provide large chunks of class time, perhaps entire class periods, for students to invent, write, revise, edit
- Provide publishing opportunities for students

- Assess holistically, not only based upon correctness or adherence to identified writing standards. This was often recommended through portfolio assessment.

Graves, Atwell, and Calkins drew their descriptions of writer's workshop from the movement forming in the universities with researchers who first studied and documented the ways people wrote, not just what they wrote. Researchers like Shaughnessy (1977), Emig² (1971), Perl (1979) and Sommers (1980) studied what writers do when they write – what are the thought processes, the acts, the assumptions and the constraints of student writers, and what can teachers do to create conditions where writers can develop more efficiently, effectively and fully? Theorists like Elbow (1973, 1981), Macrorie (1984), Murray (1978, 1982), and Moffett (1968) added their own ideas to the movement, and many secondary teachers readily incorporated them into their classrooms.

Though today's classrooms do not hold exact replicas of the writers' workshop and expressivist pedagogies that were put forward in the early writing process movement, many writing process ideas have been adapted to better suit the contexts of middle school, high school and university classrooms. For example, most English teachers today understand that ideas do not come from thin air, and a bit of invention or prewriting strategies will help students select and develop their own topics. Most writing teachers expect that students will write more than one draft of a paper. Some may include response groups, teacher conferences, portfolio assessment, and/or lessons on revision strategies to incorporate this idea further in their classroom. Most writing teachers today understand that students need models for writing. Most writing teachers do not assess writing based only upon correctness and standard form. These writing process

² Though Emig focuses her study on high school students and not post-secondary composition students, I have situated her with this group of composition researchers because her work is often cited within the literature on composition studies. It hasn't been as readily embraced or studied by secondary classroom teachers, and therefore I believe it fits best with Perl, Shaughnessy and Sommers' work.

ideas have become so much a part of our teaching, it is difficult to believe that at one time they were considered revolutionary. However, critiques of the writing process movement have influenced shifts in the attitudes towards these ideas.

Tobin (1994) describes in political terms the critiques of writing process movement that came from both sides of the educational spectrum. Conservatives believed that the writing process movement was too lax and harmed students by not teaching important skill sets. More leftist teachers felt the writing process was too expressivist and personal, lacking the necessary depth of rhetorical and cultural critique.

Key players in the writing process movement radically changed writing instruction in secondary classrooms, and today the ideas of writing as a process seems almost commonplace. It is difficult for some teachers to imagine that process theory was ever considered “radical.” Just as important as the pedagogical changes, the writing process movement brought about other changes in the structures surrounding research, theory and teacher leadership.

Teaching writing in secondary schools.

As the writing process movement made its way into secondary school classrooms, instead of critiques, some misinterpretations occurred. Teachers, who had not studied the process in full, began taking bits and pieces of the theories and practices described, and implemented them haphazardly with their students. For example, teachers heard that students should choose their own topics and be able to freewrite to “think on paper.” So they did this, and a lot of it, often at the expense of teaching revision, organization and editing strategies. Some teachers (both secondary and post-secondary) misinterpreted writing as a process as “*the* writing process” which entailed a very structured, linear step-by-step process that was taught to students as a non-negotiable procedure to create any piece of writing (Tobin, 2001)

Another misunderstanding resulted in the lack of grammar and mechanics instruction. Teachers heard part of the message – that they should not use worksheets or their trusted Warriner’s handbook drills to teach grammar and mechanics – so they did not teach them at all. In reaction to this wide-spread misinterpretation, Constance Weaver became a prominent advocate for secondary English teachers because she provided usable guides and direction on how to teach grammar in the context of writing (Weaver, 1998, 1997, 1996). Still today, on her Western Michigan University web page, Dr. Weaver lists one of her current classes as “ENG 574 Grammar for Teachers” then has written in smaller type below, “[more accurately, Grammar in Teaching Writing]” (Weaver, Western Michigan University homepage for Constance Weaver). It seems this is still an issue within our teacher preparation and in-service programming. It is challenging to incorporate rules and correctness within student-centered writing instruction in a way that the standards are both contextualized and useful. The mini-lessons of Atwell unfortunately were often readily ignored as teachers embraced instead only her ideas of student freedom and expression.

Another issue at hand is the increasing class sizes that are occurring because schools are hiring fewer teachers to save money during the current difficult economic times. Though the classic idea of writers’ workshop makes sense to many secondary teachers, it feels unmanageable and organizationally burdensome because of the individualized attention it demands. When classroom teachers see 150-200 students a day, it just doesn’t seem possible for them to run their classes in this way. While other writing programs exist in schools, and many private schools still have classes described as or even named “writers’ workshop,” very few public secondary classrooms use writers’ workshop as Atwell described. This is likely due to the contexts of

increasing class-size as well as standardized testing which has further limited teachers' professional knowledge.

Teaching writing in college.

At the post-secondary level, the writing process movement has adapted following various critiques. Several critics pointed out the over-expressivistic slant of writing process scholars (Bartholomae, 1995; Berlin, 1988; Spellmeyer, 1993). Others criticized the movement's lack of context or content and suggested new content models based upon a cultural constructivist model (Berlin, 1988; Bizzell, 1994). Most composition departments and instructors today still practice many of the teaching ideas that came out of the process writing movement. For example, they expect students to write more than one draft of a paper, incorporate response groups and/or teacher-student conferences. Many also allow their students some choice in writing topics, use portfolio assessment and use brainstorming and prewriting activities in class.

Yet as the critics of the process movement at the post-secondary level began to describe it as both content-less and context-less, the freedom for students to choose their own topics and forms felt too loose and incorporated no substantial curricular materials with which students could connect their writing. The movement also did not acknowledge the socialized, racialized and gendered contexts of students as they wrote. From these critiques, the universities moved through what is now called "the social turn" in composition, and incorporated a cultural studies or social constructivist mode of writing instruction, within which, instructors presented students with texts (content) that both modeled forms of academic writing, while complicating and questioning social and cultural norms. Students were expected to interact with, and in fact "write themselves" into the culture. As Spellmeyer (1993) described, many scholars looked to a pedagogy "that recognizes individuals as real players in the social game, conscious agents who

are never altogether powerless, unaware, or passive in their relations with others: never just creations, always reflective creators of both their own identities and the social worlds they inhabit” (p. 32).

The social turn in composition studies elicited conflicting views: One portraying the process writing as being content-less and context-less, while others portraying the cultural studies model as putting “dogma before diversity” (Hairston, 1992, p. 180). Tobin (2001) reminds us however, that critical binaries following the process movement portray both sides as “guilty of exaggeration” (p. 14) and, “dividing the history of our field into preprocess, process and post-process is as reductive and misleading as dividing the composing process into prewriting, writing and revising” (p. 15). Reductive, it certainly is, but it seems that at the college level, while many attributes of the writing process movement are still solidly in place, more theoretical questions and critiques have extended from post-process theory (Kent, 1999).

Post-process theory critiqued the ideas of process writing theories by dismissing the assumption that there could be one all-encompassing process that applied to every act of writing. Post-process identified the importance of individual context and communicative goals of composing, and argued that these would determine any processes that a writer might participate in. Therefore, teaching “a process” would be inherently incomplete since it could not relate to every possible context or every communication goal in which a writer could participate. Lynn Bloom (2003) described three beliefs of post-process theory; that all writing is: public, interpretive and situated. While process theory forwarded ideas of discovery and the importance of the writer’s internal expression or control, the post-process movement looked outside the idealized individual writer and acknowledged issues of gender, class, and other

socialized/socializing discourse communities, showing the influence of these on how and what a writer composed.

Changes currently occurring are stemming partly from this post-process understanding as scholars work to understand how the very definition of writing changes depending upon context, medium and purpose (Yancey, 2004). While cultural studies is slowly losing its place as the most innovative and necessary pedagogical stance, it is being replaced by a new interest in new media and digital literacies. These new pedagogies borrow from and extend what was learned during the social turn, but also identify new questions and concerns as well. The new media and digital literacies focus of post-secondary composition is in response to the contexts of our students and current writing and reading situations. As we embrace this new content field, we are not merely assigning students to write within these new fields of discourse. We cannot just see these new literacies as technicalities. As Yancey (2004) advised,

If we continue to just partition it off as just something technical, or outside the parameters governing composing, or limit it to the screen of the course management system, or think of it in terms of the bells and whistles and templates of the PowerPoint screen, students in our classes learn only to fill up those templates and fill in those electronic boxes – which, in their ability to invite intellectual work, are the moral equivalent of the dots on the multiple choice test. Students will not compose and create, making use of all the means of persuasion and all the possible resources thereto: rather, they will complete someone else's software package; they will be the invention of that package. (p. 320)

We are once again studying how students write within these fields. Here is the most interesting piece of this new pedagogy, in many cases our students are the experts over this discourse. As we move deeper into these new ways of seeing writing, teaching, and the production of texts, it is

well advised that we turn back to the lessons of the process writing movement, and once more write with our students, and study the processes of our students and ourselves. Here is the true legacy of the writing process movement, that the relationship with our students and our position in our classrooms will continue to be that of researcher and writer, not only teacher, assigner and grader.

The writing process movement was transformative in the way it described writing as something to be taught, not merely assigned and critiqued. It gave power over to the student and envisioned students at all levels as writers, not writers-in-training. Further, it acknowledged that thinking occurs differently when one writes, that the act of writing both clarifies and constructs meaning. The power of this movement is described by Lad Tobin as “conversion narrative” for many teachers who began teaching this way in the 1960’s and 70’s, that after he and other teachers tried teaching this way, “The energy and balance in the classroom, as well as my role as a teacher, were clearly changed, and I felt there was no going back” (Tobin, 2001, p. 6). Likely for many of us, there is no going back as the paradigm has truly shifted.

Even with the powerful influences of standardized testing and writing in new media, we are learning to adapt the values and lessons of the writing process movement into these current contexts. That is what we do now. Because of researchers like Emig and Shaughnessy, teachers have models for studying students’ literacy practices. Because of theorists like Atwell and Graves, we know teachers must participate in their classrooms in more active ways. We know teachers must “take responsibility for their knowledge and teaching” by writing with their students and studying the instructional moves made in both texts and classrooms. This, in some ways is the most important inheritance of the writing process movement, that not only should

teachers allow their students a voice in their writing, but teachers should give voice to our practice and the knowledge we can create within our classroom work.

The standards movement, college preparation and writing instruction.

Current scholarship addresses the need to attend to diverse literacies in our high school classrooms, and at the same time there are political and societal pressures to focus writing curriculum upon college preparation and academic text-production. Most high school English teachers acknowledge the narrowing of curriculum towards the goal of college preparation, and often see this as a way to help their students (especially those in poverty) move out of marginalized positions. Preparation for college writing can allow for an easier transition into and more powerful position within academia and in turn the larger culture of work and citizenship. This is a place of tension for many urban teachers, however. How does one value and provide space for diverse literacies while still preparing students for traditional literacy skills of college academic writing? Kirkland (2008, 2010) suggests a New English Education that provides a “curricular third space.” Others suggest an expansion or re-envisioning of the definition of academic or college level-writing to incorporate “habits of mind” (Framework, 2011) or more expressivist forms of writing (Eva-Wood, 2008; Gemmell, 2008; Jocson, 2006; Kinloch, 2010). At the same time, states are being pressured to adopt, or have already adopted the new National Common Core State Standards for College and Career Readiness which narrow the purposes of writing to three academic modes: narrative, argumentation and expository essays. This all creates a shaky ground for high school teachers who are receiving different messages and pressures from different sources, making their curricular decisions even more complicated and politically-charged.

The trend to focus high school English instruction upon college preparation comes from both social and policy pressures. There has been an explosion of new scholarship focused upon the teaching of college composition in the high schools (Alsup & Bernard-Donals, 2002; Budden, Nicolini, Fox, & Greene, 2002; Farris, 2006; Simmons, 2005; Sullivan & Tinberg, 2006; Sullivan, Tinberg, & Blau, 2010; Thompson, 2002). This work has developed from an awareness that high school students are often taking college composition while still in high school through Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate or dual-credit/concurrent enrollment classes. These are different avenues through which students can earn college composition credit in high school, and we are just beginning to understand the differences and implications of each program. The one thing that is clear in the scholarship is that no one agrees upon a single definition of college writing, and the way college writing is taught in the high schools looks different among settings and programs. It also often looks different from what occurs on a college campus. While some automatically assume the solution is to standardize and create uniform definitions, assignments and assessments for these programs, others see them as places for collaboration and conversation. With more and more students “testing out” of college composition, it is clear that this trend is not going away especially as our new National Common Core Standards are reflecting this view of writing curriculum as inherently college preparatory.

The National Common Core Standards were adopted by the United States Department of Education as a component for states’ application for Race to the Top educational funding. At the time of this writing, 42 states had adopted these standards, and were in the process of making them a part of state public education policies. These Standards were designed, not by developmental knowledge of children and adolescent literacy growth, but by identifying “College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards,” and then creating year-by-year K-12 grade-

level standards that progress toward achieving the final anchor standards. In other words, the kindergarten standards are based upon beginning steps in a progression towards college and career readiness, not necessarily on what a kindergartener developmentally should be doing or can do. A striking example of this is the following writing standard for Kindergarten which is aligned with the college readiness standard for research writing, where a student should: “Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore a number of books by a favorite author and express opinions about them)” (Common Core Standards Initiative, 2010, p.19).

Therefore, following these National Standards, the entire K-12 curriculum will be designed to train students for college or career. This is a different view of schooling than what we’ve seen in the past, where curriculum was designed to educate a student in more holistic and multi-faceted ways. Translated into writing instruction, the curriculum will focus only on genres and modes that will also prepare students for college and career, and according to the standards, this includes only three main “text types or purposes” of writing which are described as follows:

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences. (Council of Chief State School Officers and National Governors Association, 2010, p. 18)

Basically, under these standards, students write argumentation, exposition and narratives. While writing in these three modes, the standards also specify a particular focus on research writing as well:

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question . . . Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation . . . Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research (Common Core Standards Initiative, 2010, p. 41).

These, according to the standards are what will prepare them for college and the workforce, and beyond that, there are no other meaningful purposes for writing. While the standards do not prevent teachers from teaching other genres or purposes, we already know from experiences with policies like NCLB that it is highly likely that teachers will teach only to those standards. As these standards have just recently been adopted, they are not yet fully implemented by states or schools. That will take several years of teacher training, test development and perhaps even textbook and resource re-design. In the meantime, states are beginning to hold workshops on these standards for teachers and administrators, and certainly this will impact our schools over the next few years as our writing curriculum becomes even further narrowed for what is being touted as preparation for college writing. As more control over curriculum is situated outside of schools, teachers will have fewer opportunities to depend upon their own professional judgment and construct curriculum based upon their own contexts. It is important that we find ways where teachers can gain control over their writing curriculum allowing the construction and adaptation

of their instruction based upon particular students' needs. Otherwise the curriculum will continue to be taken out of teachers' hands dominated by those who do not work in schools or classrooms.

When considering these curricular constraints within the framework of spatiality, we must consider Lefebvre's distinction between dominated and appropriated space, which will be used later in this dissertation as an analytical lens. For teachers to appropriate the dominated space of standards and standardization, we must allow them the professional authority to modify their space to serve the needs and possibilities of their students. Authentic and experiential learning through habits of mind may be a place to begin. So too must it begin with teachers as knowledge creators.

Part Two: Teachers as Knowledge Creators, Curricular Designers and Assessors

Following the lessons of teacher-researchers who ushered in the writing process movement by studying their own teaching (Emig, 1971; Perl, 1980; Shaughnessy, 1977; Sommers, 1980) this dissertation study is situated within the belief that teachers are the most knowledgeable assessors and designers of their curricula, and in order to better understand curricular design, we should study the choices and the experiences of teachers. These choices and experiences create a professional knowledge and identity that is difficult to articulate or measure, but it is valid and it is essential that educational researchers find ways to capture these professional ways of knowing.

Darling-Hammond (1990) identifies two systems of teaching. One is what she describes as the "bureaucratic approach to teaching" (p.25) through which students are seen as "standardized," meaning "they will respond in identical and predictable ways" to prescribed curricular "treatments" created by those outside the classroom (p. 27). This is reminiscent of Jackson's (1986) description of the "mimetic tradition" of education, which transmits facts and

procedures from teacher to student, or what Freire (1970) described as the *banking concept of education*. This bureaucratic system or mimetic teaching is “secondhand knowledge . . . ‘presented’ to a learner, rather than ‘discovered’ by him or her” (Jackson, 1986, p. 117). Within this system, the teacher is merely a channel for knowledge to pass through. Knowledge is transmitted from policy outside the school to the student, and the teacher merely conveys that knowledge without actively participating or assessing its worth or appropriateness.

Darling-Hammond advocates strongly for a different positioning of teacher: that of teacher professionalism, which she describes as “client-centered” and “knowledge-based” (p. 25). This position relies upon the teacher as knowledge-creator and co-constructor of curriculum based upon judgment of context and individual students’ needs. This is a more interactive, and student-centered position than a mimetic, bureaucratic form of instruction. It positions teachers in a different way in the classroom, by demanding higher levels of participation and inquiry.

The tradition of seeing teachers as knowledge creators and curricular designers began during the progressive movement and was especially clear through the creation of laboratory schools. These laboratory schools were diverse based upon the belief that children begin school coming from different realms of experience; therefore standardization was illogical. Under the progressive laboratory school models, there was a belief that if curriculum is standardized, then some children will not experience growth and others will experience very little growth, while even others will experience massive growth. Trying to quantify this growth is virtually impossible because of the vast range of variables. Certainly, some testing can give us information, but in the process, what we must avoid is what Dewey described as “quantitative by-products” which are helpful to understand only if the qualitative processes will succeed. Therefore the creation of curriculum depended upon individual teachers’ judgment of the needs

of their own students. Since there was no standardization of curriculum, a highly-trained teacher stood at the center of all classroom decision-making. Curriculum was designed not by a theorist, policy-maker or content-area specialist outside the classroom. Instead it was imperative that the curricular decisions were made within the classroom through the naturalistic understandings and inquiries of practicing teachers.

One of the most interesting parts of the laboratory schools was the professional development model wherein teachers were invited to formally inquire into their own practice. The laboratory schools provided summer institutes where teachers would focus upon their own questions and concerns brought out of their individual classrooms. Here, teachers were asked to evaluate and then reform their individual curricula within their own classroom contexts. They were not told what to change based upon their test scores. Rather, it was assumed that teachers could qualitatively judge the strengths and weaknesses of their curriculum and teaching then work to overcome the weaknesses and build upon the successes. At the time this was a radical idea. Despite our current preoccupation with standardization, there is still today a trace continuation of these ideals in many areas of teacher research, action research and professional development, positioning the teacher as knowledge-creator. More current portrayals of these ideals have been promoted in the field of education by the scholarship of Joseph Schwab and Eliot Eisner.

Schwab's call for practical curricular assessment.

Joseph Schwab wrote about the need to step away from theory and back into the realities of classroom life in order to truly judge curriculum. He called this “the practical” and says that this stance “requires curriculum study to seek its problems where its problems lie – in the behaviors, misbehaviors, and non-behaviors of its students as they begin to evince the effects of

the training they did and did not get” (Schwab, 1969, p.17). Here, the practical connects to Dewey’s development of the laboratory schools, where the teacher is the creator and assessor of the curriculum alongside students as they learn. If true assessment within “the practical” must “seek problems where its problems lie” it makes sense that an outsider who cannot thoroughly comprehend classes “behaviors” would not be the ideal assessor. Instead, this job is reliant upon teacher knowledge and the insider evaluation (s)he can provide.

Further, Schwab (1969) describes that evaluation must be understood as a part of the real world, not some sort of test that one might attempt to create within controlled or laboratory-like conditions, “nor are we concerned with successes and failures only as measured in test situations but also as evidenced in life and work” (p. 17).

In the end, if curriculum is based not upon standardization, but upon value judgments, it only makes sense that the assessment of such curriculum should also be value-based, and qualitatively framed. Further, because of the naturalistic setting of such evaluation, the most thorough evaluation would have to be done by someone with a more comprehensive understanding of the context and the curriculum as it became a lived experience for students. Therefore the best evaluator and designer of a curriculum would be the teacher who is teaching it, by seeing how it works with real students.

Connoisseurship in educational research.

Eisner (1983) discusses curricular design in similar ways. He says we do not expect architects, when asked to design a three-bedroom house, to design the same exact house. Rather, we would expect each design to be different, yet include certain accepted parameters. Because an architect knows houses so well, he can create a design that is totally unique, yet is still a successfully designed three-bedroom house. In this way, teachers will create curriculum and their

classroom work in ways that look different, but because they hold a specialized, professional knowledge, their unique curricular designs can be successful, yet different. When we expect identical results, and try to quantify teaching or curriculum, we are attempting to narrow the definition of a successful model, and in doing that, we lose the professional knowledge that makes uniqueness valuable.

In order to make these value judgments, Eisner describes the need for connoisseurship in educational research. Connoisseurship “is a matter of noticing, and noticing requires perceptivity . . .the ability to differentiate and . . .to experience an interplay of qualitative relationships. [It also] requires an awareness . . .the ability to experience those qualities as a sample of a larger set of qualities” (Eisner, 1991, p. 64). In fact, he says that “all people have some degree of connoisseurship in some areas of life. In virtually all cases, however, the level of their connoisseurship can be raised through tuition” (Eisner, 1991, p 69), and this makes sense, clearly in every day examples. Further, Eisner describes the need to portray unique and creative examples of teaching in ways that are contextualized and value-based.

In view of the teacher-research movement, Eisner’s view of connoisseurship can move from that of a traditional educational researcher and also be applied to teachers as knowledge-creators. There have been many writers especially in the action research movement who have framed teaching in this way. These scholars contend that teachers can and should not only create knowledge through their own practices; this will also establish their professional voices (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Friedrich, Malarky, Simons, Tateishi & Williams, 2005; Mohr, Rogers, Sanford, Nocerino, Maclean,& Clawson, 2004). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) identified several conceptual frameworks which portray classroom inquiry as transforming the role of a teacher. One way they describe this transformation is a:

. . . blurring the boundaries of research and practice and on conceptualizing practice as a critical and theory-building process. The larger goal is to create classrooms and schools where rich learning opportunities increase students' life chances and to alter the cultures of teaching by altering the relations of power in schools and universities. (p. 18)

This positioning of teacher as researcher or knowledge-creator shifts the predominant power of knowledge creation from the “outsider” theorists or policy-makers to the “insider” practitioners. It can even be so powerful as to enable teachers to deconstruct the hierarchies and assumptions held by policy mandates regarding what it means to teach writing at a particular grade level or in a particular setting.

The importance of teacher knowledge.

This model asserts that teachers should be well informed in the practices of writing (not merely technicians of the content); they should analyze their own practice and experiences in writing in order to better teach writing to their students. Teachers then are not merely distributors of knowledge, but creators of knowledge and theory. Reform of classroom methods and practice should come, according to this model, not from outside theories, but from the daily experiences and practices of teachers and students. In other words, classroom practice is a theory-building activity when teachers are encouraged to reflect upon and share what is happening in their classrooms. This is described by Tanner and Tanner (2007) as the *professional teacher* in contrast to the *teacher-as-technician*, when they state, “The ability to synthesize this knowledge in action is the hallmark of the professional teacher. Clearly, if teaching is to be professionalized, then knowledge of best practices in education (including the ability to implement such practices) and the ability to think experimentally should be required for entrance into the profession” (Tanner & Tanner, 2007, p. 408).

However, there are many issues that keep teachers from gaining this professionalism. For Walker and Soltis describe these difficulties as coming from three main issues: (1) Where can teachers find time and resources to do curricular work? (2) How can teachers gain the authority to make curricular decisions? (3) How can teachers decide when curricular change is necessary? (Walker & Soltis, 2004, p. 3). These are all important concerns, and transmit the somewhat stark realities of teaching. Teachers have little time to reflect upon or share their knowledge. They have little opportunity and resources to collaborate and create or co-create curriculum. Further their authority is often questioned or dismissed outright.

Also, this sort of professionalism and constructivist teaching is a process that cannot easily be described. Scholarship on teacher knowledge links this closely to teacher identity because when teachers position themselves as knowledge-creators, the personal and professional are often so closely intertwined (Alsup, 2006; Gomez, 2007; Grumet, 1988; Palmer, 1998). It is a combination of personal experiences and professional understandings. Linda Darling-Hammond explains, “When viewed as a craft, teaching makes sense as a messy and highly personal enterprise, for it concerns itself with the making and remaking of an object until it satisfies the standards of its creator” (Darling-Hammond, 1990, p. 156). And if the enterprise is concerned mainly upon the satisfaction of the creator, how can researchers best evaluate and examine this craft?

Leiberman and Miller (1990) also point us to the “Dailiness of Teaching” as a place to begin to identify and examine a teacher’s knowledge. This dailiness includes the rhythms, rules, interactions, and feelings that an individual teacher experiences. It acknowledges the patterns and the boundaries, the emotions and connections and social nature of teaching. Leiberman and Miller explain that from these things we cannot only examine teacher knowledge but also one’s

teaching identity. In their eyes, teacher knowledge and teacher identity are closely linked and examined in similar ways.

The difficulty and the challenge however is how to capture and portray this knowledge and identity. Qualitative inquiry is certainly the realm necessary for this sort of inquiry. Some have contested that this sort of teacher-knowledge can best be studied introspectively, by the practitioner herself through action research or auto-ethnography (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Ellis & Bochner, 1996; Rath, 2002; Walker, 2007), while others have suggested more collaborative forms of research through which the teacher and researcher learn together and construct research texts while the teacher-participant is still positioned as the expert and knowledge-creator (Josselson, 2007; Kelchtermans, 1994; Savage, 2003). This study will employ a narrative inquiry because this methodology allows the researcher and participants to co-construct storied accounts of teacher-knowledge. It is initiated through a philosophical stance that teachers create knowledge and construct curriculum through their storied experiences. Finally, narrative inquiry is best suited to the capturing of the “dailiness” of teaching through small stories (Georgakopoulou, 2006) while still acknowledging the existence of the larger social constructs of grand narratives teachers must live and work within. The next chapter will deal more closely with the theory and framework of narrative inquiry as a research methodology and explain how this is best suited to inquiring into the questions of teacher-knowledge.

Chapter Three:

Research Context and Methods

Part One: Capturing Teacher Knowledge Through “Stories to Live By”

Since it is impossible to authentically capture teacher knowledge through traditional quantitative research methodology, my research was conducted through the methodology and philosophical stance of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006), and a close examination of the storied landscapes of two high school English teachers. Providing each teacher’s “storied landscapes” best portrays the experiential, relational and fluctuating realm of teacher knowledge. Narrative inquiry is a relatively new form of qualitative research methodology, and while many researchers may use narrative and story to varying degrees in their investigations, “story” can take on many different roles, and elicit many different results. Before explaining the specific methodology used in my study, it is important to understand the position of narrative within the larger realm qualitative research, and clearly position the present study within the current scholarship.

Narrative has been and is being used in educational research for both purposes of form and philosophical stance, and when a researcher says (s)he is doing a narrative study, that can actually mean a wide variety of things. Gergen and Gergen (2006) make the distinction between two ways of seeing narrative or story in research: the first way to use narrative in research is “as cognitive structure or schema through which we understand the world”; the second is “narratives as discursive actions” (p. 118). When used as “discursive actions” narratives are used by researchers for the effect they provide in reporting and illustrating research. When used to portray “cognitive structures and schemas” researchers begin with the assumption that human experience is storied experience, and the best way to understand that experience is through the

collection and analysis of stories. Narrative inquiry, then, deals with story or narrative as cognitive structure. This study assumes the stance that human experience is formed through narrative accounts. Any rhetorical or discursive actions occurring through the use of storying these experiences are considered secondary to the primary cognitive suppositions. Whether seen as cognitive structures or discursive actions, we can observe three common values across most all forms of narrative research: the importance of story, the importance of context, and the importance of relationship.

The value of story was first described in the context of social science research by Polkinghorne (1988) and then developed further as a research methodology by Clandinin and Connelly (2000, 2006) and Clandinin, Pushor, and Orr (2007). Story has been identified throughout the literature as an effective way to depict research data to readers, and to portray the human element that is at the heart of qualitative research. In their narrative study of literacy events in urban schooling, Gordon, McKibbin, Vasudevan, & Vinz (2007) describe the importance of story in this way: “stories are gathering places of meaning that convey the contexts, complexities, and situatedness of experience. Stories offer up the living traces of multiple forms of consciousness and relation” (p.326). While qualitative research in general is centered on the complexities of lived experience, the use of story can be utilized as a research tool, as a “gathering place” or as a philosophical stance. The ways story is used throughout the field of narrative research varies greatly, but all narrative researchers see storied form as a valuable way to portray and interpret qualitative data.

This second common value among narrative research is “situatedness,” which refers to the value of context. Similar to the ways writers of novels, short stories and drama often rely on their settings to portray meaning, as a site of action, and as an interactive realm, so do narrative

researchers see context as an important piece of meaning-making within the analysis and interpretation of data. Especially within the complicated, interrupted, non-linear, unpredictable nature of school, “the task for narrative researchers is to find ways of telling open-ended narratives in a manner that is compelling and illuminating” (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007, p. 375). The importance of context is always at the forefront of qualitative research, but because of the particularities of school experience, narrative research in education has especially come to depend upon the significant meanings of context and the ways these are portrayed through narrative.

Finally, the collaborative act of relationship between researcher and participant is the third common value within narrative research. Because of this, many scholars have written about the ethics of the narrative research relationship (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007; Josselson, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Marshall and Rossman (2006) describe this research relationship as one requiring “a great deal of openness and trust between the participant and researcher: The inquiry should involve a mutual and sincere collaboration, a caring relationship akin to a friendship that is established over time for full participation in the storytelling, retelling, and reliving of personal experiences” (p.118). Because the researcher is being entrusted with the participant’s personal stories, it is imperative that the researcher creates a trusting collaboration, so the story does not become that only of the researcher and his/her own experience. There must be careful depiction and interpretation of where the researcher’s story begins and ends in relationship to the participant’s own experience and story.

There are differing theories regarding how much control a researcher should have over the participant’s story. Some find it acceptable, even necessary to change entire narrative structures (Ollerenshaw & Cresswell, 2002). Others define the research relationship as an

unequal but mutually beneficial relationship of “neighborliness,” acknowledging that “knowledge, prestige, and the power of the profession belong to the researcher, not the researched” (Savage, 2003, p. 343). Still others attempt a more collaborative relationship where the storied accounts are co-created between participant and researcher (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Connelly, 2006; Kelchtermans, 1994; Phillion & Connelly, 2004).

Throughout all these perspectives, there is a constant concern for and awareness of a unique relationship between researcher and participant.

Differing views of story and narrative.

Though all narrative forms of research rely on story, context and relationship, this is where the uniformity ends. Within the umbrella term “narrative” in research, we find different ways of looking at and using narrative form. Some researchers value narrative for the writerly effects they can utilize in their final research texts. The use of narrative can provide a sense of authorial freedom that is uncommon within the genre of scholarly research. Other researchers use narrative plot structure as a tool for qualitative analysis. Still others study narrative as a phenomenon, and see it as not only a tool, but a philosophical stance. The following is an overview of the different perspectives and uses of narrative and story within the field of qualitative research.

The researcher could believe that stories are a powerful way to write about the data (s)he has collected, so the “narrative” part of the research is focused on the final storied form (Gordon, et al, 2007; Perl, Counihan, Schnee, & McCormack, 2007; Schaafsma, Pagnucci, Wallace, & Stock, 2007). These researchers focus more on literary stylistics and points of view as prominent means for depicting their research in narrative structure. It makes sense that many of these scholars are situated within English education, a field that values storytelling, for the goals are

often situated within the emotional and logical connections between reader and text. The focus on storytelling and writerly aspects of narrative are valued by these researchers because they see the rhetorical influence in crafting a powerful story (Perl, et al, 2007) and the ways in which story can both provoke and teach. Using this rhetorical strategy of pathos within a research text demands the reader's attention in unique ways.

This approach is reminiscent of many of the strategies and assumptions of the genre of creative non-fiction, and is reminiscent of the move to New Journalism in the 1960's and 70's by writers such as Hunter S. Thompson and Truman Capote who began to create more storied forms of journalism. Traditional journalism relied upon an objective, outsider stance; however New Journalism focused on the story behind the reporting in order to create a more human connection to topics. Often the New Journalists included their own story within the reporting, to allow a more experiential depiction of a current event. Here too, with narrative in research, many researchers "report" their data through storied accounts, using narrative structures and devices such as description, dialogue, characterization which allow readers to envision their analysis and interpretations in a more human and storied way.

Other researchers focus primarily upon narrative plot structure for the analysis of storied accounts (Ollerenshaw & Cresswell, 2002). The intention with this analysis, called "the problem-solution approach," is based on the traditional three part narrative plot structure of conflict (problem), climax and resolution (solution). In this approach the researcher takes the research data and analyzes it for the five elements of plot structure: characters, setting, problem, actions, and resolution. The research data is coded and then the events are organized and sequenced into the traditional narrative plot structure. This plot structure allows the researcher to identify the problem and solution of a participant's lived experience by restorying the data. There is no

negotiation between participant and researcher in the restorying. Ollerenshaw and Cresswell (2002) contend that this process allows a “logical sequence” (p. 343) based upon “classic elements of a plot structure” (p. 343).

The dilemma with the “problem-solution approach” is that it assumes all stories fit naturally into a traditional, western, white, middle class narrative structure. Scholars have contended that narrative structure is dependent upon cultural values and traditions (Gee, 1989; Silko, 1991). When a story is told, the structure of the telling and the organization of the storied parts can create a particular meaning. Just as flash-back in a traditional narrative changes the meaning from a story told chronologically, the researcher can perhaps learn as much from the structure of the telling as from the storied parts. The structure of the telling affects the temporal considerations to which narrative inquirers must be attentive (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007). Based upon these assumptions, if a researcher re-stories participant data by changing the structure, (s)he could unintentionally create new meaning(s). This would be a meaning based upon the researcher’s own cultural assumptions of story. The intention of the “problem-solution approach” is to organize the research data into a more linear and traditional fashion, to make it more comprehensible to the researcher. However, the researcher might find a more accurate meaning by attending to the storied account as it is told and analyzing not only the meaning of the story, but also how the structure exposes the *participant’s* experience and meaning.

Finally, a researcher could attempt narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007) in which the entire theoretical stance and research methodology is situated firmly within narrative philosophical assumptions. Narrative inquiry was first identified as a research methodology by Connelly and Clandinin in 1990 in *Educational*

Researcher – this theory comes originally from John Dewey’s (1938) ideas of “lived experience” and is explained thus:

Humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives. People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and other are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories.

Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful.

Viewed this way, narrative is the phenomenon studied in inquiry. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular narrative view of experience as phenomena under study. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006, p. 477).

With this definition narrative inquiry has set itself apart from all other narrative forms of research and research reporting. It is a philosophical stance that considers storied phenomenon as well as a method of data analysis and reporting.

Researchers who value the storied form of narrative research do not necessarily begin their research with the philosophy of narrative inquiry. They do not necessarily plan their studies or collect or analyze their data with a philosophical belief that narrative is a frame through which their subjects create identity and move through experience. Clandinin, Pushor and Orr (2007) make this distinction to portray the differences between narrative inquiry and other forms of narrative research:

When researchers say they want to ‘do narrative’ and what they want to do is take their data and turn it into a story, that is, they want to somehow incorporate story into their research texts, this is not what we think of as narrative inquiry. For those of us engaged in

narrative inquiry, we work from a set of ontological and methodological assumptions and the questions of representational form follow from those assumptions (p. 31).

This is the important difference between narrative research and narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is a purposeful framing of human experience and understanding through storied landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

These storied landscapes have three commonalities: temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007). These commonplaces of narrative inquiry situate it as a unique form of research. These three structures create lenses through which narratives can be collected, interpreted and reported, and these will be discussed in further detail and within the light of this study later in this chapter. Narrative inquiry attempts to study the phenomenon of storied experience as it is created and lived out over time, through relationships and within contexts. Therefore, the questions asked when attempting this methodology must always take into account the storied landscape as a theoretical position, not merely as a useful tool with which to portray data.

Scholars within narrative research have also begun to identify differences between small stories and ‘big stories’ or ‘grand narratives’ (Bamburg, 2006; Georgakopoulou, 2006). Georgakopoulou (2006) actually identifies small stories research as a “‘new’ narrative turn” that can provide a needed meeting point for narrative analysis and narrative inquiry” (p. 122). She identifies the small stories as non-canonical, everyday stories which provide an immediate reworking of a slice of life, or future-looking stories of projected events. Therefore these small stories, which may be overlooked for traditional analysis, are important in portraying the possible as well as the actual, moving through and across time and space. Georgakopoulou contends that much narrative research to this point has essentialized storied experience, by

attempting to create grand narratives in order to understand one's lived and storied experience. Her focus upon the smaller stories is an attempt to break up the big stories, to "enable the shift from the precious lived and told to the messier business of living and telling" (p. 129). Michael Bamberg (2006) does not value one level of story over the other, but does point out that they often represent different approaches to narrative inquiry. The big stories are usually those "looking backward" and reflecting upon the past as a sort of identity work for the participant. While he concedes that all storytelling is reflective by nature, the smaller stories can portray "how selves and identities are 'done' in interaction" (p. 146), and how identities may be emerging and are managed on a day-to-day basis.

Narrative research has been used frequently as a way to trace the development of teacher-identity (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Doyle & Carter, 2003; Rodriguez, 2010). These researchers contend that teacher identity is based within a narrative construction of experience, and therefore to understand how teachers construct their identities, a researcher must work with teachers to uncover and tell these stories of identity formation. Based again upon Dewey's ideas of experience and learning, some writers describe a beginning teacher's development of a teaching persona, or the development of professional knowledge connected to the narrative identity formation (Doyle & Carter, 2003; Phillion & Connelly, 2004; Rodriguez, 2010). Rodriguez (2010) adds to this understanding of narrative and teacher identity by describing a beginning teacher's narratives as "creative acts of resistance through which she negotiates a positive and affirming identity" (p. 1) when her storied experience is one of hostility and discrimination. Here, a teacher can create "counterstories" that work within the larger discriminating stories she finds herself working within.

Doyle and Carter (2003) describe beginning teachers as collecting storied experiences that eventually create their identities and professional knowledge base. The difficulty for novice teachers, they claim, is that without a collection of classroom experiences to work from, “they can only fall back on the story-line they know so very well, namely the studenting narrative”(p. 135). Providing pre-service teachers with many experiences, and allowing them to “story” these experiences will allow novice teachers to begin their work with a clearer teacher identity and a deeper accumulation of experiential professional knowledge. Since teacher identity is always evolving and in relationship to his or her context, narrative inquiry is especially useful to better illustrate and comprehend this phenomenon.

Part Two: Methodology and Analysis

Since my research is an inquiry into how two particular urban English teachers position themselves within their curricular spaces to create college-prep writing curriculum, qualitative methods of narrative inquiry are applicable. My research questions focus upon teachers’ experiences and aim towards learning how they uniquely position themselves as curricular developers of college preparatory writing. Because of these theoretical assumptions, I organized a narrative inquiry study based upon the work of Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly. Narrative inquiry is a purposeful framing of human experience and understanding through storied landscapes and attempts to study the phenomenon of storied experience as it is created and lived out over time, through relationships and within contexts. Therefore, the questions asked when using this methodology must always take into account the storied landscape as a theoretical position, not merely as a useful tool with which to portray data (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

As mentioned earlier, Clandinin and Connelly describe storied landscapes as having three commonalities: Temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry must always be mindful of these three commonalities, how they connect, complicate and interact with the lived stories of participants. These commonplaces of narrative inquiry situate it as a unique form of research. These three structures create lenses through which narratives can be collected, interpreted and reported.

Temporality, the first commonality, compels us to observe and interpret stories, people, places and events as taking place in time. That all is living and moving within a process, and that the consciousness of one's past present and future, interact to create current identities and understandings. Because of temporality, it is important for narrative inquirers to try and uncover layers of stories across time, and work to comprehend how stories change and interact over time. It is also important to recognize that institutions have histories and futures just as individuals have histories and futures. When collecting and analyzing the stories of Monroe High School, the history of the school was an important consideration in my data collection and analysis. Institutionally, this school exists in a particular time-line that is understood individually and collectively by the persons involved in its existence, past and future. Individual teachers are also considered as living temporally, with their stories reflecting past experiences and also portraying a vision of future stories and selves.

Sociality, the second commonplace, considers personal conditions of the researcher and participants and social conditions of context, environment. Here narrative inquirers see storied experience as taking part among individuals, and within a social reality. For this reason, it was important that I spend some informal time with the whole English department at the Monroe High School. I occasionally sat with them during their lunch break, which they spent together,

eating in one teacher's classroom. Though my research focused closely upon just two teachers, Samantha and Allison, I also interviewed other members of the department and administration. This was important to allow me to understand how the department interacted and how the relationships among department and administration might affect the stories told and lived by Allison and Samantha.

Also important is the inquiry relationship between the researcher and participant. I worked hard to portray myself as a supportive observer, or as I heard one researcher describe herself at a recent narrative conference, a "compassionate witness." While I was analyzing and inquiring into the work and thinking of these teachers, I did not want these teachers to view my research as a criticism of their work, or that my goal was to in any way be disparaging towards their school, their teaching or their students. I tried to be inconspicuous when that was needed, and I also participated when invited, allowing the teachers to take the lead regarding how I fit into the social context of their classrooms. When I was with the teachers outside their classroom work, with the department at lunch, or in other more informal settings, I was often asked questions about what I was doing and also invited to discuss what was happening in the bigger picture of education and literacy. Teachers recommended books to me, and seemed to enjoy discussing their teaching with me. I in turn, enjoyed these conversations as well, and I believe they were clear signals of my social inclusion in the English department.

The last commonplace is the setting of inquiry. Where and when the actual research takes place will impact the study and the storied experience. This third commonplace of setting will be especially important to my study because of my interest in the spatiality among curricular narratives. I draw on the work of Craig (2007), using the organizational tool of story constellations to conceptualize the storied nature of curriculum in both a metaphorical and

concrete three-dimensional space. Craig's description of capturing story constellations to better see the spatiality of the collected stories will help portray the various storied stakeholders and the ways in which these overlap and interplay within the teachers' storied landscapes. The creation of a different constellation for each teacher will provide an organizational tool to view the stories spatially and also provide a construct for spatial analysis.

Methods of data collection.

I spent 2-4 days per week within Monroe High School over the course eleven weeks. I spent this time alternating between the two teacher-participants' classrooms, observing their teaching, reading and discussing their journals, and performing interviews. The data was collected over the last eleven weeks of the school year, which allowed me to see the excitement and the anxiety felt by the teachers and students as they prepared for graduation, summer vacation and various standardized tests. The week following the dismissal of school, I also performed final interviews with teachers, collaboratively discussing, interpreting and revising the stories I collected.

In order to better create a triangulation of data I gathered information from a variety of sources and in a variety of ways during the course of this study. I especially kept in mind the critique made by Scheurich on the power differentials and inconsistencies in data which may come from interviewing (1997). I designed my interviewing, described below, in response to Scheurich's critique on the form of conversation as a problematic reflection of information within text, I worked closely with other written documents, and used these to "check" the information I received through the interview process.

During the first week of data collection, I conducted preliminary interviews that allowed me to construct the "meganarratives" (Olson & Craig, 2009) understood as the stories of policy

and accountability that the teachers must live and teach under and within. I created the meganarratives through interviews and then collaborative revision and creation of a text. It was important that the meganarratives in particular be a collaborative project between researcher and participants so the meganarrative created was thoroughly the understanding of the collective lived experience of the participants without being heavily influenced by the “outsider” analytical view of the researcher. This will be the beginning contextual layer of the narrative landscape upon which the smaller stories (Georgakopoulou, 2006) of teaching will then be laid, accumulated and examined.

During the period of observation and data collection in the school, I performed short interviews once every two weeks to capture the teachers’ smaller stories of daily teaching and lived experiences. These interviews were at times used to probe further into the stories recorded in the participants’ journals or to gain insight into classroom observations. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher within two weeks of the recording in order to better analyze patterns and themes within the text of the participants’ own words.

As Mishler (1986) contends, research participants naturally will use stories, just as people naturally use stories in their everyday conversations with each other. In traditional, survey research interviewing, however, Mischler also notes that stories are often suppressed by the researcher (p. 69) because stories cannot be quantified and can be difficult to code. In a traditional interview, participants are often interrupted so that they are kept “on topic.” Following the suggestions of Mishler and others (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Ellis & Berger, 2003), I was especially attentive my own assumptions of what stories should entail, and worked to create interview protocol that invited stories and were open to multiple interpretations. At times, the interview questions actually used the word “story” as in, “Could you tell me a story

about a time when you felt successful teaching writing?” It was my intention to frame these interviews in ways that would allow participants to move “off topic” as they wished, and allow them space and opportunity to tell their stories. When teachers did continue to talk, I tried not to interrupt them. Occasionally this made our interviews last longer than the allotted time, and we had to decide together whether to end the interview before all questions had been asked or break it up into more than one session. It was not unusual to have a six-question interview last anywhere from five to 30 minutes depending upon what the teacher wanted to discuss and how she felt about it. I tried to allow each teacher freedom to elaborate upon a topic as she wished, and tell the stories that were important to her.

Besides the short bi-weekly interviews, I collected and analyzed the small stories of day-to-day teaching shown within the informal journal reflections kept by the participants. I originally asked teachers to write these journals every week to two weeks. I explained to them that they could either send me an email with their journal in the text or as an attachment, or they were also welcome to handwrite these journals, and give them to me when I was at the school for observations. Every Friday I sent an email to Allison and Samantha, reminding them to reflect upon the week and share a story with me about something that stood out in their teaching. It was often a challenge for them to find time to write these journals. I was able to obtain five journals from Allison and four from Samantha over the weeks of data collection. The journals I received were often emotional, and usually 1-2 single-spaced typed pages in length. Once, when Samantha wrote about the time it takes her to respond to student writing, she attached a copy of a student paper (with the name removed) for me to see the amount of response she generally provided on a student’s paper. Allison also included other documents with one of her journals to help me understand certain references she made in her writing. Though I did not receive weekly

journals as I had hoped, these journals were more intensively thought-out and carefully written than the quick, spontaneous reflections I expected from the participants.

The tone and detail in these journals seemed to imply that there were issues in their teaching that these teachers really wanted to share. Just as Samantha wanted me to see and understand the time consuming nature of her writing instruction, other journals also seemed to portray the desire to be heard and understood. Since teachers were invited to choose their own topics, I believe the journals allowed teachers to discuss the issues they were personally focused upon. Therefore these provided a very different sort of data from the short interviews wherein I as researcher was able to guide the discussion. These journals, along with the observations gave more specific insight into the process of constructing curriculum through small stories of everyday teaching. I looked specifically for themes regarding what stood out as important teaching moments during the week and how it fit into the meganarratives and storied landscape of Samantha and Allison's writing curriculum. This data provided by the journals also seemed to be a safe place where more of the participants' more secret stories could be divulged and illustrated.

I was able to observe each teacher's class an average of 2-4 times a week, so I was observing a total of 4-6 class periods a week. When I scheduled my observation times each week, I took into consideration the school's schedule, which changed daily. Two days a week all classes were fifty minutes long. Two days a week, classes were 90 minutes long, but each of these "block days" held only half the scheduled classes. One day a week all classes were 40 minutes long to make space in the schedule for Socratic Seminar. Because of this schedule, I tried to alternate when I was there on block or non-block days. I enjoyed observing the block classes because the longer amount of time allowed different things to happen in class. I also

wanted to spend an equal amount of time in non-block classes to get a realistic view of how these instructional days were spent as well. For this reason, my observational schedule changed from week to week.

During classroom observations, I brought my laptop computer into the classroom and typed notes as class progressed. I also audio-taped some class discussions or student-teacher conferences in order to capture the teachers' language. In observational notes, I described the visual space and interactions including observations regarding: the students, the arrangement of desks, the position of the teacher, etc. I also typed what I could that was written on the board or on the overhead especially when the teacher had written instructions for students to follow. When the teacher gave instructions, answered questions or led discussions in front of the whole class, I tried to write word for word as closely as I could what was said and by whom. When students participated in small group discussions, worked with a partner, or held one-on-one conversations with the teacher, I focused my attention on one particular small group/partnership/teacher-student conversation and tried to record that particular interaction. When I was focused on a particular interaction, and not the whole classroom setting, I did try to look up occasionally and record a bit of what the rest of the class was engaged in, but my observational attention was truly focused mainly upon a smaller interaction in those circumstances.

In Allison's class, particularly, there were times when an individual student or Allison herself would invite me to participate in a discussion or work in a partnership or small group. When that happened, I accepted the invitation and closed my laptop and participated in the work of the class. During those occasions, I stepped out of my "researcher role" and became a participant for the time being. However, I did describe the interaction and my participation later

in my field notes, but those instances left some holes in my descriptive scripting of classroom events. Yet, I believe in the long run they were valuable in establishing relationships within the class, with the students and with the teachers. Because I was willing to participate, I hoped I did not seem like such an outsider, suspiciously typing away on her computer in the far corner of the room.

Following each day I spent at Monroe High School, whether I performed interviews or classroom observations, I worked to examine and compartmentalize my own story of research separate from yet entwined with the stories I collected from participants by using a note-taking strategy that helped to sort out the information I observed. My logbook was a way to reflect on my personal attachments and emotions, understanding that it was important to “capture and hold” what was lived and allow myself as researcher to move on from the experience of data collection (Kelchtermans, 2008). My specific strategy was based loosely on Connelly, Clandinin and Chan (2002), in which they describe a trio of note-taking perspectives to better unpack a particular experience:

1. *Recovery of Meaning* which is a basic summary, reading the experience “from the inside . . . uncritically”
2. *Reconstruction of Meaning* which is a personal response, and a reading “from [my] own intentions” using “biases to generate possibilities.”
3. *Reading at the Boundaries* which is a critique of the experience. This is a reading “at the interface between the text and the formalistic and reductionistic boundaries” (p. 133).

I recorded field notes either by hand in my research log, or on my laptop computer, and I followed these three strategies to be more conscious of where my participant’s stories and my

own overlapped. These field notes were commonly written after my visit while in my car in the parking lot of the school, so my memory was fresh and I was still close to the experience. At other times, I would take some time to type in an empty classroom or the school library before leaving the building because I wanted to record my thoughts right away following an observation. On other occasions, when a particular incident or observation was “sticking with me” I knew I needed to process it further, and I would go back to my field notes or research texts to reflect further. I would write these reflections in the same research log or on my laptop, depending upon which was most convenient.

Besides this list of research texts: the interview transcripts, the observation notes, the field notes and reflections, I was also able to collect several classroom artifacts from the weeks I spent in Allison and Samantha’s classrooms. These were assignment sheets, photocopies of reading assignments, district-wide assessments and even articles that the English department had read and discussed which were influencing classroom practices. Through these various methods of data collection I was able to triangulate my data in ways that will better capture teachers’ stories of college preparatory writing. Using the organizational tool of story constellations, I was then able to categorize and map the stories of teaching writing at Monroe High School in order to better uncover and position the spatiality of complex curricular stories.

Framework of data analysis through Henri Lefebvre’s theories of spatiality.

After collecting data and constructing the teachers’ stories, I analyzed them using the analytical lens of spatiality working from the theories of Henri Lefebvre (1991). This allowed me to more clearly describe and map the story constellations of each teacher’s professional knowledge landscape. Lefebvre is concerned with issues of power within spatiality, so the analysis through this lens allowed understanding of where teachers have power of movement

versus restraint within their curricular decisions. This analytical lens I used to see my data was inspired by the theories of spatiality in *The Production of Space* by Henri Lefebvre (1991). In his book, the author describes the way space is constructed socially and portrays power relationships within a particular culture. Because his theories portray space metaphorically as constructions of power, identity and agency, his theories of spatiality served as an insightful lens through which to view teachers' story constellations of curricular constructions.

Especially pertinent is Lefebvre's distinction between dominated and appropriated space. He describes dominated space as the space that is "invariably the realization of the master's project" which is "usually closed, sterilized, emptied out" (1991, p. 165). Appropriated space, on the other hand, is defined by the group, not the "master," as Lefebvre states, "It may be said of a natural space modified in order to serve the needs and possibilities of a group that it has been appropriated by that group" (p.165). Therefore, public schools are inherently dominated spaces, and at times, schools, and especially classrooms, can become appropriated spaces within the dominated space. This is done through acts of resistance and negotiation, through stories, through constructed and contextualized curriculum carried out within such spaces.

Also applicable is the idea of movement within an edifice of space, identified as "fractured" by Lefebvre,

It is impossible to overemphasize either the mutual inherence or the contradictoriness of these two aspects of space. Under its homogenous aspect, space abolishes distinctions and difference, among them that between inside and outside, which tends to be reduced to the undifferentiated state of the visible-readable realm. Simultaneously, this same space is fragmented and fractured, in accordance with the demands of the division of labor and

the division of needs and functions . . . each spatial interval, is a vector of constraints and a bearer of norms and ‘values’. (p. 355-356)

As high school English teachers work within their various curricular constraints, I believe the stories they tell allow them to make sense of these constraints and better fragment or fracture the dominated space for their own needs and the needs of their students. Therefore, in this study, I looked for stories where teachers described a dominated curricular space, which was created outside their realm of control and absent of their context or agency. I also looked for stories in which teachers described ways they appropriated the spaces and perhaps fractured or fragmented the space in order to create writing curriculum that was more personally contextualized, constructed and owned.

The analysis of stories as holding spatial importance and professional identity allowed a better understanding of how and why English teachers constructed college-prep writing curriculum in particular ways. This analytical lens also provided an understanding of how teachers positioned themselves within sometimes constrained, sometimes shifting and sometimes uncertain curricular spaces.

The process of data analysis within this frame took place through both inductive and deductive procedures. Data was viewed within the frame of spatiality in order to deductively code stories as creating, negotiating, and bumping up against curricular spaces. At the same time, data was analyzed through inductive means as well. This process of using both deductive and inductive analysis was described by Patton (2002) as “discovering patterns, themes, and categories in one’s data” (p. 453) and generating “indigenous typologies” (p.457). Marshall and Rossman (2006) further explain the importance of inductive analysis because here a researcher

can use categories and language that better “reflect the understandings expressed by the participants . . . generated through analyses of the local use of language” (p. 159).

Finally, it should be clear that the process of data analysis in a narrative study follows coding which is closely linked to narrative as form of thinking and writing, Therefore the field and research texts were also coded through increasingly complex viewings of how stories overlap or intersect with other stories. There were interim research texts, which described or reflected upon common story lines. These also began to portray where silences became visible through the revisions and negotiations of stories. These interim texts were shared and discussed with participants, allowing a collaborative revision or re-crafting of research texts. This movement from field to research text is described by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) as looking for the “patterns, narrative threads, tensions and themes either within or across an individual’s experience and in the social setting” (p. 132). Therefore in some ways, the creation of the stories too, was an inductive process that moved through and beyond themes as stories were crafted and re-crafted collaboratively with participants.

Part Three: The Research Site and Participants

Because of my experiences working with the local National Writing Project site, as coordinator of a dual credit English program at a local university and as a student teacher supervisor, I had been in dozens of high schools in two major metropolitan areas, their suburbs and surrounding rural districts. As I considered selecting my research site I knew it was important to me to work within an urban setting, but I also wanted to try and find a school where the administration allowed its teachers authority and agency within their classrooms and district curricular design. I also wanted to work within a school where there was some expectation that their students would attend college. Finally, I wanted to work within a traditional public school,

not a private, charter or parochial school that may have resources unavailable to most public school teachers.

For several weeks I visited three high schools I believed fit these requirements. I talked to English teachers and administrators. I observed classrooms and students. I read up on school statistics and information on district websites. After looking closely, I decided on Monroe High School, a medium-sized, urban, public school with a diverse student population, in the Union Hill School District. I believed it held everything I was interested in. The teachers felt they had power in curricular decisions. They were working to prepare their students for post-secondary education. As I talked to teachers and observed students at Monroe, however, I discovered I may have stumbled upon a very unusual story to tell; within my study of teachers' narratives of college-preparatory writing instruction, Monroe's history and community may have unique and important influence upon the stories of teachers.

Monroe High School³ is situated within an urban area in the Midwestern portion of the United States. From its beginnings in the mid-1950's it had been a part of the Central City School District, a medium sized inner city school district currently made up of over 17,000 students and 35 schools. Situated on the Western edge of the school district's boundaries and with most students living within the smaller city of Union Hill, Monroe High School was one of the poorest and lowest achieving in the Central City district. Because of their dissatisfaction with the district, in 2007 the parents and general community of Union Hill voted to annex five elementary schools, one middle school and one high school from the Central City School District. Monroe High School was one of the schools that was annexed and became a part of Union Hill School District beginning the 2008-2009 school year. During its last years within the

³ Names of districts, geographical locations and schools have been changed. All research participants were invited to select their own pseudonyms. Students were given pseudonyms.

Central City district, Monroe H.S. had around a 50-60% graduation rate. Just a few years after becoming a part of the Union Hill School District the graduation rate improved to 95%.

According to the district, 77% of the graduating class of 2010 was planning on attending post-secondary education (in either two-year or four-year institutions) immediately following high school graduation.

Monroe High School had a 72.16% free and reduced lunch population and was approximately 66% white, 14% black, 17% Hispanic⁴. At the time of this study, they enrolled 758 students, and their English department is made up of five teachers and two special education teachers assigned to work only with English Class-within-a-class (CWC)⁵ settings. Though it has English classes defined as pre-AP and AP, students are not “tracked” and are expected and allowed to move freely in and out of these courses as they desire to be challenged. Through a grant from a local university Monroe High School hired two staff members defined as “College Guides.” The sole purpose of these staff members was to help students get into college. These College Guides organized trips for students to visit college campuses, helped students fill out college applications and apply for financial aid and scholarship moneys. Though the school was not considered “college prep,” the philosophy of the teachers and the administration seemed to be focused on breaking the cycle of poverty by getting their students into community college, four-year university or a trade/technical school. Beyond the coursework and the work of the College Guides, the principal has promoted a weekly school-wide Socratic Seminar on various

⁴ All school statistical information was obtained through the Union Hill School District administrative offices in February, 2011.

⁵ Class-within-a-class (CWC) is a common way to mainstream special education students into regular classrooms. This situation usually includes 10-30% special education in the make-up of the class, with the remaining percentage made up of non-special-ed. students. CWC's are usually team-taught between a “lead” content area teacher and an “assisting” special education teacher. This allows the special education teacher to modify and/or provide individualized attention for those students with IEP's (Individualized Education Plans) while allowing the lead teacher to continue to provide content for all students in the class.

topics. All students, staff and faculty participated in these seminars, and the teachers to whom I've talked credit these Socratic Seminars with providing higher expectations of respectful communication and critical thinking in and out of the classroom. During my data collection, these took place every Tuesday morning. Students were presented with a reading that was pre-selected by a committee of teachers. Students were given time to read and annotate the text, then they participated in a Socratic Seminar-framed discussion. The last two years, teachers used readings from the "Touchstones Discussion Project" which was developed from St John's College Great Books program. This year, however, teachers have formed a committee to choose and distribute common school readings.

Monroe High School provided an interesting context for my study because it had a small, cohesive English department within a school where graduation and college entrance was expected. The community, though impoverished and known for its high rate of crime, has rallied around its schools and after voting to annex the schools into Union Hill School District, have continued to have high expectations believing the change in school districts to be the possible redemption of their children.

At the same time, the English teachers at Monroe High School made it clear to me that they believe they are fighting an uphill battle: many of their students enter high school with a 4th or 5th grade reading level; some students who wanted to enroll in junior or senior level A.P. English had difficulty writing a strong paragraph; their students came from homes that did not seem to value books or reading or learning; their students were sometimes involved in gangs and drugs and problematic home lives. To complicate issues more, the school had grown so rapidly over the last three years, the class size had risen significantly: averaging 18 students per class three years ago to 32 students per class during the 2010-2011 school year. Susan Tanner, the

district's English Coordinator confessed to me that she believed this is the one thing that is affecting her English teachers the most. She said some of teachers even told her that in some ways, poor attendance is helpful because if everyone was present in their classes, they would not have enough desks or space to hold them all.

In my experiences talking informally and through formal interviews with the English teachers, I am convinced that these teachers believed they were providing skills and concepts to support and prepare students in college-level writing. At the same time, they always questioned how they could improve, what could they have done better. They seemed to be both hopeful and realistic.

The five person English department at Monroe held a common lunch period, and since there was no teacher's lounge in the building, it was common for the teachers to meet in their department chair, Lily Pitt's, classroom to have lunch together. One afternoon I met the teachers during this lunch period to talk to them about my intended research project and to gauge the department's interest in participating. As six teachers sat around the classroom in student desks, eating their salads, sandwiches and micro-waved meals, I felt hesitant, taking up their 20 minute lunch break, their only time together, and their only time to sit and relax. I began to explain who I was and what I was interested in doing. I brought a hand-out describing my project, and explained that they could all just think about it and read through my handout and e-mail me if they had questions or decided they might be interested. Lily explained that she would be interested, but she felt that her senior AP literature class just did not have enough writing instruction in it to be worth my studying. One teacher, Allison Manning, blurted out "I'm in like Flynn!" and explained she was excited to be able to also learn from me. When I was getting up to leave a few minutes later, Allison looked me in the eye, smiled and said, "Thanks for liking us!"

Department chair, Lily, suggested another teacher, Samantha Wisemann to also work with me since she taught 12th grade college prep English. Samantha said she would think about it. Later she e-mailed me and asked if I could clarify exactly what she would have to do. She explained her fiancé would soon return from an overseas tour in the military and she wanted to protect her time with him, so she was unsure she wanted to participate in anything else. After detailing my expectations of her commitment, she responded that she wanted to participate because she felt the media was giving people the wrong picture, and it was important that people knew what was really happening in high schools.

I feel very fortunate to have been able to work in this school and with such smart and dedicated teachers. During my data collection, which I will describe in detail later, I was always welcomed and allowed into classrooms and meetings. I was able to interview a variety of faculty and staff at the school beyond my two primary participants, and I felt very privileged to be treated so warmly. In order to appreciate the relationships that are central to this study, I think it is important to understand a little bit about the two main participants, Allison Manning and Samantha Wisemann, as well as other key members of the English department and school.

During the data collection of this study, my focus was around the classrooms of two teachers who were teaching college preparatory English. Most my time within the school was spent observing in these two women's classrooms, chatting informally or formally interviewing them. However, I also interviewed and interacted with other members of the English department. I will describe here the primary participants, Allison and Samantha, and I will also touch on the three other members of the English department, Matthew, Chris and Lily as well as the district Communication Arts Teaching Learning Coach, Susan, and the principal, Dr. Richard Prier.

Allison Manning is electric and passionate. She has been teaching six years, three at Monroe High School and the previous three at a neighboring suburban district. She regularly wears bright patterned clothes and always has her brown chin-length hair and make-up done perfectly. She is in the middle of planning a wedding, and considering beginning a graduate degree in the next year or two. She is busy and non-stop. She smiles often and laughs easily at herself and with her students. She says what she thinks and does not usually filter her emotions. This holds an interesting power in her classroom when smile disappears suddenly, and she stares a student in the eye and says stone-faced, “You cannot treat someone like that in my classroom. That’s not O.K.; now make it better.” Even the toughest student will back down, reacting with an apology and a shrug. When she calls on a student who is reticent to answer her question, she will go over close to him and say quietly something along the lines of “It is safe to take risks in this classroom. You don’t learn if you don’t take risks. Take a risk. Just guess.” And the student will quietly guess, allowing Allison an opportunity to praise the student and extend those ideas in the necessary direction.

She is a 28-year-old Caucasian woman and her freckles make her appear younger than she is. During this research study, I focused my data collection on Allison’s 5th hour Advanced Placement English language and composition class. This class focused around reading and writing essays about social and cultural issues such as race, wealth and gender. Allison is frank with her students, and when uncomfortable discussions occur that other teachers may shy away from, Allison explains her point of view from her middle class white background and asks students to teach her their point of view just as she teaches them hers. During one classroom observation, she admitted to her students that she knows she has been lucky, “I’m lucky to have two parents who stayed married, I’m lucky to be born into a middle class family that had money

to send me to good schools and to college.” She teaches aerobics classes in the evenings at a local fitness center, and is the sponsor of Monroe’s cheerleaders. She starts every class with a loud “Good morning!” or “Good afternoon!” and her students always respond in kind.

Once, after I’d been observing for only two weeks, I came into the classroom, set up my laptop and waited quietly as students trickled in. Allison was late because she was helping with testing during her planning period in the school library. When she arrived, after her boisterous “Good morning!” and her students’ response, she looked around the room accusingly and said, “Did anyone say hello to Melanie?!” The students looked down or around or at me guiltily, and Allison said, “You guys, that’s just weird when there is someone in the room and you just pretend they aren’t there. Melanie is a part of our family now, so you need to treat her that way.” Several students smiled or turned around and said hi to me at that point, and from then on, I became, not only a researcher, sitting in the back of the room taking notes, but a participant researcher who would be brought into class discussions frequently by Allison or her students because of my inclusion in their “family” and because of what they saw as my unique “college teacher” perspective.

Samantha Wisemann came to teaching after working in the business world, and she has taught at Monroe High School for six years. She was there for three years when Monroe was part of the Central City School District and was one of only three Central City teachers who were hired through the transition into Union Hill School District. She is now, three years after the transition, the only teacher left from the Central City days. During the eleven weeks I spent in her classroom, Samantha’s fiancé, James, who was serving in the military, returned from a tour overseas. Samantha, while teaching and working with me was also preoccupied with

reestablishing her relationship with her fiancé, planning her wedding, and preparing to become a step-mother to James' two school-aged children, one of whom was diagnosed as special needs.

Samantha has blond, wavy, shoulder length hair and wears glasses. She usually wears a serious look on her face, but when engaged in conversation she readily shares a sly observation or wisecrack. She jokes with her students in a sarcastic way, and she admits that she is hard on them and pushes them. At times she admitted to me that maybe she makes assignments too hard, but she would rather do that than not push them hard enough.

Samantha has dry sense of humor. She is cynical and ironic, yet when she talks to her students, she always refers to them and “honey” or “sweetie.” When speaking to her classes as a group, she has a strong, all-business, and almost drill-sergeant tone of voice. She commands active attention and expects disciplined behavior. Her voice softens however; her demeanor lightens when she talks one-on-one with any of her students. When a student asks for help or has a question, she will always make them feel important and cared for by leaning in and looking them in the eye while talking softly, asking probing questions and offering advice. Her class is run very orderly, and she is able to organize it so effectively that she can easily differentiate among students' needs and give special attention to each of her students.

Samantha did not introduce me to her students, and if they asked about me when I wasn't there, I don't know. They were always friendly and when I asked questions, they were happy to engage with me. They would smile at me knowingly if something funny happened in the classroom. I wasn't, however, “a part of their family” in the same way I was in Allison's classroom. I was a bit more of an outsider and observer than a participant. For this research study, I observed Samantha's 6th hour senior college preparatory English class. Even though this class is labeled college-prep, it is the lower of the two English classes offered to seniors at

Monroe High School, therefore, the students enrolled in Samantha's class are the ones who did not choose to be or were not selected to be in the Advanced Placement track, at the school. This ends up a very mixed bag of student ability-levels and motivation.

The following individuals are teachers or administrators in the school, and I regularly came in contact with them during my data collection. While working at Monroe High School I interviewed each of these individuals once but we also often spoke informally in the halls or during lunch or after school. I believe they each bring a unique point of view to the narrative landscape of Monroe High School and the way writing instruction is viewed and implemented. I will give a brief description of each one here and will occasionally bring these participants in through my storying and analysis of Allison and Samantha's teaching narratives.

Lily Pitt is the English department chair at Monroe High School. She has taught for eight years. The last three years have been at Monroe High School; like Allison and Matthew, she was hired during the annexation and began teaching at Monroe under Union Hill School District. Before teaching at Monroe, she taught middle school and high school for five years in Las Vegas, Nevada. Lily and her husband are both originally from the Midwest, and after hearing from a friend what was happening with the schools in Central City and Union Hill, Lily decided she wanted to be a part of the reorganization. She traveled to Union Hill to apply for a teaching position as well as to move closer to family. Currently at Monroe, Lily teaches senior Advanced Placement Literature, regular 10th grade English and Pre-A.P. 10th grade English. Lily also has a young, pre-school aged daughter. As I got to know Lily, I found she was wise and careful with her words and also very warm. She thought very highly of her colleagues and obviously cared for them personally as well. The other department members viewed her as a leader, but they also found her approachable and it seemed she and Allison had an especially close friendship.

Matthew Anson taught Junior English and Advanced Freshman English. He also sponsored the character education program, and he worked after school until 5:00 several days a week monitoring the credit recovery lab (CRL) at the school. The CRL was an after school, computer-based program where students could work through coursework they had either missed or previously failed, so they could earn “lost credits” and still graduate. Matthew was hired as a first-year teacher at Monroe at the time of the annexation, so he has been teaching for three years and this has been his only teaching position. Before teaching at Monroe and while he was in college, Matthew worked at various childcare programs. He is also a graduate of Union Hill School District, having graduated from what was considered the most affluent of the district’s three high schools. He had a high opinion of the district based upon his experiences both as a student and teacher. Matthew had a new baby, born the year of this study, and when we talked, he often voiced his concerns about staying in education and still being able to provide for his family without taking on so many extra duties that he would never be able to spend time at home. Matthew’s wife was also a teacher. He was soft-spoken and wise and often made claims and observations far beyond what I would expect of a third-year teacher.

Christopher Stoltz had four years of teaching experience and was certified through what he described as a “sort of Teach for America” program through a local university. He taught in five schools in his four years, mainly in the Central City School District. His first year teaching was at Monroe High School the year before the annexation, and he left Monroe to continue teaching for Central City School District when Monroe became a part of Union Hill. Christopher taught Freshman English, Junior English and one section of English for ESL students. He was not certified in ESL, and admitted that the knowledge of ESL as a whole in Union Hill School District is left wanting. He had very strong views on urban education, and said, “I haven’t taught

a long time, but I've seen a lot." At the time of this study he was finishing a Master's degree in secondary education administration.

During my interview with Christopher there were times when he talked passionately about his students, and through his body language, I felt he was often holding back some frustration or other agitation. Though he continued to speak in a calm and careful voice, he would occasionally clench both fists or punch or rub one fist in his other hand. He would stretch his arms up and then behind his head, flexing his arms and clenching his jaw. The day following our interview, I ran into him between classroom observations and he told me he just could not shut off his thinking after our interview.

Susan Tanner was the district high school English coordinator. Though she worked with English teachers throughout the district high schools, her office was located off the library within Monroe High School, so she was especially knowledgeable about the English teachers and program at Monroe. She served as the English coordinator for Union Hill for four years and taught high school English before that. This was her thirty-second year in education, and before coming to Union Hill, she taught in two rural Midwestern districts and for nine years in Texas, changing positions as her family moved for her husband's job. As coordinator, Susan visited classrooms in the district's three high schools and observed, team-taught with, and coached English teachers. She also wrote and evaluated the benchmark testing for the district that aligned with the state standardized test. She oversaw the curriculum writing that will take place the summer following this study.

Dr. Richard Prier began his career in education in 1973 as a classroom teacher. Since that time he has served as assistant principal, principal and as a district director of curriculum and instruction. He has worked in urban, suburban districts and also spent eleven years working for

an educational non-profit organization. When the annexation took place, he was asked by the Union Hill School District to serve as principal and help with the transitional period of Monroe High School. I personally have never heard so many teachers speak so highly of their school principal. The students as well say his name with respect and not disdain or fear. Dr. Prier is described by his teachers as “intense,” “brilliant,” “the most well-read person I’ve ever met,” and “intimidating.” At the same time, teachers also see him as “hands off” regarding the work they do in their classrooms. Though I have referred to all other participants by their first names throughout this study, I have elected to refer to the principal as Dr. Prier. This decision is not based upon some hierarchical statement, but rather reflects the way the teachers refer to their principal. I never heard a teacher refer to him as anything but “Dr. Prier” and so, I want to portray him in the same light and with the same respect that the teacher-participants showed for him.

Chapter Four:

The Meganarratives of Monroe High School

Jean-Francois Lyotard first posed the theory of grand narratives in his book *The Postmodern Condition* (1984), describing them as the materials which “allow the society in which they are told, on the one hand, to define its criteria of competence and, on the other, to evaluate according to those criteria what is performed or can be performed within it” (1984, p.20). Lyotard’s grand narratives theorize the ways cultures create, share and live within commonly told stories. He describes narrative knowledge as existing in opposition to scientific or paradigmatic knowledge because narrative knowledge cannot be “proven” and it cannot be debated. He shows these narrative ways of knowing in direct contrast to positivistic ways of knowing, yet he claims the scientific ways of knowing are still enclosed and understood within the larger grand narratives. Lyotard’s theories of grand narratives and cultural narrative ways of knowing have been connected to narrative research in the social sciences by Polkinghorne (1988) who says, “at the cultural level, narrative also serves to give cohesion to shared beliefs and to transmit values.” (p. 14) therefore they should be studied as interpretations of principles and standards of social groupings. More recently, Georgakoupoulou (2006) extended Lyotard’s ideas and argued for attention beyond the grand narratives and towards the small individual stories that take place within the cultural grand narratives. These smaller, everyday stories allow a fracturing which provides insight into grand narratives of cultures and systems. Bamberg (2006) and Georgakopoulou (2006) differentiate between the big and small stories within narrative inquiry studies, showing how looking at small or big stories allow different views of systems or identities. Clandinin et al (2006) have further described “seeing small” and “seeing big” as looking at narratives from different perspectives – to see either the systematic stories of a group,

culture or society or seeing the day-to-day storied happenings of individuals. In order to better understand the ways teachers at Monroe High School story their living and working within the school, this chapter will portray the systematic, larger stories of the school culture. These stories are the agreed upon narratives that English department teachers tell and re-tell and live through and with as they perform their work within the school.

These larger stories of teaching writing at Monroe High School are similar to Lyotard's grand narratives in that they are shared and lived through by a particular culture. They are accepted as reality and "known" by all the participants, yet they cannot be "proven" in the scientific sense. These I will describe as meganarratives; the larger common narratives shared by a group of people (in this case the English department at Monroe High School). These become frames through which these teachers and administrators view their identities, their work and their students. The term meganarratives is taken from a narrative study on teacher accountability by Olson and Craig (2009) in which they describe meganarratives as "big stories that society has uncritically accepted as sacred" (p.549). These commonly told narratives therefore come to be "sacred" -- seen as truth or reality that one lives and works within. The meganarratives of Monroe High School also interact spatially with moments of overlap, constriction or freedom. These stories are connected to the institution but are created by the people working in the institution and are lenses through which individuals make sense of the institution and their place within its bounds.

In this chapter I will describe the meganarratives as portrayed through the various research texts I collected. These meganarratives became evident when they were told or referred to repeatedly without prompt. They were visible in classroom observations, classroom artifacts

and teachers' reflective journals as well as the formal interviews. It became very clear that these meganarratives were commonly told and re-told through the living and working in this school.

To understand the three-dimensional context of these meganarratives, it is important to first understand the geography and the culture surrounding the school itself. Monroe High School at the time of this writing was one of three high schools in the Union Hill School District. It had the lowest socio-economic status (SES) of the three high schools. There was one middle class to upper middle class high school, and one middle to lower class high school, with Monroe situated as distinctively lower SES. Teachers described that at Monroe, they sometimes felt they were the "step-children" of the district, and when there were district-level professional development programs Monroe teachers said they have felt snubbed and looked down on by the other district teachers. They attribute this outsider status to the economic status of their students and the economic status of the community surrounding their school. When asked to describe this community surrounding Monroe High School, principal, Dr. Prier described the geography, housing and businesses,

Couple of big, major trailer courts. Lots of government housing. A lot of rental property.

Not very much home ownership, and up and down ---- Road, the main thoroughfare, is secondhand stores. Not much business on this side of town.

When I drove to Monroe High School during the months I spent collecting data, I drove about twenty minutes on the highway from my suburban home, and as I exited off the highway, I could turn left into Central City or right towards Union Hill and into an area called Brookpark. This area was unincorporated and was known for its squatters. Brookpark was an area that was never claimed by either Central City or Union Hill, and now has become a sort of no-man's land or forgotten-man's land. There are homes and trailers in this area, but because it is not a part of

Central City or Union Hill, there are no municipal services, and since it is unincorporated, there are no building codes. People lived there with no running water, no trash pick-up, etc. Even though it was not claimed by Union Hill municipality, Brookpark was part of the annexed area taken over when Union Hill School District re-drew its boundary lines. Matthew told me that some of the students at Monroe had addresses in Brookpark. When I traveled to Monroe High School, I drove through Brookpark before entering the edge of Union Hill where the buildings were in disrepair and sometimes vacant. Though there were no sidewalks along the sides of the road there were always pedestrians walking along the gravel shoulder. Upon arriving at Monroe I always felt a bit of astonishment as the school stood out vividly against the scarcity and squalor I had just driven through. My data collection took place during spring months, and there were purple flowers and budding trees and striking landscaping surrounding the school building. There was a perfectly manicured football field and a bright red and silver sign on the front of the building. The school always looked a little out of place standing out from the more decrepit buildings surrounding it and certainly providing a contrast to the other urban schools I was used to seeing, usually with crumbling concrete and ignored weedy lawns. This geography is important in comprehending all five of the meganarratives I will present, but especially the first and most prominent meganarrative of the school's transformation.

Part One: The Narrative of Transformation

The narrative of transformation describes how Monroe High School, which was once a part of Central City School District, was annexed by the Union Hill School District, and through that annexation it was transformed both physically and academically. This narrative was probably the strongest and most visible narrative of this school. Not only was this narrative visible within the confines of the school, but it was also a well-known story in the community

and the larger metropolitan area. The two local newspapers and all three local television stations had over the last few years showcased Monroe high school and the story of the vote for annexation, consequent legal battles between school districts, the proceedings of the annexation and subsequent success in raising graduation rates, college acceptance rates and test scores. Though the district annexation included a total of seven schools, because of Monroe's history of violence and high drop-out rate under the Central City School District, it has become the most visible symbol of transformation of the school district's annexed schools. It is a story of which these teachers and students are all acutely aware.

Through interviews or informal conversations, the storying of transformation usually began with participants discussing the new construction, building renovation and other more cosmetic or structural depictions of change and improvement. These renovations were important symbols in the narrative showing that Union Hill School District cared about the school because it was willing to provide funding and other support. It also symbolized the support of the community and the ways it was able to organize and rally together to bring about this transformation.

The narrative of transformation described by many participants detailed court battles that lasted into summer before the first school year under Union Hill School District. Since Union Hill was unable to take over the annexed school buildings until mid-July, there was community concern that buildings would not be ready to start the school year. A now infamous part of the narrative depicts how community members rallied together that summer to help the district get Monroe High School ready for classes to begin. Susan Tanner, who was at the time working in another school in Union Hill described this story in her interview:

I think one of the major things that happened was when the community all came together and remodeled the school . . . the camaraderie and the pride that came out of that was significant. It was like an extreme makeover and you had a committee . . . they sent out the word, we need, you know we're going to need painting, we're going to need concrete, we're going to do this that and the other. I think they had over a thousand people show up. And they had businesses donate the paint rollers and the paint and all the equipment and people were just given jobs . . . It was a Saturday and a Sunday and they . . . just made it over. And the students, when they came into school, some of the teachers told me the kids made comments like they couldn't believe. Well, Samantha for one, she couldn't believe the change, and just the fact that the school looked different had an impact on the way the kids reacted to it. And I've noticed that it's stayed pretty nice since then too.

The physical transformation of the building after the annexation was followed by further renovations. One year after the annexation, the school district passed a bond issue, which in itself was quite amazing because of the economic climate at the time of the vote. This bond issue allowed the district to totally renovate all the restrooms in Monroe High School, refurbish the heating and air conditioning systems and give Monroe their own football and soccer fields. In previous years, the students and their families had to travel to a neighboring school's fields to play their home games. Dr. Prier said all these district-led renovations again were symbolic and sent important messages to the community,

Again that's a symbol of what was here was junk. And then the new addition at the front end, the new air conditioning and heating systems in this building, new football field and soccer field . . . it's pretty remarkable. So I think all the kinds of things that are symbolic to a community really, I think the kinds of things the system promised, they delivered

them, and it's up to us to provide a quality education. That is harder, but I think that's what we have to do at this point.

And many teachers echoed Dr. Prier's remarks. They appreciated the district's support and understood that there were expectations for them to now help students succeed academically. During interviews, several individuals mentioned the first and most striking symbol of this transformation to teachers and students was when Union Hill took over the schools and the superintendent announced the removal of all metal detectors. At that time all high schools in the Central City School District were equipped with metal detectors and security guards at the buildings' front doors. The superintendent's announcement told the community, teachers and students that Union Hill district expected and would implement a different atmosphere within the school. Dr. Prier told me he still hears students talking about that particular change. Christopher also referenced the metal detectors and connected them to a general feeling of hostility when asked to describe the year he taught at Monroe before the annexation:

I mean there were metal detectors, just the school community as a whole was more hostile. It was, everything was hostile, you know, a screwed up urban district. Teacher versus teacher, student versus teacher, it was, it was chaotic. It wasn't as chaotic as most of the other schools, but it was chaotic. Kids weren't learning . . . and it was frustrating. It was overwhelming and kids took advantage of it and adults didn't help.

Christopher's experience of teaching at Monroe under Central City then teaching at several other Central City high schools before returning to Monroe this year gives him an interesting perspective and allows him to pinpoint not only the physical but also the curricular changes at the school. Samantha also worked with Christopher the year before the annexation, and was the only teacher left at Monroe who has worked there consistently since the Central City Days. She

also often described the curricular transformation of the English department. Samantha and Chris both remarked that the only English class the freshmen had under Central City was Read 180, a literacy program created by Scholastic Inc., which was bought by the school district. In this program, students worked through lessons from computer software, listened and read along to books on tape, and were instructed by their teacher through tightly scripted mini-lessons. Read 180 is a popular program in many school districts and is most often used as a remediation class for students who do not score well on reading tests. Within the program there is little space for teachers to tailor their teaching to their students, and there is little need for teacher reflection or autonomy. It is highly unusual for a high school to place an entire freshman class of students into this program. Chris and Samantha both taught Read 180 at Monroe under Central City and made the following remarks when asked about their teaching:

Christopher:

I taught my first year here, yeah, those prescribed programs like Read 180, they're awful. Awful. Awful. I had to teach that for a year and I told myself that I would quit teaching if I had to teach that again. It's yeah, it's horrible.

Samantha:

. . . but you've got to put that kind of intention into it [writing instruction]. These poor kids they've, their first year they spent in stupid Read 180. Oh yeah. Unless they were in a different building, but yeah, every kid I had was in Read 180, whether or not they needed it.

So the transformation has been much more than cosmetic. While the school has removed metal detectors, renovated the building by providing new heating and cooling system, new bathrooms, and built their own football and soccer fields, the real transformation seems to be in the

instruction. At the district level Union Hill offers three tiers of English classes for its high school students. The top tier consists of Junior and Senior A.P. and freshman and sophomore pre-A.P. classes. The second tier Freshman-senior years are called college preparatory English, so these middle tier classes are still focused upon getting students ready for college reading and writing, but they do not include the Advanced Placement courses. The third tier in the district is a basic English for students who plan to enter the workforce following high school. Though the two other high schools in the district offer all three tiers of English, Monroe does not offer the basic third tier classes. This provides another strand to the transformation narrative that now, under Union Hill, all students participate in more advanced literacy coursework. This strand provides a vivid contrast when one looks at the progress of the seniors I observed during this project. According to the narrative, all graduating seniors were in Read 180 as freshman under Central City School District, but are now enrolled in either A.P. or College Prep. English their senior year under Union Hill.

This part of the narrative becomes more of a sacred story (Clandinin and Connelly, 1999), or a story of the institution that teachers live under, but at times either question or live in opposition to. There were comments made in interviews that poked holes in this thread of the narrative. Yes, everyone agreed that the goal was to get every student prepared for college level reading and writing, and every English teacher said that is what he or she was working towards. Several teachers also told me they saw the literacy skills needed for college as being similar to those “needed for life.” However, there was some doubt that every student graduating was fully prepared for college level writing. The narrative of academic transformation was one of hope, hard work and an earnest goal, yet because of other factors, indeed other narratives, the transformation of English curriculum within the larger narrative of general school transformation

is a thread that has yet to be fully realized. During our interview, Susan and I talked about college level curriculum at Monroe:

Susan: I'm sure in the back of their minds they're saying, "We need to get them ready for college." What the reality is is that a lot of these kids are a long ways from that . . . unless they're in an AP class or you know going through the AP/pre AP track, I would say the majority of students aren't anywhere close to being ready to take a college level English course. . . but I think in the lower level courses, and I may be wrong on this, but they are just getting them through as well as we can, and you know get them the best skills that we can in the time we've got them, and that's when they're coming to school.

Melanie: So do you see the kids that are in the AP classes are improving more or they're just at a higher skill level or do you think the teaching is different? It seems like you are talking about almost two different groups of kids.

Susan: I think a lot of times it's motivation and the kids that are willing to write and rewrite and rewrite and you know have that intrinsic, you know . . . you can't grade a piece of writing that you don't get. And if a kid will not go back and redo it . . . but I think those kids that know they are going to college they know they've got to have that . . . it's just a matter of guiding rather than pulling teeth.

While the sacred story of Monroe High School is the English curriculum has been transformed to prepare all students for college level writing, the reality is sometimes that goal is not met. The secret story many teachers describe is that due to the obstacles of poverty, the differing expectations and academic preparation of the previous district and student motivation, not every student leaves Monroe prepared for college level writing. This narrative of transformation is of course in flux as all narratives are. It takes place within a time and space and a certain

community of narrators and relationships. The thread of academic transformation is a continuing narrative that is being told and co-created by the English teachers as they evaluate and re-evaluate and story and re-story their professional landscapes. Several teachers described how they felt their job would become easier as more and more students would “come up” through Union Hill School District, and they would be used to higher expectations and be better prepared for their high school curriculum. In this way they anticipated the restorying of this narrative and the ways their places in the story might change in the future.

The last thread of the meganarrative of transformation deals with changes in the positioning of teachers and changes in the teachers themselves. Dr. Prier admitted to me that one of the more attractive parts of this job was that he was able to hire almost all of his own faculty. Not all of those teachers have lasted, and Samantha said in one of her interviews that it is a school-wide joke that the staff can tell which teachers Dr. Prier hired, “because the people that he hired have very similar mindsets . . . you get the kids where they need to be come hell or high water. And you don’t give up on them, and if this doesn’t work, you go to something that does. All of us have a certain rebel tendency in regards to outside forces saying what we need to do.” It appears that this “rebel tendency” has benefitted Monroe because the teachers aren’t quitters. They don’t make excuses. From my conversations with them, they are reflective and willing to try new things to solve the problems they face.

These teachers describe having had to deal with the transformation every day in their classrooms as students were shown a new culture and new expectations of behavior and achievement. Allison, who came to Monroe after having taught at a suburban school said this about the transition:

Well, when I started teaching at Monroe I was really surprised that kids didn't know how to be in school. They didn't understand that you are expected to sit in a seat most of the time. That you are expected to have pencil and paper. That you are expected to do work . . . when the first section of grades came . . . they said "well, why don't I have an A?" They'd have C,D, F. And I'd say "because you didn't do your work." And they would say, "well. . . I came to class." . . . and I really hate talking badly about the Central City School District because I think that it's full of a lot of really good people and a lot of really good kids, but they weren't used to that. A lot of kids got good grades for showing up. So that transition has been umm, taxing. It's been hard.

During the time that this study took place, the graduating senior class was the last class to have lived through the transition, and teachers and students were keenly aware that this particular graduation marked an important point in the school. On the last day of school for the seniors a student remarked that her freshman year she walked into a prison and her sophomore year she walked into a school. Other seniors remarked that once they were hated as a school, and now they are accepted. The references to this narrative of transformation were thick within discussions about school and graduation. It was clear that the school identity was firmly rooted in this narrative in its history but also in the looking forward to its future. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe the narrative landscape as being dependent upon temporality, "not as a thing happening at that moment but as an expression of something happening over time. Any event, or thing, has a past, a present as it appears to us, and an implied future" (p. 29). Clandinin and Connelly also describe this temporality as a tension between researchers who work to view the temporal and participants who want to see the story as a timeless event, which is of itself. This narrative of transformation however was impossible to live in and through without

acknowledging the temporal, and teachers would often in their tellings slip from present to past to future easily. The story of their school could not be told outside the space of time and history and potential tomorrows. For example, in one of her journals describing the last day of school with the seniors, Samantha described her emotions while watching “her kids” graduate after having been the only teacher who stayed at Monroe through the transition and all four of their high school years, she thinks of their graduation as a movement in an ongoing narrative, and considers this event as a part of a chronology of transformation she is living and working through:

. . . it's a bit hard. This is the last class of seniors that I think of as "mine." I was with them their freshmen year, through all of the turbulence of the vote and the transfer to Union Hill School District. After this, they are officially "our" kids - I take no more ownership of them and their behavior than any other teacher. I'm not sure if that makes sense- it doesn't really make sense to me, but I have sort of felt...responsible (?) for this group of seniors. Their freshmen year was just hell, and we got through that together, and it's forged a connection.

This narrative of transformation is a constant one within the data and within the day to day working of the school. Of the five meganarratives, this one is the deepest and most commonly told. The other four meganarratives are all told through this story of transition in some way and they would not be told in the same ways if this transformation narrative was not present. The following four narratives are stories on their own, but it should be recognized that each of the four are affected and storied through the lenses of this first meganarrative of transformation.

Part Two: The Narrative of Poverty

When I began drafting these five meganarratives, I shared an outline with both Samantha and Allison for their feedback. Both teachers voiced concern regarding the ways I might portray “our kids.” It was important to both of them that I took care to not describe the students at Monroe as stereotypical poor kids who were hopeless and helpless. Samantha said, “there are already enough of those stories out there.” Allison wrote to me in an e-mail the concerns she had with my outline of meganarratives and the inclusion of the narrative of poverty:

I hope that it doesn't come across as "these kids are poor so they are not as smart or capable as other kids in the district". We don't believe that. (I don't think you think that we do, but I'm just concerned about this.) We believe these kids have come in with fewer social and intellectual skills than other kids in more affluent situations. We know that kids in more affluent situations typically have more parental involvement and support, which our students on the whole seem to lack.

Therefore, I will begin describing these students in what I hope will portray the ways their teachers see them, as capable and resilient, and smart and strong. My first observation at Monroe High School was in Allison’s Advanced Placement English class. This is a junior level class that focuses on composition and writing. Allison was working with a textbook I had used in the past with my first-year college composition students, *Rereading America*. During the class I first observed, they were in small groups, discussing an article regarding wealth in America. I have taught the same article to my own university freshman, so I know the text well, and I know many students find it dry and challenging, full of statistics and implications that are not frankly stated. The group of boys I listened to questioned the text, asking if the statistics it cited are still relevant since it was written several years ago. One boy asked Allison if he could use her

computer to search for comparable and current statistics, then he brought that information back to his group and they not only discuss what the article states, but they extend this to the new and more current economic statistics their classmate has found. During this one class period I can see the curiosity and motivation inherent in these students. They are able to question what they read and are also motivated and knowledgeable in ways to search for more information that will extend their learning or answer their questions. As I observed more classes at Monroe High School I saw this behavior repeatedly, and I was impressed. It became a strange intermingling of intelligence, skill, and motivation in school combined with the stories of fear, sorrow and tragedy of poverty outside of school.

Still, though the teachers at Monroe believed whole-heartedly that their students can succeed, they willingly admitted that for their students to achieve they must overcome some of the obstacles of their impoverished realities. The narrative of poverty remained an important one that affected the ways these teachers viewed and worked with their students. When asked to describe the students at Monroe High School, each teacher referenced the strength and intelligence of the students, but they also described the poverty. This poverty was often described as creating “chaos” in students’ lives and that chaos often affected what faculty could accomplish in school. High absentee rates, lower academic skills, apathy, and inability to complete work outside of school were all described as school issues that were directly or indirectly related to the chaos of poverty in which the students lived. Often, when referencing this poverty, the teachers also expressed that they could not fully relate to where the students were coming from because their students’ lives were so different from what they had experienced. There was sometimes a sense of frustration and sorrow as well because of this difficulty in connecting to their students’

lives. During interviews I asked teachers to describe their students and the school's community. They all described the poverty in response to one or both of these questions:

Allison's description of the community and students:

We are high, high poverty. Within our, you know, our geographic location there are adult shops and liquor stores and A.A. meetings . . . there's a halfway house across the street. So kids come from a lot of chaos, which isn't to say that we don't have students who aren't living with what you would call like a normal happy life, but the majority of our students don't have that sort of American dream life. They're incredibly resilient. They've been through things that I've never imagined, so I don't understand how they get up in the morning and come to school.

Samantha's description:

Poor. Beaten down some of them, stubborn as all get out, resilient, so very troubled, and so very caught in a vicious cycle. Some of them, I would say that the majority of them are poor. The majority of them come from single parent homes. Quite a large number of them have moved districts usually Central City to Union Hill and different schools within Central City, and now they are here. In some ways they are more, they handle more at 18. They see more and handle more than I handle at thirty-two. Deeply troubled families. I think that they see a possibility for different way of life and some of them are so stuck they don't know how to get out of it. And then they see that there is something different and they want it and they know it is possible and then they get so close and then they are involved in a shooting or drug deal or they steal a car or their mom goes back on the pipe and they get kicked out of the house. It's just a vicious cycle. But I do see more of them fighting through. I'm thinking of four, oh goodness really there are five kids that if you

had asked me their freshman year, I would have said, “I don’t know if they’re going to make it.” And they did! They are here and they’re doing it!

Lily’s description of the community surrounding Monroe:

It’s very working class; very poor. It is not, sadly, it is not an area I would feel comfortable living in just yet. I mean that’s important, and I feel bad that I feel that way. I think that there are patches of progress coming up. I think that it’s a lot slower than we all thought it would be. But I think that it’s, things are changing, but it just seems to take a while to make that shift.

Chris’ description of his students:

They’re poor. There’s un-discussed norms . . . social structures, mentalities, values, that are hard for even me to understand that we battle every day.

Matthew’s description of his students:

I would characterize it as a high poverty school. The free and reduced lunch numbers that are reported . . . are in the high 60’s to low 70’s, but I imagine what we have is significantly higher than that because we have a number of students who are undocumented, and so I think that the actual poverty numbers are going to be higher than that 60-70 percent . . . You know they’ve got commitments outside of school. Some of them work to support themselves. Some of them work to help support their families. Some of them don’t live with their families. They live with friends or whoever, whichever couch they can get to that night. A lot of the kids have had some really rough things happen to them. As far as their families or their lives in general, victims of abuse, or drug abuse in their family or bigger than just the poverty issues, you know? Suicides

of family members, you know just problems that I don't even know how to begin to address.

Susan, the district coordinator, on the other hand did not discuss the economic make-up of the student body, nor did she discuss poverty when asked about the community. When asked to describe the students, she expressed some discomfort, and said that what she described to me was really coming “from the teachers’ perspectives because I haven’t had one-to-one contact with the students here.” When asked to describe the community she said, “Ummm, I’m not that familiar with it, so I’d hate to comment on it. I don’t know,” yet after a little more discussion she did describe the ways the community has really come together to support the school. This struck me as interesting especially since she worked in all three of the districts’ schools, I expected her to be able to describe the students and community within the district context. It makes some sense, perhaps that she may not have felt comfortable or capable describing the students or the community when the bulk of her work seemed to focus upon creating and scoring benchmark assessments and working between teachers and administration. She likely had very limited interaction with students and parents and other community members.

The teachers, however, see this narrative as being very much a reality, and not necessarily one that is temporal or in flux. It is a narrative that they often described based upon geography and larger social structures that were beyond their control. The meganarrative of poverty was one of “obstacles” and “chaos” that was clear and visible and unchanging, and because of this, teachers felt they could see it clearly enough to grapple with it, critically think about ways to help their students prevail over it. It was at times overwhelming, yet it was in many ways combatable because the storying of it was so unambiguous and static.

Part Three: The Narrative of Relationship-building

Over and over again during my time at Monroe High School, I heard teachers tell me that relationship building is at the core of what they do at the school. This relationship building included relationships among teachers and staff as well as relationships between teachers and students and relationships among the students themselves. One of the important narratives of the school is that building strong relationships is an integral part of teaching and professional development at Monroe High School. If a teacher doesn't work on connecting with other faculty and students and only wants to focus on academic content, he or she doesn't belong at this school. Allison said, when responding to an early draft of this chapter,

Relationships are huge at Monroe. We believe that these are half the battle. We fight to keep them positive and constructive . . . we feel very accountable to one another. There is never the sense that you can blow something off or not buy-in to something. The environment among staff and administration is that we are all in this together. We are all expected to tow the line.

Allison describes the bi-weekly professional development meetings when teachers would come to the meeting with heavily annotated and studied articles to debate and discuss. She said, you don't dare show up without having read and prepared for the meeting because then you would be letting everyone down and showing them you did not care. This sort of accountability to colleagues was echoed over and over again in the data I collected. This sense of social accountability is also taught to students through classroom management, teaching methodology and the implementation of the weekly Socratic Seminar. This narrative describes a school where relationships among all individuals are considered the basis for success. Without positive and

constructive relationships, so the narrative goes, the rest of the school's goals cannot be implemented as effectively.

When I observed in classrooms and when I watched teachers and administrators working with students at the hall, I recognized subtly different interactions than what I have seen in other urban high schools. Teachers and administrators often looked students in the eye or put their arm around them. They rarely talked down to students or belittled them. The principal, Dr. Prier, was always out in the hall during passing periods, and at the end of every school day he stood outside on the front steps and observed the students as they got on the buses or walked home. He was not only visible, but he was actively engaged with the students on a daily basis. This valuing of relationships was obviously passed down from the school's principal. Samantha told me that she thought Dr. Prier probably knew the name of every kid in the school. When we had our interview, I asked him if that was true. He admitted it was not, and smiled and said unfortunately it takes longer to get to know the good students, the ones who do everything they're supposed to do,

No, I wish that I did, but no, I don't. But I think that's really important. I think kids need to feel that somebody knows them and values them and says "hi" to them, and I think those are the things at the end of the day that are important. My own daughters all taught me that I think. People they valued at school were the people who cared about them. It didn't make much difference what they taught.

The teachers portray this as well. Allison regularly told her class that she cared about them, or that she was proud of them. Less often she would tell them she was disappointed in the ways they were acting or performing; however, this too elicited a reaction from the students. They obviously cared about her opinion. In her initial interview when asked to describe the school,

Samantha spent time describing her relationship with her students and the way she saw the relationships between teachers and students across the school as a parent-child relationship:

Yeah, every day. I tell them . . . very frequently. I tell them I am so very proud of you, because we're their parents. And I think that's another thing that as a staff, we are having a bit of reality check. We knew this would be hard. We knew that we were doing something different and unique and challenging, but it is a whole other thing to realize you are raising these kids. They have 80 parents and they are all in this building . . . You sign on in this area and you're going to raise the kids.

Not every teacher describes their role as parenting the students, but they do all agree that they are concerned about the relationships they have with the students. Students are told out right that they are cared for, and perhaps in less obvious ways, the staff models the relationships they want students to create. That generates a very different sort of atmosphere at the school. Lily described it this way, "I really, I really like our culture . . . the kids by and large will stick up for each other and help each other. You know we have our fights and our differing social groups but I think that we're a pretty welcoming place."

I also witnessed this relationship development through my classroom observations. It was extremely clear that Samantha and Allison used a social and personal pedagogical stance in their teaching of writing. While Samantha focused on knowing her students in order to work closely with them and their writing, Allison created a writing community where everyone in the class was expected to know and respect each other in a collaborative group. She often described her classroom as a "family" when they were moving through emotional material or a "team" when they were working on something especially challenging. There was always a sense of community, trust and positive interdependence.

In all the classroom observations I observed over the eleven weeks as I observed writing instruction in Samantha and Allison's classes, only once did I observe direct instruction. Every other class I observed was engaged in one of the following activities: teacher-student writing conferences, response group or discussion group activities, whole group discussions, classroom presentations, or independent reading, writing or research. Besides the independent reading, writing and research, the writing classes I observed were engaged in learning activities that were dependent upon a classroom community built upon strong and trusting relationships. These relationship-based activities were created to move students further in their thinking. Small groups were utilized so students could, for example, see their writing through another person's perspectives. In large group discussions, students were asked to begin by writing and then sharing opening questions. These activities allowed students to see their writing within a dialogue, communicating with an authentic audience. They were not writing just to the teacher, nor were they writing in isolation without the help of other points of view or feedback. These small groups, large groups and conference configurations also allowed students to see their reading and writing through more critical lenses. Whenever students participated in these activities, either a teacher asked questions to activate their thinking, or they were required to ask questions of each other. These activities will be described in more depth in later chapters, but it is important to connect the pedagogy to this narrative. If the relationships had not been in place, the pedagogy would not have been as successful because students would not have been as likely to listen to each other's voices nor would they be as likely to trust their own.

While everyone spoke of the importance of relationships at the school, two teachers, Lily and Christopher described important variations on the narrative, complicating it a bit and

expressing that the relationships, while important, still need work and perhaps even renewed attention. Lily described how she saw the change in this narrative over time:

Yeah, I think we've lost a bit of that cohesiveness but the first year we worked really really really hard. It was the hardest year of my career. It was harder than my first year teaching . . . and when we were in the trenches, we were in it together and when we worked. The whole staff, and I've never worked somewhere where I knew everybody on the staff, and that year, I knew everybody that worked here, and that was through a principal working his hardest to get us to understand that we're either going to sink or swim, but we've got to do it together. And we've lost a little bit of that as we've grown. In students and in staff, we don't have the luxury of taking all this time, this touchy-feely time now. It's like, we've got stuff to do.

Once again, this narrative is dependent upon the temporal for some teachers and one that has changed and is changing. Everyone I spoke with believed relationships were at the core of their work and success at Monroe, but only Lily and Christopher described this narrative as one that could still be in flux and revisited for improvement and further development. Lily's take on the meganarrative of relationships also ties it tightly to the narrative of transformation. This is a subtle connection through most telling of this narrative, but Lily's is the most concrete connection that relationships helped them transform the school, allowed them "to sink or swim . . . together." As a newcomer to the department, Christopher spoke enthusiastically about his colleagues and the way he has been welcomed and included into the English department at Monroe, he also veered slightly from the shared meganarrative of relationship-building when described places where they needed to work harder:

I've been in five staffs in four years . . . they talk about relationship building in this building all the time . . . And I think we're finding cracks right now, and I think its stressing a lot of people out. But again, we're making moves to change which I think is amazing. It's a hard conversation to have. I don't understand, how do I have a conversation with a family that's black and talk about issues that they're having that I can't understand because I am a white male? We talk about wanting to make community relationships, but we don't really address it. And then we do things like – which we need to do too – we'll hire more black teachers. That's still not dealing with the issue . . . you've got to have the conversations too.

While everyone at Monroe High School discussed the importance of relationship building in terms of relationships with students and staff, Christopher extends and complicates this meganarrative to include and consider relationships with the community. He sees this as the next step and an important concern for the future. Christopher's extension continues this narrative geographically into the surrounding community and temporally into the future. He also is concerned that the relationships with the community will be challenging because the teachers are predominantly white middle class. He sees this conflict as something they haven't begun to deal with because "it's a hard conversation to have," yet it is one that he believes will need to take place for relationship building to really occur within the school community.

Part Four: The Narrative of Testing

Under NCLB schools are expected to improve test scores each year until achieving 100% proficiency in 2014. As this date looms and as many educators argue 100% proficiency is statistically impossible, the pressure to perform better on standardized tests is becoming a more serious concern than it has been in past years. High stakes testing is a pressure all American

public schools face, but the pressure is especially acute in schools like Monroe where students come to them with fewer resources and limited academic experiences. The state in which Monroe is located has had for many years included a writing performance event on its standardized test in Language Arts/English. This year, for the first time, the state Language Arts test is entirely multiple-choice and has no writing component. The teachers I spoke with assumed this was a funding issue because it is much cheaper to score scantron sheets than it is to pay people to score students' writing. Because of this change in the testing, and because of the incredible pressure they feel regarding this test, both of the Sophomore English teachers, Allison and Lily, admitted to me that they did not teach writing in any substantial way until after the test, so realistically students were only provided with acceptable writing instruction during the last month of the school year. This was a decision they regretted, but the pressure to perform well on the test was too intense, and they voiced fear at not spending every second they could on test-preparation. This narrative of testing echoes current scholarship describing the effects of standardized testing on writing curriculum. Several studies have shown that standardized, high stakes testing generally narrows curriculum (Ramirez, 1999; Smith, 1991) to the point that what is being taught in classrooms mirrors exactly the minimum of what appears on a test. Other scholarship has shown that standardized testing influences both teacher and student attitudes toward writing instruction in negative ways, lowering student motivation, and hindering teacher creativity and reflective practice (Mabry, 1999). Ketter and Pool (2001) showed that high stakes testing decreases reflective practice and inhibits locally informed, individualized instruction. Sandra Murphy (2007) shows how because of high stakes tests, classroom writing instruction at best begins to mirror the tested genres or tasks. At worst writing is eliminated from the

curriculum and replaced by skill-building exercises, grammar drills and the like. Unfortunately this last scenario seemed to be happening at Monroe High School.

It was painful to talk about this with the teachers, because they all saw what was happening and they were doing what they could to make up for it, but they also felt caught. They were afraid that if they did not teach to the test, the students' test scores would go down and the school would be seen as a bad school and they would be seen as bad teachers. On the other hand, when they did teach for the test they felt like bad teachers anyway because they were not teaching what they personally believed was best for their students. It was a terrible dilemma to be caught within. Two teachers, Lily and Allison, commonly voiced fear and frustration because they carried the burden of teaching Sophomore English and the year students were tested. In a conversation with Allison she explained the frustration felt at the school because of the lack of writing instruction:

So that's very frustrating because . . . every English teacher *would* feel like writing is the most important skill that I want you to leave with . . . and we just don't have the time to devote to it because of these standardized tests, so . . . The state eliminated entirely the writing portion this year. They say that they are testing writing because there is a short series of questions, probably four or five that relate to grammar and punctuation and so they say . . . because those are features of writing that they are testing writing, which of course we laugh at because that's not true at all. If you can't write your own ideas down then no matter how you punctuate it, it doesn't matter. . . it's a moral problem as a teacher when you feel like you know what's best for kids and you're not allowed to do it.

Though it is not openly discussed and wasn't mentioned at all by Dr. Prier or Susan Tanner, the other teachers in the department also realized what was going on, and they seemed sympathetic

towards their colleagues who were in a morally problematic situation of not wanting to teach to the test but feeling they must to the exclusion of writing instruction. It was a problem that the sophomores were not getting substantial writing instruction until the last month of school. What made this even more problematic was teachers across the department said that because of the sophomore year standardized testing, their students really weren't exposed to adequate writing instruction until their junior year. By their junior and senior years, teachers said they were playing a lot of catch-up, and so in this way the test was hurting every single year of instruction. Again, the other English teachers were sympathetic to their colleagues and did not point fingers or blame, as they believed they were doing the best they could within the confines of high stakes testing. When discussing school-wide writing curriculum, Matthew and Christopher shared they believed writing was not being taught well the first two years at Monroe.

Matthew: They [students] are still struggling [in their writing] because I don't think they've been asked to do it consistently. Or at all. I think that English II teachers are under a tremendous amount of pressure to produce test scores and writing sometimes takes a backseat to that. I think that they would probably cop to that and they would probably say they're sick about it but they don't know what to do. And they don't. I wonder if they maybe feel safer not writing. If they feel safer teaching the reading strategies that they feel the kids are going to need in order to test well. And so they feel kind of hamstrung by that. It's kind of the impression I get. And maybe they are starting to move beyond that, but it's really tough because the kids are juniors and they've never written a paper before.

Melanie: So you feel that they are not writing papers until they get to their junior year?

Matthew: I don't want to say that. I don't feel like they are writing consistently. I don't feel like they are writing anything of depth or substance that approaches like . . . you know . . . a five paragraph essay over a 100 page novel is not college level work, but it's a primer, it's preparation. Somehow if we can get them to where they need to be, but we can't start in 11th grade and get them there in time. So I think they're behind the 8-ball on that and at a deficit because they lack the perseverance, the reading stamina, the writing stamina, the ability to work longer and harder on something that's challenging.

Christopher:

Now we just drop those [writing] skills on them their junior and senior years. We realize that and we're kicking ourselves. . . I think because our kids are so far behind reading wise . . . It's all reading comprehension. And it is driven by the test and it is driven by the fact that . . . they're so far behind. Their junior and senior year we say "You get to write!" and "You better get ready to write!"

So according to this meganarrative of testing, students came to Monroe with such low reading skills that teachers felt that was where their focus had to be – on reading and not writing. Since the standardized test incorporated no writing and tested only reading comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, and literary device identification in a multiple choice format, the teachers focused on getting them up to speed in their reading and helping them memorize literary devices, grammar rules and prefixes and suffixes that might help them on the test.

The other common strand in this narrative of testing was that everyone readily admitted that the test did not measure anything important, but they had to "play the game" because that was the only way they were evaluated. They all seemed to see the test as a game they had to play and conquer in order to keep the level of autonomy they currently held within the district. What

felt ironic to me as a researcher was that the teachers and administrators described the test as meaningless, yet because those outside the school valued the test, the teachers and administrators had to teach and act as if it truly was valuable. Even the principal admits that this is the case:

Melanie: I wanted to know more about how you think standardized testing fits into the teaching of writing at your school. . .

Dr. Prier: I don't think standardized testing is related to anything.

Melanie: And how do you feel about that? How do you deal with that as an administrator?

Dr. Prier: I try not to apply any pressure on teachers, unless I feel like they are blowing it off. I don't think we currently have anybody who is like that. I try to be as fair and honest as we can. We talk about it. There's so many people who write about it. I try to share those things . . . but at the end of the day, we all agree, this is what we are being judged on. So, we're going to play the game, and that's what it is. It's a game and we find a way to game the system. I was interested last week the Governor of California began to question the laying off of 10,000 teachers and spending 2 billion dollars on testing and where those things fit. He's called into question why we do this, and he's really the first political leader who is doing this I think across the country. Yeah, I don't know how to match it . . . my wife is a reading teacher and is, I can't tell you the number of conversations she and I have had about this and how disgusting she finds this entire thing.

But playing the game seemed to have real academic consequences on curricular decisions and it also had moral and ethical consequences for these teachers when they were pressured to teach things they saw as unimportant to the exclusion of curriculum they thought was meaningful.

One of the most telling times of my data collection was the actual week of the test. I hoped to spend time with Allison during this week to see how she felt and how she worked in her AP class while she knew her sophomores were taking their standardized tests. On Monday morning, however, Allison sent me an e-mail asking me to stay away that week. She felt she would not be teaching at her best and preferred that I did not observe. I admittedly was a little disappointed but did not want to add to her stress, so I asked if she would be comfortable if I observed her on Friday that week after the testing was finished. When I did observe her on Friday, she seemed worn out and told her AP students she was fighting a migraine. I was worried for her and a little shocked that she had actually become sick from the stress of the test her sophomores had taken. I was worried that she would have to go through the same thing again when her AP students took their test, so I asked her when that would be, and was she getting worried about it. She looked at me surprised, and said, “Oh they took it this week, on Wednesday. I haven’t even thought about it. I think some of them said they did okay.”

And at this point I saw, sadly, how this narrative of testing put pressure on these teachers in very imbalanced ways. Allison saw this too, and admitted that she was putting a lot of pressure on herself because in some ways it seemed what the state standardized tests portrayed to the community was more pressing than what she did with her AP class. In a journal she wrote during the week following her sophomores’ testing, Allison lamented her position in this meganarrative and portrayed her stress and fear in the larger context of the school year and the political climate surrounding education. This meganarrative of testing within Monroe was obviously a part of a larger narrative created at the national policy level. This narrative was in turn controlling the living and storying of other narratives in schools across the country. As I read Allison’s journal I knew her voice was particular to her school and situation. It was the

voice of an individual teacher who cannot represent all other teachers, but at the same time when I read her words, I could not help but imagine the many other teacher voices that were unable to share similarly poignant narratives of struggling and testing in their particular communities and schools. Here is an excerpt from Allison's journal written the week after testing:

The stress that accompanies teaching this course is beyond description. . . .
Somehow we managed every day to enter our classrooms and hide this sense of doom from our students. Instead of drill and kill and passing on the pressure we were feeling, we exposed them to literature that challenged them to open their worldview like Elie Wiesel's *Night* and Judith Ortiz Cofer's *An Island Like You*. We gave them life-changing experiences like participating in a school-wide poetry slam that allowed every student the opportunity to define themselves through words and then present that poetry proudly to their classmates. And we snuck the learning in there along the way. We decided early in October after attending a Cris Tovani seminar that the only way to really positively impact these students literacy skills was to give them purposeful strategies that would allow them to grow as readers and to solve problems in challenging texts that they encountered. We worked hard. We assessed students' skills along the way, and we went back to the grind every day, reflecting on what worked and what didn't, and redeveloping lessons so students could master the skills. Another strategy we used specifically in our classroom was developing positive relationships. We knew that if students didn't want to work for us, if they didn't like us, if they didn't want to come to our classroom, that no amount of strategies, benchmarking, or assessment could possibly get us to where we needed to be, come springtime. Relationships are a do or die kind of thing. You either have them and they help you, or you don't, and it hurts.

Anyway, we finally revealed to our students the gravity of the situation. We explained to them that we thought this kind of testing was unreliable and unfair. We told them that we didn't want to have give them the test because we didn't think it captured their learning or growth in any real or significant way. We pointed out that we could go on and on and on and on about how far they had come during the year and how special each of them are to us. We had to tell them that our jobs depended on their work. It was disgusting to admit that to our students. It felt wrong and dirty. It felt like we were betraying what we believed teaching to be in front of the people who meant the most to us. And then they tested. And we prayed.

Even though the standardized testing did not occur in the classes I observed, and the tests themselves had little or nothing to do with college readiness or college writing, the meganarrative of testing was a powerful one. It influenced what English teachers were able to do and teach to their junior and senior level college-bound students. Beyond the curricular effects, as can be seen through many of the teachers' descriptions, this meganarrative also greatly affected the way teachers viewed their own autonomy, efficacy and professionalism. The test presented practical curricular concerns for the English department, but more sinister and far-reaching were the ethical and personal effects of this narrative.

Part Five: The Narrative of Teacher Autonomy

The last meganarrative of Monroe High School is the narrative of teacher autonomy. All of the teachers I spoke with described how they were encouraged to take risks and try new things in their classrooms. They believed they were treated as professionals and expected to perform professionally. Teachers said they felt supported by the administration, and frankly, I have never witnessed a faculty that so respected and appreciated their principal. It was clear that the

empowerment these teachers felt came from the school leadership. In all of my interviews, I never asked questions related to administrative policy or relationships with administration, yet the importance of Dr. Prier's leadership was mentioned over and over again:

Allison:

. . . the school district was really receptive to us having our administrator who is sort of radical and doesn't necessarily follow all the rules. He's not necessarily part of the boys' club, you know?

Samantha:

I dread the day Dr. Prier retires. I absolutely dread that day. Because you can't work in this dynamic without that! I mean talk about amazing. I mean that scares the bejesus out of me. I mean, who can replace Dr. Prier? Who?!

Matthew:

I feel that I have the freedom to try new things educationally, to take risks, and that the only expectation that is placed on me associated with that is that if something doesn't work, I'll figure out why and I'll figure out how to do it in the way that it will work . . . and if our administrator comes into my room, we're doing some kind of activity that seems strange or unfamiliar or just you know this isn't kids reading textbooks and answering questions . . . I think they're going to come into the room and they're going to look and they're going to say, "That's interesting. What are you doing right now?" and after I explain myself, [he'll say] "You'll have to let me know how that turns out." And that's really . . . It's amazing. I don't feel micromanaged at all.

The principal respected his teachers. He was "hands off" except for the Socratic Seminar.

Teachers were expected to be professionals through their teaching, scholarship, collaboration and

curriculum design. For this year's professional development, Dr. Prier gave each teacher a book on the topic of curricular reform. Every other week, the entire faculty discussed a reading from the book and worked to apply the principles to their own school and context. Because of this sort of professional development design, Dr. Prier established a culture among his teachers where they were expected and encouraged to do the research and the work to reform their own curriculum based upon their professional knowledge and experience. This was a direct result of Dr. Prier's vision of school administration. When I interviewed Dr. Prier, one of the first questions I asked him was to describe the work he did at Monroe High School:

Melanie: The next question is can you describe your job. You're principal but could you describe what you do?

Dr. Prier: I try to create an environment among the adults where they feel powerful enough to create a classroom and a school that works to meet the needs of these kids. The phrase I like to use is "build the capacity." If the adults in the building are smart enough and insightful enough then they can create this good school that is not dependent on one person to make that happen.

Melanie: Do you think that is unusual that your focus is on the adults and not the kids?

Dr. Prier: I don't know. Maybe, but I think most schools are run to be efficient and not to be educational institutions.

The fact that teachers were allowed to try new techniques, were in fact "allowed to fail" as one teacher described, portrayed an unusual level of trust between administration and teachers. The failings by teachers at Monroe would come not through failing because of apathy or ignorance, but failing through the attempt to gain new ground. The teachers at Monroe spoke often of learning from their mistakes, and taking risks to move their students further. There was a

collective sense that their professional growth came from their ability to innovate and take such risks.

What was fascinating and somewhat tragic in this narrative was that teachers felt empowered to try new things and innovate within their classrooms, yet this narrative of autonomy was swallowed up by the narrative of testing. They believed in their professional knowledge, and every single English teacher described his or her ability and freedom to act upon this professional knowledge. At the same time the curriculum of Monroe's English classes was very dependent upon state standardized testing and the teachers' stories of this testing. Writing was not taught in the ways teachers saw it should be until students reached their junior year. At that point teachers had more freedom, but because the students were not adequately prepared, much of junior and senior level English curriculum was based upon the need to "catch them up" to where they needed to be. English teachers were conflicted because their professional knowledge told them their students needed to write more consistently and needed to participate in more "authentic literacy" practices, yet because of the pressures of standardized testing, they were afraid to veer away from test prep which was anything but "authentic literacy."

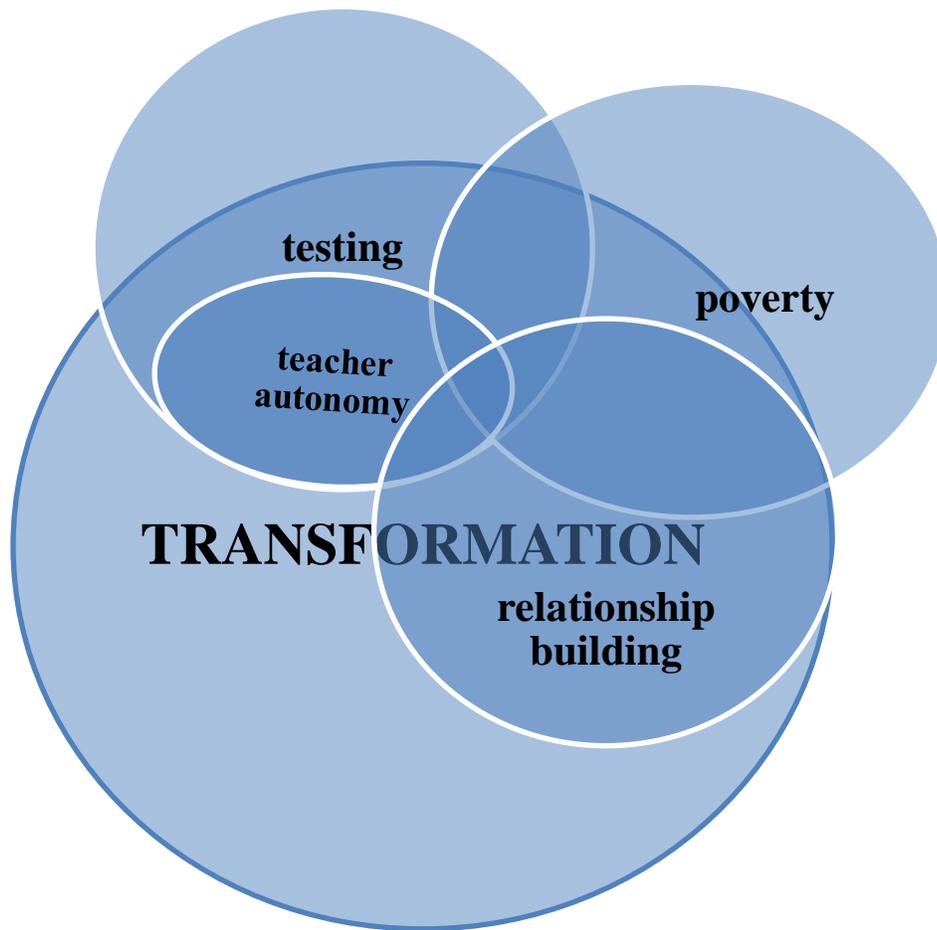
While I collected data at Monroe, the teachers were working on curricular reform and much of the reform focused around what they termed "authentic literacy" experiences. Dr. Prier told the teachers they should plan to reform the curriculum even if it seemed different from district curricular goals or what the other Union Hill district high schools were doing. The teachers all seemed excited at the prospect of "doing what makes sense" because to them this translated to more reading, more writing, and less test-preparation. They also felt a little nervous about how it would work or how it would be seen by district administration or how their students

would do on standardized tests. They felt empowered, yet they felt anxious when given this autonomy.

Part Six: The Interaction and Overlapping of Meganarratives at Monroe High School

To show the relationships between these meganarratives, I have followed the methodology suggested by Craig (2007) who portrays stories of teaching and school through graphics she terms “story constellations” to illustrate the layers and spatial interplay among shared narratives. The graphic depiction of the meganarratives of Monroe’s English department (see Figure 1) shows visually where these meganarratives overlap, influence one another, or even swallow up other narratives. Four of the meganarratives work within the realm of and are affected by the fifth meganarrative of transformation. The change in the school after its annexation has been a narrative that determines much of how teachers and students live and act within the school. The meganarrative of transformation, then, affects all other narratives in some way. Further analysis of the interplay among and within these meganarratives will be described in chapter seven; however, as the meganarratives are described in the rest of this chapter, this story constellation will depict the scope and interplay of these shared narratives:

Figure 1. Story Constellation of Meganarratives of Monroe High School's English Department



The meganarrative of transformation was clearly established in Monroe's English department and the school in general. It was such a powerful narrative and one so connected to the community, geography and history of the school, all other meganarratives were seen at least partially, if not entirely, within its frame. The meganarrative of transformation was also one that was in a state of flux dependent upon the history of the school and community. As it is changes, the narratives within its bound also would be affected by and adapted through this change.

The meganarrative of poverty was told as one origin of the transformation. The transformation of the school was necessary and indeed became an ongoing story partially because of the poverty of the community and the historical systemic obstacles that this poverty produced. At the same time, the meganarrative of poverty was not seen by many teachers as a story that was in flux. It was seen as a static reality independent of the school and the teachers. The meganarrative of poverty influenced and overlapped with the meganarrative of transformation; however, there was a part of this narrative situated very sturdily outside any narratives of school. It was seen as a story independent of the work of the school, which many teachers struggled to comprehend, yet one to be dealt with and overcome for the transformation to be successful.

The meganarrative of relationship building was firmly situated within the meganarrative of transformation. This story was important in creating teacher-collaboration and leadership at the time of the annexation and continued to be important as the school remained within this transformation narrative. The relationships between teachers and students have been storied as integral to the transformation by showing students that the hostility of the past was no longer, that they were cared for and valued. This meganarrative of relationship building also overlapped with the poverty narrative as many teachers described their need to connect with students due to a deficiency in the students' home-lives. One example of this was when Samantha described the teachers at Monroe as being parents to the students; she based that description within the narratives of relationship building but also within the ways she storied her students' impoverished realities. This narrative of relationship building also overlapped to a smaller extent within the meganarrative of testing and teacher-autonomy because both of these narratives referenced relationships as motivating factors. Teachers described students as motivated to work,

to learn, and even to perform better on standardized tests when they felt secure and cared for in school. These feelings of care came directly from the relationships with teachers, administration and other students. Similarly, teachers storied their autonomy within the frame of being respected and cared for. They told stories of positive interdependence, where all teachers worked together and were supported to try new things. Their autonomy came from supportive and respectful relationships among each other and with their principal.

The meganarrative of testing was a strong one that was also swallowed up partially by the narrative of transformation. Teachers were aware that the community, district and general public visualized the transformation of the school through the improvement of standardized test scores. While in many ways this story infuriates the teachers, they also saw this story as “a game they must play” or a story they must live. They did not see themselves as authors of this story, but instead saw this story told by those outside the school but still influencing the particular storied space they must work within. At times teachers seemed to participate in the telling of this story, and other times they did not want to take responsibility for its telling. There were not many instances where teachers wanted to actively resist it. With the possibility of reforming next year’s curriculum, and indeed due to the meganarrative of teacher autonomy, this meganarrative of testing may be in flux and some restorying and resistance may play out. Allison described her fear of not teaching to the test next year, even though she knew that was what her students needed and what the reformed curriculum would demand. The interplay between the two meganarratives of testing and teacher autonomy could continue in conflict for the next few years as teachers decide how to stop playing the game or living within the story of testing by becoming more fully autonomous and influential.

Finally, then, this meganarrative of teacher autonomy was one that may go through the most change as teachers view themselves as autonomous, yet this autonomy was firmly swallowed up by the narrative of testing which in turn is mainly couched within the narrative of transformation. Therefore, teachers storied themselves as autonomous; they felt they were able to take risks and make curricular choices. They were not however free to do this beyond the constraints of standardized testing. Since the test did not include writing, there was little substantial writing instruction until after the test was taken. Therefore the test itself was constraining the freshman and sophomore writing curriculum and teachers' autonomy to teach based upon their professional judgment. In the junior and senior level English classes, though the teachers did not have a test weighing over their heads, this narrative still affected their instructional autonomy because the curricular inheritance of the testing meganarrative constrained what writing tasks students were prepared to undertake.

If we look at these five meganarratives spatially, there are clearly layers and interactions and spaces of movement and restriction. It is within these spaces that the teachers of Monroe worked to prepare their students for college level writing. Through this storying and restorying, teachers constructed curriculum and worked with students who in turn participated in their own narratives. While these meganarratives established certain spaces, the spaces also provided allowances for independent storying. LeFebvre (1991) describes dominated space as that which is "closed, sterilized, emptied out", and appropriated space as that which is "defined by the group, not the master" (p. 165) In some ways these meganarratives of Monroe High School, the group became the master encroaching upon individual storying and affecting the movements of individual teachers within curricular space. Lefebvre also reminds us that systems (and the systemized stories of meganarratives) may seem immobile, but that is only from our habituated

assumptions which blind us to the places where initiative can create movement “that makes the edifice totter” (p. 41). It is through the smaller stories of individual teachers that we can see the initiative, then, where we can view the ways teacher agency truly occurs. While there were powerful meganarratives being told and lived out by the teachers at Monroe, there were also equally powerful smaller stories of agency and teacher knowledge, and these were the stories that created movement, adaptation and even tottering of seemingly immobile meganarratives of definition or constraint.

Chapter 5:

Samantha's Small Stories of Personal Relationships and Individualized Instruction

Connelly and Clandinin (1999) describe three interpretive devices within narrative inquiry. "Broadening" is seeing the general context of the storying, the bigger stories, the grand narratives. Their second interpretive device is what they call "burrowing", or seeing the events from the perspectives of the participants. Finally there is "restorying" which portrays movement on teachers' knowledge landscapes by understanding events from teachers' perspectives within the larger narrative context. Chapter Four of this dissertation focused upon the meganarratives of the English department of Monroe High School and "broadened" the storied landscapes of the two participants, Samantha and Allison. This chapter and the next will use the interpretive devices of burrowing and restorying to provide different perspectives of two different storied accounts of preparing students for college writing at Monroe. Within these chapters, the focus will be not on the meganarratives of Monroe High School, but the smaller day-to-day stories of individual experience. The particular focus on small stories in narrative inquiry is a fairly new development, one that Georgakopoulou (2006) has described as "the second wave of narrative analysis" (p.123). Olson and Craig (2009) have described this second wave as extremely valuable because "small stories are lived as interpretive breaks to the canonical nature of meganarratives that have become frozen . . . as paradigmatic imperatives" (p. 551). Georgakopoulou (2006) describes these small stories as fleeting, non-canonical bits that are often overlooked because they do not follow the expected structure of narrative. Therefore, within narrative inquiry, when we focus only upon the bigger stories, the meganarratives, and ignore the smaller fleeting moments, we become blind to the places where actual movements are made,

identities are positioned and spaces are appropriated. Bamberg (2006) describes the important point at which we see the larger narratives and smaller stories in relation to one another:

It is at this juncture that we come full circle by showing how narrators position themselves in relation to discourses by which they are positioned. In other words, analyzing narratives in interaction along these lines enables us to circumvent the aporia of two opposing subject theories, one in which the subject is determined by preexisting discourses and master narratives, the other in which the subject is the only ground from which narratives (and selves) are constructed. (p. 145)

Therefore, the smaller stories of Samantha and Allison portray these “narratives in interaction” where each teacher is empowered to truly story her teaching of writing within the contexts of the department’s meganarratives. Though these smaller stories are but snapshots of their teaching, the snapshots will allow us to see the individual curricular decision making of writing instruction as it is lived within individual classrooms.

During the eleven weeks I spent at Monroe High School, I observed Samantha’s sixth hour senior-level College Prep English class one to four times per week. I observed during the last few months of school, and the class was made up of graduating seniors, so when I began the research project I imagined this class would be easing into a slower pace over the time I observed. That was not the case at all. Over the eleven weeks, the students worked through three major assignments (see appendix for assignment handouts). The first was an analytical paper about the novel, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* by Mark Haddon. Samantha described this assignment as the most challenging of the semester, and asked students to not only analyze a feature of the novel but also incorporate outside sources. Following that paper, the students worked through two assignments simultaneously to finish out the school year. The first

was an individual-choice reading response assignment over a novel. The second was a written paper and class presentation reflecting on one's educational past and future aspirations (see appendices for assignment handouts).

During the weeks I observed, there was very little direct classroom instruction in Samantha's class. Any direct instruction took place on-on-one in student-teacher conferences. Most often the students worked at computers in the lab or library with Samantha asking them one by one to e-mail their drafts to her, which she would then open up on her computer and hold individual conferences, student by her side. When these conferences weren't occurring, Samantha sometimes would divide the class in half, allowing half the class to work in response groups while she circulated around the other half, and checked in with students. Depending upon the needs of students, conferences could take 10-25 minutes, and while Samantha worked with individual students, the rest of the class worked on their assignments, busily writing, reading, researching on the internet, creating presentation materials, or working in peer response groups. I was often impressed by how engaged the students were in their work, considering they were seniors about to graduate in a few short weeks. I was also impressed by how riveted they were to Samantha's feedback whenever she worked with them individually. In one of her journals, Samantha described the management and teaching style in her college prep classroom in the following way:

CPE [College Prep English] does become a much more independent environment in the last few months. The first semester is a more traditional setup, with more teacher-centered instruction. I spend a lot of time modeling various skills and then allowing them time to independently practice those skills (analytical reading, how to edit and revise, transitions, etc.). Second semester is all about the application of those skills and is a more

self-directed/self-driven environment (well, to a certain extent - I still keep pretty close tabs on what they're doing and where they are with their work).

It was interesting for me to come in at the end of the year and see how the classroom atmosphere had been created. The students were obviously becoming independent learners (an attribute Samantha told me she thought was important for college success) and though they listened carefully to her feedback and asked questions at times, the students engaged in their writing and their studies without much prodding from their teacher. Besides the study skills and independent learning styles Samantha imparted upon her students to get them ready for college, she also had specific ideas about what college writing looked like. She described her ideas about teaching college preparatory writing in the following ways:

What you would be asked to do in college: research and effectively communicate what you've learned from your research, to be able to convince someone your opinion is correct and these are the reasons your opinions are correct. . . those are skills of life.

I think where we struggle with our current seniors and where we'll probably struggle for the next two years I imagine is stamina with reading and writing . . . the ability to stick with revision and the ability to recognize what you are saying on the paper is not what you are saying in your mind. My kids today are not what I would consider college ready. We haven't had enough time with them . . . but they're not where the kids in two or three years, four years from now will be and it's not against them. It is what it is and it is what we have to deal with. They can't communicate effectively on paper. It's hit or miss. They don't know how to fight past that hesitancy or how to fight through writing. They don't know how to fight through it. They don't know that all you do to pass through writer's

block is just keep writing, and I have not yet been able to get them to, all of them, to understand it's a process that you have to push through.

These ideas of reading and writing “stamina” and “fighting through” were prominent in Samantha’s pedagogy. Her common response to students in the beginning stages of writing was, “Just get it down on paper. Just write. We can fix it later. Just write.” Then, as promised, she spent generous amounts of time sitting with students one-on-one talking with them about their writing in class and after school. These talks took place at the computer where she wrote out their discussions into the students’ own drafts. When she responded to drafts outside of conferencing, she also spent vast amounts of time pouring over the writing and writing notes and modeling strategies for students within their own texts. She said she wanted to show her students that writing is hard work, and revision is a huge part of writing. She explained that though she had taken many courses on composition and writing instruction at three different universities, she learned much of what she knew about teaching writing through her own experiences as a writer. She saw her instructional methodology as a way of modeling, of showing students this is how a writer thinks through her draft, and this is the sort of decision-making that occurs in the revision process.

Besides teaching the experiences of process writing and knowing the scholarship in the teaching of writing, Samantha spent a lot of time getting to know her students personally. She came to know who they were as people and as writers. Through this understanding, she knew each student’s strengths and weaknesses and how each student responded to her conferences. After watching many of these writing conferences, it became clear that she tailored each conference to her students’ writing needs, but also their personalities. Some students received a quiet voice and supportive encouragement to work harder. Other students were praised

boisterously and then given very directive instructions in how to improve their drafts. Still other students received questions and were allowed to answer these and find their own way. These movements from one student's needs to another would change so smoothly and quickly within the course of one class period, I was enthralled at how masterfully Samantha could "read" each student, and respond so precisely to their current writerly needs. In one interview, Samantha described with great confidence that she knew her students and she knew the scholarship, and her instruction was based where those two realms of knowledge meet:

I trust my own voice . . . I am much better about taking other peoples' input and putting it in the context of how I know my kids and what I think is best for my kids. I value my co-workers' opinions, but at the end of the day, especially at this point on the year – April, I know my kids. I know what they're capable of. I know their attitudes. I know my kids. I know what best to do for them. I know perhaps better than some people what knowledge you need for the workforce . . . and it's not an instinct; I don't do anything on instinct. I think about it. I've done the research. I've read the articles. I stay current on what's going on. I've worked in the real world. I know people who work in the real world. I know college admissions directors. I know what they need. I trust that I know what they need and I trust myself more that I know how to get them there.

I was always struck by Samantha's confidence, yet her willingness to admit mistakes and to take risks. She shared with me stories of times she made mistakes in the past, and said she was thankful for those opportunities because they made her a better teacher. She described her earlier years teaching as years where she carried "a chip on her shoulder" when she said she "distrusted my own voice." Her earlier years she felt defensive because she was a Central City teacher, and she was teaching English even though her degree was in political science, and she spent the

beginning of her career in the business world. There was a part of her that felt she needed to prove something to somebody. During the study however, she described having been through a transformation over the last few years, and she began to see herself as possessing valuable professional knowledge and the expertise to accurately judge what her students needed, why and when they needed it, and the best way to provide it for them. Part of this knowledge came from her coursework in education. Part of it came from her experiences, especially the mistakes and failures she described. She was also proud of the collaboration with her colleagues at Monroe and viewed this network as evidence of her expertise as well:

What we want them [students] to have is what we believe they need. That belief is not generated by teddy bears and unicorns. That belief comes from 90% of us have our Master's degrees in education. 90% of us have spent years researching what kids need, and we're well-read and well-versed and we know. We are professional teachers. We know what our kids need. And we also know where they are at. And we know I would say more than any group of teachers I've ever seen -- even my friends who are teachers [at other schools]. I know my kids. I know.

Over and over again in our interviews and informal conversations Samantha reiterated her belief that she knew her students, and this was an important attribute of her teaching and her personal identity as a teacher. This importance of Samantha knowing her students was clearly evident in the way she taught writing. Her classes were usually flexibly organized, so students could work on their own at different paces and in different ways. She provided options and choices but still expected them to reach a similar goal by the end of the class. She also constantly circulated around the room and checked in on students, giving them personal attention, directions, assistance and encouragement while the rest of the class worked independently. I

often felt tired watching her as she constantly moved around the room, or had a steady stream of students come to her desk for individual conferences.

For example, on one of the days I observed, Samantha told her students they were supposed to work on their analysis/research paper in the computer lab, but as they did so, they were given the following options: they were allowed to finish research on-line; they were allowed to go back to their novel and find passages they could integrate into their writing; they were allowed to print off information from the internet; they were allowed to get started on their rough drafts. Samantha said that everyone should have a rough draft started by the end of the class period, and she wanted them to e-mail their drafts to her at the end of the day so she could see where they were going. These students were seniors, and it seemed they were at various skill levels and motivation levels, so it also seemed to make sense to give them options. I also saw that knowing students well allowed Samantha to engage with each student effectively while allowing this freedom. She was able to push the ones who needed pushing, encourage those who needed support, and give specific directives to others. This teaching methodology worked well for Samantha. Her students worked hard for her, even in the last days of their senior year. They seemed to know exactly what was expected of them. Because students worked so closely and conferenced so frequently with her, they clearly understood what writing goals they were expected to reach. This methodology was not without its downside, however. It was exhausting. Samantha said to me at times that she did not know how much longer she would be able to “keep this up” and in one of her journals written while students were revising their analysis papers over *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* she wrote the following:

My seniors are to the point where they are actually writing their papers, and all I want to do is slap myself for giving them a research/analysis paper. Why, you might ask?

Because the kids are struggling? No, not really. The reason why is totally selfish – teaching academic writing is a BEAST.

What I'm finding (pretty consistently) is that my students don't recognize when they have merely skimmed the surface of a topic – the most common statement I have heard over the past week is, "I don't know what more to write." However, when I sit down to go over their paper with them, I find loads of general statement and little detail or analysis. Once I explain, in detail, what they need to add and where, they're good to go - I get a lot of, "Oh, I get it," after I review a paper with a student, but there's the rub - I have to sit down and review, one on one, with each student their draft.

Maybe there is a more efficient/effective method of teaching academic writing, but my gut says probably not. I learned how to write over many years and based on the comments I received back from my professors, and research consistently say that to get better at writing kids need practice and guidance, so that's what I'm doing. It's just such a time-killer.

In order to show the ways that Samantha worked with her students individually, I am going to tell the small stories of her interactions with two particular students over time. It is important to note that these two students and their interactions with Samantha were not unusual, nor did they receive more or less attention than other students. Samantha did not have unusually close relationships with these two students. They were just two of the over one hundred students Samantha worked with, so it is important to keep in mind that these small stories are but two strands in the hundreds that made up Samantha's teaching. Her professional knowledge was an intricate weaving of these threads, knowing what her students needed at particular moments to become better and more confident writers. It is through these small stories that we can see her

knowledge of student needs. We can see where she taught writing skills within the context of individual personal relationships with her students. We can observe how she provided particular writing experiences for her students based upon their own personalities and skill levels.

As Samantha told me in one of our interviews, she felt that her teaching “is a lot like triage.” Each day she had to judge what each student needed at that moment, who she had not spent time with lately, and who needed her the most. The stories of Samantha’s interactions with these two particular students were selected to illustrate stories of her individualized instruction because they are representative, not because they particularly stand out as unique. Before creating the narratives, I created a list of 5 students that were present through my classroom observation notes and also in Samantha’s journals and interviews. I sat down after school with Samantha and asked her to list the students she thought would be good portrayals of her instruction. We also talked about how she felt describing different students’ writing. We compared her list and my list and negotiated and decided to collaborate on the storying of her teaching of two students in her sixth hour College Prep English, Tina and Trent. We talked about these two students, and Samantha shared the things that stood out to her about each one. I then created the stories based upon our conversations, my observation field notes, interview transcripts and Samantha’s journals. I shared rough drafts of my narratives of Tina and Trent with Samantha and she provided ideas for additions and revisions. In this way, the storying was collaborative depiction of the narratives. Samantha’s voice was storied to be more prominent within the narratives; her perspective was the most important one in this storying because here is where we can better observe how her interactions with students depicted her teaching methodology and philosophy.

Stories of Samantha Teaching Tina

Students have just turned in their papers over *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*, and they seem a bit tired, but still cheerful. The class began by heading to the library to check out books for their last novel reading-response assignment. Samantha told me that this will be a more easy-going day because they have worked really hard to get their papers done. When we return from the library, students have the choice of reading their novels or brainstorming ideas for their final paper/presentation reflection upon their education and future goals. Most students begin reading at their desks. Two girls, Shawna and Tina sit right in front of me, and they pull their desks together so they are touching. Shawna is African-American and wears an orange t-shirt and jeans that are ripped in a way that frames the large tattoo on her right thigh. She wears glasses and has heavy reddish-gold highlights streaking her long, straightened hair. Tina is white. She wears a bright red warm-up jacket and jeans. She has black curly hair that is pulled tightly into a high ponytail. She wears large gold hoop earrings and a lot of eye make-up. As we walked from the library to the classroom, I chatted with the girls about the books they checked out, and they told me that they are both going to attend a local university in the fall. They seem excited and happy, and they say they want to take all their classes together. Both girls have picked out Young Adult “chick lit.” The covers of their paperback novels have images of African American couples or groups of teen-aged girls of varied ethnicities and the two girls excitedly tell me about the books they are reading and how great these particular authors are.

After students get settled in their desks and begin writing or reading, Samantha calls them up to her desk one at a time to conference about their grades and what they need to accomplish before the end of the year. Some students are in danger of failing and therefore not graduating

because of missed assignments. Tina is called up to the desk and handed a computer print-out of her grades, and Samantha tells her that her grade is bad because she hasn't turned in the last paper and she missed a bunch of quizzes. She asks her when she can come in and make up the work. After school? No, Tina has to work. Samantha asks her if she has to come for Saturday school and Tina does, so Samantha gleefully says, "Great, you can do all of this then. I will tell Ms. Manning that you have these quizzes and a paper to write and a book to read. You can get it all done then!"

When Tina comes back to her desk, she plops down and whispers sadly to Shawna. Shawna whispers back. The girls go back to their novels and soon begin chatting about what they are reading, trading books and pointing out passages the other should read. Shawna laughs at her book and then whispers to Tina, "Read this. Read what she says here."

"I'd beat my child if she said that to me" says Tina

Samantha stops talking to the student who is conferencing with at her desk, looks at the girls and shouts, "Chit-chatty people, zip it!" Shawna and Tina quiet down for a moment and then Shawna asks Tina if she's read *Indigo Summers* – an earlier book in the series she is reading now. Tina says no, and then Shawna tells her a little about it and they go back to reading again. After a while, Shawna shows Tina another part of her book and they whisper about how "that man wouldn't be living there if it were me."

"I know!" says Tina. Samantha asks the girls to quiet down a couple more times before the bell rings. After class I mention to Samantha that the whole time the girls were talking, they were discussing and sharing the books they were reading. Samantha says they always tell her they are just talking about their books, but she never knows if she should believe them or not, and she smiles and says, "That's good to know. That's good."

Five days later

Samantha says: “Everyone on either Thursday or today has received their current progress report, so you all know what you need to do to pass senior English.” Today, students are again working at their desks and Samantha says they can come up and share drafts or talk about their ideas for their papers, but they should all be writing or reading during class. A few minutes into class, Tina brings her laptop up to Samantha’s desk. After reading, Samantha says, “Do me a favor, separate your elementary, middle, and high school into separate paragraphs. Also – I get your voice. I know you, so I get it, but other people might not. So you’re leaving things out, but I want you to go back and fill in the holes.” Samantha quietly points out several particular places where Tina needs to add more explanation or details then says, “But I can definitely hear your voice, Tina!” Tina practically prances back to her desk and gets back to writing.

Three days later

The class is in the computer lab in the library, so students can either write their reflective papers or create accompanying PowerPoint presentations. Samantha says to the class, “I’m going to print out a sign-up sheet for next week’s presentations, and everyone needs to sign up before you leave today.” She sits at a computer next to Tina to print the sign-up sheet. Tina leans over and begins quietly talking to Samantha, whispering a long story about what is going on with her family. Samantha looks straight at the computer screen and occasionally up at the trophy case that is on the wall above the computers, and I am not sure if she is listening to Tina or not. After asking later about this incident, Samantha told me that since her back was to the majority of the class while talking with Tina, she was watching the rest of the class in the reflection of the computer screen or trophy case, to make sure everyone was working. When Tina pauses for a moment, Samantha rises from the computer, walks to the printer and brings over the sign-up

sheet. She tells students again that they need to sign up for their presentations next week. She sets the sign-up sheet on a table in the middle of the computer lab, and a bunch of students gather around it to sign up for the best times.

Samantha sits back down next to Tina, leans towards her and says quietly, “This is one of those moments where you have to learn to work through this situation without losing yourself in the situation . . . The problems are never going to go away. There will always be something, but it is going to get easier. You have good coping skills. You are doing good. You haven’t told anyone off. You haven’t hit anyone. You haven’t put your fist through a wall. You are here in school today.”

Tina whispers more to Samantha about her dad.

Samantha says, “Here’s the other kicker, your life is not controlled by their lives. That is the hard part. You have to kind of let go and realize that their choices are not your choices and that will get easier as you get older and you have more of your own life.” Tina continues to talk to her and they continue a quiet conversation while other students work on their presentations. Tina finally begins to smile a little. Samantha says, “I want you to be successful in life.” and gives Tina a long hug and rubs her shoulders while Tina leans against her, quietly crying. Meanwhile, the other students continue to work diligently at their computers, and I wonder how many of them either see or sense that Samantha is helping a distraught classmate.

After a while, Samantha says, “Do you want to go to the restroom?” Tina whispers, nods, and then gets up and walks out of the room. No one seems to notice or be surprised or bothered by her departure or tears.

One week later

It is the last day of class for the seniors, and Tina is the third presentation. Instead of a PowerPoint presentation, she has made a poster with very fancy cursive writing, glitter and sparkly ink. She describes her education, and like many of the students in this class, she attended a number of schools – five in all. She wants to be a nurse and says she would like to just have a simple life and be remembered as a fun grandma and a loving mother and someone who would put a smile on someone’s face and who would give to the poor.

Tina is enrolled to begin fall semester at a local four year university. Samantha recalled when she met Tina her freshman year and Tina told her, “I want to go to college; Ms Wisemann, help me go to college.” I asked Samantha if she feels Tina is prepared for college-level writing, and she replied, “No, she’ll be totally overwhelmed at first, but I think she’ll be O.K. in the end. She’ll bounce. She’s got that kind of personality. She’ll bounce.”

Stories of Samantha Teaching Trent

Samantha has been conferencing with students regarding the rough drafts of their papers analyzing *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*. The computer labs at the school are all being used for standardized testing, so Samantha has brought her students to the library to work on computers there. Samantha spends the first 20 minutes of class with one female student, looking very carefully at the ways she could revise and reorganize her paper. When they have finished their conference, Samantha shouts, “Trent, you’re up!” and she asks Trent to e-mail her his paper and then come over to her desk. Trent is white with short brown hair and a silver earring. He wears a grey t-shirt and black pants. When she pulls up his paper on the computer screen, I can see there are only two short paragraphs written. She says “Trent! Why!?” and Trent says something quietly. She interrupts him after a while and says loudly, “Stop it! Stop it, because you are being a little bit melodramatic and it’s not getting you anywhere, and I think you

have a mental block, and you are telling yourself you can't do it and so you can't. Does that sound accurate?"

Trent whispers to her.

"You say you can't write, but you have all year, so what's. . ."

Trent whispers to her.

"So walk me through what's going through your mind when you sit down to write . . ."

Trent whispers.

"Can you do me a favor, and take that worrying about making it look nice and take it out of the equation and just try to get your ideas on paper? For today I just want you to put your thoughts on paper. Making it fit the scope of the assignment and making it look good, you have to be a really, really, really good writer to be able to do it all at once, and I'm not even there. It's a process. Focus on just getting your thoughts on paper and then we can sit down and say – 'Oh look these ideas look like they fit together and we can cut and paste these.' In the revision process we can say, 'We can group this stuff together to make one cohesive paragraph.' But now just get something down we can work with. Now, can you tell me what you think I am telling you to do?"

Trent whispers again.

"Can you tell me your thoughts about doing it? Don't filter; just say it."

Trent whispers.

Then they have a conversation about how the author portrays an autistic character and how autism is represented in Trent's research. And Samantha says, "Do you realize you just said everything you need for a 15 page paper? Stop worrying about making gibberish! If it pops in your head, type it. Those things you just said . . . just type it. I can't really help you until I have

something to work on with you.” This conference takes about ten minutes, and Trent goes back to his computer to write, and Samantha calls another student up to her desk. Later, Samantha wrote a reflection on this conference and said the following about Trent and his writing:

When I conferenced with Trent over his paper, he kept going on about how he was worried it didn't look right. I think that was fifty-fifty B.S. and truth. He does overly worry about making things look right, but it's also a stalling tactic - he convinces himself he can't do it so he doesn't try. Mollycoddling only works with Trent to a certain extent - after that, you sort of have to kick him in the butt to get him going. His final paper was okay - not stellar, but a good effort.

Two weeks later

Students are working in the computer lab either writing their papers or working on their presentations. Trent is talking with Samantha about his plan for his final paper and presentation. He wants to write an obituary for his final reflection assignment. Before talking to Samantha, he has been searching the internet and looking at images of gravestones for the last 10 minutes. Samantha says, “But don’t you want to write in first person? This is one of the only times you can write with an ‘I’ voice.”

And he says, “but it’s original!”

“OK, but don’t let it get too dark and don’t gloss over the details like they do in some obituaries.” I can tell that Samantha does not like his idea, but Trent seems so excited and proud of it, she allows him to go ahead. At the end of class, he shows her what he’s written, and she says, “Just focus on your life, not on your death. This is not supposed to be dark. Focus on your life.”

He tells her not to worry, and then calls, “I love you Ms. Wisemann” as he walks out of the room.

Samantha says back, a little wearily, “I love you too, Trent.” And later she describes how uncomfortable she feels when male students tell her they love her. She says it seems too cold to just say, “thanks,” but saying “I love you” in response feels awkward, too.

Nine days later

It is the seniors’ last day of classes. When I arrive, students are excited but not out of control. A few students are getting ready to give their presentations. Students joke about whether they are going to cry or not. Trent is the first presenter and as promised, he has written his presentation as an obituary. He talks softly and seriously as if he is at a memorial service and they are all in mourning, and he talks about himself in third person. He pretends to be standing in front of everyone sometime in the future announcing his death and eulogizing himself. The life he describes for himself includes majoring in secondary education and teaching woodworking at Monroe High School, and living in an apartment across the street from the school. He also wants to become scoutmaster of his Boy Scout troop. He says he will always be remembered as a family man, a good father and husband. Several other students give their presentations, and students are riveted hearing about their classmates’ pasts and future goals. When the bell rings, Trent tells Samantha that he wants to stop by and see her tomorrow even though seniors don’t have classes, and he says, “I love you Ms. Wisemann.” There is a crowd of students around her desk, asking her to sign yearbooks, and Samantha looks up and tells Trent that she loves him too, and he walks out the door. Samantha wrote in her journal, “When Trent told me he was going to write an obituary, it worried me because I wasn't sure where he was going with it or how the kids would react. Trent is incredibly sensitive and a bit on the depressed side, so I was worried about

his mental state. That's why I kept stressing that he needed to focus on the life, not the death.” However, she felt satisfied with his final paper and presentation which were melancholy, but not “dark.”

Thinking Through Stories of Teaching Tina and Travis

Samantha’s pedagogy focused around giving her students both the skills and the experiences she believed would benefit them in college. The first semester of her class was very teacher centered she said, and then in the second semester she wanted students to work more independently. She often talked about how she was trying to teach students to “push through” the challenges of writing and to advocate for themselves. She talked often in class about the purpose of a writing center on college campuses. She held after school “office hours” and announced those each week. She did this in order to help her students get used to going to see their instructors outside of class for help. She believed many of her students will need this extra help when they go to college, and the ones who can advocate for themselves and search out assistance will be the ones who can succeed. As described previously, Samantha felt her students did not have enough writing practice in their high school years. She was concerned that they did not have all the skills they need. In one of our interviews, she listed some of the skills she knew they had. They knew what a thesis was, most of them understood how to do research and cite their sources. They knew how to set up an argument and analyze though many needed help moving beyond the superficial. They needed help with organization sometimes. Mostly, though, Samantha described that her students just had trouble “getting what is in their heads down onto paper” and she worked with them in her conferences asking them to “talk through their writing” as a form of pre-writing. This “talking through” allowed them to hear their ideas and then, Samantha believed, they would have the confidence to start putting it down on the paper.

When she described her students and whether they would succeed in a college composition course, she talked more about their levels of perseverance and work ethic and resilience and confidence. She discussed their skill level only when pushed to do so, and even then she began to talk about skill level and then veered off onto topics of motivation and perseverance. This was likely portrayed her concern that they haven't had the time to get all the skills they needed, but also it was firmly based upon her view that writing is a process that is both independent and social. It is something that needs to be worked through, that takes persistence and work. If students did not have the skills because of their poverty or because of the restrictions standardized testing presents, then she would provide experiences that would help them "push through, to fight through" and continue working and improving, so their persistence alone would hopefully help them overcome the odds. At the end of our last interview, I asked Samantha why, whenever I asked her how prepared her students would be for college writing, she described personality or character traits instead of their writing skills. Her answer was telling because it not only portrayed how she saw her students but how she saw the experience of college:

Even if you struggle with writing, if you have those skills – persevering and working through something and not giving up, I think that you will advocate for yourself. You'll find that writing lab. You'll go to your professor. You'll ask other students. You'll build that support system . . . The skills you can teach and teach and teach and teach, but if you don't have that determination it doesn't matter how much we teach you the skills. You're not going to learn. College is just about perseverance. It's about pushing through that last all-nighter and studying for that exam. It's about showing up to class and taking the notes

and if you can't take notes fast enough, getting a recorder, and if that doesn't work, meeting with the professor. It's a marathon. It's not a mensa quiz.

When asked to evaluate her own teaching of writing this year, Samantha gave herself a 75-80%, and said she is going to have her students read and write even more next year. She has learned this year that students need more practice analyzing and incorporating multiple outside sources into their writing. Though she did not describe it, I have no doubts that one thing Samantha will continue to do next year is work hard to know her students personally and find out where each one is, pushing them to become advocates for themselves and preparing those who desire it to train for their own marathons. She will show students like Tina that they can have control over their own destinies, they are strong and have a voice, and the details and the stories matter, and they should be shared. She will show students like Trent that sometimes it is important to push through your doubt and just get it on paper, and often the focus is what makes the difference. Samantha's teaching of writing, for better or worse is focused upon individual students and her stories of those students. Their needs, their histories, their personalities are what matter to her. The skills can be taught by anyone, but her place in the classroom is to connect skills to individual students' motivation to help them experience what it is like to fight through and move further than they thought they could.

Chapter 6:

Allison's Stories of Identity, Community, Resourcefulness and Testing

The spontaneity of small moments in teaching can be the pinpoints where teacher knowledge identity and agency become most visible. Allison's small stories are not only pinpoints, but turning points illustrating her identity as a writing teacher. Without looking closely for these pinpoints, it is easy to merely see the larger shared meganarratives and fail to acknowledge where the movements or tensions of individual identity formation within these meganarratives may lie. Olson and Craig (2009) describe the hidden nature of small stories as appearing "in the cracks" or "in the shadows" (p. 549) of larger powerful meganarratives of educational policy: "small stories intimately experienced by people in relationship typically do not get attended to because narratives with mega-plot lines devised by others and routinely accepted by ourselves in the daily conduct of our lives tend to take precedence" (p.549). And yet, as Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008) have shown, here in the often overlooked small stories individuals orient themselves within the larger narratives. Individuals become subjects within the stories as they find ways to story themselves into the controlling meganarratives already at work. Moreover, through these small stories, researchers can conceptualize the idea of identity as in flux and in relationship with small stories as "sites of engagement where identities are continuously practiced and tested out" (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008, p. 379). Bamberg and Georgakopoulou also point out that because small stories can be viewed as a way individuals create their own narrative positioning, these small stories often work in opposition to the traditional narrative progression of a temporal plot-line, or a problem-to-solution structure. Small stories of identity work can show movement and the makings of identities within larger narrative structures because they are somewhat independent of the temporal or other structural

understandings of traditional storytelling. In fact, since small stories can be portrayals of relationships in flux, they can often appear to be ‘about nothing’ yet still be useful: “people use small stories in their interactive engagements *to construct* a sense of who they are, while big story research analyzes the stories as *representations* of world and identities” (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008, p. 382).

Allison’s small stories show how she constructed her identity as a teacher in the midst of pressures of standardized testing and poverty and through meganarratives of transformation, relationship building, and teacher autonomy. Like Samantha’s small stories, Allison’s small stories of teaching also took place across time. Allison’s stories however did not depend upon the temporal as much as Samantha’s strings of individual student stories. Allison’s stories were positioned more within relationships than within time, and these various relationships: with students, with her principal, with the community all affected her teaching identity. At times these small stories showed how relationships within the meganarratives created pedagogical pressures. These pressures in turn affected Allison’s identity and positioning within the meganarratives. She storied herself as in conflict, yet also very much in control of her classroom and how she guided her students. She often required her students to question their assumptions, and she too questioned her own placement and identity within the larger meganarratives at Monroe.

In her junior level AP Composition and Language course, Allison’s content focused around current political and social issues and allowed space for students to debate and critically think about their positions on those issues. Allison expected students to read complex texts and then in writing integrate sometimes contrasting sources into their own experiences and opinions. She would say things like: “Don’t fake read. Remember to ask questions, infer, engage with what you are reading. If you don’t, you are wasting your time!” and she taught her students how to

annotate texts and how to take effective notes that would oblige them to engage with what they were reading. She believed that this sort of close reading would help her students think through what they would later discuss and then write about. This careful and close reading would help them as writers because it would serve as a sort of pre-writing; it would also help students better understand how writers create a particular effect, how they construct their arguments and how their voices are developed. Allison described her understanding of college level writing as:

college writing is longer formal writing usually . . . It's argumentative for the most part and it's well-supported . . . and it needs to be clear. . . it needs to not sound like a book report . . . you need critical thinking. . . You need to know how to locate the most important information in a text. You need to be able to think and consider other perspectives and see how they mesh with your own world . . . You need to be able to cite your sources; I don't think that's the most important thing about college writing but definitely a college standard. You have to have a good thesis. You got to have an argument.

However, she regularly pointed out that good writing is good writing, and the skills and experiences needed to write well in college were the same skills and experiences needed to write well in life. Allison once said to me that she did not consider writing-for-college as a goal any more than she envisioned writing-for-junior-year-in-high-school as a goal. "I'm just calling it quality writing." When asked to describe what she saw as "quality writing" in more detail, Allison said, "I want them to grow and to push themselves and see themselves in new ways through their writing . . . even though I think that's kind of dangerous sometimes." And then she went on to describe how she expected her students' writing to be well-focused, high interest, organized, well-supported argumentation that "sounds like the person" who wrote it. She said, "I

want to hear my students when they write,” and spoke frequently about voice and authentic style and vocabulary. She always connected these writing skills to real-world situations which extended beyond the college or high school classroom. She also tried to balance these skills with experiences that were more expressive:

I don't want your child's teacher to judge your child because of the way you write an e-mail. I think about how they're going to have to write on job applications or they're going to have to write cover letters and . . . can you make yourself sound as intelligent as you are? I want it to be real world applicable. I don't want it to be journals and graded poetry. That's great. There's nothing wrong with that, but if your other ideas don't make sense, I mean there are very few jobs if any that say, you know, write me a 50 line poem; use seven literary techniques. Go! You know it's just, that's not real world, but it's also important for them to know how to do that because it's good for the soul. And I feel that school needs to educate kids in both ways. We need to give them the skills for the real world because of course we want them to be successful, but I also want them to be good human beings and to feel good about who they are, so I try, I do try to balance it. I promise.

Allison took pride in a story she told of spearheading a school-wide poetry slam earlier in the year during which every single student at Monroe wrote and performed an original poem. She believed this experience showed students the value of their individual voices and their particular stories and ideas. At the same time, she often directed students to write for less expressive purposes.

While Samantha's class was focused around individualized instruction, Allison's AP class was organized as a community of writers. Her class regularly worked in a circle, or in small

writing groups. The whole time I observed Allison, there was never a class period in which the mode of instruction was teacher-centered. Students learned through reading, writing, discussing and presenting their ideas to others. A normal class period would include Allison asking students to do some writing, some reading and annotating, then they would usually discuss their reading and writing – either as a whole class or in small groups. When they read or discussed, she would often stop the class and say, “Okay, let’s stop here. Check in on your thinking now.” And with that cue, students knew they were supposed to write a short paragraph reflection about what was going through their minds as they read or listened to a discussion. Sometimes Allison would ask students to share these, and sometimes she would not. She talked to her students often about the problems with “fake listening” and “fake reading” and as she ran her class, she carefully watched what was happening to make sure that all students were actively engaged.

Allison’s professional knowledge was vividly portrayed through the ways she planned her assignments as well. She worked to provide reading and writing assignments that were connected to current issues her students found important, yet she also worked to stretch them so they experienced these issues from other perspectives. During the three months of data collection, Allison had students read and write about gender issues, wealth and class issues and issues surrounding war and terrorism (see appendix for assignment sheets and classroom handouts). She wanted her students to be educated about current events and also participate in and critique some of the assumptions they made. In order to do this, her class had to be a community. It had to be a safe place where her conservative Mormon student with a very traditional religious upbringing could share his point of view with an atheist lesbian sitting across the room, and neither one would feel threatened or insulted.

Each summer, the English teachers at Monroe gave their students a summer reading assignment. While I observed, Allison revised her summer reading assignment and looked for new books to include for her AP students (see appendix for summer reading assignment). Her choices of books show how carefully she tried to select non-fiction books that would appeal to her students while providing them with new perspectives. Her book choices were also for the most part very upbeat and encouraging. She knew some of her students came from very conservative religious backgrounds. Some of them came from tragic poverty, and she worked to provide choices that would help them escape a little bit and also see new possibilities. While creating the summer assignments, the English department members also discussed among themselves how they would use these summer reading assignments in the fall. Some teachers wanted to have a large test or essay assignment the first week of class based upon the summer reading in order to set a tone of scholarship and rigor for the rest of the year. Allison resisted this, and told me that she saw the first weeks of school as critical for establishing trusting relationships with and among her students. She was concerned such an assignment would set her up in a somewhat threatening way, and she was searching for other options. In the end, she told her students in the assignment sheet (see appendix) that they were required to read and annotate two books on the list, then on a side bar, she wrote “Hint! Hint! When you come back to school in the fall, you will have to do some intensive writing work with these books, so don’t blow off this assignment.” which left her space to meet her students, establish relationships and still use the reading and hold them accountable for the summer work they had done. This is a representation of how I saw Allison teach AP English. She had certain ideas about what good writing was and what students needed to do to become successful writers, yet she could not fully create her curriculum without having met or built relationships with her students. Her

professional knowledge was based upon judicious responses to the immediacy of what happened in the classroom and, like Samantha, where her content knowledge and student needs met.

Allison's two small stories are both of unexpected events; they are stories of insight and confidence of teaching and acting spontaneously in context. Yet these are not the stories of impulsivity. Each small story begins as an unexpected small moment and extends into a momentous event with consequences that reach beyond that fleeting instant in which they occurred. These extensions were only possible within the context of Allison's professional wisdom. The first small story took place toward the beginning of data collection and occurred within a classroom observation when Allison stepped outside her lesson plan to act upon what she saw as students' immediate needs. The second small story is one of an unexpected visitor to Allison's classroom and took place also during an observation but towards the end of my time at Monroe High School.

Since I observed her during the last three months of the school year, it was clear during my data collection that Allison was very conscious of the looming AP exam, and she did what she could to prepare her students. Since this was her first year teaching AP, and the first time the course was offered at the school, she had little to base her expectations upon. She described trying to balance between trying to be encouraging and also telling her students that the reality was that this was a very challenging test. She gave them a practice test during the time I was collecting data and she wrote about this experience in one of her journals:

On Tuesday, the guidance counselor came into our class to discuss the upcoming AP test with our students. He encouraged all the students to take the test if they felt ready and prepared to be successful on the test. When he left the room, a lot of students had questions about the AP exam: How long is it? How hard is it? How much reading? How

much writing? Do you think I can do it? I wanted students to gauge for themselves whether they felt adequately prepared to take the exam and so I suggested that we all take one AP practice test so they could see for themselves what the test would be assessing. . . I would give them points for giving it their best shot. And so they dug in to the test. Forty minutes later, we graded the test and the students discovered that they did not do as well as they had hoped. They were very disappointed, embarrassed, couldn't believe that they had done so poorly. I was not surprised that they hadn't done so well, but, as their teacher, I was disheartened by their reactions. One poorly taken practice AP test had enough power to take away their confidence and to cause them to forget how far they have actually come during the school year.

This is a problem with these high-stakes tests. Students become numbers and scores, not people who have the capacity to grow into intellectuals. I fail to understand why we have convinced ourselves that these scores are the best representation of what students actually "know". This is a fundamental moral and ethical dilemma that I face on a daily basis in teaching. It's hard to come in to school every day and teach students who you believe in, who you know will exceed your expectations, who you have the highest hopes for and tell them, "Okay, we're going to take this test. It's really important. All the years of courses and all your hard work come down to one four block window of time. Do your best job because this is what will determine your future." I find that line of thinking to be irresponsible and damaging.

Allison continued to be conflicted regarding where she should position herself in regard to testing. Perhaps this conflict was more prominent because I was observing and interviewing in the spring when the testing took place; however, it was a theme that came up often in our

discussions. She did not want to value the test, and she did not want her students to value the test in ways that were “irresponsible and damaging”, yet she knew that they could not just dismiss the tests altogether. The AP test was not the only one that concerned Allison. The other class she taught was Sophomore English, and the state mandated that at the Sophomore level, all students take a standardized test in Language Arts in the spring in order to judge whether the school is achieving Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Allison’s Sophomore English classes were Class Within a Class (CWC), and she described them as about 50% special education students. Because of her students’ skill levels, she knew she was up against an almost impossible challenge; she felt the pressure acutely and worked hard with enthusiasm and drive to help prepare these students for the test. Though the state standardized test was in her sophomore English classes, Allison often described how the stress of the state test affected her energy level in her AP class, and she felt bad that her AP students often received less of her focus and effort because of the heavier pressures she felt from her sophomores’ standardized testing.

Allison’s small stories portray moments in her AP classroom that illustrate her values and identity as a teacher. They also show how she envisioned college level writing and how various other constraints in the school sometimes affected her instruction and her teacher-identity. I will describe two different stories from Allison’s AP class.

Allison’s Story #1 – “Because We Live in Eastern Union Hill”

Class begins and Allison tells students they have a minute and a half to finish getting ready for their group presentations. Today students are presenting in small groups of three-four students about articles they have read regarding work, wealth and class in America. Each group

has created a visual aid to assist their presentation. Allison directs students to take notes while listening to each group's presentation, and they will use these notes for their upcoming papers.

The first group stands in front of the class and shares facts about social class and poverty in America. One of the group's presenters says "We go to Monroe and Monroe is predominantly poor" and he explains that one critique of his article is that the article is old and the poverty and homelessness is actually statistically worse today than what the article claims and that is why they should especially pay attention to this information. A girl asks a question to the presenters, "Do you think that since Monroe is predominantly poor, do you think we will be poor when we grow up?"

"Yes," says the presenter, "statistically that's what this article says. Some of us will do better, but most will be in poverty or the working class."

"That's really discouraging." says the girl,

"Yeah, it's fucked up! I mean it's messed up. Sorry, Miss Manning. Yeah."

The second group stands up and shares their information regarding how poverty is hidden in America. A student says "the people who are poor can still buy cheaper clothes that look more expensive than they are, so people don't look like they are poor." Another student talks about the drawing of a pyramid on their poster board – that there are a few who own most of the wealth but most people own a little. The group discusses whether or not hard work always pays off.

The third group presents profiles of people in different socio-economic classes. Allison asks the group what were some of the opportunities that the first person got that the others did not (private school, summer camps, Ivy League college). The second profile showed that the lower class person did not get these opportunities. The students relate to the profile of the lower class individual and discuss how it seems impossible to get as far as someone who is born into money.

A student who is listening but not saying much blurts, “we’re going to all become a bunch of socialists.” One girl puts her head down on her desk and says that she is getting really depressed.

The fourth group presents issues of gender and how those issues play into the matter of class. The discussion continues regarding luck versus hard work. One black girl who is presenting in this group finishes the presentation saying somewhat dispiritedly, “so, I can work and work and work, but no matter how hard I work, I can never work hard enough to become a white man.” Another presenter says, “Basically it shows who you know and where you’re from is what matters.” The fifth group discusses how class effects education and health. Students refer to their class as poor and how frustrating that is, that “we have very little chance to move further.” The mood of the class and the tone of the discussion have continued to become more and more negative and more students are putting their heads on their desks even while continuing to take notes on the presentations. Students discuss how these statistics in the various articles relate to their own lives. They repeatedly say the information relates to them because they live in Eastern Union Hill. They see themselves in the data and numbers and profiles of poor and working class Americans. Allison, who has been sitting at her desk, taking notes, stands up quickly at the end of the fifth presentation. She stops the class and wheels her desk chair to the center of the room where she sits down and says, “Okay, I’m going to stop you all for a minute.” In a later interview, Allison stated that she stopped the class for the simple reason that she “just couldn’t take it anymore”:

I was like . . . I just . . . it was too much! I just love those kids, and I really believe in them. And I don’t know if anyone else tells them that. Somebody’s got to tell them. And they need to tell each other. I don’t ever want them to walk out and feel like “the world is stacked against me; what’s the point?” because nobody deserves to hear that. Seventeen-

year-olds don't deserve to hear that. Forty-five-year-olds don't deserve . . . nobody deserves to hear that. And so I thought that we needed to just sit and brainstorm ways about how are we going to get around this. Yes, our lives are difficult and yes, things are going to be difficult for us in the future, but how are we going to do it?

After stopping the class, Allison speaks in a loud voice and says that she wants to applaud and congratulate everyone because they did a really good job presenting and reading and thinking about their passages. "But," she says, "I have to stop you because I keep hearing you say things like, 'we live in Eastern Union Hill and there is no hope; we live in Eastern Union Hill and we are not going to make it; we live in Eastern Union Hill, so we won't be able to finish college.' And if you walk out of this classroom today feeling that way, that's just not okay." She pauses and looks around the room at them. Students are silent and staring at Allison or looking down at their desks. Allison continues, "I want you to think about what things are in your control right now. Today! This minute. In Eastern Union Hill. You are right, some of you come from chaos, some of you are poor, but I cannot, as your teacher who cares about you more than I can even express, let you leave this classroom thinking that you cannot finish college or move forward."

The students seem shocked. The air is heavy in the classroom, and everyone is still and silent, staring at Allison. She talks a while longer about what she has heard them saying and how all of it is true but it doesn't have to be the whole story. "So, right now I want you to talk about this in your groups and see if you can identify what you *do have control over*. Because yes, the statistics are against you, but that doesn't mean it is impossible for you to succeed." There is a lot of chatter after she tells them to discuss. After a few minutes of discussion, Allison asks them to share with the class. They describe the following as things they have control over that can help them: good grades to get scholarships, study skills to get good grades, work ethic,

communication skills, relationships, asking teachers and others they know for help. Allison sees that the class is back on track, and knows that there is one group left to present. She says, “Okay, we need to finish this up. Group six bring it home.”

The sixth group presents on how race and gender play a part in class and wealth. The presentation and discussion becomes depressing and sad again when they present statistics showing race is a detriment to success in our country. They question and critique the idea of a poverty line. The class discussion turns to the loss of jobs during the Reagan administration, attacks on welfare and the loss of production jobs. A student describes how more jobs have become mechanized. Another student discusses how we are competing with other countries now and that was different in the past. Allison stops the discussion and asks students to take out a piece of paper, and she asks them to write a reflection for the last ten minutes of class regarding the following question: Has your mind changed regarding what you need to be successful? Everyone writes furiously and Allison says, “Don’t worry how long it is; just write until the bell rings.”

When Allison looks back on this story, she remembers one student in particular, the girl who said she could never work hard enough to be a white man. She described how she watched her lose hope during the presentations, and recalls the girl saying, “I just want do it [go to college] and it’s so exciting and I know that I’m smart enough, but you know my family, we don’t have any money and we have so many kids and my father died and how am I ever going to get out of this? I just think that it’s pointless.” And Allison said that is when something clicked and she knew she had to stop the class and change direction. She thought,

Oh my gosh, you can’t think that! It just means that you have to work harder and it just means that you have to go about it in different ways. I mean she’s a black woman, so I

think it just hit her really hard . . . you know, she really felt disenfranchised. So, I thought that it was a good place to stop, and at the end when they wrote about it, I did notice that a lot of them said, ‘I used to believe this, and I still kind of believe this, but now I realize that there are a lot of other things that go into it.’

It was Allison’s ability to see what was happening in her classroom, her comprehension of her students’ backgrounds, dreams, and personalities that made her stop and change the course of this class. Her students were “doing the work” of the lesson plan perfectly, even expertly. They were analyzing and presenting and discussing the articles, and they were relating the information to their lives and synthesizing the data they heard from various sources. They were achieving the skills necessary. However, the work they were doing was also damaging them in a profound way, and Allison saw this because she knew her students. Because she trusted her wisdom and could assess more than just her students’ skill levels, she was able to stop the class, change directions and possibly keep some students from losing hope. In this one instant, she was able to give her students back some of the power they saw slipping away as she demanded that they figure out what they did have control over in that very moment.

Allison’s Story 2—The High-five

It is the Monday after standardized testing week. Earlier in the day, Allison and the other sophomore English teachers received their test scores and they were good, but not as good as they had hoped. It is a warm spring day and the windows are open in Allison’s classroom, allowing a breeze and the sounds of traffic to enter into the room. The bell rings and Allison says, “Circle up!” and her AP students get into a circle. They are very chatty today. “You need your *Rereading America* book! And you need to pass in your essays.” The students get their desks organized quickly and some of them hand her papers. When everyone is situated, Allison

says, “What, I’ve got four essays? These are all my essays?” Some students look sheepishly at her. A couple make excuses. During the past week, students read and responded to articles on patriotism and terrorism. As the class sits in the circle, Allison begins to lead them in a discussion about the death of Osama Bin Laden, finding out what they know and think about the event. The students share quite a bit of information, some of it accurate and some of it inaccurate. One student says, “Did it bother anyone that people were celebrating his death?” and the students begin talking about whether or not a celebration was appropriate.

About ten minutes into class, Dr. Prier walks in and looks around the room. Students notice and become quiet, and Allison raises her hand and says, “I’m right here.” Dr. Prier walks through the circle and over to Allison and gives her a high five.

“Was it good?” Allison asks quietly

“It is good, don’t you think? Aren’t you thrilled?” he says excitedly

“I don’t know, I’d hoped it was better”

“Oh, but . . .”

“It’s up ten percent, right?” Allison asks hopefully.

“Yeah, and it’s better than one of the schools.”

“It is?”

“Uh-huh.”

“Which one?” Allison is now excited as well to know that their scores are higher than one of the other, more affluent high schools in the district.

“Well, you know which one.” Obviously Dr. Prier does not want to give this information out in front of the students, but a student quickly shouts out the name of the school everyone was thinking, and the class begins to chatter happily.

“Shut up! We’re not last?!” shouts Allison, “You saw *their* scores? I didn’t know that.” There is more laughter and chatter among the students. A student says, “Hi Dr. Prier!” wanting to get his attention. Dr. Prier turns his attention towards the class and says, “Hi guys!” then he turns his attention back to Allison, “That’s what Susan just said. So what does that tell you?”

“We need to buy Scholar Island.”

Now Dr. Prier sounds angry, “No! No! I don’t want you to think that’s what it was!”

“I don’t think that’s what it was,” Allison replies softly, but not with certainty.

Raising his voice, Dr. Prier says, “It’s you! The three of you!”

“But I think it’s a good tool,” offers Allison

“Sure. It’s one tool, one of the many tools you had.”

“But I think it is good for assessments as we go along.”

“But if everything else wasn’t in place, it wouldn’t make any difference, would it?”

“I don’t know . . .” Allison says quietly trailing off.

Dr. Prier raises his voice again. “No! No, it’s not that! That would say anybody could come in and do this! No! Absolutely not!”

“Okay, Dr. Prier”

“Yes! I’m happy for you.” Dr Prier says this strongly as if he is trying to convince Allison she did good work, and he begins to walk toward the door.

“Thank you,” says Allison

“Thanks, guys.” Dr. Prier waves to the students

“Thanks, Dr. Prier,” Allison says again as he leaves.

The interruption takes only about a minute and a half, but the implications are extreme. The classroom atmosphere has changed. The students just watched as their beloved principal

interrupted class to praise their teacher and tell them that because of her, their school's test scores are no longer the lowest in the district. The mood of the class is now focused and optimistic; the students seem poised to speak, to work and participate in whatever Allison requests of them. I was struck, as an observer, by what had happened in those few moments. There were messages and issues raised about testing itself, about what is good teaching, about what is valued in a school, about pride and insecurity. As a researcher I felt so happy for Allison because I knew how scared she was about the test last week, and I knew how hard she worked. I was thrilled that her principal did not wait to praise her after school, but instead he did it in front of her students, so they could be proud too. At the same time I could not help but think of the other teachers in another school in the district who may be getting news that they were now at the bottom. I hoped that some other teacher in a classroom a few miles away was not seeing herself as a failure because *her* students had scored lowest in the district. Allison reflected later in an interview on the interaction she had with Dr. Prier:

He . . . really strongly doesn't believe we should ever interrupt class for any reason, so if he comes into your room or if he makes an announcement it's . . . a big deal. So when he opened the door I knew it was important and so I started to pay attention. I saw that he was looking for somebody, and then he looked at you like he was looking for an adult, and I said, "no, I'm right here." He came across the room with a big smile on his face, and that's not like him, you know; he's a really serious person. Not that he's not happy; he's just like that. And he was smiling and he put his hand in the air and he high-fived me which is *really* not like him because he's just so intense. I wasn't sure why he was high-fiving me, until it dawned on me that it was because of the scores because we improved. But then I realized that's what it was for, and it felt nice to be acknowledged by him. It

felt good to be validated and then [later] I was in the office and he was asking me what I thought about the whole situation and I said . . . I was really surprised, but I felt like they could have done better, and I told him that if we do this literacy stuff across the board that we'll continue to see growth like that.

The “literacy stuff across the board” Allison spoke to Dr. Prier about were the authentic literacy experiences that the English department was trying to implement in their classes. Allison and Lily were incorporating the reading experiences and strategies into their sophomore classes, but were still leaving out the writing experiences because writing was not tested. This statement that the authentic literacy could help them “continue to see growth” showed that Allison did see herself and her colleagues as knowledgeable curricular developers. However, when Dr. Prier was in her classroom, Allison was reluctant to take credit for her students’ success. She said it was because of “Scholar Island,” a computer-program that drills students and prepares them for standardized testing. When I interviewed Dr. Prier, I also asked him why he decided to interrupt class like that to congratulate Allison for her test scores. He said the following:

I want her and others to feel good about how hard she works and what she does and the impact she has on kids. I think sometimes, you remember what she said that day?. . . she said it was that Scholar Island stuff . . . Oh, come on! It is a test prep program that everybody and their mother buys around here except Union Hill. We don't buy it and so we have it on loan for a while and I just, I want her and others to know that our performance is directly related to what *she* does . . . she works very hard and I want her to know that I value what she does and her thinking . . . I don't need to apply any more pressure [regarding testing]. I need to find ways to support teachers, and in some respects that is what I'm trying to do with Allison.

Allison did feel validated by this ninety second visit. Her students also felt proud and were pleased to know that their teacher and their school had been successful. Dr. Prier wanted Allison to know that what she was doing was valued and it was much more than what a computer test prep program could do. This visit was unexpected for many reasons. Dr. Prier never interrupted class. Allison did not believe her test scores had improved enough. The visit, though will impact the relationship between Allison and Dr. Prier, and it may also impact the way Allison sees her teaching and standardized testing. Though Dr. Prier said he wanted to support Allison and he did not want to put pressure on teachers regarding standardized testing, I wondered if this validation could be seen as showing Allison and her students that when it comes down to it, the test scores are what matter most. However, the fact that Allison went to her principal later and said they need to expand more authentic literacy experiences showed that perhaps this visit could instead allow an opening for more extensive writing assignments. Perhaps here was an opening and a way to move even further from Scholar Island and other test prep curricular controls.

Thinking through Allison's Stories of Unanticipated Insight and Surprise

Allison was caught between two visions of her pedagogy and this seemed to, at times, affect her teaching identity. She was a masterful teacher and understood the intricacies of running a class. She had a clear idea in her mind about what her students needed to do to become better writers. Allison believed a good writer was a good writer whether he was writing a college essay or an e-mail. Like Samantha, Allison saw clearly where her students were and what she must do to increase their learning. This enabled her to create lessons that appealed to her students in authentic ways and even enabled her to change directions without notice when she saw something was not working the way it should. Allison also focused not only upon her students' skills, but also their well-being.

There was still an underlying unease in Allison's teaching that came from the testing she dealt with. She taught AP English; therefore, part of her job was preparing her students for a writing test. She admitted she was uncertain about this and had done her best with no actual AP training and only recently acquired textbooks. Though I did not study her sophomore English class, that class deeply affected how she saw all of her teaching. What she did in the sophomore class affected where her junior level students will be next year, so if she taught test prep over writing instruction, she would have a harder time preparing her juniors for the AP exam. However, if her sophomores did not test well, she feared she would be seen as a bad teacher, and she would also see herself as a bad teacher:

And a lot of the pressure [to perform well on the test] comes from me because I'm proud of what I do, and I'm proud of these kids, and I want them to do well, and I don't want the community to look at them and be like, "That's still a shitty school. Those are still shitty kids." That's the only thing that they know to judge it by! That's the biggest problem with education. Nobody is in here asking teachers and asking kids who are the most involved part of this whole process. Nobody asks us. We're just numbers.

Though her principal did not intend to put pressure on her to teach to the test, Allison still felt it; sometimes this pressure manifested itself in fear of creating more meaningful curriculum and sometimes it manifested itself in Allison's concern that she would be viewed as a bad teacher. The pressure manifested itself in her doubts whether a test prep program was more impactful than her insightful attention to students' needs and her broad knowledge of literacy pedagogy.

As Allison looks to the future, she will certainly continue to negotiate her place between authentic literacy and standardized testing. She was already resisting and finding ways to make sense of these conflicting values. Next year she and her department will have more autonomy to

construct their curriculum and here will be the space they need to begin to truly resist the curricular demands that do not make sense to their students' lives and learning. Here Allison will hopefully show others that she and her students are more than numbers. She already has done this in small ways – with the school wide poetry slam where she described giving her students a voice. Through the small daily stories of knowing her students and sensing the spontaneous necessities of classroom life, she understood how to adapt classroom instruction based upon what her students need.

Chapter 7:

Spaces and Stories

The meganarratives and small stories of teaching college level writing at Monroe High School show us how teachers both lived and worked with larger shared meganarratives while simultaneously storying and restorying their work within these meganarratives. The smaller stories illustrate where teachers' identity and agency resided. Spatially, we can think of these narratives as plains, as layers, as a three dimensional landscape that is co-constructed through the living out and telling of these meganarratives and small stories. In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre (1991) reminds us of the fluctuating and temporal nature of space, whether concrete or abstract:

Visible boundaries, such as walls or enclosures in general, give rise for their part to an appearance of separation between spaces where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity. The space of a room, bedroom, house or garden may be cut off in a sense from the social space by barriers or walls, by all the signs of private property, yet still remain fundamentally part of that space. Nor can spaces be considered empty 'mediums', in the sense of containers distinct from their contents. Produced over time, distinguishable yet not separable (p. 87)

So, too, were the spaces of meganarratives within the social boundaries of Monroe High School's English department. These storied spaces were not "empty 'mediums'" wherein teachers produced their instruction as if within an emptied frame. They were spaces created by the storied lives of the inhabitants. As the stories were constructed, told and lived, the spaces were created, and as the spaces were created, the storying responded by subverting, reinventing, overlapping or conforming to the spaces. Through their stories, the teachers within this study

portrayed their work through complicated and sometimes conflicting layers of both visible and hidden curricular concerns. The research questions that guided the work of this dissertation are worth revisiting at this time. My original questions were:

1. How do English teachers in urban high school envision and story their experiences teaching college preparatory writing?
2. How do teachers create and define curricular spaces by their personal stories and experiences teaching college preparatory writing in an urban high school? In what ways do the storied landscapes of high school English teachers affect their day-to-day teaching of college preparatory writing?

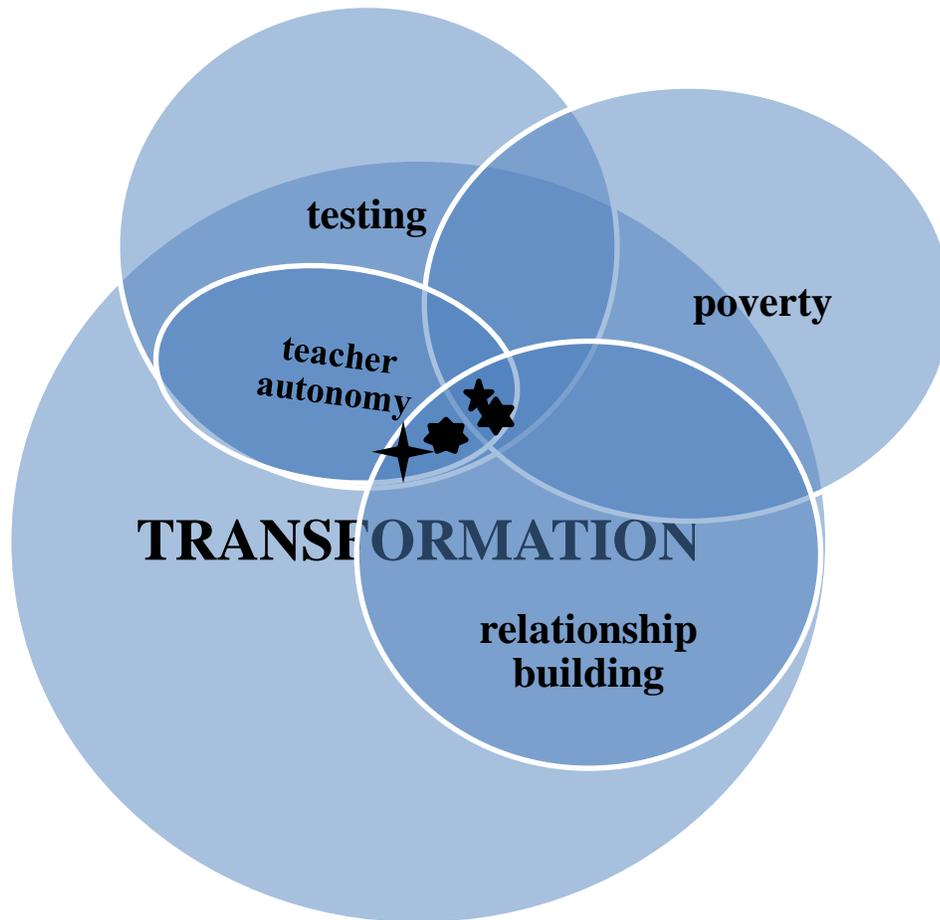
The Spatiality of Meganarratives and Small Stories

In order to respond to these original questions, it would make sense to look again at the story constellation in chapter four where we can envision Allison and Samantha's small stories within the layers of Monroe English department's meganarratives in order to get a perspective regarding where these daily small stories resided (see Figure 2). This study utilized story constellations, a methodological tool created by Craig (2007), and in doing so, focused upon the teachers' telling and living of stories, and also allowed an envisioning of movements and overlaps and tensions among the storying:

The strengths of the story constellations approach are its sensitivity to both teachers' developing knowledge and schools' shifting contexts and the way the approach enables researchers to follow where an unfolding story may lead. In other words, the story constellations approach celebrates emergent inquiry and allows teachers' practical experiences, rather than researchers' theoretical perspectives, to take the lead in the methodological dance. (p. 186)

This idea of the “unfolding story” is most clearly observed when we look at Samantha and Allison’s small stories in relation to the larger meganarratives within their department. The five meganarratives were common to all members of the English department, and they portrayed the larger narrative landscape within which teachers worked. These larger narratives also overlapped and pushed up against each other. The meganarrative of teacher autonomy, although a highly valued one in the school, was swallowed up by the meganarrative of testing which unfortunately controlled much of the writing curriculum at the school. The other meganarratives interacted in various ways, and the small stories of Allison and Samantha’s classrooms were located in a cluster where these meganarratives overlapped.

Figure 2. Story Constellation of Samantha and Allison’s Small Stories within Meganarratives



- ★ Samantha’s Story of Teaching Tina
- ★ Samantha’s Story of Teaching Trent
- ★ Allison’s Story of “Because we Live in Eastern Union Hill”
- ★ Allison’s Story of “The High-five”

Samantha’s stories focused strongly upon teacher autonomy and relationships with her students. These relationships were central to her teaching. As Samantha said over and over again,

she knew her students and she knew their writing. She knew how to motivate each one; she knew how to move them through their individual processes of drafting and revision. Most important, she knew how students' personalities affected how they saw themselves as students and writers. She knew who will "bounce" or "fight through" when faced with challenging writing assignments in college, and for those who she sensed will do neither, she tried to provide experiences to show them how it can be done: how one can advocate for oneself, and how one can push through the challenging aspects of writing. Because Samantha had the autonomy to create the classroom structure she desired, she was able to develop an environment during the second semester where students were also fairly autonomous. Samantha could build upon her strong relationships with students to work closely with them on their writing, almost in the way a tutor or an editor may work with a writer. Samantha's small stories also resided within the meganarrative of testing because she storied her students' skill levels based upon their freshman and sophomore years of heavy test prep and the lack of substantial writing instruction. If the meganarrative of testing were not such a strong one within the English department curriculum, all the English teachers might have felt they had more control over their writing instruction -- that they weren't merely teaching to a test freshman and sophomore years or catching their students up from the deficit of writing instruction junior and senior years.

Samantha's stories of teaching Tina were also firmly rooted in the meganarrative of poverty. Tina had an after school job was often unable to come in for help after school because of the poverty her family faced. The other more emotional issues connected with her family were also the result of poverty. The day Tina cried on Samantha's shoulder stemmed from Tina's concern that she did not think she could finish her paper because her family was crumbling and she did not know where she would be living in the next five days, let alone where she would be

able to type her papers. This type of concern is what Dr. Prier referred to over and over again in his interview as “obstacles of poverty” and what the teachers referred to as “chaos” stemming from students’ impoverished home lives. The stories of teaching Tina dealt with Samantha’s understanding of Tina’s desire to attend college on the one hand and Tina’s challenging home life and low skill level on the other. Therefore, Samantha’s stories of teaching Tina developed at the epicenter of where all five of these meganarratives overlapped.

Samantha’s stories of teaching Trent were very similar to those of Tina because they shared Samantha’s storying of her classroom as a place of teacher autonomy and relationship building within the structures of testing and transformation narratives. Samantha never discussed Trent’s socioeconomic status. He may have been poor, but if he was, it was not a part of his narrative. If he was poor, his poverty did not come into play in the ways Samantha storied, interacted with and taught Trent. Here, then, was an example of how the narrative of poverty may have been a strong one at Monroe and may have affected many interactions and experiences in the school; however, students were not consistently treated or storied as though they were impoverished or somehow lacking because of the meganarrative of poverty. Instead, the meganarrative was acknowledged as being present in the school, yet the meganarrative was only developed and fully acted upon when the need arose. Since Trent never portrayed this as a part of who he was, Samantha neither taught him nor interacted with him in ways that were rooted in responses to poverty. Instead her response to Trent was the result of his personality and academic skill, his melancholy state and his shy and awkward position in the classroom. Samantha’s storying of teaching Trent then fell a bit off-center within the constellation, within the realms of transformation, testing, teacher autonomy and relationship building, yet outside of the meganarrative of poverty.

In Allison's case, her stories were similar to Samantha's because they too were clustered around the center of these overlapping narratives. Allison's first story of changing the course of her lesson was like the story of Samantha teaching Tina. This narrative was firmly situated within all five meganarratives. Of course this narrative was situated within the narrative of transformation. It is also dependent upon the meganarrative of testing since Allison's curriculum in her AP class was dependent upon the restraints of standardized testing within the school. The meganarrative of poverty was central to this story since the main conflict of the small story was the students' grappling with the statistical implications of their own poverty and their questioning of what that meant to their own lives. The meganarratives of relationship building and teacher autonomy were what allowed Allison to understand the classroom events the way she did, and be able to astutely judge what she needed to do to make the lesson successful for her students both intellectually and mentally. If Allison had not developed personal relationships with her students and had not cared for them the way she did, she may have seen that they were doing exceptional academic work, analyzing the articles and perceptively connecting the data to their lives. Without the empathy of strong relationships, she may not have reached the point where she saw her students losing hope, where she "just couldn't take it anymore." Without the meganarrative of teacher autonomy, she may not have trusted her professional judgment nor felt empowered enough to change the course of her lesson when she concluded that was what her students needed.

Allison's other small story is still located toward the epicenter of the meganarratives, yet it, like Samantha's story of teaching Trent, is not dependent on the meganarrative of poverty. When Dr. Prier interrupted Allison's classroom, it spoke to the meganarratives of transformation, relationship building, teacher autonomy, and testing. Dr. Prier in his 90 second visit to Allison's

classroom, made several points. He showed Allison that he believed in her and supported her teaching (not the test prep program, Scholar island). He showed that it was important that the students scored well on the standardized test (important enough to interrupt class). He also showed that it was important that Monroe did better than one of the other schools. Each of these points spoke to one of the meganarratives. The meganarrative of teacher autonomy was clearly evident because he believed in Allison's teaching and supported her autonomy in the classroom. Otherwise he would not have said in response to Allison's belief that a test prep program increased scores, "No! No, it's not that! That would say anybody could come in and do this!" The meganarrative of testing was clearly promoted in that he was interrupting class to congratulate Allison for raising scores. Finally the meganarrative of transformation was evident when Dr. Prier mentioned that they had scored better than another school in the district. This message was clear: not only are the scores raised higher than they were when Monroe was under Central City School District, but they are also higher than one of the other, more affluent high schools in Union Hill School District, something that will convince the district and the community that Monroe has effectively transformed itself from a failing school to one that is successful. Finally the meganarrative of relationship building was evident in the way Dr. Prier spoke to the students and the ways they tried to get his attention. It was also clear that Dr. Prier and Allison already had a close and respectful working relationship, and that part of this relationship necessitated Dr. Prier's congratulating Allison, and Allison's satisfaction with his approval.

Only two of the teachers' small stories take place within the narrative of poverty. This shows how the storying of the teachers at Monroe portrayed their students' lives in poverty, but this poverty did not have to be what fully defined them. The meganarrative of poverty was a

narrative that could be subverted or ignored at times through teachers' day to day workings. Though all these narratives took place within the overlap of testing, teacher autonomy, relationship building and transformation, it seemed that while teachers discussed the meganarrative of testing as a threat and as a constraint for what they are able to do in the classroom regarding writing instruction, these smaller stories show us where teachers were able to either grasp or relinquish their autonomy within these meganarratives. Samantha used her autonomy to work one on one with students in writing conferences, yet this use of her autonomy was exhausting and time consuming because of her large class sizes, and she was not sure how much longer she would be able to continue that sort of instruction. Allison at times embraced her autonomy as in the story when she abruptly stops and changes the direction of her class lesson. She was able to do this because she had the freedom to base her teaching upon her professional judgment of her students' needs. At the same time, Allison struggled with the relinquishing of her autonomy when she described students' success on standardized testing due to a computerized test prep program, not her own understanding of student needs.

Following Henri Lefebvre's theories of spatiality, the meganarratives and small stories of Monroe High School created professional spaces for teachers' living and working. The spaces also then created the stories and there ensued a continual interplay among storying and space and movement through space and the stories of movement and restriction. The small stories of Allison and Samantha show us that the teaching of writing at Monroe High School is controlled by powerful narratives. Because the standardized testing is so important, the entire writing curriculum is affected by what is tested. At the same time, part of the meganarrative of transformation portrayed Monroe as preparing students for college level writing. The only classes students could take were college prep English or AP/pre-AP English. These conflicting

storylines placed acute pressures on teachers because the raising of test scores was a goal in complete opposition to preparing students for college writing. In order to deal with these pressures, Samantha and Allison worked hard to create strong relationships with students, and focused on motivation and other experiences that would prepare students for college. The skills were not always the center of these teachers' curriculum. The skills came, but through a focus on motivation, relationships and perseverance. Since no writing was on the test, writing was not taught in any substantial way until the last month of the sophomore year and then the junior and senior college prep and AP English classes had to be more accelerated as teachers felt the need to make up for the deficit of writing instruction they described. Besides this feeling of catching up in junior and senior year, there were also concerns that students who might not be able to achieve the necessary academic skills could at least be able to achieve certain social skills or personality traits. In Samantha's senior college prep class for example, she saw that a number of her students were not academically prepared to write in college, so to make up for this she tried to instill certain habits or traits such as perseverance and self-advocacy to help her students succeed in a college setting.

Lefebvre describes movements through spatiality in terms of liquidity: "Great movements, vast rhythms, immense waves – these all collide and 'interfere' with one another; lesser movements on the other hand, interpenetrate" (p. 87). So, the larger meganarratives at Monroe may have collided and interfered with each other. This could be seen through the clear collision in Allison's teaching of the meganarratives of teacher autonomy and standardized testing. This collision or interference must be examined and dealt with through the smaller stories of particular moments in daily teaching. These smaller stories then are the "lesser movements" which can "interpenetrate" the meganarratives and create fluidity and promote

change. The lesser movements of everyday teaching are the movements that could in fact change the meganarratives at Monroe, and effectively change the teaching of writing. If teachers are dissatisfied with the ways their writing instruction is controlled through the “frozen” meganarrative of testing, they can make small effective movements through more fluid meganarratives of autonomy and relationship building. Indeed, Allison attempted to do this when she met with Dr. Prier following his classroom visit. She explained to him that she believed test scores will only improve if more authentic literacy experiences are implemented across the school. She and other teachers within the English department may in the future use the meganarrative of teacher autonomy and the small stories taking place within and because of this autonomy to make the fluid change within the interfering meganarrative of testing.

Through these small stories, these subtle fluid movements of change, Allison and Samantha along with their English department colleagues then become the subjects in their own narratives rather than the objects of the meganarratives they are a part of. Here through their small stories, they produced and redefined the spaces of meganarratives that worked to define them and their teaching. Again, this resonates with Lefebvre’s spatiality and his description of appropriated space:

groups, classes or fractions of classes cannot constitute themselves, or recognize one another, as ‘subjects’ unless they generate (or produce) a space. Ideas, representations or values which do not succeed in making their mark on space, and thus generating (or producing) an appropriate morphology, will lose all pith and become mere signs, resolve themselves into abstract descriptions, or mutate into fantasies. . . viewed from this vantage point, the ‘world of signs’ clearly emerges as so much debris left by a retreating

tide: whatever is not invested in an appropriated space is stranded, and all that remain are useless signs and significations. (p. 417)

In the English department at Monroe High School it was through the combination of teacher autonomy and relationship building that teachers had the most control over their storying and could restory and appropriate space in ways that made sense to their own experiences. Here were where they became subjects in their own narratives and generated their own spaces. It also seemed that the issues of testing and poverty were the spaces that teachers responded in, not to. The meganarratives of poverty and testing were less in flux, therefore they did not allow movement or appropriation of space by teachers. This is likely because the meganarratives of testing and poverty were created in their beginnings through outsider-storytellers, and the stories that were constructed around relationship building and autonomy were constructed within the context, more organically and cooperatively by the participants of the school.

The meganarrative of testing was created originally by pressures of policy, of storytellers outside of Monroe, and these were then reacted too and re-storied by the teachers as they lived within the narrative. So too, the meganarrative of poverty originated as a narrative of the community and the school before the transformation began and therefore it too is a story that originated through outsider-storytellers and was then re-storied and reacted to by the teachers of Monroe. There is less movement or appropriation within these stories mainly because they did not originate within the school community in the same ways the narratives of teacher-autonomy, transformation and relationship-building did. Instead of creating these meganarratives, the teachers merely reacted to the telling of testing and poverty. Samantha reacted to the meganarrative of poverty when Tina began to lack hope, and Samantha used this narrative to help her work with Tina and encourage her to continue. Allison was faced with the

meganarrative of poverty when her students discussed their situations in response to the reading assignments and also began to lose hope. Allison did not create that narrative in her classroom. Her students brought that to the lesson and Allison saw the need to react to it. In both of these small stories, the teachers could not use the small stories to change the meganarratives or to critique or fight against them, but they could react to them and use these meganarratives to inform their teaching.

Therefore, here in the small stories, as there were possibilities of movement and change and reauthorization of the meganarratives, there was also the danger that the meganarratives could become too constraining upon teachers' abilities to appropriate the spaces within the meganarratives. Though teachers had the ability to appropriate their spaces through their small stories, if these stories are kept silent and hidden, there is a danger they will in time become lifeless, isolated and inert. Lefebvre's warning is crucial: "Ideas, representations or values which do not succeed in making their mark on space, and thus generating (or producing) an appropriate morphology, will lose all pith and become mere signs, resolve themselves into abstract descriptions, or mutate into fantasies" because again, "whatever is not invested in an appropriated space is stranded" (p. 417). Here the teachers at Monroe could also become stranded within the more frozen narratives of poverty and testing if not for the possibilities held within other more fluid meganarratives of teacher autonomy and relationships and transformation. When the small stories are told and lived within frozen spaces and when they are not shared, there is little hope for any appropriation of space. Though small movements can be made in isolation, they lack the power and the inertia that public, shared, and acknowledged stories can hold.

Implications for Future Study

When scholars discuss college level writing, it often becomes a conversation of theory, and these conversations are important. We do need to think about the larger implications of the work we do and how it fits into a theoretical framework. When policy-makers, especially those in educational policy have recently discussed the importance of college readiness, this discussion usually includes a list of particular objectives that are forwarded as the “standards” successful students should meet. While this dissertation certainly includes theory and discusses standards, there needs to be more impetus moving us to look closely at what is actually happening in English classrooms. The use of more contextualized research methodology can allow researchers to view the emerging narratives and understand how teachers are creating their own narrative structures to affect change within their curriculum. Examining teacher knowledge through the use of narrative and spatial structures can more authentically portray the contextual demands and the individual autonomy that teachers work through and within. Because of this, my study of two teachers at Monroe High School is not set up to be seen as replicable or transferable. However, it does help us to see and ask more questions about how teachers’ knowledge is utilized in the teaching of college level writing in high school settings.

Through Samantha’s storying of personal relationships with her students, we are encouraged to think further about questions of teacher-student relationships in an urban high school writing classroom and the place of personal relationships in academic writing instruction in general. Samantha’s stories also encourage us to think more carefully about the impact of class size and where the beginnings of teacher burn-out and dissatisfaction may lay within the exhausting job of writing instruction. Allison’s stories point us towards tensions between standardized testing and writing instruction, and how teachers can negotiate these tensions and

how these tensions take their toll on teachers' identities. Allison's stories also encourage more research on teacher knowledge as contextual and based within community and student relationships. We see through both of these teachers' stories that not only is writing socially situated, but the teaching of writing is socially situated and both hard "skills" and personality traits or habits of mind should be considered when assessing a writing curriculum. Finally, both teachers based their instruction as well as their teaching identities upon their particular students. Here too, more research could be done to help better understand where the "skills" and the "sociality" of writing instruction come together in college preparatory writing curriculum and teaching.

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Appendix 1

Human Subjects Committee Approval

Teacher Narratives of Preparing Urban High School Students for College-Level Writing

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Curriculum and Teaching at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this unit, the services it may provide to you, or the University of Kansas.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to better understand the stories of experience of urban high school English teachers as they prepare their students for college-level writing.

PROCEDURES

The study will use interview, observations, and collection of classroom artifacts and teacher journals.

1. There will be one long (probably 45-60 minute) interview in spring or summer, 2011.
2. During the period of classroom data collection (this would be over the course of several months, teachers will write 1-2 reflective journal entries a week sharing a story of something that happened during that week of teaching. These are informal, and could be hand-written or typed and e-mailed to the researcher.
3. Short (20-30 minute) interviews will take place about once every two weeks or so also during the period of data collection.
4. The researcher will observe your teaching a couple times a week also during the data collection period. You will not have to do anything at all to prepare for this. I will mainly just be observing your teaching and learning more about your classroom, students and teaching style. If there are questions I have about the observations, and it isn't convenient to talk after the observation, I can bring these up at our interview times.
5. Classroom artifacts will be collected in the form of assignments, student work, syllabus, etc.
6. Finally, informal discussion regarding classroom observations and student work will take place with teachers and student-participants.
All interviews will be audio-taped, and recordings will be kept digitally, and password secured.

RISKS

No risks are anticipated. Teacher participants will be asked to give up some of their time before or after school to participate in interviews and journal writing once a week for 4-6 months.

BENEFITS

The potential benefits to the teacher-participants are that they will have the opportunity to reflect upon their teaching practice and philosophy, and share the stories of their classroom and school with the researcher and perhaps the public. This act of reflecting and sharing allows teachers to become more critical and thoughtful regarding their pedagogical choices.

There are benefits to society, the teaching profession and the fields of composition studies and curriculum studies. These benefits include the understanding and portrayal of how classroom teachers make choices in order to construct their curriculum and prepare their students for high school writing.

PAYMENT TO PARTICIPANTS

Participants will receive no payment.

PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY

Your name, and your school and district's names will not be associated in any publication or presentation with the information collected about you or with the research findings from this study. Instead, the researcher(s) will use pseudonyms instead of your name, school and district names. Your identifiable information will not be shared unless required by law or you give written permission.

Permission granted on this date to use and disclose your information remains in effect indefinitely. By signing this form you give permission for the use and disclosure of your information for purposes of this study at any time in the future.

INSTITUTIONAL DISCLAIMER STATEMENT

In the event of injury, the Kansas Tort Claims Act provides for compensation if it can be demonstrated that the injury was caused by the negligent or wrongful act or omission of a state employee acting within the scope of his/her employment.

REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the University of Kansas or to participate in any programs or events of the University of Kansas. However, if you refuse to sign, you cannot participate in this study.

CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose further information collected about you, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to: Melanie N. Burdick, Department of Curriculum and Teaching, J.R.Pearson Hall, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045 or burdickmn@ku.edu

If you cancel permission to use your information, the researchers will stop collecting additional information about you. However, the research team may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researcher(s) listed at the end of this consent form.

PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION:

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7429 or (785) 864-7385, write the Human Subjects Committee Lawrence Campus (HSCL), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7568, or email mdenning@ku.edu.

I agree to take part in this study as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

Type/Print Participant's Name Date

Participant's Signature

Researcher Contact Information

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Appendix 2:
Interview Protocol

I. Preliminary interview protocol for Samantha and Allison

Set One –demographics and context

1. What grades and classes do you teach?
2. How long have you been teaching?
3. How long have you been teaching at this school?
4. Can you describe your students for me?
5. Can you describe your district?
6. Your school?
7. Your department?
8. The community?

Set Two – The Curricular Landscape: District, School and Classroom Curricular Goals

1. Describe the overall curricular goals for writing instruction at this school/district.
2. Where do these goals come from? Who created them?
3. Do the goals change for different grade levels or different groups of students?
4. Describe how preparation for college-level academic writing fits into the school's curricular goals?
5. Describe your personal curricular goals for writing instruction?
6. How do you see these goals as interacting/opposing/reinforcing the school's goals?
7. How do you decide writing goals for your students?
8. Do/have your goals change(d) over the course of the semester or year?
9. Why do they or have they changed?
10. How do you assess your students' progress as writers? As college-bound writers?
11. Can you tell me the story of a time when your writing instruction felt successful?

12. Can you tell me the story of a time when you felt challenged or unsuccessful while teaching writing?
13. How much freedom do you feel you have in creating and/or adjusting your writing curriculum for your students' needs?

Set Three – Teacher Stories of College-level and College-prep Writing Curriculum

1. Describe what college writing is. What does it look like? What skills are needed? What makes it successful?
2. How do you see college-level writing different from other types/forms/genres of writing?
3. How did you come to learn these insights about college-level writing? (Your own college experience? Special training or professional development programs? Feedback from colleagues, students, others?)
4. What questions do you have about college level writing and preparing your students for this undertaking?
5. When you create a syllabus for a writing class, or a class that will include the teaching of writing, what do you make sure to include?
6. When you plan a lesson for a writing class, what is important that you do or include in that lesson?
7. Can you describe a time when you felt a particular student, or class would certainly be successful when they were asked to write in college?
8. Can you describe a time when you were concerned that a student or a class might not be able to be successful in college writing?

II. Interview protocol for other participants (Lily, Susan, Matthew, Christopher and Dr. Prier)

Set One –demographics and context

1. What grades and classes do you teach? (Or – what is your position at the school?)
2. How long have you been teaching? (Or – how long have you been in education and in what capacity?)
3. How long have you been teaching at this school?
4. Can you describe your students for me?
5. Can you describe your district?
6. Your school?
7. Your department?
8. The community?

Set Two – The Curricular Landscape: District, School and Classroom Curricular Goals

9. Describe the overall curricular goals for writing instruction at this school/district.
10. Where do these goals come from? Who created them?
11. Do the goals change for different grade levels or different groups of students?
12. Describe how preparation for college-level academic writing fits into the school's curricular goals?

III. School year bi-weekly interview protocol for Samantha and Allison

1. Tell me a little about what you have been teaching.
2. How do you think this fits into (or doesn't fit into) your larger curricular goals?

3. Can you describe how you feel the students are doing with the material you are teaching?
4. What has happened to make you feel that way?
5. Can you tell me about something in particular that has occurred during the last week or so, and explain what it tells you about your students, the material, your teaching? You can talk more about something you described in your journal, or you can share something new.
6. Do you feel your students are becoming better writers? Why or why not?
7. Will these things you shared affect your curriculum or teaching in the days and weeks to come? If so, why and how? If not, why won't it affect anything?

IV. Final interview protocol with Allison and Samantha:

1. Can you reflect on or describe a little about your writing instruction this year?
2. How well do you think you met your larger curricular goals in regards to writing?
3. Can you describe how the students did this year?
4. What has happened to make you feel that way?
5. Can you tell me about something in particular that has occurred that stands out regarding your teaching of writing, and explain what it tells you about your students, the material, your teaching?
6. Do you feel your students have become better writers? Why or why not?
7. Do you think they are prepared to write in a college setting? Why or why not?
8. Will these things you shared affect your curriculum or teaching in the days and weeks to come? If so, why and how? If not, why won't it affect anything?

Appendix 3:

Excerpts from Union Hill School District Sophomore Communication Arts

Quarterly Benchmark Assessment

Provided 4-11 by Susan Tanner

HS CA BCA April 2011 Eng. II

Name: _____ Date: _____ Block _____

Instructions: Write the letter of the best answer on the line next to the question number.

Glory and Hope

By Nelson Mandela

(South Africa is a country made up of black Africans, whites of mostly English and Dutch descent and others of mixed race. In 1948, the white South African government created laws enforcing what was called apartheid, which means "separateness." For many years apartheid brought injustices to black South Africans. Nelson Mandela was a black South African leader who helped bring about abolishment of apartheid in 1990.)

Your Majesties, Your Highnesses, Distinguished Guests, Comrades and friends:

Today, all of us do, by our presence here, and by our celebrations in other parts of our country and the world, confer glory and hope to newborn liberty.

Out of the experience of an extraordinary human disaster that lasted too long, must be born a society of which all humanity will be proud.

Our daily deeds as ordinary South Africans must produce an actual South African reality that will reinforce humanity's belief in justice, strengthen its confidence in the nobility of the human soul and sustain all our hopes for a glorious life for all.

All this we owe both to ourselves and to the peoples of the world who are so well represented here today.

To my compatriots, I have no hesitation in saying that each one of us is as intimately attached to the soil of this beautiful country as are the famous jacaranda trees of Pretoria and the mimosa trees of the bushveld.

Each time one of us touches the soil of this land, we feel a sense of personal renewal. The national mood changes as the seasons change.

We are moved by a sense of joy and exhilaration when the grass turns green and the flowers bloom.

That spiritual and physical oneness we all share with this common homeland explains the depth of the pain we all carried in our hearts as we saw our country tear itself apart in a terrible conflict, and as we saw it spurned, outlawed and isolated by the peoples of the world, precisely because it has become the universal base of the pernicious ideology and practice of racism and racial oppression.

We, the people of South Africa, feel fulfilled that humanity has taken us back into its bosom, that we, who were outlaws not so long ago, have today been given the rare privilege to be host to the nations of the world on our own soil.

We thank all our distinguished international guests for having come to take possession with the people of our country of what is, after all, a common victory for justice, for peace, for human dignity.

We trust that you will continue to stand by us as we tackle the challenges of building peace,

prosperity, non-sexism, non-racialism and democracy.

We deeply appreciate the role that the masses of our people and their political mass democratic, religious, women, youth, business, traditional and other leaders have played to bring about this conclusion. Not least among them is my Second Deputy President, the Honourable F.W. de Klerk.

We would also like to pay tribute to our security forces, in all their ranks, for the distinguished role they have played in securing our first democratic elections and the transition to democracy, from blood-thirsty forces which still refuse to see the light.

The time for the healing of the wounds has come.

The moment to bridge the chasms that divide us has come.

The time to build is upon us.

We have, at last, achieved our political emancipation. We pledge ourselves to liberate all our people from the continuing bondage of poverty, deprivation, suffering, gender and other discrimination.

We succeeded to take our last steps to freedom in conditions of relative peace. We commit ourselves to the construction of a complete, just and lasting peace.

We have triumphed in the effort to implant hope in the breasts of the millions of our people. We enter into a covenant that we shall build the society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity--a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world.

As a token of its commitment to the renewal of our country, the new Interim Government of National Unity will, as a matter of urgency, address the issue of amnesty for various categories of our people who are currently serving terms of imprisonment.

We dedicate this day to all the heroes and heroines in this country and the rest of the world who sacrificed in many ways and surrendered their lives so that we could be free.

Their dreams have become reality. Freedom is their reward.

We are both humbled and elevated by the honour and privilege that you, the people of South Africa, have bestowed on us, as the first President of a united, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa, to lead our country out of the valley of darkness.

We understand it still that there is no easy road to freedom.

We know it well that none of us acting alone can achieve success.

We must therefore act together as a united people, for national reconciliation, for nation building, for the birth of a new world.

Let there be justice for all.

Let there be peace for all.

Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all.

Let each know that for each the body, the mind and the soul have been freed to fulfil themselves.

Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another and suffer the indignity of being the skunk of the world.

Let freedom reign.

The sun shall never set on so glorious a human achievement!

God bless Africa!

Now answer numbers 1 through 4. Base your answers on the passage "Glory and Hope by Nelson Mandela".

1. What is Mandela's main purpose in delivering this speech?
 - A. to end apartheid
 - B. to use literary techniques
 - C. to bring the people of South Africa together
 - D. revenge
2. Read the following sentences from the speech. "Let there be justice for all./Let there be peace for all./Let there be work, bread, water, and salt for all." What literary technique is used in these sentences?
 - A. foreshadowing
 - B. parallelism
 - C. ethical appeal
 - D. compare/contrast
3. Why is the word "We" repeated?
 - A. to remind people who they are
 - B. to emphasize his main purpose
 - C. to persuade people to respect each other
 - D. to make sure people were listening
4. In his speech, Mandela balances problems of the country such as bondage, poverty, suffering, and discrimination with what other element?
 - A. solutions
 - B. hatred of racism
 - C. freedom
 - D. dreams

Read the passage "The Little Big Fish" before answering numbers 5 through 10.

The Little Big Fish

1 It was his first real job. Even though it involved cleaning hamster cages and fishing slimy eels out of aquariums, it made the sixteen-year-old boy feel like he was stepping across an invisible threshold into adulthood. Derek loved caring for fish and animals and had frequented Mr. Piper's pet store throughout his childhood.

2 Over the years, Derek's mother had allowed him to purchase a mouse named Leo, a fish named Fido, and, at various times, three turtles, all of whom had been named Champ. The previous Saturday, on his way home from final soccer tryouts, Derek saw the sign seeking

24 Derek thought a moment, then put down the broom and picked up the little goldfish bowl. "Mr. Piper's a smart man," he said softly. Then holding the fish at eye level, he asked, "Hey, little one, you want to grow into a bigger fish?" Then he added, "Me, too."

Now answer numbers 5 through 10. Base your answers on the passage "The Little Big Fish".

5. The reader can infer from Derek's last comment that
- A. he wants to expand his opportunities and participate fully in life
 - B. he wants to stay small like the fish
 - C. he feels trapped just like the fish
 - D. he can't wait to eat also
6. Which literary technique does the author use in paragraph 16 to describe the fish?
- A. a metaphor
 - B. hyperbole
 - C. personification
 - D. simile
7. In paragraph 2 of the passage, the author uses which of the following literary techniques to create humor?
- A. irony in naming a mouse Leo
 - B. irony and alliteration in naming a fish Fido
 - C. understatement when writing, "He had always admired how the storeowner offered friendly words of advice..."
 - D. both answers A and B illustrate literary devices that were used to create humor
8. What do paragraphs 2 and 3 establish in the story?
- A. Derek's fond feelings for the pet store and Mr. Piper
 - B. Mr. Piper's kindness to local kids such as Derek
 - C. Derek's need for a meaningful afterschool activity
 - D. Mr. Piper's dedication to the store and animals

9. What connection in paragraph 20 does the author establish between the guppies and Derek?
- A. both are hungry
 - B. both are looking through the glass
 - C. both want something more than they have
 - D. both want to return home
10. Which best describes Derek's tone as he speaks with the girl and her mother about the fish?
- A. carefree
 - B. unhappy
 - C. confident
 - D. uncaring

Read the passage "The Writer by Richard Wright" before answering numbers 11 through 15.

The Writer

by Richard Wright

*** the words in bold print are defined to the right ***

In her room at the **prow** of the house

(the prow is the front part of a ship)

Where light breaks, and the windows are tossed with **linden**,

(linden is a type of tree)

My daughter is writing a story.

I pause in the stairwell, hearing

From her shut door a commotion of typewriter –keys

Like a chain hauled over a **gunwale**

(upper edge of the side of a boat)

Young as she is, the stuff

To the hard floor, or the desk-top

And wait then, humped and bloody

For the wits to try it again; and how our spirits **(sense; clear-headedness)**

Rose when, suddenly sure,

It lifted off from a chair-back,

Beating a smooth course for the right window

And clearing the sill of the world. **(a window ledge)**

It is always a matter, my darling,

Of life or death, as I had forgotten. I wish

What I wished you before, but harder.

Now answer numbers 11 through 15. Base your answers on the passage "The Writer" by Richard Wright.

11. The story of the starling helps explain
 - A. why the girl was typing a story.
 - B. why the window was closed.
 - C. why the girl feels abused and battered by her father.
 - D. why the father does not enter the room to help his daughter with her story.

12. Which line contains a metaphor?
 - A. My daughter is writing a story
 - B. ...a commotion of typewriter-keys like a chain hauled over a gunwale.
 - C. Young as she is, the stuff / of her life is a great cargo...
 - D. But now it is she who pauses, / as if to reject my thoughts

17. Which of the following sentences is punctuated **correctly**?

- A. "It's not easy fighting fires, so I don't want to see any of you out there starting any," said the captain.
- B. "Its not easy fighting fires, so I don't want to see any of you out there starting any" said the captain.
- C. "It's not easy fighting fires so I don't want to see any of you out there starting any, said the captain.
- D. Its not easy fighting fires so I don't want to see any of you out there starting any, said the captain.

18. Read the following paragraph, and identify the **incorrect** sentence. The sentences are numbered for reference purposes.

1. Helicopters were first conceived in the mind of Leonardo da Vinci. 2. However it took another 400 years before they were able to actually build and fly it. 3. In the centuries between that first idea and its fulfillment, many experiments were conducted to create the first helicopter. 4. It was not until the 1930s that fully successful helicopters were developed. 5. Despite their differences, all helicopters share similar flight principles. 6. Leonardo da Vinci would probably recognize his early sketches of these unusual flying machines.

Which sentence is incorrect?

- A. Sentence 2
- B. Sentence 3
- C. Sentence 4
- D. Sentence 5

19. Which sentence below is correct?

- A. That was an exciting race; the winner set a world record!
- B. That was an exciting race, the winner set a world record!
- C. That was an exciting race the winner set a world record!
- D. That was an exciting race. The winner, set a world record!

Appendix 4:
Assignments from Samantha Wisemann's
Senior College Prep English Class

S.W.

So, you have to write a paper. Over what, you ask? Well, my dears, over this:

How does Haddon use literary devices to achieve his purpose?

I can hear it now: "Huh?"

Quite simply, pick a literary device (you know, foreshadowing, conflict, metaphor, hyperbole, et cetera) and then analyze how Haddon uses that literary device to achieve his purpose (oh yeah, you'll need to figure out what you think was Haddon's purpose for writing the book).

Still confused? Ok, let me give you some examples of possible topics:

- Is the plot driven by internal or external conflict?
- Is Haddon's decision to narrate the story in 1st person an effective choice?
- Is this a coming of age story or a mystery novel?
- Is the story inside a story format successful?
- How does Christopher's story compare and contrast with traditional storytelling?
- How does adversity help individuals to build character?
- How do people's choices affect their lives and the lives of others?
- How can strength also be weaknesses?
- How does Haddon use Christopher's autism?
- Does Haddon successfully incorporate Christopher's autism into his voice?
- How does Haddon use autism as a storytelling device?
- How does Haddon use Christopher's autism to comment on "normal" human interactions?

You will then take that topic and narrow the focus to something specific and manageable. Here are some examples of what I mean:

- What challenges does *The Curious Incident* present to the ways we usually think and talk about characters in novels? How does it force us to reexamine our normal ideas about love and desire, which are often the driving forces in fiction? Since Mark Haddon has chosen to make us see the world through Christopher's eyes, what does he help us discover about ourselves?
- Christopher's conversations with Siobhan, his teacher at school, are possibly his most meaningful communications with another person. What are these conversations like, and how do they compare with his conversations with his father and his mother?
- Christopher's parents, with their affairs, their arguments, and their passionate rages, are clearly in the grip of emotions they themselves can't fully understand or control. How, in juxtaposition to Christopher's incomprehension of the passions that drive other people, is his family situation particularly ironic?
- Mark Haddon has said of *The Curious Incident*, "It's not just a book about disability. Obviously, on some level it is, but on another level...it's a book about books, about what you can do with words and what it means to communicate with someone in a book. Here's a character who if you met him in real life you'd never, ever get inside his head. Yet something magical happens when you write a novel about him. You slip inside his head, and it seems like the most natural thing in the world." Is a large part of the achievement of this novel precisely this – that Haddon has created a door into a kind of mind his readers would not have access to in real life?
- In his review of *The Curious Incident*, Jay McInerney suggests that at the novel's end, "The gulf between Christopher and his parents, between Christopher and the rest of us, remains immense and mysterious. And that gulf is ultimately the source of this novel's haunting impact. Christopher Boone is an unsolved mystery." Is this an accurate assessment? If so, why?

Your paper must reference four sources (one of which should be *Curious Incident*). Only ONE website may be used as a reference. All others must either be books or articles. All sources must be correctly cited (as per MLA) in a bibliography. The body of your paper must be 4-5 pages and must include a title page. More details will follow.

S.W.

What you need to do:	What you need to produce:	When it's due:
1. Select a topic (see assignment sheet for specifics)	Two acceptable topics, one of which will be selected. You need to describe each topic in a proposal paragraph.	Proposal paragraphs – 04/04
2. Do exploratory research and in depth reading on your approved topic.	A working bibliography (MLA format) of four possible sources to be used in the paper.	Working bibliography – 04/05
3. Record and assemble your data into a coherent sequence using research cards.	A progress report of not more than one page on your research process – what have you done, what are you learning, what is confusing, what are your questions?	Research progress report – 04/08
4. Draft a thesis statement, setting forth the major idea of your paper.	Thesis statement	Thesis statement – 04/11
5. Outline the paper in its major stages.	Notes and an outline.	Outline due – 04/13-14
6. Write a rough draft and argue, prove, or support your thesis with the information learned from the sources. Acknowledge appropriately borrowed ideas, data, format, and opinions.	A rough draft of the paper.	Rough draft due – 04/22
7. Prepare a bibliography listing all sources used in the paper, using the proper format. Write a final paper.	The final, polished paper, complete with the bibliography in proper form.	Monday, May 2nd

Samantha Wise name
May 5

English IV

TRISTER READING PROJECT

Purpose of the Assignment: The two main purposes of the Trister Reading Project are to help you meet AR requirements and advance your reading ability. One of the most difficult aspects of reading a novel is developing stamina. Stamina is your ability to read large portions of a novel without losing focus or interest. Reading constantly is the only way to develop reading stamina.

Directions: Go to the library and choose a novel. You are allowed to select a novel of your choice once a semester. The other two novels must come from the attached book list. In addition, the novel must be an AR book and be worth at least 5 points. After you have chosen a novel, READ the novel. Once you finish the novel, answer the questions below. You will also be expected to have a conversation with me about the plot of the novel and your reflections on the novel.

The assignment is not difficult, but if you decide not to complete the assignment, it will negatively affect your grade each trister.

Trister Dates:

1st Trister Ends—September 27th

2nd Trister Ends—November 5th

3rd Trister Ends—December 22nd

4th Trister Ends—February 16th

5th Trister Ends—April 8th

6th Trister Ends—May 20th

Personal Response Question:

- What are your personal experiences relating to a chapter? What have you experienced, how or why, and what have you not?

Summarize:

- Summarize three chapters in your novel. Summarize each chapter with TWO or THREE sentences. Be concise.

Critical Comment

- In a brief answer, provide a critical comment about your novel.

Appendix 5:

Assignments from Allison Manning's Junior

Advanced Placement Composition and Language Class

The Miami Herald

Posted on Sat, Mar. 26, 2011

Here's reason for us to fear fear itself

By Leonard Pitts Jr.
lpitts@miamiherald.com

OK, put your books away. We're having a pop quiz.

Below are four quotes. Each is from one of two sources: the Bible or the Koran, although, just to make things interesting, there's also a chance all four are from one book. Two were edited for length and one of those was also edited to remove a religion-specific reference. Your job: identify the holy book of origin. Ready? Go:

- 1) "... Wherever you encounter [non-believers], kill them, seize them, besiege them, wait for them at every lookout post ..."
- 2) "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword."
- 3) "If your very own brother, or your son or daughter, or the wife you love, or your closest friend secretly entices you, saying, 'Let us go and worship other gods' ... do not yield to him or listen to him. Show him no pity. Do not spare him or shield him. You must certainly put him to death."
- 4) "Now kill all the boys. And kill every woman who has slept with a man, but save for yourselves every girl who has never slept with a man."

All right, pens down. How did you do?

If you identified the first quote as being from the Koran (9:5) and the other three as originating in the Bible (Matthew 10:34, Deuteronomy 13:6-9, Numbers 31:17-18), I congratulate you on that degree in theology. If I have guessed correctly, most people will not have found it easy to place the quotes in their proper books. If I have guessed correctly, most people will have found a certain thematic similarity in them.

Yes, there is a point here: I wish people would stop cherry-picking warlike quotes from the Koran to "prove" the evil of Islam. You see this stuff all over the web. Just a few days ago, some anonymous person, angry with me for defending "Fascist/Nazi Islam" the writer says is trying to kill us all, sent me an e-mail quoting Koranic exhortations to violence to prove that Islam is a "religion of hate and murder."

As rhetorical devices go, it is a cheap parlor trick, a con job to fool the foolish and gull the gullible and for anyone who has spent quality time with the Bible, its shortcomings should be obvious.

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/03/26/v-print/2135771/heres-reason-for-us-to-fear-fear...> 5/23/2011

If not, see the pop quiz again. The Koran is hardly unique in its admonitions to take up the sword.

It is not my intention here to parse any of those troubling quotes. Let us leave it to religious scholars to contextualize them, to explain how they square with the contention that Islam and Christianity are religions of peace. For our purposes, it is sufficient to note that, while both Christian and Muslim scholars will offer that context and explanation, only Christians can be assured of being taken at their word when they do.

Christians get the benefit of the doubt. Muslims get Glenn Beck asking a Muslim Congressman to "prove to me that you are not working with our enemies."

Because Christianity is regarded as a known — and a norm. Muslims, meantime, have been drafted since Sept. 11, 2001, to fulfill the nation's obsessive, historic, paranoiac and ongoing need to rally against an enemy within. We lost the Commies, but along came the Islamo-fascists. The names change. The endless capacity for irrational panic remains the same.

As in people who send out e-mails insisting upon the rightness of holding over a billion people — that bears repeating: over a billion people — responsible for the actions of, what .. ? A few hundred? A few thousand?

Some of us use lies, exaggerations and rhetorical gobbledygook to instill in the rest of us that irrational panic they breathe like air. Yes, it is only sensible to fear the threat we face from terrorism. But panicked, irrational people are capable of anything.

Might be wise if we chose to fear that, too.

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AM 5-23

Bill Bigelow stated that after the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, President Bush called these acts "acts of war" and proclaimed a "war on terrorism." Not so clear was exactly who would be the target of this war. And what exactly did the president mean by terrorism? Bigelow points out the fact that Bush uttered the words "terror," "terrorist," or "terrorism" thirty-two times in his September 20th, 2001 speech to the nation, but he never once defined them.

Write your own definition of terrorism, keeping these questions in mind:

- ❖ Does terrorism need to include the killing of many people or can it affect just one person?
- ❖ Can it involve simply the destruction of property, with no injuries?
- ❖ Can governments commit acts of terrorism, or is the term reserved only for people who operate outside of governments?
- ❖ Must terrorism involve the people of one country attacking citizens of another country?
- ❖ Does motive make a difference?
- ❖ Does terrorism need to be intentional?

Individual definition:

With your small group, read each member's definition of terrorism. See if you can agree on a definition. You may use a group member's definition or put one together from your separate definitions.

Next, read the scenario assigned to your group. Using the definition your group came up with, decide whether any of the groups in the situation meet your definition of terrorism.

AP Language and Composition



Summer Reading Assignment: Choice of Two Non-Fiction Texts

May 24, 2011

Attached, you will find a list of several non-fiction texts from which you are to choose two to read this summer.

You are encouraged to purchase your own copy of this text in order to annotate as needed. Books will be available for check-out at the local branch of your public library and at our own school library. Purchase plenty of post-it notes in order to annotate. If you purchase your own copy, you can annotate within your text. As we have learned, active reading through annotation enhances our understanding of the text.

Assignment:

You must have at least 10 and no more than 15 annotations per chapter or section of your chosen books that are easily identified when you return to school in the fall. This will be your first assignment grade. Keep your annotations organized. You may even want to number them.

It is important to make quality annotations, not merely "This reminds me of..." or "I like when he says..." etc. You should ask questions, make connections, form opinions, draw conclusions, etc. You are to demonstrate that you have "think read" all the way through the texts.

Consider these possibilities as well.

1. Identify language, word choice, and images which appeal to you and explain why.
2. Mark word patterns, visual images, grammatical patterns, repetition of words, etc.
3. Track themes throughout the text.
4. Note figurative language such as similes, metaphors, personification, hyperbole, allusion, etc.
5. Keep a list of questions you encounter while you read.

Hint! Hint!

When you come back to school in the fall, you will have to do some intensive writing work with these books, so don't blow-off this assignment.

Make sure that you really understand the books that are reading and use the "think reading" strategies that you have acquired in your English II and Pre-AP English II classes.

Supplies Needed for AP Language and Composition

While this class won't require you to purchase a lot of supplies, there are supplies that are very important that you have throughout the school year that will help you be successful.

- A pocket-style dictionary (This is a must!) They are cheap at back-to-school times and easy to find at thrift stores and garage sales. (And no, you can't just use the Dictionary.com app on your smart phone.)
- Plenty of post-it notes in different sizes and colors. A variety of sizes will be especially important. I encourage you to get the Super Sticky style when possible because they are less likely to fall out of your book
- A manila folder (required) in which you can keep all of the drafts for our formal papers

Jacobs, A. J. *The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible*

Raised in a secular family but increasingly interested in the relevance of faith in our modern world, A.J. Jacobs decides to dive in headfirst and attempt to obey the Bible as literally as possible for one full year. He vows to follow the Ten Commandments. To be fruitful and multiply. To love his neighbor. But also to obey the hundreds of less publicized rules: to avoid wearing clothes made of mixed fibers; to play a ten-string harp; to stone adulterers. The resulting spiritual journey is at once funny and profound, reverent and irreverent, personal and universal and will make you see history's most influential book with new eyes. Throughout the book, Jacobs also embeds himself in a cross-section of communities that take the Bible literally. He discovers ancient biblical wisdom of startling relevance. And he wrestles with seemingly archaic rules that baffle the twenty-first-century brain. Jacobs's extraordinary undertaking yields unexpected epiphanies and challenges. A book that will charm readers both secular and religious, *The Year of Living Biblically* is part Cliff Notes to the Bible, part memoir, and part look into worlds unimaginable. Thou shalt not be able to put it down.

Nafisi, Azar. *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*

Every week for two years in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nafisi secretly gathered seven of her most committed female students to read forbidden Western classics. This extraordinary memoir is an exploration of resilience in the face of tyranny and a celebration of the liberating power of literature.

Gladwell, Malcolm. *Outliers: The Story of Success*

In this stunning new book, Malcolm Gladwell takes us on an intellectual journey through the world of "outliers"--the best and the brightest, the most famous and the most successful. He asks the question: what makes high-achievers different? His answer is that we pay too much attention to what successful people are like, and too little attention to where they are from: that is, their culture, their family, their generation, and the idiosyncratic experiences of their upbringing. Along the way he explains the secrets of software billionaires, what it takes to be a great soccer player, why Asians are good at math, and what made the Beatles the greatest rock band. Brilliant and entertaining, *OUTLIERS* is a landmark work that will simultaneously delight and illuminate.

Levitt, Stephen D. *Freakanomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything*

Steven D. Levitt is not a typical economist. He studies the riddles of everyday life--from cheating and crime to parenting and sports--and reaches conclusions that turn conventional wisdom on its head. Levitt explores the inner workings of a crack gang, the truth about real estate agents, the secrets of the Ku Klux Klan, and much more. Through forceful storytelling and wry insight, they show that economics is, at root, the study of incentives--how people get what they want or need, especially when other people want or need the same thing.

McBride, James. *The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother*

As a boy in Brooklyn's Red Hook projects, James McBride knew his mother was different. But when he asked about it, she'd simply say, "I'm light-skinned." Later he wondered if he was different, too, and asked his mother if he was black or white. "You're a human being," she snapped. "Educate yourself or you'll be a nobody!" And when James asked what color God was, she said, "God is the color of water." As an adult, McBride finally persuaded his mother to tell her story--the story of a rabbi's daughter, born in Poland and raised in the South, who fled to Harlem, married a black man, founded a Baptist church, and put twelve children through college. *The Color of Water* is James McBride's tribute to his remarkable, eccentric, determined mother--and an eloquent exploration of what family really means.

Hall, Ron. *Same Kind of Different as Me*

A dangerous, homeless drifter who grew up picking cotton in virtual slavery. An upscale art dealer accustomed to the world of Armani and Chanel. A gutsy woman with a stubborn dream.

It begins outside a burning plantation hut in Louisiana . . . and an East Texas honky-tonk . . . and, without a doubt, in the heart of God. It unfolds in a Hollywood hacienda . . . an upscale New York gallery . . . a downtown dumpster . . . a Texas ranch.

Gritty with pain and betrayal and brutality, this true story also shines with an unexpected, life-changing love.

Rubin, Gretchen Craft. *The Happiness Project: Or, Why I Spent a Year Trying to Sing in the Morning, Clean My Closets, Fight Right, Read Aristotle, and Generally Have More Fun*

Bretchen Rubin had an epiphany one rainy afternoon in the unlikeliest of places: a city bus. "The days are long, but the years are short," she realized. "Time is passing, and I'm not focusing enough on the things that really matter." In that moment, she decided to dedicate a year to her happiness project.

In this lively and compelling account, Rubin chronicles her adventures during the twelve months she spent testing the wisdom of the ages, current scientific research, and lessons from popular culture about how to be happier. Among other things, she found that novelty and challenge are powerful sources of happiness; that money can help buy happiness, when spent wisely; that outer order contributes to inner calm; and that the very smallest of changes can make the biggest difference.

Bragg, Rick. *All Over but the Shoutin'*

This haunting, harrowing, gloriously moving recollection of a life on the American margin is the story of Rick Bragg, who grew up dirt-poor in northeastern Alabama, seemingly destined for either the cotton mills or the penitentiary, and instead became a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter for The New York Times. It is the story of Bragg's father, a hard-drinking man with a murderous temper and the habit of running out on the people who needed him most.

But at the center of this soaring memoir is Bragg's mother, who went eighteen years without a new dress so that her sons could have school clothes and picked other people's cotton so that her children wouldn't have to live on welfare alone. Evoking these lives--and the country that shaped and nourished them--with artistry, honesty, and compassion, Rick Bragg brings home the love and suffering that lie at the heart of every family. The result is unforgettable.

Cullen, Dave. *Columbine*

When we think of Columbine, we think of the Trench Coat Mafia; we think of Cassie Bernall, the girl we thought professed her faith before she was shot; and we think of the boy pulling himself out of a school window -- the whole world was watching him.

The result is an astonishing account of two good students with lots of friends, who came to stockpile a basement cache of weapons, to record their raging hatred, and to manipulate every adult who got in their way. They left signs everywhere, described by Cullen with a keen investigative eye and psychological acumen. Drawing on hundreds of interviews, thousands of pages of police files, FBI psychologists, and the boy's tapes and diaries, he gives the first complete account of the Columbine tragedy.

Foer, Franklin. *How Soccer Explains the World*

Soccer is much more than a game, or even a way of life. It's a perfect window into the crosscurrents of today's world, with all its joys and sorrows. In this remarkably insightful, wide-ranging work of reportage, Franklin Foer takes us on a surprising tour through the world of soccer, shining a spotlight on the clash of civilizations, the international economy, and just about everything in between. *How Soccer Explains the World* is an utterly original book that makes sense of our troubled times.

Robbins, Alexandra. *The Overachievers: The Secret Life of Driven Kids*

In America today, high school students are under more pressure to succeed than ever before. In this groundbreaking exploration of the ever-intensifying culture of overachievement, Alexandra Robbins goes behind the scenes to explore every aspect of the teen overachiever's life, from dramatically unfair high school admissions processes to the high-stakes game of college admissions. With an emphasis on the competition, cheating, grade inflation, parental pressure, coaching and prep that are now considered normal parts of teenage life in middle class and privileged communities, Robbins explores the consequences of the pressure to achieve, including addiction and depression. Of-the-moment, thoroughly investigated and compellingly reported in Robbins's signature style, this will be a must-read for anyone who knows or is a high-achieving teen