

CLOSING THE CLASSROOM DOOR:  
DENYING THE POLITICAL, EMBRACING THE MORAL

by

Jenise Porter

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## DEDICATION

To Barbara Shippee and the children of Westernville

and

to my husband Les Porter

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the ways in which elementary school teachers view their job as political. I asked teachers to reflect on how they construct their identity, inside and outside the classroom; their relationship with the community, inside and outside the educational institution; and what behavior they consider political.

Teachers' identity is constructed through personal ideology and through societal influences such as historical context and popular culture. Radical pedagogy and feminist theory are the ideological lenses by which I measured the attitudes of teachers.

Using grounded theory I found that elementary school teachers characterize their actions as moral rather than political, what they called "doing the right thing." This research is important for looking at ways that political involvement on the part of teachers can be reframed as moral behavior. It includes implications for the relationship of elementary school teachers' pedagogy and a democratic society.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

The original purpose of this study was to explore the ways in which teachers construct their political identity both inside and outside of the classroom. My interest in the subject grew out of a desire to understand how the political ideology of elementary school classroom teachers, individually and collectively, affects a democratic society and whether there is a relationship between teachers' belief systems and their political participation in the greater society. I say that was my original purpose because I discovered as I analyzed the interviews I conducted for this study, that interviewees had beliefs which I began to characterize as a core of integrity or as moral principles. I was not sure just what I was hearing from them but it was a theme which led my study in an unexpected direction.

### **Where the Research Questions Began**

My husband and I retired in 1994 to an unincorporated area of Arizona I'll call Westernville. The 2000 census reported that the population of the area was 1,200 but that is probably a low estimate because a large number of people in the town are undocumented Mexican or Guatemalan nationals who took pains not to be counted by the census takers. While my husband built a house nearby, I volunteered in the county library branch located near the center of town. After a few months of volunteering I was offered a full time job, replacing the retiring, part-time library manager who had just turned 80 years old.

When I began my employment with the library district, it was located in the volunteer fire department building, a building that had been constructed a number of

years earlier with a community block grant. One of the requirements for the grant money was that the building be used for programs for the enrichment of the populace. The library moved into the space left vacant when the senior center closed a few years earlier. In Westernville the library and the school were the only institutions with governmental ties. There was no mayor, no city council, no local police force or fire department. The library contained the archives of the town – local memoirs, minutes of community meetings and maps of streets and buildings.

Children in the community attended kindergarten through eighth grade in town and later had a choice of taking the bus to high school in a small city about 20 miles away or a very small town 30 miles in the opposite direction. The K-8 school did not have an on-site library and teachers walked to our facility with their students once a week. When I became the library manager I implemented story times for Head Start, kindergarten, first, second and third grades. I had the encouragement, along with the considerable resources, of a county library system which served a very large and diverse population. I was encouraged by the library administration to devise and implement a wide-ranging number of programs for the children and adults in the community. I was so successful that I was recognized as one of the country's ten paraprofessionals of the year 2000 by *Library Journal* (St. Lifer, 2000).

Approximately eighty-five percent of the children attending school in Westernville were non-native English speakers and I wanted to learn as much as I could about assisting and encouraging all of the students to read for pleasure. I also wanted to understand the research underpinning various pedagogical methods.

Barbara, my friend and colleague, who taught third grade in the school, researched Master's Degree programs and discovered that the University of Arizona Department of Language, Reading and Culture offered just what we were looking for. We enrolled in the program and for four years Barbara and I commuted several hundred miles round trip, once a week to take classes in children's and adolescent literature, multicultural education and pedagogical theory. During our multi-hour round-trip commute we discussed our class work and shared information on the library/school environment. Barbara was my regular informant on teacher relationships, behavior at faculty meetings, teachers' views on the curriculum and the written and oral communications of the school principal who was also the district superintendent. During these conversations, Barbara and I honed our philosophies of education and discussed our pedagogical practices.

In 2000 the library district contracted with the school to share space in their new building. It was an ideal partnership and the library circulation continued to grow. The library was open during the evening and was usually full of young people using the computers, playing games, reading, getting homework assistance and visiting with friends. Two years into the partnership a new principal was hired who wanted the library space placed under his control. He spread misinformation about the library district and made scurrilous remarks about me in an attempt to have the school board evict the library. Teachers who had made extensive use of the library services told me privately that they did not wish to see the library evicted but they didn't feel they could make their views public. These teachers and teachers' aides said they did not see themselves as "political." One teacher remarked to me that she "stayed out of the politics of the school"

(K.Jackson<sup>1</sup>, personal communication, 2003). In this particular instance, the teacher clearly meant that she did not take sides in issues which involved school hierarchy. This was during a time when it was clear to me and to Barbara that the local school board simply acquiesced to anything the superintendent requested and that he favored faculty and staff who did not question his authority. The school board held a meeting where members of the public and some students rose to express support of the library. Barbara was the only teacher who did so.

### **Politics in the Classroom**

Following a provocative discussion in one of our university courses around this time, Barbara told me that she would never bring politics into the classroom even though she used what I consider to be some very challenging literature with her third grade students. One book in particular, Eve Bunting's (1999) *Fly Away Home*, is about a father and son who are homeless and, along with a few other people, live in a major metropolitan airport in the United States. They live at the airport because the father has lost his job and does not have enough income to rent a place for them. Barbara explained that she does not see this book as political; she sees it as a book about treating others fairly and providing shelter and other basic needs for all people. I believe that it is the duty of a democratic government to provide basic needs, including shelter, for its citizens. So a book about homelessness, regardless of its point of view, I find to be highly political.

This was one of those "ah-ha" moments when I realized that Barbara expressed a view that might be prevalent among teachers whether they considered their actions to be

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<sup>1</sup> This and names of teacher participants in this research are pseudonyms.

political or not. Teachers appear to feel comfortable teaching values such as manners, citizenship and concern for others; but do not feel comfortable teaching critical thinking about or questioning of our own government agencies, be they federal, state, local, school or community.

I retired in 2004 and began a doctoral program at the University of Arizona. I wanted to learn skills that would help me investigate how teachers construct their political ideology and how that is intertwined with their personal and professional identity. I wanted to know if there are implications for a democracy in the way teachers view “politics” in the classroom.

### **Research Questions**

I designed questions for this research project that would give me an opportunity to pose open-ended queries to elementary school teachers about their identity as teachers and their understanding of the word “political.” My research questions are:

1. What are elementary school teachers’ beliefs regarding the ways in which their teaching job is political?
2. How does gender influence a teacher’s definition of what is political in relation to her/his profession and
3. What ways are teachers’ pedagogical beliefs influenced by institutional directives?

My coursework at the University of Arizona was essential for examining educational philosophies and ideologies but I always placed the theories in the context of the events in Westernville. I believed these teachers acted against their own best interests, in not speaking up for maintaining the library, what Engels called “false consciousness” (Engels, 1893). Education can be transformative or it can be a way to maintain the status quo. In either case, teachers are essential agents in the process. I

wanted to know whether elementary school teachers see themselves as agents of change or whether they believe that their job is to transmit the dominant ideology to their students. I initially believed that both of those stances are related to one's political beliefs.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter I have described the personal observation that led to my desire to investigate a phenomenon I thought might have implications for the educational establishment. I identified the need to become conversant with theories that would guide my research and with the tools I needed to conduct the research. I told the story of the origins of my research question, my personal background and biases and how the teachers in Westernville could have been activists for change in the school and the community. Theory is never separate from real life, and can serve as an impediment for people who do not see themselves as intellectuals to delve into the meanings of their behavior. If elementary school teachers do not understand the theoretical framework for their behavior they are less able, and possibly less willing, to do what they call "the right thing."

### **Overview of Dissertation**

In the second chapter, literature review, I describe the theoretical lenses I have used to form my inquiry. Feminism, ideology and radical pedagogy are three of the four lenses I used to analyze my data. The fourth, morality in education, emerged after I had begun data collection.

The third chapter, methodology, sets forth the research questions, research design, interview questions, choice of participants, organization of data and data analysis and the codes and categories that emerged from the data.

The fourth chapter, data analysis, is the heart of this research. It is here that the teachers' voices make the theories come alive. These are the voices of the women and men who transmediate the written curriculum into classroom activities that lead children to construct knowledge.

The fifth chapter is a discussion of the data analysis and brings together theory and practice and Chapter 6 is an examination of the implications for teacher education programs and constructivist education as a foundation for democracy in the United States.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this investigation was both scholarly and personal. I wanted to understand how elementary school teachers define the term political and how they construct that definition. I was also in search of validation for my personal belief that the teachers at the school in Westernville should have taken a stand on behalf of the library and that the services I had provided to the community were valuable. My personal involvement in the outcome of the research was a catalyst for the theoretical framework of metacognition and self-reflection. Analysis of my own motivation and positionality was always on my mind.

### **Thinking About Thinking**

I begin with a discussion of metacognition and self-reflection because it is central to understanding the skills teachers used to respond to my questions and the skills I brought to bear in analysis of those responses.

Cognition, the process of knowing, and/or the product of knowing, forms the basis for a discipline within the study of psychology that is primarily concerned with the processing of information. Metacognition is the ability to think about how one is processing information. Flavell, a developmental psychologist, describes how metacognition works with children who are learning new skills.

Metacognition refers to one's knowledge concerning one's own cognitive processes or anything related to them, e.g., the learning-relevant properties of information or data. For example, I am engaging in metacognition if I notice that I am having more trouble learning A than B; if it strikes me that I should double check C before accepting it as fact (Flavell, 1976, p. 232).

Even though I am not a trained psychologist and my research is not with children. Flavell's description of metacognition lays a foundation for the discussion later in this chapter concerning the constraints on ways we are able to think about what we believe to be true. Developmental psychology is not the only vantage point from which to assess what we know about our own thinking. The late Clifford Geertz, anthropologist, philosopher and one-time aspiring novelist employs more elegant imagery than Flavell to describe metacognition:

Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning (Geertz, 1973, p. 4).

I asked teachers to tell me how they processed the information they use to construct their own identities while simultaneously thinking about the webs of culture which had been spun for them by their society.

### **Organizational Framework for Theoretical Lenses Used for Data Analysis**

I found that trying to impose an external framework onto the data I collected was impossible. Once I gave up that effort and began to "listen to the data," the codes grew organically from the words of the teachers. I sorted the codes into categories which became the organizing themes of the research. The claims I make in data analysis are based on the organizing themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data.

Chapter 3 on methodology includes a more detailed description of how I coded the data but it is helpful to note that the literature review in this chapter is arranged around those themes and sub-themes also. I began coding with an eye towards the theoretical lenses that shaped my research: ideology, feminism and radical pedagogy. These theoretical lenses meshed with the larger themes – Constructing Teacher Identity,

Teachers in a Democratic Community and Ways of Being Political - that contained multiple codes. The final category – “Doing the Right Thing” – came from using grounded theory methodology and prompted me to add another theoretical lens to my framework, that of morality in education.

The themes that became apparent when the coding process was complete are

1. Constructing Teacher Identity is an examination of the personal and societal aspects of being a teacher in the context of history, popular culture and gender. It includes the concept of ideology and the educational continuum from the strict father model to the progressive nurturant parent model.
2. Teachers in a Democratic Community is an examination of how teachers construct their identity in group settings.
3. Ways of Being Political examines correspondence theory in a capitalist society along with conservative politics and the current dominant educational ideology. Radical pedagogy is the lens through which I view my own ideology and the yardstick I use to measure what I consider “political.”
4. Doing the Right Thing is an examination of moral and ethical behavior in the classroom and how it is shaped by gender roles.

None of these themes is a discrete entity. They each overlap and influence the others.

### **Constructing Teacher Identity**

#### **The Concept of Identity.**

Brubaker (2000) notes that the term identity is so ubiquitous as to be almost meaningless. If identity is everywhere, it is nowhere (Brubaker, 2000). Fortunately,

ubiquity of the term does not preclude Brubaker and Cooper from refining the definition so that it is useful for this research:

‘Identity’ too, is both a category of practice and a category of analysis. As a category of practice it is used by ‘lay’ actors in some (not all!) everyday settings to make sense of themselves, of their activities, of what they share with, and how they differ from, others. It is also used by political entrepreneurs to persuade people to understand themselves, their interests, and their predicaments in a certain way to persuade certain people that they are (for certain purposes) ‘identical’ with one another and at the same time different from others, and to organize and justify collective action along certain lines.

By ‘categories of practice,’ following Bourdieu, we mean something akin to what others have called “native” or ‘folk’ or ‘lay’ categories. These are categories of everyday social experience, developed and deployed by ordinary social actors, as distinguished from the experience-distance categories used by social analysts. (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, pp. 4-5).

The everyday social experience of teaching is a category of practice. I wanted to find out how teachers learn to *be* in a category of practice called teaching and how the practice of teaching shapes their political and moral identity. Brubaker and Cooper make the point that people who see themselves as sharing a group identity may be the target of “political entrepreneurs” who wish to persuade them to “understand themselves, their interests and their predicaments in a certain way” (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, p. 4).

Teachers in the United States are encouraged to identify themselves as professionals rather than laborers. This may account for the difference in levels of activism on the part of teachers in the United States and in other developed countries.

Gee (2000) breaks identity down into categories which have similarities to the themes I have identified in my data.

1. Nature, over which we have no control, e.g., gender and childhood circumstances;

2. Institution, an identity which is defined by an institution to which we belong, e.g., the historical context of schools as sites of transmission for the shared values of society. One of the difficulties in theorizing Institutional identity is that there is often not a consensus on what those shared values are, or should be. I will examine that contradiction more closely in *Ways of Being Political* later in this chapter.
3. Discourse, the identities we build in relationship with others. Teachers build discourse identities through their relationships with colleagues, administrators, students, parents and the community at large. Discourse identities are examined in the section *Teachers in a Democratic Community*
4. Affinities, groups we choose for ourselves.

Teachers' identity is constructed from all four of these categories.

I begin with the ways in which teachers' identity has been shaped through schools as historical institutions.

### **Historical Identity of Teachers.**

In order to understand the historical identity of teachers in the United States it is necessary to examine the Institution of schooling itself. Schools have been viewed as a place to transmit certain values since the beginning of the colonial era in the early 1600's. Even before the Puritans stepped onto the soil of the New World in 1630, John Winthrop told his fellow colonists in a sermon aboard ship: "We must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us" (Winthrop, 1630). For Winthrop and the early Puritans, schooling meant learning to read and write so they could obey the laws

of God and the state. Schooling in New England in the early 1600s began to lay the groundwork for education as a means of creating “the good society” (Spring 1997, p. 11).

Free, state-sponsored schools were considered by Thomas Jefferson to be a bulwark against a corrupt Europe. Jefferson argued that representative government relied on educated lawmakers “without regard to wealth, birth, or other accidental condition” and that sharing the cost of free public schools would enable the best possible representative government (Kaestle, 1983). Noah Webster wrote in 1790 that “the national character is not yet formed” (Kaestle, 1983, p. 6). Webster believed that common schools would create a national character but it was a specific kind of character which Dr. Benjamin Rush, another of the Founding Fathers, envisioned. He wanted to “convert men into republican machines...to perform their parts properly in the great machine of the state” (Kaestle, 1983, p. 7). The description of national character meant the character of men. Women were not participants in the democracy; not until a century later, in 1920, would women, fifty percent of the population, be granted the constitutional right to vote.

That does not mean that women were unaware of the inequality inherent in the founding documents. Abigail Adams wrote in a letter to her husband John Adams, a future president of the United States: “If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation” (Letter to John Adams, March 31, 1776).

Teachers were not charged with developing or determining the curriculum to be taught, they were charged only with transmitting to children the values deemed important

by the leaders who decided those values. The transmitted values were, and continue to be, those of the dominant ideology.

Zinn (1997) points out that in the rapidly growing colonies, political power benefited the upper classes. In Boston in 1770 the top 1% of property owners owned 44 percent of the wealth (Zinn, 1997, p. 39). These individuals decided what would be taught in schools. The class struggles of that period in American history are not included in the textbooks that chronicle our history. There are alternative “histories” to those written by our Founding Fathers and others who established the first schools in this country; however, those accounts which restore women, Native Americans, and non-European settlers to the story are often categorized as radical or extremist.

The notion of Horace Mann, often called the father of American education, was that education in an industrialized society was about Americanization as standardization (Cremin, 1961). The stated goal of schools for American Indians in the nineteenth century was to turn them into “Americans” as that term was defined by the people who were in power in government and in the larger society (Spring, 1997). I suggest that not a lot has changed in the last century. For example, in the spring of 2009 in Arizona, Senate Bill 1108 was introduced into the legislative process. This bill states, “a primary purpose of public education is to inculcate values of American citizenship...including democracy, capitalism, pluralism and religious toleration.” Public schools are forbidden from teaching materials that openly “denigrate, disparage or overtly encourage dissent” from these values (Tucson Citizen, April 18, 2008). In this particular case, Arizona legislators were trying to shut down an academically successful ethnic studies program that they felt transmitted values that were contrary to what the legislators believed to be

“American. Legislators were maintaining the history of public education in the United States where the classroom teacher is the means of transmission of “American values” to students.

Theories of schools as institutions of social reproduction are not uncommon in contemporary academic writing and research. Althusser wrote in 1971 that “the school (but also other State institutions like the Church, or other apparatuses like the Army) teaches ‘know-how’, but in forms which ensure subjection to the ruling ideology or the master of its ‘practice’ (Althusser, 1971). Schools are not places of democratic participation but rather institutions in which there is a “structural correspondence between its social relations and production” (Bowles & Gintis, 1977, p. 131). Bourdieu goes so far as describing the reproduction of social values through schooling as “symbolic violence, that is, the imposition of “arbitrary” values that are embedded in power relations (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Giroux (2001) describes “unstated norms, values and beliefs” that are part of classroom life as “hidden curriculum” and Fine’s (2003) research in urban high schools demonstrates how class structure is reproduced with students. Teachers’ identities are shaped by the institutional identity of the educational establishment which is almost always officially a reflection of dominant ideology.

Class divisions are apparent in Eckert’s book *Jocks and Burnouts*, (1989), a study of a large high school in the northern United States that summarizes in two words the class divisions in that school. Eckert could be describing the high school that I attended in a small city in California in the early 1960’s or the twenty-first century Arizona high schools with which I am familiar. Reproducing class structure appears to be the norm in

high schools but it begins in elementary and junior high school. Jones (2006) school experience along with her literacy research with primary grade girls demonstrates the transmission of class consciousness in school settings at a very early age. She describes her surprise when she entered public school to discover that families who lived in trailer parks were often categorized as “White Trash.” Class structure is an institutionalized ideology within schools in the United States that “corresponds” to the class structure of U.S. society in general.

Social studies is a battleground of ideological beliefs in elementary school. The enduring myth of Thanksgiving as a time of sharing between the Pilgrims and the Indians is enacted in primary grades across the United States every year. Stenhouse’ (2009) description of 5 year olds wearing brown paper vests cut from grocery bags while other students sport construction paper “feather” headdresses to act out the first Thanksgiving is familiar to those of us who have attended elementary school in the United States. In 1986 Dr. Lynne Cheney, wife of former Vice-President Dick Cheney was appointed to head the National Endowment for the Humanities by President George H. W. Bush. During her tenure she asked the National Center for History in the Schools at the University of California in Los Angeles to coordinate the writing of standards for teaching history in public schools. Those standards were mandated by Congress in 1992. The standards that were produced were widely praised by historians and educators throughout the United States. The section on teaching colonial history to kindergarten through fourth grade includes this statement:

The helplessness of the colonists to secure their own survival led them to establish an intimate relationship with the Indians of the Chesapeake. While this relationship was not the one originally desired by either people, the Indians were the ones who ultimately lost (Nash, 1994)

Cheney wrote:

[T]he certification process put in place by the Clinton administration will lead to the adoption of the proposed standards more or less intact -- as official knowledge -- with the result that much that is significant in our past will begin to disappear from our schools (Cheney, 1994).

Apple (1993) writes about the struggles of powerful political elites to control what becomes “official knowledge” and thus the dominant narrative of what ideas comprise our heritage. Cheney understood the importance of controlling the narrative.

I agree with Brubaker and Cooper (2000) that teachers’ group identity can be used as a tool for manipulation by political entrepreneurs. My presumption for this study is that schools *are* sites of transmission for official knowledge and that teachers are the means of transmission. My question is whether teachers understand the construction of official knowledge and if it shapes their identity.

### **Identity of Teachers as Constructed in Popular Culture.**

Examination of popular culture, including books, movies, television programs, advertising and music, on teacher stereotypes is essential for understanding how much of teachers’ identity is constructed for them.

Connections between popular culture and schooling is “of central importance with respect to consideration of schooling in the context of a democratic society” (Farber, 1994, p. 3). Weber (1995) calls popular culture our collective biography and the “institutional biography” posited by Britzman (1986) is similar to Gee’s institutional identity.

Contemporary popular films with high school teachers serving as protagonists include *Stand and Deliver* (1988) based on the teaching experiences

of Jaime Escalante (played by Edward James Olmos), *Dangerous Minds* (1995) inspired by the real-life experiences of LouAnne Johnson (played by Michele Pfeiffer) and *Freedom Writers* (2007) starring Hilary Swank. *Freedom Writers* is based on the true story of Erin Gruwell, who taught high school only three years before becoming a Distinguished Teacher in Residence at California State University-Long Beach. None of these teachers is typical. Ron Clark and Jaime Escalante are male teachers in a profession dominated by females. Jaime Escalante is Latino, an underrepresented minority in the teaching profession and Clark, Johnson and Gruwell are white teachers who make a life-changing impact on the lives of inner city minority youngsters. The teachers in these films are charismatic and iconoclastic and certainly not team players. They defy the administrators of their schools and seemingly single-handedly inspire their students to excel beyond what anyone else had expected they would or could do.

Ron Clark is the only teacher in this group who did not teach in a high school. In *The Ron Clark Story* actor Matthew portrays a successful and popular elementary school teacher who moved from North Carolina to an inner city school in Harlem where he miraculously turned 12 year-olds from the lowest performing class into the highest on what appeared to be annual standardized tests. Clark is played by actor Matthew Perry, was paid a million dollars for his performance in each episode of the television series *Friends* (Carter, 2002). There is an aspect of unreality in the Johnson and Johnson Company, a multi-billion dollar multinational corporation (Johnson & Johnson, 2009) producing and relentlessly promoting a television movie about a regular schoolteacher played by a wealthy

and famous actor. The federal government reported that the median annual salary for elementary school teachers in 2004 was \$41,160.00 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001), considerably less than the million dollars paid to an actor who portrays a teacher.

Freire (1987) tells us that literacy is reading the word and also reading the world. One of the ways we read the world is through popular culture which in turn helps to shape our identity and that of those around us. Movies like *The Ron Clark Story*, *Stand and Deliver*, *Freedom Writers* and *Dangerous Minds* construct an identity of teachers who are so committed to “doing the right thing” that they give up their personal lives and earn far less than they might in many other professions.

### **Gender as Identity.**

In 1973 Susan Hollander of Hamden, CT sued the local school board for the right to run on the boys' cross-country team since there is no girls' team. The judge rules against her saying, "Athletic competition builds character in our boys. We do not need that kind of character in our girls" (Guttman, 1991, p. 221).

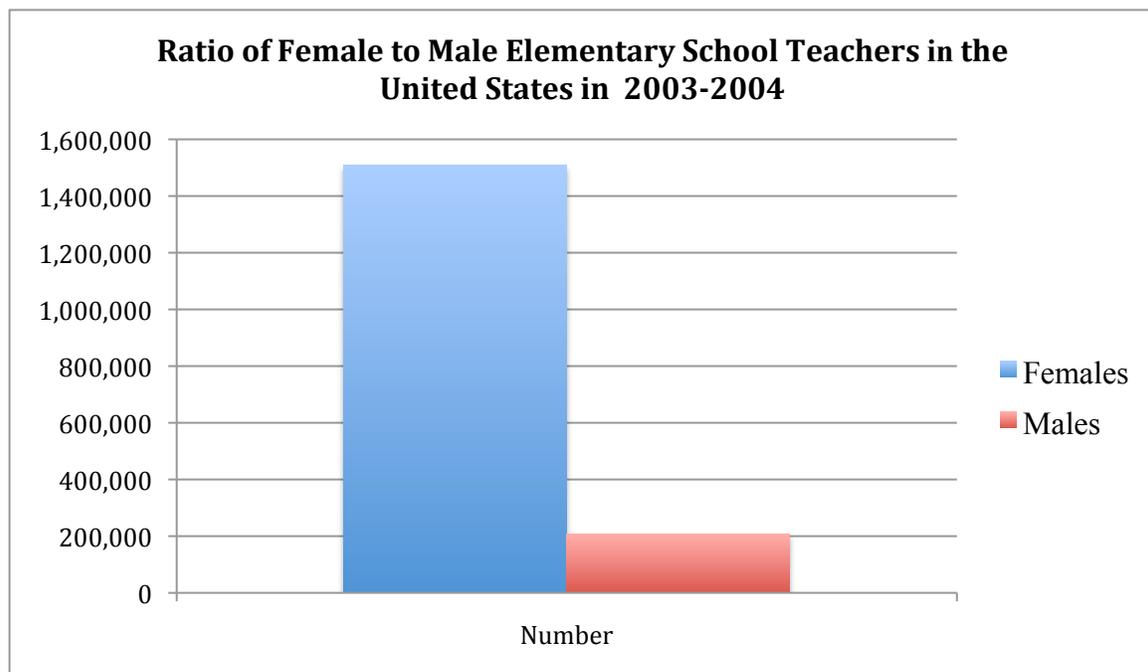
The ruling against Susan Hollander occurred in 1973, a year during which a number of the teachers I interviewed had already reached adulthood. Teacher identity is fabricated in ways I have discussed previously: historically, personally and through popular media. One of the strongest influences may be the gender of the teacher. Gee's (1999) concept of identity derived from nature encompasses gender as an identity over which we have no control.

Historically, women teachers have been considered a “stable and inexpensive” work force whose wages, as early as the era of the Common School, have been less than

male teachers (Spring, 1997). Teachers are “highly educated professionals” who are “often treated as a strange hybrid of babysitter and civil servant” (Moulthrop, 2006, p. 3).

For many years, teaching was one of the few professions open to women. Women have also been considered to be more suited to nurturing and caring for young children. Those so-called feminine traits are inextricably linked to the historically low-paying profession of teaching. Female teacher stereotypes “are profoundly sexist and reveal a disdain for the teaching profession’s female roots” (Britzman, 1991, p. 5). In 1870, “teachers made up 90% of all professional women (Degler, 1980, p. 379). Women continue to make up the majority of elementary classroom teachers.

*Figure 2.1 Ratio of Female to Male Elementary School Teachers in the United States in 2003-2004.*

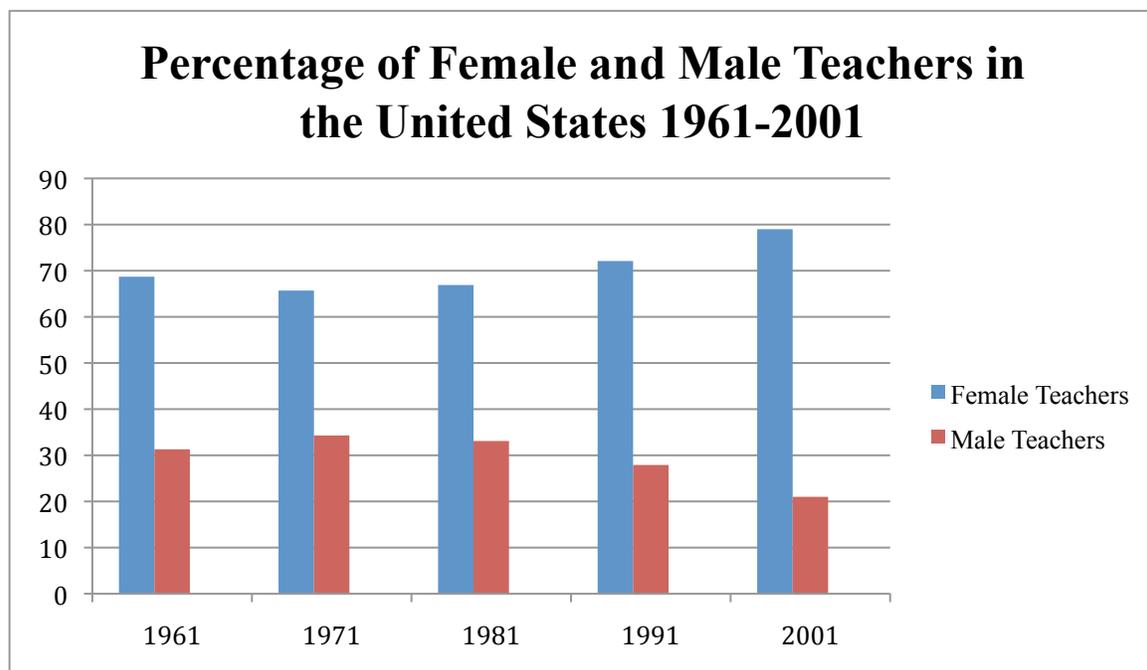


The on-line database from the National Center for Educational Statistics does not separate elementary school teachers from middle and high school teachers. The

information in figure 2.1 is from a response to an email request for that specific information. (Snyder, personal communication, 2009)

Female teachers were expected to serve as moral models to their communities and even into the early 1900s were not allowed by school districts to be married or to be seen in public with men to whom they were not related (Spring, 1997). Women were not even full citizens until 1920 when they were granted the constitutional right to vote.

*Figure 2.2 Percentage of Female and Male Teachers in the United States 1961-2001.*

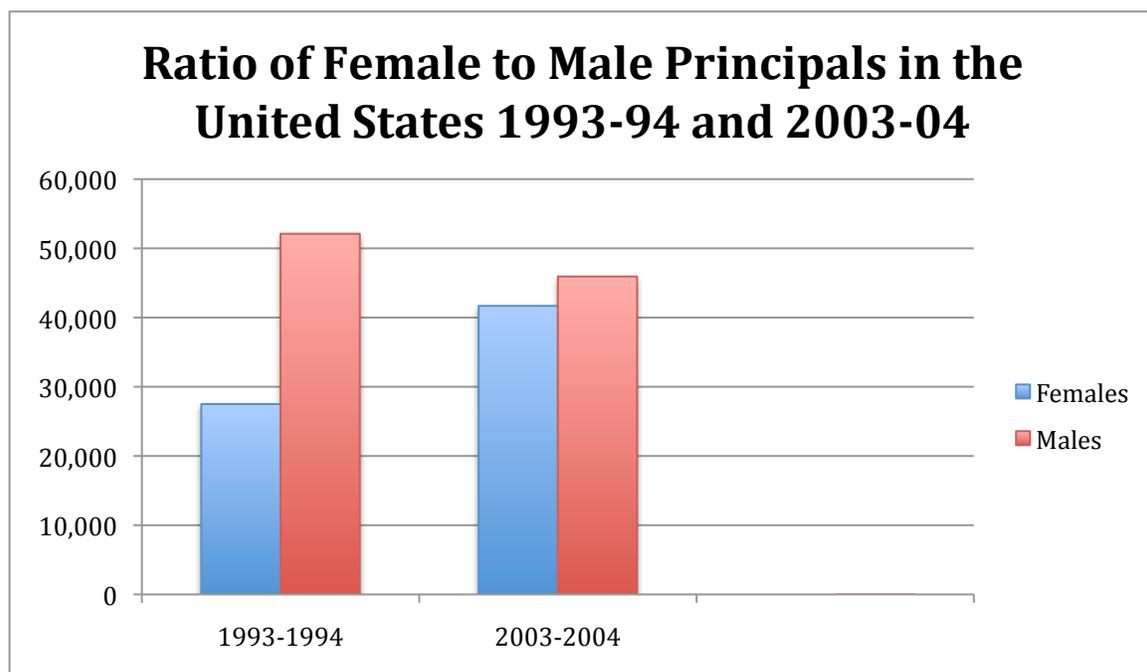


The belief that men should get paid more than women for the same job is a dominant ideology in the United States. The Institute for Women's Policy Research reports that "The ratio of women's to men's median weekly earnings for full-time workers was 79.9 in 2008, the third consecutive decline since the historical high of 81.0 in 2005" (Rose, Stephen J., 2004). The United States Census Bureau reports that in their data set from 2005-2007 the wage differential

between the earnings of men and women employed full time across all professions was \$17,458.00 (United States Census Bureau, 2007).

In the teaching profession administrators are paid higher salaries than classroom teachers and the majority of administrators have been, and continue to be, male. The National Center on Educational Statistics (2008) reports that in 1993-1994, 52,110 elementary school principals in the United States were male and 27,500 were women. Prospects for women administrators improved by 2003-2004 when 45,930 were men and 41,690 were women. However, at the same time that the number of women in principals' offices was growing the ratio of female to male teachers was still skewed heavily in favor of females.

*Figure 2.3 Ratio of Female to Male Principals in the United States 1993-94 and 2003-04.*



The preponderance of women in the elementary grades is indicative of the continuing belief that teaching, particularly of young children, is women's work.

But it is not women who have given birth to the pedagogical frameworks they use. Luke and Gore (1992) put it this way:

As feminist educators, we are also women who stand hip-deep in cultures saturated with phallogocentric knowledges, in institutional structures ruled epistemologically and procedurally by men and masculinist signifiers, and in a discipline which, despite its historical terrain as “women’s work”—a caring profession—remains the theoretical and administrative custody of men (p. 2).

Feminist scholars who study the profession of teaching suggest that even John Dewey, a paragon of progressive education, subscribed to the societal ideology that women were a “stable and inexpensive” work force. Lagemann (1996) a feminist historian of education, notes that Dewey was responsible for “widespread misunderstanding of the important role he assigned teachers” (p. 33). She writes that his was a “failure to emphasize the significance of teachers, which helped skew interpretations of his thought and limited the practical value of his philosophy” (p. 33). The practical value of Dewey’s philosophy might have included strengthening elementary school teachers’ collaboration in designing curriculum and honoring their expertise in pedagogical methods. Dewey’s relationship with one of his closest colleagues at the Chicago Laboratory School illuminates his actions. Ella Flagg Young was his doctoral student, an elementary school teacher and an astute politician. Young argued in her dissertation that “cooperation and the continuous, collaborative discussion, modification, and reaffirmation of aims that made effective education possible” was based on “social equality between and among all the participants in the educational system,” students, teachers, administrators and university professors (Lagemann, p. 38). Although Dewey continued to acknowledge Flagg’s influence on his

thinking, Dewey and his wife Alice apparently suffered a falling out with Flagg and their collaboration ceased after 1904. Dewey's subsequent writings failed to make a clear connection between teachers and the politics of education.

Even though Dewey was a visionary of progressive education, he was still a privileged male custodian of the "theoretical and administrative" framework of educational philosophy and thus influential in progressive education in a way that women of his era could not be.

Another strong woman who was not part of the hegemonic male elite was Margaret Haley who joined the Chicago Teachers' Federation in 1898. Under her leadership it became the first teachers' labor union in the United States. Haley and the CTF fought for better working conditions and higher pay for teachers and for increased school funding. She was critical of what she called the "factoryization of education" and she fought for teachers' rights to provide a nurturing environment for children (Rousmaniere, p.147-148). Haley's work was "opposed by an emerging coalition of school reformers and business interests intent on creating a centralized school administration..." (Rousmaniere, p. 148). This turn of events is not dissimilar to Bill Gates and the Business Roundtable taking firm control of the direction of education in the United States in the early twenty-first century.

### **Concept of Ideology**

I define here the ways in which I am using ideology to discuss the belief systems of the teachers I interviewed and of the Institution of schools.

The term ideology was first used by Count Antoine Destutt de Tracy during the

French Revolution to describe a science of ideas or a comprehensive way of looking at things (Hawkes, 2003). Ideology or ideological framework is used in this study to mean what we assume to be true because it fits our own values and experiences (Lakoff, 1996) or helps us to defend a set of beliefs about social institutions and relationships (Kaestle, 1983). Thomas Kuhn (1962) uses the term paradigm to describe a way of organizing a scientific problem. As with an ideological framework, a paradigm is a way in which thinking about a scientific question is organized. In both cases the basis for the framework seems so logical and fits so closely to our perception of what we know to be true that we don't "see" other information or ideas that do not fit our framework. Identities serve to create a "sameness and continuity of the individual" (Robins, 2005, p. 172) as does Ideology. Ideology is a more contentious term, however, partly because it is so often used to describe "an explicit set of political beliefs..." (Grossberg, 2005, p. 177). This confirms what I discovered in interviews with teachers, the word political does not have positive connotations.

Dominant ideologies in a society become the norm and are viewed as neutral; ideologies which differ from the norm are considered radical. Schools, along with churches and the military, are state institutions which transmit the dominant ideology (Althusser, 1971; Bowles & Gintis, 1977; Giroux, 2001). "Conservative politicians have always spoken about communism as an ideology" (Grossberg, 2005, p. 177) while capitalism is seldom referred to in the mainstream media as an ideology. The concept of habitus is especially useful for understanding that one's ideology is most often unconscious (Bourdieu, 1977). It becomes a disposition to act in certain ways which are so ingrained that they are seldom even closely examined. Behaviors which are part of an

unconscious ideology no longer need to be monitored by outside forces (Foucault, 1977). Lynn Cheney understood this in her fight to control official knowledge. Once a certain kind of knowledge becomes the norm, it is more likely to be part of one's habitus.

Eagleton (2007) lists a number of current definitions of ideology. The most useful for purposes of this study are:

1. the process of production of meanings, signs and values in social life;
2. a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class;
3. the medium in which conscious social actors make sense of their world;
4. action-oriented sets of beliefs (Eagleton, 2007, p. 1).

Ideology is also about power – who has it, who doesn't and who is trying to obtain it. In education, the people in power are the ones who design the curriculum and make the laws that determine how the curriculum will be delivered to the students. Teachers can transmit the values those in power have given them or they can attempt to interpret the ability of those values and transform them into what they call “doing the right thing.” The ways that teachers take power is what I categorize as Ways of Being Political, one of the themes that grew out of my data analysis. I will discuss that more fully later in this chapter.

Eagleton (2007) writes that sociologist John B. Thompson's description of the study of ideology as a study of relationships of domination is:

probably the single most widely accepted definition of ideology; and the process of legitimation would seem to involve at least six different strategies. A dominant power may legitimate itself by *promoting* beliefs and values congenial to it; *naturalizing* and *universalizing* such beliefs so as to render them self-evident and apparently inevitable; *denigrating* ideas which might challenge it; *excluding* rival forms of thought, perhaps by some unspoken but systematic logic; and *obscuring* social reality in ways convenient to itself (pp. 5-6).

Eagleton argues that not all ideology is related to power that is dominant; however, ideology in the elementary classroom curriculum has been determined by policy makers at the federal and state levels. It promotes congenial beliefs and values (Native Americans and Puritans were equal partners in the first Thanksgiving); and it universalizes those beliefs as exemplified in state standards for schools. Power to determine what ideology makes its way into elementary classrooms in the United States rests with the political and business elite.

### **An Ideological Continuum in Schools.**

Lakoff's (1996) analysis of the worldviews of liberals and conservatives in the realm of national politics in the United States is instructive for understanding the power of dominant ideologies in education.

Lakoff posits the nation as a family with a strict father model at one end of the continuum and a nurturant parent model at the other. Theories of education fall along the lines of that same continuum with rigid, prescriptive, authoritarian methods at one end and progressive, constructivist thinking methods at the other. Which of these educational philosophies forms the basis for teaching as a category of practice is what ideology, and the dominant power behind it, is all about. The strict father/authoritarian model transmits dominant ideology to students through curriculum and teaching methods. The nurturant parent model emphasizes constructivist thinking that may or may not result in acceptance of the dominant ideology. I look at them both in turn.

### ***Strict father/authoritarian model.***

As part of a course on qualitative research I conducted interviews with two people whom I identified as community activists. Graduate study research led me to consider the connection between political identity and community activism. Both of the

interviewees told me independently of one another that they are uncomfortable with authority. I had not anticipated that response and wondered how discomfort with authority figures might influence behavior.

The modern study of authoritarian personalities began after World War II. Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson and Sanford (1982) developed the theory of authoritarian personality in response to the trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1960. In his capacity as a “Transportation Administrator” in Hitler’s Germany, Eichmann was responsible for overseeing the transport of thousands of Jews, and other undesirable people to death camps. Eichmann claimed at his trial for war crimes that he was just following orders and was not responsible for the deaths of those he had sent to the camps. Adorno and his colleagues came together under the auspices of the American Jewish Committee to study prejudice, anti-Semitism in particular, and personality traits. They theorized that an authoritarian personality is a person who purports to prefer obedience to a boss, an authority figure, rather than making decisions for her or himself. They held that ideology is part of one’s personality and is shaped by childhood development and reflects the character of the family.

In 1961, in further examination of authoritarian personalities, Robert Milgram conducted a series of experiments in which he tested the hypothesis that adult male subjects would administer an electric shock which they believed was causing pain simply because they were told to by an authority figure (Blass, 2000). Robert Altemeyer (1981, 1988, 1996, 2007) has continued researching authoritarian personalities in his work on right wing religious authoritarianism and its implications for Canadian and United States’ politics.

In a school setting an authoritarian/strict father teacher would not question the commands of the bureaucrats in power. She<sup>2</sup> would teach the curriculum designed by those in power and she would expect children to take in the information she provides without questioning it. Freire (1970) describes it as the “banking” method of education.

E.D. Hirsch and his Core Curriculum program are the epitome of the authoritarian model of schooling. Hirsch believes that every American should share the same cultural knowledge, what he calls cultural literacy (Macedo, 2006) and what Cheney calls official knowledge. He maintains that “the basic goal of education in a human community is acculturation, the transmission to children of the specific information shared by the adults of the group or polis” (Hirsch, 1988, p. 4). Educational researcher Provenzo responds:

In Hirsch’s approach, minority students sign away their cultural heritage in order to be able to enter into the mainstream culture. There is no notion on Hirsch’s part that by accepting the cultural definitions identified by him in works like *Cultural Literacy*, the minority student may be resisting domination by the mainstream culture. For Hirsch, such a rejection of the mainstream culture on the part of a minority student is an act of ignorance – an act of cultural suicide – or a failure on the part of the student to identify what meaningful knowledge is actually about. (Provenzo, 2005, p. 31).

Hirsch’s ideological stance is that some knowledge is more important than other knowledge and that some people are more qualified to decide what that knowledge is. Constructing new knowledge and examining philosophical concepts is anathema to Hirsch’s strain of utilitarian knowledge but it is not new to the United States. Historian Richard Hofstadter (1963) recounted the strain of anti-intellectualism that is part of the “American” character. Hofstadter wrote in 1962 that the United States was the only country among Western nations with majority of females teachers, not only in elementary school, but also in secondary. He suggests that intellectual pursuits were seen as

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<sup>2</sup> Even though Lakoff characterizes the strict parent as Father, it is not limited to the male gender. I use the feminine pronoun here because the majority of elementary teachers are women.

effeminate and not quite suitable for “vigorous” males. During the presidential campaign of 2004, Senator John Kerry was regularly characterized by political pundits as being effete, in part because he spoke fluent French, while George W. Bush was described as a regular guy you might want to have a beer with. That situation lends some credence to Hofstadter’s description of anti-intellectualism in the United States.

***Nurturant parent/critical literacy model.***

The primal experience behind this model [nurturant parent] is one of being cared for and being cared about having one’s desires for loving interactions met, living as happily as possible, and deriving meaning from one’s community and from caring for and about others (Lakoff, 1995, p. 197).

The act of learning to read and write has to start from a very comprehensive understanding of the act of reading the world, something which human beings do before reading the words” (Freire, 1987, p.xiii).

“Critical literacy is about “reading” and uncovering power relationships in the world” (Edelsky, 1999, pp. 212-213).

Fifty years of experience have taught us that knowledge does not result from a mere recording of observations without a structuring activity on the part of the subject. Nor do any a priori or innate cognitive structures exist in man; the functioning of intelligence alone is hereditary and creates structures only through an organization of successive actions performed on objects. Consequently, an epistemology conforming to the data of psychogenesis could be neither empiricist nor preformationist, but could consist only of a constructivism (Piaget, 1980, p. 23).

What these four quotations have in common is the knowledge that learning is a complex process and is about more than acquiring some information or a list of facts as Hirsch and his supporters would have us believe. Strict father knowledge can be assessed with a multiple choice fill-in-the-bubble exam while nurturant parent constructivist knowledge requires a teacher who is aware of each student’s abilities and strengths. Moll (2005) calls it “funds of knowledge,” honoring what the child knows and building on that

knowledge in the classroom. Thinking about the strict father/nurturant parent dichotomy during the process of listening to and transcribing interviews caused me to code some of the data as “children as learners/thinkers.” A number of teachers expressed their respect for the abilities of the children who come to their classrooms and the knowledge that each child is unique. They wanted their students to “read the world” and to care about others in their community.

I summarize this section on Constructing Teacher Identity by quoting Althusser (1971): “I only wish to point out that you and I are always already subjects, and as such constantly practice the rituals of ideological recognition....” and Geertz (1973): “man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs....” Individual teacher identity is always already shaped by institutional and cultural forces. That is not to say that teachers, or any of us, do not have free will. I think we do and the relationships that teachers build with those around them is an expression of their free will. I will next review the literature that relates to identities teachers construct for themselves under the heading Teachers in a Democratic Community.

### **Teachers in a Democratic Community**

The personal identity of teachers is constructed for them by history, by popular culture and by nature. But teachers’ identity is always part of a social process, “dialogic” in the Bakhtinian sense.

One’s own discourse is gradually and slowly wrought out of others’ words that have been acknowledged and assimilated, and the boundaries between the two are at first scarcely perceptible” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 345).

Group identity is transmitted through a shared ideology about teaching, much of which is developed in teacher education programs and continued in professional development and school in-service programs. Teacher discourse is recognizable across the country, and perhaps the world, in ways that are not unlike what Horace Mann strove for in his common schools.

Personal identity and collective identity of teachers is inextricably entwined. However, when I coded my data the theme of teachers as part of a democratic community was distinct from teachers constructing their personal identity. I developed two sub-themes: (1) becoming a kind of teacher and (2) acting as a kind of teacher. Gee (2000) writes that we have no control over Nature Identity, our gender<sup>3</sup>, ethnicity, age, etc. and our Institutional Identity, except insofar as we choose to be part of the Institution. We do choose our Discourse Identity and our Affinity Identity through the groups we belong to and the people with whom we associate.

“Identity is both a personal and a social construct, that is, a mental representation” (van Dijk, 1998, p. 118.). Teachers make sense of their world through a shared ideology which results in actions toward their students, colleagues and administrators and the community at large. Teachers’ attitudes and interaction shape the group beliefs which in turn shape the individual teachers in a continuous loop. “Everything means, is understood, as part of a greater whole-there is constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 426.).

Society not only continues to exist *by* transmission, *by* communication, but it may fairly be said to exist *in* transmission, *in* communication. There is more than a

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<sup>3</sup> Feminists theorists, preeminently Judith Butler (1999) take exception to the assumption that gender is “natural” and not socially constructed. I find merit in that argument but it is outside the scope of this research.

verbal tie between the words common, community and communication. Men live in a community in virtue of things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common. What they must have in common in order to form a community or society are aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge – a common understanding-like-mindedness as the sociologists say. Such things cannot be passed physically from one to another, like bricks; they cannot be shared as persons would share a pie by dividing it into physical pieces. The communication which insures participation in a common understanding is one which secures similar emotional and intellectual dispositions-like ways of responding to expectations and requirements (Dewey, 1916, p. 4).

John-Steiner recounts an encounter with a colleague where the exchange of information and ideas contributed to “clarification and reorganization” in her thinking.

Knowledge, therefore, is both reconstructed and co-constructed in the course of dialogic interaction. It involves agentive individuals who do not simply internalize and appropriate the consequences of activities on the social plane. They actively restructure their knowledge both with each other and within themselves. Such reconstruction can occur as the outcome of positive shared dialogue and joint activities. It is also a consequence of criticism, rejection and resistance to events that occur on the social level” (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 35).

A teacher’s day is shaped by interaction with students, other teachers, administrators, support staff and possibly parents and other community members. Each of those encounters changes the identity of the teacher in some way, small or large. Teachers who reflect on their own practices, and their own identity, will value the dialogic exchanges that occur throughout the day; others, whose paradigm is rigid, may be unable to reconstruct or co-construct new knowledge because, as Kuhn (1962) tells us, they cannot “see” information that does not bolster the current paradigm. For example, a teacher who is authoritarian, in the mold of the personalities identified by Altemeyer (1988) and Zimbardo (2007) is unlikely to question a directive from the principal or

superintendent instructing that the DIBELS<sup>4</sup> test be administered to each of her students. Beyond that, this teacher will internalize the belief that the DIBELS score represents a legitimate measure of reading ability and will segregate children accordingly. DIBELS as a legitimate assessment of reading ability has become official knowledge and represents the current dominant ideology of the educational institution.

I observed this phenomenon directly when I taught children's literature in the classroom to preservice teachers in a University program. I asked students to co-construct with me and with the other students their knowledge of children's literature as a tool for critical thinking. It was thrilling to observe so many moments during the semester when students discovered aspects of themselves and of their literacy history that changed their paradigm.

In contrast to students' attitudes about children's literature, their faith in the Disney Corporation as a benign and positive influence on children, was unassailable. I showed the film *Mickey Mouse Monopoly* (2001), based on Henry Giroux's analysis of the Disney Corporation's dominance in the lives of children's play, near the end of each semester. The film examines sexism and racism in more than eight films ranging from the early *Cinderella* to more recent *Beauty and the Beast* and *Little Mermaid*. I was shocked at the resistance students demonstrated towards the information presented by Giroux and many other scholars interviewed in the film. My students simply refused to believe that there could be a way to look at Disney films and the Disney Corporation as

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<sup>4</sup>DIBELS is the acronym for Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills. It is a timed test of fluency in word sounds, phonemic segments and nonsense syllables. Its developers advertise it as a measurement of a child's skills for reading. In a number of states, Arizona being one, DIBELS is required to be administered in schools which accepted certain federal government funds for education. DIBELS was developed in conjunction with No Child Left Behind.

anything but a benign force in global culture. I expressed my frustrations in a weekly staff meeting with Dr. Kathy Short and the other children's literature teachers. Dr. Short suggested that the film asked students to examine their identity and how it was constructed and re-constructed by Disney Corporation. The students, the majority of whom were female, had grown up with Disney characters. They had lunchboxes, stuffed animals, make up kits, Halloween costumes, books, clothing, shoes, and much, much more imprinted with the Disney characters and Disney logo. I did not encounter a single student who said she or he had not been to Disneyland in California or Disneyworld in Florida. The majority of the young women and men in my classes could not imagine a paradigm where Disney was a multi-million dollar enterprise whose main purpose was to make money for its shareholders and not simply a neutral purveyor of entertainment for children's pleasure.

After the first semester of showing the film I emailed Dr. Giroux to share my frustration and ask for advice (Giroux, personal communication, 2005). He told me that his experience with students is the same and that he requires that they write a reflection of the film after they view it. In subsequent semesters I asked students to write a 2-3 page reflection on *Mickey Mouse Monopoly* with citations from the film. In a number of instances, students reported in their reflections statements from the film which were not factual. It was not a matter of interpretation, they simply fabricated (unconsciously, I'm certain) aspects of the film that did not exist. Duke University political scientist Brendan Nyhan reports research showing that people who have strongly held beliefs are even more likely to assert those beliefs as factual, after being presented with demonstrable evidence to the contrary (Nyhan, 2009). Nyhan attributes to Mark Twain the sentiment:

“It ain’t what you don’t know that gets you into trouble. It’s what you know for sure that just ain’t so.”

The students who viewed *Mickey Mouse Monopoly* reinforced one another’s view of the film, sharing opinions and childhood experiences to confirm the validity of the paradigm they had internalized. However, van Dijk reminds us that “ideologies are constructed, used and changed by social actors as group members in specific, often discursive, social practices. They are not individual, idealistic constructs, but the social constructs shared by a group” (van Dijk, 1998, p. 9). Social actors using and changing constructed ideology is an expression of free will and is apparent in changing societal attitudes about multicultural education or inclusion of students with various disabilities into regular classrooms. Critical pedagogy is not the norm in schools in the United States but changes in ideology through co-construction of knowledge is a clear outcome of a 1996 study of preservice teachers’ selection of children’s literature for classroom use (Hart, 1996). Participants in the study were forty juniors and seniors enrolled in a children’s literature course at a Midwestern university. All but one of the students was female and their mean age was 21.9. One student was Asian-American, one was Hispanic-American and the rest were of Euro-American heritage. At the beginning of the semester, students were given a list of picture books with descriptions and asked to choose the five books that were the most appealing to them for use in an elementary classroom and their reasons for the choices. The course was structured in much the same manner as the Children’s Literature course I taught where students are introduced to a wide variety of literature from many perspectives representing adults and children from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, along with individuals who are homeless or

mentally or physically challenged. At the end of the course, students were given the same list of picture books and asked to complete the same questionnaire they had completed earlier. The researchers found that:

[T]he number of multicultural reasons given for the selection of children's literature revealed a 116% increase. Also of interest is the 41% pre to post-intervention increase in the frequency with which the subjects in this study chose to select literature portraying cultures other than the mainstream culture (Hart, 1996, p. 220).

When presented with theories of multicultural education and data for its use in teaching, preservice teachers constructed a new ideology that had the power to change their teaching practices. Nyhan's research and my experience discussing Disney Corporation with students notwithstanding, the possibility of groups of teachers questioning dominant ideology and changing their minds is not impossible. The teachers I interviewed for this research were nearly unanimous in stating that professional development at their school site was inadequate. The most common scenario was for the school district to bring in an outside "expert" who was paid a large amount of money to talk "at" the teachers. They were seldom offered the opportunity to exchange information with their peers and to co-construct knowledge as John-Steiner describes it.

John Dewey's (1916) quote is useful in summarizing how teachers' identity is constructed through relationships with others:

Not only is social life identical with communications, but all communication (and hence all genuine social life) is educative. To be a recipient of a communication is to have an enlarged and changed experience (Dewey, 1916, p. 5).

### **Group Identity and Social Capital.**

Although social capital is often associated with individuals, it also accrues to groups.

Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition-or in other words, to membership in a group (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248).

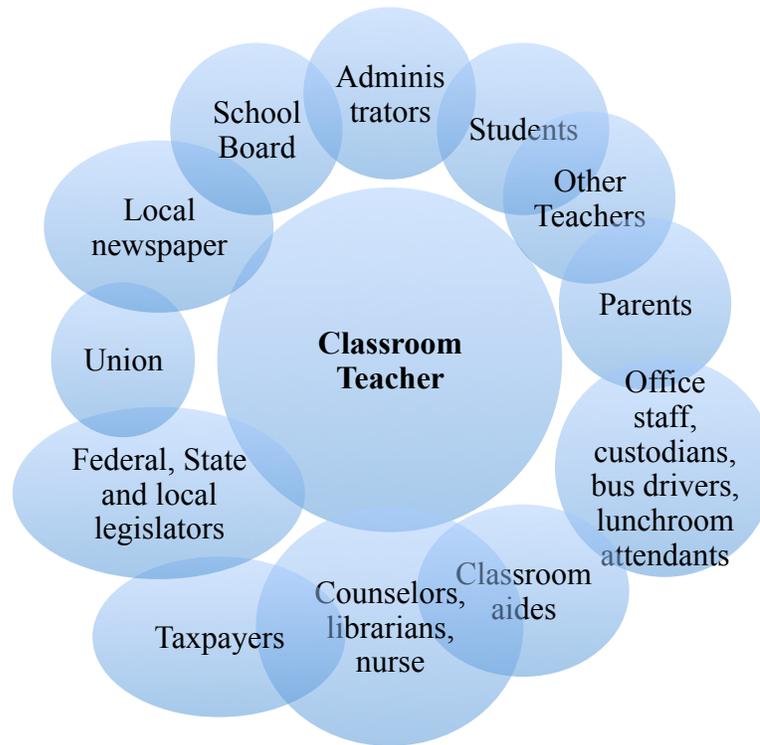
Social capital in the specific context of schools is identified by Putnam (2000) as having originated with L. J. Hanifan, progressive supervisor of rural schools in West Virginia, who wrote in 1916:

Those tangible substances [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit....The individual is helpless socially, if left to himself....The community as a whole will benefit by the cooperation of all its parts, while the individual will find in his associations the advantages of the help, the sympathy, and the fellowship of his neighbors (Hanifan, cited in Putnam, 2000, p. 19).

Hanifan was aware that the institution of school functions within a larger community of families and neighbors. His statement precedes the work of social theorist James Coleman by almost a century when Coleman writes that there is a “broadly perpetrated fiction in modern society...compatible with the ...political philosophy of natural rights...that society consists of a set of independent individuals (Coleman, 1990, p. 300).

Individual teachers cannot be separated from the milieu in which they perform professional responsibilities. Figure 2.4 below illustrates the groups teachers interact with and are impacted by every day ranging from local school site staff to federal policy makers.

*Figure 2.4 Teachers in the Community*



The amount of social capital a teacher has varies from group to group. Peers at a school site may have equal amounts of social capital in relationships with one another, greater amounts in relationships with custodians and kitchen staff and none at all with federal policy makers. Having less social capital with groups outside the school community may explain why teachers see their authority as bounded by the classroom walls.

Educational sociologist James S. Coleman (1990) points out that independent individuals acting alone are a myth and that even though individuals have social capital, that capital always operates within a social structure. When Hirsch, and other proponents of the “banking” method of educating students, encourage individual knowledge in the classroom, they ignore the dynamics of collaborative learning and social structure. The politically conservative core curriculum of Hirsch is essentially

competitive rather than cooperative. It grows out of the enduring myth of American individualism, the “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” philosophy espoused by the Puritans.

Teachers are measured by a “core curriculum” also. Their expertise is not valued in professional development within the school and the district, they have no voice in choice of curriculum and they are marginalized the social capital that counts belongs only to political and economic elites who believe that children can be taught and assessed in standardized ways.

Teachers, who believe that they have no social capital in the educational institution, are not just making excuses for not speaking out. United States courts are clear on the point that elementary school teachers do not have the luxury of academic freedom. *Mayer v. Monroe County Community School* is a case in point.

**I honk for peace.**

*Mayer v. Monroe County Community School Corporation, et al.* was decided in January 2007. The undisputed facts in the case are that Deborah Mayer was a probationary elementary school teacher whose contract was not renewed by the Monroe County School District in Illinois in 2003. She responded to a student’s question about whether she participated in political demonstrations by responding that she honked her car horn to show support for demonstrators who held up placards printed with “Honk for Peace.” Some parents complained, saying that teachers should not take sides in any political controversy and Mayer was not hired for the following year. The Court of Appeals, whose judges are appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, serve lifetime appointments. The three-member panel which upheld the lower court’s decision

in the *Mayer* case were all appointed by Republican President Ronald Reagan. In October 2007 the United States Supreme Court declined to hear Mayer's appeal.

The Court's decision states that "the school system does not 'regulate' teachers' speech as much as it *hires* that speech. Expression is a teacher's stock in trade, the commodity she sells to her employer in exchange for a salary" and [b]eyond the fact that teachers hire out their own speech and must provide the service for which employers are willing to pay is the fact that the pupils are a captive audience.

The opinion concludes:

It is enough to hold that the first amendment does not entitle primary and secondary teachers, when conducting the education of captive audiences, to cover topics, or advocate viewpoints, that depart from the curriculum adopted by the school system.

Although I find the Court's statements, and by extension, the settled law in this case, problematic, my concern is with presentation of the dominant ideology not being subject to the same case law. In a search of the Lexis-Nexis database I was unable to find any instance of an elementary or secondary teacher being disciplined for espousing a "support the troops, support the president" point of view. No Child Left Behind legislation contains a provision for military recruiters to have access to the names, addresses and telephone listings of public school students without prior consent by the student or parent. (NCLB, Sec. 9528). On August 13, 2009 EdWeek online reported that Sally Ferrell, a Quaker peace activist, had been granted permission to compete with military recruiters on rural North Carolina school campuses after years of being denied. School leaders said that Ferrell was unpatriotic and that she had been banned from schools because her criticism of the armed forces was in violation of district policy. Ferrell was represented by the American Civil Liberties Union.

Teachers are effectively marginalized as transmitters of anything other than the dominant ideology if their speech is considered “hired” by employer school districts to adhere to curriculum adopted by the politically powerful. I do not mean to imply that any speech by any teacher is acceptable. There are factual standards which must be met. I am thinking in particular of the creationist or intelligent design movement that seeks to teach that Earth was created by God six thousand years ago and the fossil record was placed here by God. The preponderance of scientific evidence supports Darwin and evolutionary theory and the courts have supported teaching evolution rather than creationism in public schools. Evolution is an evidence-based theory. War versus peace is more subjective than evolution but a discussion of the merits and disadvantages of the two sides would be useful. Critical thinking would allow teachers and students to analyze the arguments on both sides as a way of thinking about current events and constructing their own knowledge about contentious issues.

### **Ways of Being Political**

#### **Definition of Politics.**

Politics comes from the Greek word *polis*, or city-state, and Aristotle considered politics to be a “practical” science, concerned with the “noble action or happiness of the citizens” (Miller, 2008). Gee makes it clear that Perchik is posing an Aristotelian question:

By “politics” I mean something that Aristotle would have recognized, though not, perhaps today’s “Democrats” and “Republicans.” By “politics” I mean anything and anyplace where human social interactions and relationships have implications for how “social goods” are or ought to be distributed. By “social goods” I mean anything that a group of people believes to be a source of power, status, or worth...(Gee, 2000, p. 2)

By definition, teachers' whole lives are engulfed in politics. Each school site and school district is a kind of city-state in its own right while also being part of a greater whole: city, county, state and country. Teachers interact within the boundaries of their school community for what they believe to be "source[s] of power, status or worth." Coded data in the theme of Teachers in a Democratic Society revealed that teachers are not full participants in their school community. They do find ways to act "politically" to obtain what they see is the "social good" for individual students and for the school community.

### **Correspondence Theory.**

Bowles & Gintis' (1977) correspondence theory is central to understanding schooling as a political activity in a capitalist society. Schools are not places of democratic participation but rather institutions in which there is a "structural correspondence between its social relations and production" (Bowles & Gintis, 1977, p. 131). Correspondence principle has four tenets.

School structure mirrors the hierarchical system of the work place. Administrators are in charge of teachers and teachers are in charge of students and students are measured by their work output. Students have no control over what is presented for them to learn, just as wage earners have no control over what is to be produced. Teachers' opinions about the hierarchical structure of school institutions forms the basis for the sub-theme teaching within an educational community.

Work for wages in the workplace is paralleled by school work in the classroom. Wages, threat of unemployment, grades and expulsion all impose external rather than internal motivational systems for work and learning.

Schools, particularly colleges and universities, like the workplace, are highly compartmentalized with knowledge being specialized rather than spread across the entire school, office or factory.

And, last, one's place in the hierarchy of either school or work will determine how much control you have over your own time and even over your own body (Bowles and Gintis, 1977).

It is important to keep in mind that Bowles & Gintis' correspondence theory refers specifically to capitalist society. Perhaps the competitive rather than collaborative nature of capitalism is one of the reasons that teachers in the United States seem to be less active in the political arena than teachers in other developed countries such as Mexico or France. In correspondence theory, teachers' identity falls into Gee's category of I-Identity. The institution of school is so powerful that one's identity through Nature, Discourse or Affinity are subsumed into the Institution. Correspondence theory describes students as having no control over what is presented to them to learn. Teachers may have more control over their daily school life than students, that is, they can make choices about classroom displays, arrangement of furniture, choices of field trips and other extraneous aspects of classroom management. Teachers, like factory workers, have little influence over curriculum and the way it is presented. The website of the Arizona Department of Education contains the Declaration of Curricular and Instructional Alignment for Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade:

The purpose of the Declaration is to affirm that the central components of standards-based education are in effect at every level in every school district and charter school in the State. The central components of standards-based education include a curriculum aligned to the Standards, instructional materials aligned to the Standards and the evaluation of teachers to ensure that the Standards are integrated into instructional practices (Arizona State Department of Education, 2010).

Teachers told me they are required to post in the classroom each day what they are teaching, and the Performance Objective and the Standard to which it is aligned. Students are expected to cite this information when asked. Teachers and students would appear to be parroting information from the standardized curriculum. I am unable to find any official information from the Arizona Department of Education or from the Secretary of Education's federal website with this requirement. Perhaps this is an example of teachers internalizing what they believe to be true without questioning it.

The second tenet of correspondence theory is the externalization of incentives to do well, rather than internal motivation. This applies to teachers as well as to students. A movement for standards-based merit pay for teachers would reward teachers based on the test scores of students in their classrooms, an external motivation for sure.

Bowles and Gintis address the compartmentalization of information in schools just as it is in factories. Elementary schools have long had art teachers and teachers for music and band and physical education. Many of those subjects have been supplanted by remedial reading and English as a Second Language programs. A fourth grade teacher with a Master's Degree from a College of Education and fifteen years of teaching experience related an incident that demonstrates the compartmentalization of knowledge in elementary schools. A recently hired male teacher in her school with three years of teaching experience and a Reading Specialist endorsement is in charge of the reading programs for Kindergarten through sixth grade. He is a proponent of the DIBELS test and using its scores as a measurement for a prescriptive reading program for students who are assigned to him for intensive instruction in reading skills, i.e., phonics. His "expertise" in reading instruction supersedes the knowledge and experience of teachers

who find fault with his methods and engage him in discussions of reading theory (B. Stark, personal communication, July 2009). One of the consequences of compartmentalization of knowledge and information in elementary school teaching is the loss of context in which teachers can help students construct knowledge that will be useful to them across the curriculum. Macedo (2006) refers to compartmentalization as an instrumentalist approach that makes it more difficult for students to “read the world,” resulting in a greater lack of critical thinking. A Reading Specialist endorsement indicates knowledge of theory that was being taught in a particular program at a particular time. It does not necessarily indicate an ability to teach a child to read or even a knowledge of alternative methods of reading instruction. The classroom teacher, who sees the student in various classroom activities is seen as less “expert” than someone whose “compartmentalization” is reading instruction.

Finally, correspondence theory addresses the control one has over one’s own time and body within the structure of the Institution. Mention of bladder control among elementary school teachers is sure to rate a chuckle. Bathroom breaks for teachers, as well as students, are constrained by school schedules. The same constraints do not affect administrators.

### **Dominant Ideology and Conservative Politics.**

The United States is a capitalistic society with large discrepancies between the income and assets of the wealthy and the poor. In 2004 1% of the population owned approximately 34.3% of the nation’s wealth and 15% of the wealth was distributed over the bottom 80% of wage and salary workers (Domhoff, 2009). That is a more equitable

distribution than that of 1770 when 44% of the nation's wealth was owned by 1% of the population. The power of the wealthy in the United States cannot be overstated.

Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft Corporation, is rated by Forbes magazine as one of the five wealthiest people in the United States. There is no doubt that Gates has a brilliant mind and is a huge success at his chosen profession. There is no evidence, however, that he has any training or special knowledge in pedagogical practices or educational research. He is founder and director, along with his wife Melinda, of a billion dollar philanthropic foundation. He is concerned with students' readiness for the workplace, and has worked tirelessly to effect change in schools at the state and federal level. He supports standardized curriculum and rigorous standardized testing. Knowledge of math and science are paramount to his vision of education, critical thinking does not appear to be.

Along with other elite members of the Business Roundtable and federal policy makers, Gates has been able to determine what knowledge is most important to a capitalist society and therefore official. One of the goals of the Business Roundtable is for schools to require a level of training necessary to guarantee a competitive work force (Emery, 2004). There is no mention in the Business Roundtable goals of personal satisfaction or the enjoyment of art, music or literature. A competitive work force is essential to the continued wealth of capitalists like Gates. Education for life as a competitive worker in a capitalist society is the dominant ideology of educational policy makers in the United States.

Control over curriculum and pedagogy in United States schools is a struggle by powerful groups who want to choose what knowledge is legitimate. It is not a benign or

altruistic exercise. Control of educational policy will create even greater power (Apple, 1993). I do not think that Bill Gates is an evil person. I do believe that he has internalized his ideology so thoroughly that he is operating in a way he sees as beneficial for students, teachers, capitalists and society simultaneously. According to Giroux, decisions about educational policy are not solely about education – they are about control of democracy itself.

More than ever the crisis of schooling represents writ large the crisis of democracy itself and any attempt to understand the attack on public schooling and higher education cannot be separated from the wider assault on all forms of public life not driven by the logic of the market (Giroux, 2001, p. xxii).

Unrelenting criticism by business leaders and groups such as the Business Roundtable obscure positive teacher and student performance (Bracey, 2009) in an effort to route more financial resources to for-profit schools (Emery, 2004). The goal is ultimately to privatize public education and create a source of income and power for elite capitalists (Goodman, 2007).

This is the milieu in which the teachers I interviewed spend their working days. It is an environment of enormous control by non-professionals over what is taught and how it is taught; emphasis on standardized curriculum, standardized testing and core knowledge; marginalization of teachers' knowledge and abilities and little emphasis on developing critical thinking skills. My assumption when I began this research was that teachers who resisted policy mandates with which they disagreed would be political activists. I thought they would have come from a tradition of anti-authoritarian actions. One of my respondents described her actions as political. One other teacher told me that she contacts legislators and writes letters to the local paper because it is civic

participation. Four of the teachers are union representatives for their school site and two of them are active in social justice activities in their church. What they had in common was a desire to do what they knew, through education and experience, was the right thing for their students. They did not express it in terms of theory but rather as an emotional feel for the best practices. I began thinking of it as a set of principles or a moral core. I came to understand that what teachers expressed to me was a moral stance that underpins their classroom behavior and their educational philosophy. Their comments led me to review the literature on morality in education. That is the topic of the next section of this chapter.

### **Doing the Right Thing-Morality in Education**

Some of the terms I wanted to understand as I worked my way through preparation for this research seemed to be relatively straightforward: identity, ideology and politics among them. The more I read and write about each of these concepts, the more nuanced they become. When teachers' responses led me to contemplate what "doing the right thing" entails I found that I needed to understand the theoretical underpinnings of that statement. I discovered that ethics is the branch of philosophy that deals with moral principals, with the right and wrong of actions. Bernard Gert, philosopher of ethics, puts it this way:

Morality is an informal public system applying to all rational persons, governing behavior that affects others, and includes what are commonly known as the moral rules, ideals, and virtues and has the lessening of evil or harm as its goal (Gert, 2005, p. 14).

The theoretical framework I rely on in this research is rooted in Western European thought and is not inherently religious although the sentiment expressed in the golden rule, found in all major world religions, is not antithetical to Gert's definition of

morality. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you presupposes a shared public system governing behavior with the outcome of lessening evil or harm. The political system upon which the United States was founded is also a moral system. The Preamble to the Constitution:

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

And the first section of the Declaration of Independence “All men are created equal...endowed with certain unalienable rights...life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” enshrine the nation’s moral code in our founding documents.

I came to the conclusion that the “right thing” teachers described to me grew out of politics, not in the sense of political parties or liberal versus conservative beliefs but the moral politics of our founding documents. These teachers understood, without using theoretical descriptions, that there are aspects of schooling that may be harmful to students and that require behavior on the part of teachers that is wrong.

Morality, as Gert explains, is an informal public system. Democracy, as it is expressed in our founding documents, is the formal side of the public system. Raymond Williams said that “no questions are more difficult than those of democracy, in any of its central senses” (Williams, 1976, p. 97). Democracy is rule by the people and simultaneously mob rule; it is a system of values and a system of institutions; it is a principle of government and a type of behavior; it confers freedoms and requires responsibilities (Crick, 2002). The founding documents are Utopian in tone; when they were written, slavery was legal and several of the authors of the Declaration counted

slaves in their personal wealth. Women, slaves and native people did not have a vote and in the case of slaves and Indians, were even considered sub-human.

The rise of democratic capitalism and its slogan “there is room for all at the top,” gained stature in the 1860’s with the publication of the Horatio Alger stories. The novels, written for young people, romanticized the belief that anyone could reach the pinnacles of wealthy society by hard work, honesty and a bit of luck (Crick, 2002). Individual ability and hard work and competition are cornerstones of core curriculum and modern political conservative ideology. Horatio Alger stories are representative of a capitalist democracy wherein individual abilities and acquisitions are stressed (Crick, 2002) and the good of the community is less important.

Correspondence theory is a critique of capitalist democracy rather than of the democratic principles espoused in the founding documents.

### **Moral Codes and Female/Male Ways of Thinking.**

Historically, in the teaching profession, nurturing and caring for one another have been viewed as feminine and motherly. Nel Noddings makes explicit the connection between caring and ethics/morality, and masculine versus feminine viewpoints. She posits the masculine viewpoint as rational and the feminine as empathetic (Noddings, 2003) in much the same way that Lakoff describes rational father and nurturing parent dichotomies. They are descriptions of a mindset rather than strictly male versus female characteristics.

At the heart of female/male ways of thinking about morality is Lawrence Kohlberg’s 1958 study of moral development in a group of adolescent boys. Kohlberg, following Piagetian principles of cognitive development posed a series of ethical

dilemmas in which the male subjects explained the reasoning they used to reach their answer. Kohlberg devised stages of moral development, each one building upon the other until a state of moral development was complete (Hersh, 1979). Kohlberg's student and feminist scholar Carol Gilligan objected to the stages of development and the fact that the studies were conducted only with male subjects. Gilligan's research found that females making moral decisions often base those decisions on caring for others rather than the rules of the moral tasks (Gilligan, 1982). Kohlberg's research on morality and teacher education has evolved into a "just community" approach in which everyone in the school is involved in decisions that affect the school. Gilligan and Noddings both describe the way that women prefer to solve moral problems not through abstract reasoning but through real-world caring about others.

#### **Teaching as Moral Activity.**

"What makes teaching a moral endeavor is that it is, quite centrally, human action undertaken in regard to other human beings" (Fenstermacher, 1990, p.133).

Schools are essential to the transmission of democratic goals by helping children acquire the skills and knowledge to participate in a democratic society (Hersh, 1979). How we behave toward one another is the essence of moral codes (Purpel, 1989). Lack of civic engagement and its detriment to democracy is the subject of an entire book (Putnam, 2002).

Durkheim (1961) views secular morality as essential for the survival of a nation and it is the teacher who holds the responsibility of creating moral beings. "Moral education is direct and indirect intervention of the school which affects both moral behavior and the capacity to think about issues of right and wrong" (Purpel and Ryan,

1976, p. 5). Democratic education requires that schools be sites where students learn to question, to be critical and to learn the skills to participate in democratic society (Scheffler, 1976; Hersh, Paolitto, Reimer, 1979; Kohn, 1999).

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter I reviewed the scholarly literature that influenced my thinking about the actions of the teachers in Westernville. The same scholars guided the organization of the data I collected and the codes I used in my analysis. I examined theories of ideology because they permeate both individual and group identity. I looked at feminist theory because it is essential for examination of gender and historical issues of teachers' identity construction. I reviewed correspondence theory and critical pedagogy to illuminate the power that business exerts over school systems and discussed morality in education.

### CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter begins with a discussion of qualitative research and the essence of the query I am posing

My ontological framework (Merriam, 2000; Mason, 1996) is a belief that human beings are social actors who are shaped by the institutions they have created and who in turn continue to change those institutions. My research is interpretive, based on my assumption that reality is socially constructed and phenomenological because of its emphasis on the experience of the teachers I interviewed (Merriam, 2009). My stance is that of a researcher whose interpretation of the data I collected is filtered through my own socially constructed reality. The center of my epistemological belief is that all human beings (with the possible exception of those with brain damage) can think about their own thinking. Central to my methodology is the belief that teachers can, through reflection and metacognition, discuss their identity as teachers and their place within the institution of school. The example I cited earlier where Flavell (1976) described the simple act of “noticing” that one task is more difficult than another is basic to metacognition. The task I set for myself and for my respondents was considerably more complex: the examination of constructed reality itself. Throughout the process I tried to remain cognizant of my own ideology as a practitioner of radical pedagogy.

The chapter continues with the design of the study itself and concludes with a detailed description of the series of codes and larger themes that emerged from the use of grounded theory analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the ways in which elementary school teachers construct their identity as teachers. It is an attempt to encourage twenty teachers from varying backgrounds to reflect on how they think teachers should behave and do behave. In *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Geertz, 1977) describes how Gilbert Ryles' notion of "thick description" can be used as a way for an ethnographer to get past surface description. My goal in this study was to encourage teachers to respond to interview questions with "thick description," providing opportunities to look below surface statements. For example, when I asked why a respondent had become a teacher, the response could have been simply that her mother was a teacher or that she had always liked working with children. Instead, thick description led to a joyful reminiscing about the kinds of experiments a science-teacher father used in his high school classroom or the hilarious recounting of how a dislike of babysitting led to a job that included travel.

The behavior of teachers in Westernville prompted me to design a research study that would answer my questions about how teachers construct their identity but I also wanted to know whether teachers' epistemological investigations might change their actions. My research resides in the tradition of critical inquiry, "it seeks not just to study and understand society but rather to critique and change society" (Patton, 2002, p. 31). Qualitative design and its outcomes can provide an opportunity for greater understanding and improved practice on the part of the group being researched (Merriam, 2009).

The research questions which guide me are:

What are elementary school teachers' beliefs regarding the ways in which their teaching job is political? How does gender influence a teacher's definition of what is

political in relation to her/his profession and in what ways are teachers' pedagogical beliefs influenced by institutional directives?

### **Research Design**

I used snowball sampling in this study (Weiss, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1984) because it allowed me to find teachers whom I did not know but were referred to me by other teachers I had interviewed. My first interview was with a teacher who is an acquaintance and then word was passed through personal and professional networks of teachers who responded to me by email with names of others who might be willing to be interviewed. My first respondent suggested that knowing the interview questions prior to the interview would have allowed her to be more thoughtful in her answers.

Subsequently I emailed my research question and interview questions to the respondent as soon as I was referred to her. In that way she<sup>5</sup> could decide if she wanted to participate in the study and peruse the questions beforehand. I asked teachers to use self-reflection and metacognitive abilities in thinking about the questions.

### **Participants.**

Permission to conduct this study was granted by the Human Subjects protection program at the University of Arizona. The approved Project Proposal Form is on file at the Human Subjects Protection Program Office, located on the University of Arizona campus in Tucson, Arizona. At the beginning of each interview, I asked the participant to read, sign and date the Subject Informed Consent Form. Consent forms on are file in my home office. At that time I explained that the respondent could decide not to

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<sup>5</sup>Use of a feminist theoretical lens prompted me to consider the markedness of feminine and masculine pronouns. I endeavored to use feminine pronouns predominantly when either one was appropriate.

participate at any time during or after the interview and that her name would be changed in the written report of the study. All of the participants agreed to continue with the interview. The one teacher who declined to participate in the study did so after my initial contact, stating that she was too busy. In all, twenty teachers agreed to be interviewed and their data was used in this study.

I interviewed a total of twenty teachers, sixteen of whom are women and four are men. This is a higher ratio of male to female elementary school teachers than exists in reality in Arizona and in the United States (see Figure 2.1 above). They teach in eight public school districts, one private for-profit school, one public charter school, one church-affiliated school, and one school operated by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). Under the guidelines of No Child Left Behind, the Arizona State Department of Education rates the schools where these teachers work as Excelling, Highly Performing, Performing Plus, and Performing. One is from a school listed as under-performing. Nineteen of the teachers self-identify as Caucasian, one as Hispanic.

The teachers range in age from early 20's to mid 60's and varied from one year of classroom teaching experience to more than 30 years.

All of the participants teach in grades ranging from Pre-Kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup>, with the majority teaching in the primary grades, kindergarten through third. Sixth grade is middle school, not elementary but the sixth grade teacher I interviewed previously taught in lower grades and I thought her perspective was important. My focus is on elementary school rather than high school for three reasons:

1. Children are acquiring information about the practice of democracy long before they reach high school civics courses;

2. The teachers in Westernville who prompted me to begin this study, were all elementary teachers;
3. There seems to be a perception among the general public that elementary school teachers do “fun” stuff and that they spend much of the day “playing.”

During the six semesters that I taught children’s literature to pre-service teachers, they regularly reported that reading children’s picture books and novels or responding to these texts with any way other than a written book report was considered easy and non-academic by family and friends who were not in the education profession.

### **Setting.**

I conducted six interviews with teachers during summer or winter periods when school was not in session for these teachers and we met in a coffee shop or a public library meeting room. The remainder of the interviews were conducted in the teacher’s classroom where I had an opportunity to observe the setting. I also had the opportunity to see the school building and grounds and meet the office staff. In one instance the children were present in the classroom for about 10 minutes prior to the lunch break doing silent reading during the interview. In the remainder, it was the end of the day and the children were not in the school building.

### **The Interviews.**

I designed open-ended questions in the hopes that the respondents would begin to tell their stories with the thick description that Geertz describes. I wanted to hear why they decided to become a teacher and how the decision shaped their lives. I wanted to know what their day-to-day interaction with children and adults was like and I wanted them to tell me how being a teacher affected their lives outside of the classroom. In

many cases the passion that these teachers feel for their students and for their profession came through loud and clear.

Theorists of radical pedagogy have written persuasively about the need for understanding how students can learn to think critically and the implications of a student population which questions the dominant ideological framework in schools. Less is written about how teachers learn to think critically. Giroux suggests that teachers must understand the construction of their own beliefs in order to become agents for democratic change.

In addition to being committed to building a better society, the next step in developing a notion of citizenship education that focuses on schools will have to address concerns about expanding the theoretical perceptions of teachers and other educational workers. That is, teachers rather than students should represent the starting point for any theory of citizenship education. Most students exercise very little power over defining the education experiences in which they find themselves. It is more appropriate to begin with those educators who both mediate and define the educational process. This is not meant to deny that students represent an important concern in both the development and effects of such a theory; in fact, it is precisely this concern that demands that we construe a theoretical framework giving teachers and others involved in the educational process the possibility to think critically about the nature of their beliefs and how these beliefs both influence and offset the day-to-day experiences they have with students. Similarly, it is important that teachers situate their own beliefs, values, and practices within a wider context so that their latent meanings can be better understood. This dialectical situating, so to speak, will help illuminate the social and political nature of the structural and ideological constraints that teachers face daily (Giroux, 2001, p. 194).

### **Positionality.**

Positionality is a term developed by feminist theorists in which knowledge is always “situated” in the experience and history of individuals. I used the word here to signal my understanding that a teacher, particularly a female teacher, is situated outside of the workplace in ways that are shaped by her “teacherness” and by her gender (Rose,

1997). I note also, that the codes and themes that grew out of my data are influenced by my stance (Bogdan & Biklin, 1992).

My positionality as the researcher for this study is not neutral. I bring to it constructed reality, that is, experience, history and situated learning in the same way that the respondents do and it was essential that I understand my position as researcher. For example, when a female respondent who is about my age, listed the professional options she had as a young woman, I found myself nodding in agreement. That was my experience exactly. My positionality is always located in the ideology of radical pedagogy, progressive politics and community activism. I am sympathetic to the time constraints teachers described when explaining their activities outside of school. It was difficult, however, if not impossible, not to measure their activism against my own. Just as theories of radical pedagogy served as a yardstick to measure teachers' politics, so too did my own positionality serve as a yardstick for measurement of teachers' behaviors.

### **Coding the Data**

#### **Technological Challenges.**

The use of technology for conducting and transcribing the interviews was a constant reminder to me of the necessity for teachers to remain knowledgeable about technological innovation at the same time they are expected to employ it in their teaching. My own challenges with technological innovation made me cognizant that teaching is a profession where on-the-job training literally means learning the technology as it is being used. One of the expectations for teachers is that they will be technologically adept and will transmit the skills to their students.

Another technological challenge was the software program, ATLAS.ti (atlasti.com), which is designed for qualitative data analysis. Although it took me several days to master the basics of the program, it has proven invaluable for segregating chunks of data by themes or similar ideas. The program makes it possible to see relationships in the transcription that would not be possible by cutting and pasting data, either by hand or in a word processing program.

I transcribed all twenty interviews in their entirety, completing one before I went on to the next. When the respondent paused for more than one or two seconds, I noted that in the transcript. I also noted laughter but I did not transcribe pause markers such as “um” and “ah” because my study is not directed at the level of conversational discourse analysis.

While I was transcribing interviews I listened for recurring words and themes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). My first step after completing the transcription was to sort the recurring words I heard into codes and then categories. I had several hundred pages of transcribed interviews and needed to devise a system for making them manageable. Marking the transcripts and cutting them into smaller pieces of paper which I could organize by theme was not efficient. Fortunately, an experienced classroom researcher with whom I was discussing my project suggested that I look into the qualitative data analysis software programs which have been developed particularly for grounded theory methodology. As I mentioned above, ATLAS.ti is the program I chose. I transferred the interview transcriptions as rich text files into ATLAS.ti and coded each chunk of talk into codes I had developed as I transcribed the interviews. Bogdan & Biklin (1992) make the point that although audiotape transcription can be tedious it serves as a source of data

analysis. As I listened to the tapes and transcribed the words I was making connections to other interviews and to my theoretical framework. As themes emerged, I made notes of categories for coding. By the time I transferred the rich text files into ATLAS.ti I had sorted the codes three times. ATLAS.ti allowed me to place chunks of data into more than one code at a time. It also provided the ability to write memos to myself as I worked through the data. I could also make families of codes and develop networks of codes and families. And all of it was searchable on the software program by word and phrase.

Some codes are a direct outcome of specific interview questions as shown below in Figure 3.1

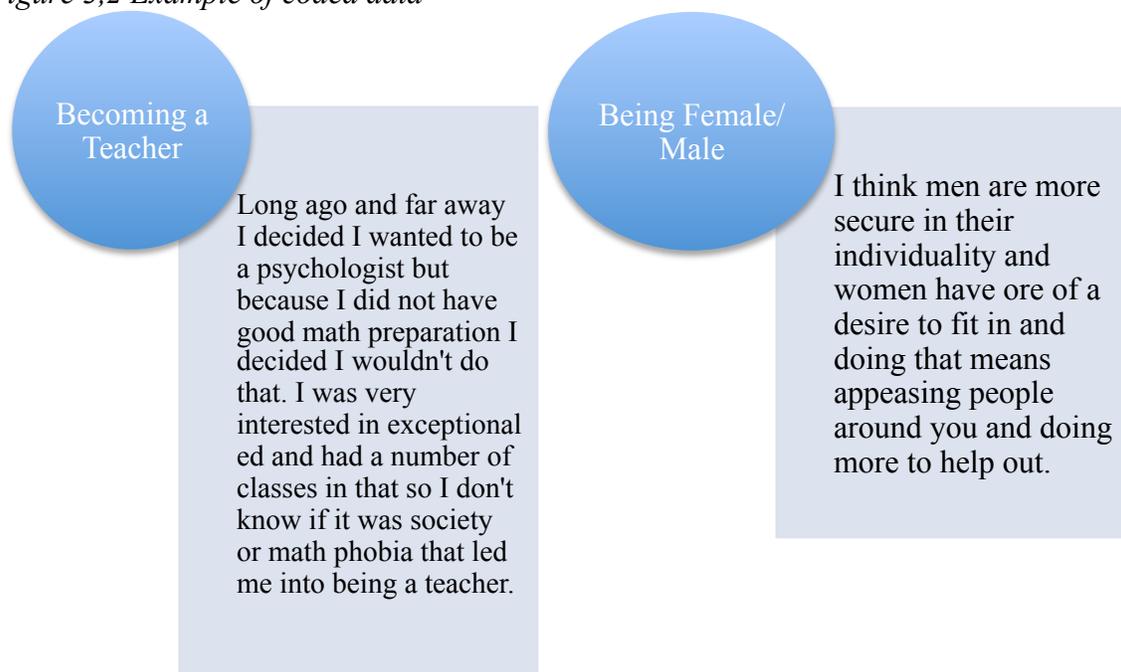
*Figure 3.1 Organization of Themes and Interview Questions*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Interview Question Posed</b>
<b>Constructing Teacher Identity</b>	<p>Would you describe why you decided to become a teacher?</p> <p>How did you learn how teachers are supposed to behave?</p> <p>Do you believe that women and men have different beliefs about being a teacher?</p> <p>Do you think women and men generally have different political beliefs?</p>
<b>Teachers in a Democratic Society</b>	<p>Do you remember a time in your teaching career when you spoke up in a staff meeting?</p> <p>Can you describe a time when a student asked a question in class about an issue you were uncomfortable responding to?</p> <p>Does your role as a teacher affect your positionality outside of work?</p> <p>Please describe how school-wide directions are disseminated.</p>
<b>Ways of Being Political</b>	<p>What parts of your job would you consider to be political?</p> <p>Does your role as a teacher influence your political involvement in the community?</p>
<b>Doing the Right Thing: Morality in Education</b>	

There are no interview questions associated with the final Theme: Doing the Right Thing. I had not anticipated this response from interviewees. Its emergence from the data caused me to begin reading and thinking about morality in education which became one of the theoretical frames for this study. I added follow-up questions to my interviews in which I probed teachers' reasons for taking actions that could be seen as insubordinate. Sometimes "doing the right thing" emerged when I asked about speaking up in a staff meeting or about positionality outside of work. Other times it was part of an anecdote about modeling behavior and in one instance it was about getting information. Not one of the twenty teachers I interviewed talked about doing the right thing as a political act.

Figure 3.2 below shows each code and a quotation from a teacher that gave rise to the code. Some of the codes, such as "becoming a teacher" and "being female/male" were natural outgrowths of specific questions.

*Figure 3,2 Example of coded data*



I still had large amounts of data to analyze and although it was more manageable than previously I wanted to synthesize it into still larger groups, what Bogdan and Biklen call categories. I used their designations as a beginning.

These already-designed codes and categories proved helpful insofar as they gave me a framework for thinking about the kinds of statements which my research participants had made over the course of her or his interview. Out of the codes and categories I developed four overarching themes that emerged from the data I had read numerous times. Below is a chart with the four themes and the codes they contain. Some of the codes were useful in more than one theme.

*Figure 3.3 Themes and Codes*

<b>Constructing Teacher Identity</b>	All About Me Becoming a Teacher Being Female/Male Harry Wong Self-reflection Self-perception Thinking about myself
<b>Teachers in a Democratic Community</b>	Speaking out Struggling for Power Participating in my Community Getting information Relating to parents/families Modeling behavior Democracy Team/teamwork Political Administration Thinking about other teachers Types of Teachers Community Respect
<b>Ways of Being Political</b>	Authority Acting political Doors Fighting back Power
<b>Doing the Right Thing</b>	Children as learners/thinkers Following the Rules Caring Parents and families Speaking out/repercussions Doing the right thing Citizenship

How teachers' construct their political identity was the central question of this research project when I began. I have used Gee's (2000) four categories of identity as lenses to examine this construction. Gender, ethnicity, physical characteristics, intellectual abilities and place of birth, what Gee calls Natural Identity is the lens I began

with for the theme “Constructing Teacher Identity.” I asked teachers to reflect on those characteristics by thinking about gender, about why they became a teacher and about themselves as teachers.

The next theme, Teachers in a Democratic Community, makes use of Institutional Identity for organizing the ways that teachers manage their identities in relationship to the people, or groups of people, with whom they interact in school settings every day. It also includes Discourse Identities because that is the language of categories of practice for teachers.

The theme, Ways of Being Political, embodies Institutional and Discourse Identities and Affinity, the groups we choose for ourselves because we share an ideology with others in that group.

Finally, “Doing the Right Thing” is the theme that truly emerged through the use of grounded theory methodology. It began as an initial code and grew into a larger theme which provides a framework for looking at democratic practices in an elementary school classroom, participation and responsibility in a democratic society and education for the promotion of a democratic society. Each of us is the product of all of these identities, all of these themes overlap. Gadamer (2004) wrote that “history does not belong to us; we belong to it.” He continues: “Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 278) and to use what they discover in their continuing construction of themselves as teachers. An implication of my research is how teacher education programs can enable teachers to examine their history, that is, their identity, as a product of “family, society and state in which [they] live”

My positionality and ideology played a part in coding this data. Because I agree with Perchik from *Fiddler on the Roof* that everything is political, I included chunks of data in that category where another researcher might not. I considered whether a teacher refused to administer the DIBELS as a political action. DIBELS was conceived as a measurement of reading skills for kindergarten and primary grade students. Its developers had close ties to the George W. Bush administration and NCLB legislation and its efficacy is questionable (Goodman, 2006). A researcher whose ideology supports standardized assessments as useful instruments in education might place the same chunks of data in a different category. I considered a teacher who questioned a state law regarding use of the Spanish language for classroom instruction as “Doing the Right Thing.” A different researcher might see the same action as insubordination.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter I described the construction of scientific methods designed to answer the questions I began with in the Introduction. The research question, my interview questions, teacher/respondents, research design and methodology created the structure that allowed me to listen to the teachers’ voices and analyze their words.

## CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS: TEACHERS' VOICES

In the previous chapters I examined the theoretical lenses that I used to look at the data I collected. I discussed the ways that Constructing Identity, Participating in a democratic community and Doing the right thing grew out of the responses I gathered from teachers. Radical Pedagogy was the lens that I used to examine my own ideological stance as I transcribed and coded interviews with the teachers. In this chapter I lay out each of the themes again and the sub-themes within each. Then I show the claims that I make based on what the teachers have told me. The claims I make in this chapter grow out of the words of the teachers themselves.

*Chart 4.1 Themes, Sub-Themes and Claims*

Themes	Sub-Themes	Claims
Constructing Teacher Identity	Becoming a Kind of Teacher	Identity as a teacher depends on intrinsic factors, (e.g., gender) and exposure
	Acting as a Kind of Teacher	Acting as a Kind of teacher requires conscious choices
Doing the Right Thing	Constraints on doing the right thing	Closing the Door reflected felt constraints
		Constraints on “doing the right thing” came from authorities, peers, and norms, both societal and institutional
	Beneficiaries of “doing the right thing”	Teachers “did the right thing” for the common good.
		Teachers “did the right thing” for individual students
Teachers in a Democratic Community	Teaching within an educational community	Teachers see the educational community as a hierarchy
		Teachers see their authority as bounded by the classroom walls.
	Teaching for a community	Teachers saw the community as students, parents and family, and other teachers in

		the educational institution
Ways of Being Political in Spite of Themselves	A Different Way of Seeing	In my view many teachers' practices are political even though they don't view them that way.
	Confrontational	Teachers did speak out and otherwise oppose authority even if they didn't present it as being political
	Under the Radar	More common ways of being political were to act oppositionally in ways that could be denied

I will now examine each of these themes, sub-themes and claims in light of statements made by teachers.

### **Theme: Constructing Teacher Identity**

#### **Sub-Theme: Becoming a Kind of Teacher.**

*Claim: Identity as a teacher depends on intrinsic factors such as one's gender, socioeconomic status, ethnic background, religion, etc.*

These are factors that shape the early lives of a child and which are part of what Bourdieu calls habitus (Bourdieu, 1977). The theoretical lens most useful for developing this theme is Ideology. As I discussed in the literature review, the kind of teacher one becomes is also influenced by historical context and by popular culture.

I posed two interview questions that get to the heart of how teachers' early lives help to construct their identity as a teacher. I asked them to describe why they decided to become a teacher and how they learned how teachers were supposed to behave in the classroom. Most of the responses were similar. For example, Kurt said "I have a brother who is quite a bit younger and I grew up raising him...I love interacting with kids, I just always wanted to be a teacher." Elizabeth told me that she couldn't imagine doing

anything else; her school librarian mother was a strong role model and Laura came from a family where her mother, father, and step-father are all school teachers.

A few respondents were less enthusiastic about teaching but believed they had little choice of career. This was particularly true of women, whose identity was, and is, shaped by historical factors in ways that a man's is not. Katherine, who grew up in the early 1960's was very clear about the lack of career choice she had. She was told as a young woman that she should be a teacher because she could follow her husband and get a job anywhere. "My dad was on the school board in this tiny town and he believed that men should get paid more than women for the same job...because he's the head of the family. I was told you could be a teacher, secretary or nurse." Martha didn't especially like children but she wanted to travel and a cousin who was in the foreign service told her about teaching jobs overseas. For the most part, women who became teachers believed they had made the choice based on their natural instincts and abilities even though historians of education demonstrate that women have been "a stable and inexpensive" work force since the era of the Common School at the beginning of the 1900's (Spring, 1997). Martha counted

**Sub-Theme: Acting as a Kind of Teacher**

*Claim: Acting as a kind of teacher requires conscious choices.*

Once in the profession, teachers make conscious decisions about what kind of teacher they want to be. This is what Gee calls Discourse and Affinity Identities. Karen said that most of her teachers when she was in elementary school were "directive." She chose not to be that kind of teacher and actively sought alternative pedagogical methods from her university professors. Cailey joined a progressive professional group because

“where I work is stagnant. I wanted to go forward.” Frank, who came to teaching after a successful career in an unrelated field, said that after he had tenure “I had enough knowledge to know [when] something was ridiculous and I took my cues from people I respected who were teaching.”

**Theme: “Doing the Right Thing”**

**Sub-Theme: Constraints on “doing the right thing.”**

***Claim: Closing the door reflected felt constraints.***

“Closing the door” is an apt metaphor for the attitude of teachers who felt that a classroom practice might be questioned, criticized or misinterpreted by administrators, teachers or other outside visitors to the classroom. Teachers were very clear in their belief that they held the authority in their classroom. Cathy described it as “this is my classroom and this is my territory so I just act normally in it.” Diane has called the AIDS hotline from her classroom in response to students’ questions, even though she is aware that a discussion of AIDS would probably not meet with the approval of her administrator. She did not ask permission to make the call and did not discuss her actions with other teachers but neither did she ask her students not to “tell” parents or friends about the discussion.

***Claim: Constraints on “doing the right thing” came from authorities, peers and norms.***

Teachers operate within certain societal norms that are often taken for granted. My discussion of “I honk for peace” in chapter 2, above is an example of a societal norm. When Deborah Mayer told her students, in response to a question, that she “honks for peace,” she was not upholding the norm for that school district and, according to the

federal court that heard Mayer's appeal, the norm for the United States in general. An internet search with the words "elementary schools support the troops" reveals multiple pages of official school sites detailing student activities for supporting U.S. troops currently fighting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Support for war rather than peace is what Giroux (2001) calls "unstated norms, values and beliefs." Teachers may or may not consciously subscribe to these norms but they are aware of what is acceptable in their educational institution. In response to a question about discussing religion in the classroom Una replied "I think we know it's one of those things that we are...not allowed to give an opinion about." On the other hand, Una tells me that there is a teacher at her school who has Christian books [bible stories] on the desk in his classroom and "he never sees any problem with it and I don't think he's ever been told to stop either."

Betsy said that a colleague in her first teaching job let her know that the aide in Betsy's classroom was part of a certain school board faction and would be reporting on everything Betsy did in her classroom. "You are scrutinized daily through someone else's perception of what you are doing" is how Betsy described it.

**Sub-Theme: Beneficiaries of "doing the right thing."**

***Claim: Teachers "did the right thing" for the common good.***

Teachers' actions in "doing the right thing" for the common good were exclusively directed at the classroom community. I will examine this phenomenon in more detail in under the theme of Teachers in a Democratic Community. Teachers' actions within the classroom often revolved around discussions that s/he felt would benefit all of the students.

Keeping in mind that the Arizona State Department of Education requires elementary school teachers to use “instructional materials and resources...aligned to state standards” and to use assessments that are “aligned to the Arizona Academic Standards and/or performance objectives,” most teachers are cognizant of any classroom activity that could be construed as stepping outside of those alignment boundaries. Classroom discussions in particular were seen as “doing the right thing” for the common good of the classroom even though they were probably not measurable with state assessments.

Celeste related one situation:

I had a kid this year, he must have watched the news every night because he would bring up topics...there was a third grader in New York City who was going to kill her teacher, she brought a steak knife to school and she got other kids involved. They had handcuffs. My student [wanted to discuss it] and there was some laughter at first and [it wasn't part of the performance objective that was on the board] but it was something that needed to be discussed...when a child feels that upset or has that many problems, my students wanted to talk about it.

In another instance, Cailey told me about a discussion she had with her second graders. There had been an incident on the playground where one child had called another a “bad” word. Cailey said she “took a deep breath,” and asked the children to name all of the bad words they could think of and she wrote them on the board, hoping that no one came into her classroom while she did this. The students sorted out which words it was okay to say on the playground, which words they could say at home and which words they should not ever say at school. Cailey told me “it was the best discussion I ever had” and that the students in her class didn't use any “bad” words the rest of the school year. The class discussion, even though it did not fit curriculum standards outlined by the State, served the common good of the classroom community.

Valerie, a teacher who spoke in language that was overtly political, took action that was designed for the good of the entire school, not just her classroom. Constraints on her behavior could have come from school norms and authorities and from her peers but she was not persuaded to behave otherwise.

I don't think I've shied away from sharing what my thinking is about something but ...I do remember when I was teaching at \_\_\_\_\_, a program was being introduced into the schools. It was called prescriptive learning. Even the name made me nervous and I had probably taught at that point for five years or something so maybe I was feeling uppity as well. But the suggestion was made that this prescription learning lab would have lots of computers to go into our library and our library could be reduced and made much smaller to make way for a program that was guaranteed to help children learn and I had a colleague, I was so fortunate in having a wonderful colleague...and both of us said you can't possibly think of trying to remove part of a library or condense part of a library to make way for the many computers that they were going to bring in and so we shared our thinking and I know it was not well received and we continued to be in distress. [We] ultimately at my house one evening decided we would all one of the school board members...and shared that we were just so worried and that we had one, that we had tried to follow protocol and go through channels and what would he advise and could he help and he did but I loved to rue the day.

In response to my question about support from other teachers, Valerie replied “we were out there by ourselves.”

***Claim: Teachers “did the right thing” for individual students.***

“Doing the right thing” for an individual student was quite common among my interviewees. Teachers viewed children as unique learners who responded to individualized instruction. Frank told me that “all the best students are risk takers” and he encourages them to work outside of the boundaries of standardized curriculum. Elizabeth said that [her] “goal is that they're independent and that they're confident and they're questioning.” Martha believes “kids who can see adults are not always right and are thinking are more likely in my opinion, I'm just guessing, to be upwardly mobile

socioeconomically and more likely to go on for more education.” Karen said that the kids she particularly enjoys are “independent thinkers” even though they leave some “scars on her hide.” She continued, “I think it kind of goes back to creating a community where questioning is just who we are and I'm quick to say golly, I sure don't know everything.”

Betsy designs the first part of her school day to encourage individual students:

I think that kids have to perceive themselves as learners and one of the things that teachers have to do is not necessarily teach the subject are, they have to teach children to believe in themselves and to believe that I can do this, I am a reader. The first half hour I don't allow my children, they have bell work, and the bell work is easy and it's usually something they have done and I have told them, you are self sufficient, responsible, problem solvers and you may not ask me a question about the bell work for the first half hour of school. It's all laid out for you, if you don't know something, what can you do to help yourself so for the first half hour I simply don't answer questions.

**Theme: Teachers in a Democratic Community**

**Sub-Theme: Teaching Within an Educational Community.**

*Claim: Teachers see the educational community as a hierarchy.*

The tenet of correspondence theory (Bowles & Gintis, 1977) that likens the hierarchical structure of the workplace to school institutions would be readily recognizable to elementary school teachers. Cathy referred to “mandates from downtown,” and Laura said that administrators exert a lot of control over teachers and play “favorites.” In a smaller school district like Martha’s, the superintendent visits each school several times a year and sits in the lounge at lunchtime so that “we can go up and talk to her and unfortunately a lot of people don’t do that but I try to.” In larger school districts the teachers receive district-wide information from their principal and never have a direct communication with the superintendent.

***Claim: Teachers see their authority as bounded by the classroom walls.***

Cathy teaches in a small district with a school board which has no expertise in pedagogical theory. Her board “hands reading programs down and wants them followed with fidelity. It’s hard to explain to the school board that the program is outside the zone of proximal development for the student.”

**Sub-Theme: Teaching for a Community.**

***Claim: Teachers saw the community as students, parents and family, and other teachers in the educational institution.***

“Community” for the teachers I interviewed includes the people with whom they interact on a daily basis. They saw themselves as representing the educational establishment to the outside world rather than being part of the outside world. When Laura traveled with a female teaching colleague to Costa Rica for vacation they joked that perhaps they shouldn’t have an alcoholic drink because someone might see them and know they are teachers. Carmen said that being a teacher hinders her involvement in the larger community. “I always have to be careful when I put a sticker on my car, or wear a pin, or what I say to a parent for fear that I might overstep my professional boundaries and offend someone.”

Celeste, like several other teachers, has made a conscious decision to live some distance away from the city where she teaches. She describes her behavior in a local grocery store near her school as different from her behavior in a store near her home. “I feel like people expect you to be on, like you’re on stage all the time. I’m probably extra freindly in the Safeway near my school because the person at the cash register might be the aunt of one of my kids or the stepfather or something.”

Kenneth was approached by a member of the Board of Education in the Oklahoma city where he began his teaching career. When a member of the Board of Education asked him, in his initial interview if he was a Christian, Kenneth replied yes, he had a relationship with the Lord. The principal of the school called him in the first week of school and said he had been seen buying beer in the grocery store. Kenneth told the principal that Jesus says it's okay if you want to have some beer and the principal asked him if he would buy his beer in the next town over, which was where the principal bought his. Kenneth said he was not willing to do that and he felt like there were repercussions from his behavior.

All of the teachers I interviewed expressed a desire to be more involved in the larger community, in what they termed "politics," but were unable to do so because they had so little free time after fulfilling their teaching duties. Women teachers are especially impacted by the lack of time. They continue to be an historically inexpensive work force as demonstrated by Martha's documentation of the number of hours she works. "I kept track a few years ago how many hours [I worked] per week and it was 75 hours one week and 80 hours the next week. In working on school things." Teachers are not paid for overtime and none of the teachers I interviewed claimed to spend less than 40 hours a week on job duties.

**Theme: Ways of Being Political (in spite of themselves)****Sub-theme: A Different Way of Seeing.**

***Claim: In my view many teachers' practices are political even though they don't view them that way.***

The impetus to my research was both the discussion of whether reading Bunting's *Fly Away Home* (1991) to a class of third graders is a political act and also why teachers chose not to speak up in support of a library facility which had proven useful to them. When I use Gee's definition of politics as implications for how social goods are distributed, I see a clear connection from the social good of discussing homelessness and its impact on a father and son in Bunting's book. I also view speaking at a school board meeting about a library closure to be political act. I discovered that the teachers I interviewed characterized actions such as choosing particular read-alouds in class as "doing the right thing" for individual students and for the classroom community. Caring for others and feeling empathy were considered to be important aspects of elementary school learning. However, when the social good was "doing the right thing" for children, teachers in my research group took actions that were overtly political. Valerie, who contacted a school board member about the prescriptive learning program, was the only teacher who placed her actions in the context of the wider society. Other teachers who took actions that brought them to the attention of the community outside of the school, were careful to explain to me that they are not "political" people. The strongest example of this behavior was when Betsy refused to cease having her students say the pledge of allegiance in languages other than English. She took a stand that she felt was principled

on what was best for her students even though it brought her to the attention of the local newspaper, the school board and parents other than those of her students.

**Sub-Theme: Confrontational.**

***Claim: Teachers did speak out and otherwise oppose authority even if they didn't present it as being political.***

Confrontational behavior does not imply anger; only a face-to-face exchange of differing ideas. For example, Carmen related a time when she spoke up in a staff meeting.

Our school psychologist was speaking of implementing a 'reading' drill each day in our first grade classrooms. The students were to spend time each day with a partner and quickly quiz each other on letters and sounds. She believes that this will help children with their reading fluency. I spoke up to voice my concern that children who struggle with reading might end up spending all their time working on letters and sounds and less time actually reading which is the number one way that children learn to read.

Diane discovered after five or six years with the same administrator that being judicious in her confrontations was helpful. "I only came to him when I thought it was important...[and if I] only brought things up because I really believe in it, I was more likely to get heard and respected."

**Sub-Theme: Under the Radar.**

***Claim: More common ways of being political were to act oppositionally in ways that could be denied.***

There is sometimes an implicit understanding between teachers and administrators about certain behaviors. If the teacher does not flaunt the behavior and all parties can deny that it was deliberate, it can be ignored.

Every teacher told me that their school has a handbook but they are often outdated. Celeste described it this way:

There are rules. You are given a handbook at the beginning of school each year by most districts where I've taught. There are rules about dress code, there are rules about how your lesson plans should be written, there are rules about communications with parents and student discipline and appropriate behavior. There's the code of conduct, they call it professional conduct. Yeah, there are rules. I don't know that those are actually followed, that people read the handbook....I think they just hand out the handbook as a way of saying well we gave you the rules, so that if you violate something they can say we told you you weren't supposed to do that.

In Frank's case, he follows the rules because "insubordination is one of those things you can get fired for." He does not blatantly disregard the rules, he just ignores some of them which "is a fine difference, but I make sure I'm not being disrespectful."

I've recounted the instance of Valerie refusing to give a standardized test so her principal came into the classroom to give the test but asked Valerie not to tell other teachers. Martha's school requires the DIBELS test but it is administered by teaching assistants, thus allowing Martha to say to parents who question the test "I'm happy to share with you my assessments on students but I'm not really familiar...." Martha generally ignores scores on the DIBELS assessment because she is more concerned about "actual reading and comprehension" with her students.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter I discuss my findings and implications for further research and for recommendations to teachers and to colleges of education. I look at each of the themes that grew out of my data analysis and at the connections between and among them.

### **Teachers Constructing Their Identity**

#### **Self-reflection as a pedagogical tool.**

Howard Gardner (2006) defines intrapersonal intelligence as having an understanding of oneself and an awareness of one's abilities. People with a strong sense of intrapersonal intelligence know what they can do, what they can't do and how to get help if they need it. Like metacognition, intrapersonal intelligence is a tool that teachers use to examine themselves in an effort to improve their teaching skills. The teachers I met who regularly reflect on their teaching practices see themselves as works in progress. Cailey told me that she never felt she had made the wrong decision when she decided to teach and that "[I] never, ever felt I was doing it completely right. Betsy described teaching as a "profession where you really can have doubts about yourself and you can go home many times, feeling you don't know what you're doing."

I am writing this analysis during the summer of 2009, amidst months-long revelations of enormous misdeeds in financial institutions (Morgenson, 2009), illegal activities by the Central Intelligence Agency (Mazzetti, 2009) and a conservative Legislature in the State of Arizona which seeks to balance the budget deficit with draconian cuts to education at all levels (US State News, 2009). I pondered whether self-

reflection of the kind done by the teachers I interviewed would have resulted in more honest and humane decisions on the part of legislators and business leaders.

I find the Ryle/ Geertz image of culture as a web in which we are suspended so powerful in part because anyone who has ever brushed up against a spider's web knows that it is so complex that a single thread cannot be removed without affecting the entire structure. Gadamer (2004) pointed out that reflection comes after we understand ourselves through our web of culture. Teachers have little support for reflection in their working lives. The teachers I interviewed, regardless of where they taught, expressed dislike for the faculty in-service meetings in their individual schools and their district. Celeste said that her district doesn't hire a consultant unless "they fly them in from somewhere and pay them lots of money." Teachers' are not allowed an official place to share their expertise and collaborate and ask questions. Teachers are isolated even in situations that would benefit from the dialogic thinking that John-Steiner (2000) described for reconstructing and co-constructing knowledge

### **Teachers' Funds of Knowledge.**

Writing in 1999, teacher educators Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin note that research on teacher knowledge was a recent endeavor, just joining the study of "teacher skills, attitudes, characteristics and methods," although there was "little talk of teachers as holders and makers of knowledge" (Connelly, 1999, p. 1). Teachers as transmitters of knowledge was the dominant paradigm.

It is crucial that teachers know how to think about their own identity in critical terms. Changing society's view of teachers is a project that is enormous, but teachers changing their views of themselves not only seems possible, but essential. A colleague

who studied new teachers and professional support groups believes that new teachers have so much going on in their professional lives in the first few years of their careers that they don't have the inclination or the time to devote to intrapersonal intelligence (F. Simon, personal communication). Beginning teachers are required to be "on stage" in their classrooms while navigating the political intricacies of getting along with students, administrators, school staff, parents and other teachers.

A recent event that challenges my assumptions about new teacher's ability to examine their own identity comes from the ethnic studies programs in the Tucson Unified School District. The aspect of the program I am most familiar with is Latino students and the history of their ethnic group in the Southwest and in the United States. In 2006 I saw a presentation about the program that included a film high school students had made contrasting the part of town in which they lived and went to school and the upper middle class area considerably north of them. Ethnic studies curriculum centers around readings from Paulo Freire, critical thinking and issues of social justice. I wondered if the students really understood concepts to which I had not been introduced until I was in graduate school. In 2008 I was invited by a colleague to critique a presentation of Latino students from the program who were preparing to present at a national conference. There were eight students, females and males, who showed a power point presentation and discussed their efforts to encourage the City Council to approve plans for a senior center in a low-income neighborhood, the neighborhood in which these students live. I had no doubt, at the end of the presentation, that every one of those students understood dominant ideology, political hegemony and issues of inequality and social justice. Why is it, I thought, that sixteen, seventeen and eighteen year olds were capable of reading and

thinking critically about their identities and ideologies but pre-service teachers are not. Yes, there is the fact that teachers have full time jobs and many tasks to complete every day. Students also have the luxury of daily discussions led by teachers who are committed to the process of constructivist education.

In 2005 I accompanied a fellow graduate student to the Arizona Department of Education to documentation on state-wide training for teachers that was required under No Child Left Behind and state Reading First legislation. We examined evaluation forms completed by participants after the four-hour training sessions. We were dismayed to find that comments about the temperature of the room and the contents of the breakfast menu outweighed substantive evaluation of the program itself. Our first thought was that these elementary school teachers fit the stereotype of not being particularly intellectual. On further reflection, it occurs to me that these teachers were all required to give up either a Saturday morning or else half a day of classroom instruction time, for which there would be no make-up period. They had not been consulted on NCLB or on Reading First and any substantive comments they made would have no influence on the policy makers or the training facilitators

#### **Female/Male Roles in Teacher Identity Construction.**

Nurturing and caring are considered to be feminine traits and are honored in the teaching profession. The perspective of a male teacher on the collaborative nature of women teachers surprised me. Frank told me that he thought women were taken advantage of because of their good nature. When he first began teaching, he said he was shocked at things that women teachers were willing to do. If the principal announced a last-minute after school meeting when the custodian was not available, the teachers were

expected to arrive early and set up chairs. “You wouldn’t ask a bunch of men to do that, we would have laughed at you. But the women do a bunch of team player stuff, which is code for we’re not going to pay you for this.”

What *is* the difference between being a team player and being taken advantage of? Honest, open discussions of female/male traits and teacher identity is appropriate for teacher education programs but I am unaware this kind of discussion. Perhaps educational theory through a feminist lens would be useful to preservice teachers.

### **Teachers Participating in a Democratic Community**

Many aspects of teaching appear to be collaborative: faculty meetings, professional development at the school, district and state levels, team meetings by grade level, study groups, Critical Friends Groups, Professional Learning Communities. The paradigm of teaching as a collaborative effort is so much a part of my ideology that I was dumbstruck by Britzman’s (1986) work on the myth of self-made teachers.

Every teacher I interviewed mentioned others at their school with whom they had comfortable relationships but working together for institutional change did not appear to be part of their Discourse Identity. There is a disconnect between the seemingly ultra social nature of teaching and the isolation of the teacher that Britzman (1986) attributes to “mythic images which tend to sustain and cloak the very structure which produces them (p. 448). Britzman posits that teachers are celebrated for individual effort. Think of the popular media images of Jaime Escalante, Ron Clark, LouAnne Johnson and Erin Gruwell. They are heroes in their stories with little discussion of others in the school community except where they pose a hindrance to the hero. Britzman (1986) writes that cultural myths about teachers include “(1) everything depends on the teacher; (2) the

teacher is the expert; and (3) teachers are self-made” (p. 448). Mythical self-made teachers are not unlike the heroes of the Horatio Alger stories that were so popular in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Self-made teachers are celebrated in popular culture for lifting poor children, and they are always poor and minority children, out of poverty and into educational success. This kind of success is celebrated, not only in the popular media, but by conservative politicians who do not wish to expend tax dollars to address the underlying causes of poverty. Gerald Bracey has documented for many years the clear connection between poverty and lack of educational success and his most recent report is no exception (Bracey, 2009). Placing all of the responsibility for students’ academic success on the teacher is an easy way to avoid discussing hunger, lack of medical, dental and vision care, jobless parents and myriad other factors that are impact the lives of children every day. The recent statements by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan that a teacher’s salary or “bonus” should be tied to standardized test scores of her students is reprehensible in light of the systemic disadvantages many poor children and their families experience.

The teacher/respondents from nine different public school districts expressed dislike for the faculty in-service meetings in their individual schools and their district. Celeste said that her district doesn’t hire a consultant unless... ”they fly them in from somewhere and pay them lots of money.” Teachers’ are not allowed an official place to share their expertise and collaborate and ask questions. Teachers are isolated even in situations that would benefit from the dialogic thinking that John-Steiner (2000) described for reconstructing and co-constructing knowledge.

Democratic society requires the principle of participation of all of its members equally and its system of education should reflect that principle (Dewey, 1916). Schools in which teachers are not equal participants in programs of professional development have failed as a democratic endeavor.

There is a profound disconnection between the institution charged with teaching democracy and democratic participation for its members.

I understand the power relationships inherent in a society that believes any individual can pull him (and to some extent, her) self up by the bootstraps. Teachers who can be manipulated by “political entrepreneurs” to believe they have autonomy in their classrooms and are single-handedly responsible for the educational success of their students are less likely to see systemic failures in education and in society. That system has worked pretty well for the last 150 years but may be faltering as teachers are expected to take on many more tasks.

When teachers have an opportunity to collaborate they can co-construct knowledge and help students do the same. Democracy requires an informed citizenry, each of whom has an equal opportunity to participate in obtaining “social goods.” Helping teachers to understand how they are manipulated by political elites would seem to be another task for colleges of education. It appears that colleges of education, professors of education and educational researchers have as little influence over educational policy as do elementary school teachers. There is a large body of scientifically based, rigorously executed educational research showing that standardized curriculum and high-stakes testing does nothing to close the achievement gap between rich and poor children. Yet Bill Gates and the Business Roundtable have a place at the

policy table in Washington DC and respected educational researchers are ignored.

President Obama sends his daughters to a private school whose philosophy states:

We offer these students a rich and rigorous interdisciplinary curriculum designed to stimulate creative inquiry, intellectual achievement and independent thinking in a world increasingly without borders. We encourage these students to...give expression to their artistic abilities [and] draw strength from silence—and from the power of individual and collective reflection.

Under No Child Left Behind poor and minority children have no access to the arts or to contemplative silence and reflection; they spend their days doing worksheets and taking tests.

### **Teachers Being Political**

I experienced a profound paradigm shift when I began to analyze the data I gathered from twenty elementary school teachers in 2008 and 2009. I could see that political identity is not the lens through which most teachers view themselves and their work. My ideological worldview required that teachers be Democrats or Republicans, Liberals or Conservatives, active in political causes or not. When I encountered anomalies like Barbara's view of *Fly Away Home* as a book about right and wrong rather than a book about one's political stance, I filed it away, knowing it did not fit my paradigm, but not understanding why. Before I began my research I talked with a teacher who, by any measure, was nurturing and constructivist. She was (and is) active in conservative religious and political causes but her personal views don't seem to interfere with her desire to help children construct their own knowledge and make decisions for themselves. She does not proselytize for conservative causes and she is not authoritarian in her relationship with her students. It is obvious to me now that her political views were subsumed by her moral values.

The teachers I interviewed who were most vocal about being “non-political” were often the teachers who were most likely to take intellectual risks and ask their students to do the same. They honor diversity of opinion and are rigorous in requiring students to construct their opinions based on empirical evidence and not hearsay.

Lakoff’s (2004) work on reframing is useful in the context of teachers and political action. Moral values, as Gert describes them, could be the underpinning of teachers’ actions rather than political values. For example, parents of first graders know from experience that their child does not thrive without an opportunity to move around physically. Berliner (2007) documents the trend in schools in the United States to severely curtail or do away with recess in elementary schools because of the need for more “instructional” time. Surely parents would recognize recess as lessening the “harm or evil” to children. Taking discussions of curriculum out of the realm of strict father/nurturant parent or Republican/Democrat might encourage parents and others who are not necessarily trained in pedagogical methods to discuss what is moral action towards children.

### **Political Entrepreneurs, Morality and Education.**

The imbrication of capitalism and education in Brubaker and Cooper’s (2000) image of “educational entrepreneurs” is a powerful reminder of how the wealthy members of the Business Roundtable join with political elites to seize power in the struggle over official knowledge. Sometimes the fear of children who construct their own knowledge and teachers who allow them to do so is almost palpable.

A case in point is the chapter in Purpel and Ryan’s book *Moral Education* (1976).

Included in that book is a chapter by Irving Kristol who is often described as the founder of neoconservatism and as a journalist and magazine editor was an influential voice of the political right. Kristol held no advanced degrees and had no training in pedagogy and I put him firmly in the category of a political entrepreneur. His article is reprinted from remarks he made at a conference sponsored by the Educational Testing Service in 1974. Titled “Moral and Ethical Development in a Democratic Society,” Kristol takes to task the organizers of a camp for high school boys and girls [sic] run by the Boy Scouts of America. Kristol focuses on the last paragraph in the article where a 16 year-old male camper from Brooklyn explains that he spent much of his time playing poker and won \$50.00 “Our floor was covered with garbage. And nobody made us pick it up,” said the camper.

Kristol’s complaint is that this was Boy Scout camp which should be promoting moral behavior. It is clear to Kristol that leaving garbage on the floor is immoral behavior and he believes that educational institutions that remain neutral on this point are pandering to the wants of the general populace. He believes that moral neutrality leads to “abrupt eruptions of profound discontent” such as “rebelliousness of racial minorities, or young people, or women, or whomever” (Kristol, 1976, p. 374). He refers specifically to student protests at University of California, Berkeley in 1964. He writes that a whole set of successful schools can be found in the ghetto – and those are parochial schools which are self-respecting and demanding and not permissive. Their students realize that the “only true moral and intellectual ‘development’ occurs when you make demands upon yourself (Kristol, 1976, p. 380). The permissive person, Kristol says, supports social change while the authoritarian is for stability. Having to choose between the two, Kristol

says he would choose authoritarian in the hopes that “mechanical repetition” of moral forms might give them meaning. Kristol concludes his talk with the statement:

If you have no sense of moral authority, if you have no sovereign ideas about moral purpose, you ought not to be educators. There are many technocratic professions, in which for all practical purposes the knowledge of means suffices – but education is not one of them. An educator who cannot give at least a tentative and minimally coherent reply to the question ‘Education for what?’ is comparable to a clergyman who cannot explain the purpose of religion.

I concur with Kristol that educators should have a coherent philosophy of education and its theoretical framework and to be able to answer the question “education for what?”

My disagreement comes when politically powerful people, who, in a capitalist society are also the very wealthy, get to determine that “rebelliousness of racial minorities, or young people, or women, or whomever” is antithetical to “true moral and intellectual development.” I am especially struck by the disdain implied in Kristol’s use of the word “whomever,” lumping everyone he dislikes into one big category. This article was written in 1976 and the language of discrimination is considerably more sophisticated but I suspect that political entrepreneurs of the twenty-first century are no more willing to listen to the voices of women and men who spend their days educating children.

### **Doing the Right Thing: Morality in Education**

I believe that morality exists without religious structure. That does not mean that I dismiss morality within a religious context as inauthentic. Every major religion has a “golden” rule. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you expresses the same ethical stance as Gert (2005) when he defines morality as having “lessening the evil or harm” as its goal. Roman Catholic priest and peace activist Daniel Berrigan, and Thich Nhat Hanh, a Zen Buddhist monk encouraged communities of resistance during the Vietnam War in the 1960’s and 1970’s. In an exchange of letters Nhat Hanh wrote :

[L]iving in modern society one feels that he cannot easily retain integrity, wholeness. One is robbed permanently of humanness, the capacity of being oneself....resistance means opposition to being invaded, occupied, assaulted and destroyed by the system (Nhat Hanh, Berrigan, 2001, p. 129).

My first hint that there was something beyond political ideology that informed teacher's actions was a discussion with Nathan, who teaches in a religious school with his wife. I am familiar with many of the young adult books he uses in his classroom and I asked him about the possibly controversial nature of some of them. He said that he felt very comfortable in his faith, he knows what is right and what is wrong, and teaching children to "read the world" is right. I described it to myself as having integrity or a core of morality. That was the point when my paradigm changed from politics in education to morality in education.

When Michelle Fine (1991) interviewed students in a large New York City inner-city high school she found that students who were emotionally healthy were most likely to drop out of school because they realized the futility of remaining in a program that, as Nhat Hanh says, robbed them of their humanness. Perhaps teachers who attended a Saturday session of Reading First training felt the same way. They simply "dropped out" of the professional training.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This research project is, in part, a search for validation of my assumption that the teachers in Westernville should have spoken up in favor of the library. My graduate studies in the Department of language, Reading and Culture have been about theory and research but they have also been about self-discovery. The Department is a community of scholars where I have felt safe in expressing ideas and accepting criticism that has always been respectful. Dr. Perry Gilmore admonished me more than once to step back from my long-cherished ideological stance and listen to my informants. I found that the principles enumerated by David Smith (Gilmore and McDermott, 2006) served to guide my thinking particularly:

1. Start with no preconceived notions about what's happening and what this means to participants.
2. Let the important questions to be addressed as well as the answers, emerge from the context.
3. Do not view participants as subjects but as co-learners with the investigator, each using the other to reach shared and ever-deepening understandings.
4. Assume that people inevitably act to make sense of the world they are experiencing.
5. Change takes place when we hear another "story," it resonates with our own experience, and we feel free to take from it for our particular uses (pp. 8-13).

My personal identity is that of an overtly partisan political activist and someone who is mistrustful of mainstream religions. I learned to see past my political ideology when I was interviewing teachers but it took me longer to realize that the concept of morality and religion are so intertwined for me that I was slow to recognize that teachers "doing the right thing" was not a religious statement but a moral one.

The topics of identity, ideology, politics, morality and community are complex and yet I spent the first few weeks of data analysis thinking of Emerson's (1908) quote "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines." I wanted some consistency in the remarks of teachers I interviewed, I wanted to wrap it all up into a coherent explanation of why teachers are not resisting what they believe to be harmful pedagogical practices. I wanted the simple answers that Emerson says are "adored by little statesmen." Hirsch's core curriculum and Kristol's exhortation to make adolescents at camp pick up their garbage ignores the complexities of how we construct our own knowledge of what is important and what is "moral."

I am not optimistic that political entrepreneurs will divulge any of their influence in the arena of educational policy; the stakes are very high in who gets to control official knowledge. I believe that if we could reframe the discussion of what is good policy in schools into a moral rather than political vocabulary, many teachers, parents and community members would be supportive.

Moral and ethical values in education should be explicitly taught in teacher training programs as should the political history of teaching. I think there is a link between the revered American myth of the self-made person, the isolated teacher that Britzman (1986) describes, the popular media construction of teachers like Erin Gruwell and the metaphor of closing the classroom door that I use in my title. I think it is possible that the power of the self-made person identity accounts for the difference in public activism of teachers in this country and in other developed countries. Teachers in Oaxaca, Mexico recently staged months-long protests that were supported by a majority

of the community. The teachers' strike was a collaborative effort that was framed quite clearly as a fight against political elites who sought to control the educational establishment for their own purposes.

The United States is the wealthiest country in the world with a political narrative of capitalism as the best economic system possible. Capitalism encourages competition, not collaboration and socialism, a collaborative system, is framed as evil and destructive. Current proposals for educational reform by the Obama administration that include linking teacher pay to student test scores makes the competition/capitalism paradigm very clear.

I hope that teachers have an opportunity to open the doors of their classrooms, literally and metaphorically and discover that embracing both the moral and the political is the right thing to do.

## APPENDIX A: SUBJECT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

### *Constructing Political Identity: Teachers as Agents of Change*

#### **Introduction**

*You are being invited to take part in a research study. The information in this form is provided to help you decide whether or not to take part. Study personnel will be available to answer your questions and provide additional information. If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign this consent form. A copy of this form will be given to you.*

#### **What is the purpose of this research study?**

*The purpose of this study is to explore ways in which teachers construct their political identities both inside and outside the classroom.*

#### **Why are you being asked to participate?**

*You are being invited because you are a teacher of grade kindergarten through 8.*

#### **How many people will be asked to participate in this study?**

*Approximately 12-25 persons will be asked to participate in this study.*

#### **What will happen during this study?**

- 1. Teacher interviews will be conducted;*
- 2. Teachers will be observed in their classrooms;*
- 3. Documents such as memoranda, handbooks, guidelines for curriculum, which relate to issues mentioned in interviews, will be collected from the teachers and from administrators of the school district.*

#### **How long will I be in this study?**

*About 4 hours over a period of 6 weeks will be needed to complete this study.*

#### **Are there any risks to me?**

*The things that you will be doing have no more risk than possible personal stress or anxiety. Although we have tried to avoid risks, you may feel that some questions we ask you may be stressful or upsetting. If this occurs you can stop participating immediately. We can give you information about individuals who may be able to help you with these problems.*

#### **Are there any benefits to me?**

*You will not receive any benefit from taking part in this study other than possibly an opportunity to reflect on your philosophy of education and your teaching practices.*

**Will there be any costs to me?**

*Aside from your time, there are no costs for taking part in the study.*

**Will I be paid to participate in the study?**

*No.*

**Will video or audio recordings be made of me during the study?**

*We will make audio and video recordings during the study so that we can be certain that your responses are recorded accurately only if you check the box below:*

*I give my permission for audio/video recordings to be made of me during my participation in this research study.*

*I do not give my permission for audio/video recordings to be made of me during my participation in this research study.*

*I give my permission for audio and/or video clips of my interview to be used in dissemination of the project's research findings.*

**Will the information that is obtained from me be kept confidential?**

*The only persons who will know that you participated in this study will be the research team member: Principal investigator Jenise Porter. Your records will be confidential. You will not be identified in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Your voice and image will be used only with your express permission. It is possible that representatives of the sponsor that supports the research study will want to come to The University of Arizona to review your information. Representatives of regulatory agencies (including The University of Arizona Human Subjects Protection Program) may access your records.*

**What if I am harmed by the study procedures?**

There is no foreseeable risk to you from participating in the interview and classroom observation.

**May I change my mind about participating?**

*Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide to not begin or to stop the study at any time. Your refusing to participate will have no effect on your employment. You can discontinue your participation with no affect on your employment. Also any new information discovered about the research will be provided to you. This information could affect your willingness to continue your participation.*

**Whom can I contact for additional information?**

*You can obtain further information about the research or voice concerns or complaints about the research by calling the Principal Investigator Jenise Porter, Ph.D Candidate at (520) 850-3819. If you have questions concerning your rights as a research participant, have general questions, concerns or complaints or would like to give input about the research and can't reach the research team, or want to talk to someone other than the research team, you may call the University of Arizona Human Subjects Protection Program office at (520) 626-6721. (If out of state use the toll-free number 1-866-278-1455.) If you would like to contact the Human Subjects Protection Program via the web, please visit the following website: <http://www.irb.arizona.edu/contact/>.*

**Your Signature**

By signing this form, I affirm that I have read the information contained in the form, that the study has been explained to me, that my questions have been answered and that I agree to take part in this study. I do not give up any of my legal rights by signing this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date signed

**Statement by person obtaining consent**

I certify that I have explained the research study to the person who has agreed to participate, and that he or she has been informed of the purpose, the procedures, the possible risks and potential benefits associated with participation in this study. Any questions raised have been answered to the participant's satisfaction.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of study personnel

\_\_\_\_\_  
Study personnel Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date signed

**APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Would you describe why you decided to become a teacher?
2. How did you learn how teachers are supposed to act in a classroom setting?
3. Do you remember a time in your teaching career when you spoke up in a staff meeting? What were the circumstances?
4. Can you describe a time when a student asked a question in class about an issue you were uncomfortable responding to.
5. What parts of your job would you consider to be political?
6. Does your role as a teacher affect your positionality outside of work?
7. Does your role as a teacher influence your political involvement in the community?
8. Please describe how school-wide directions are disseminated. For example, does the principal of your school share information about legislative policies such as the recent requirements for Sheltered English Immersion in Arizona Schools or the Iraq War?
9. Can you give me an example of a time when you have had an opportunity to share information with administrators at your school or the district?
10. How many women and how many men teach in your school?
11. Do you believe that women and men have different beliefs about being a teacher?
12. Do you think women and men generally have different political beliefs?
13. How do you think children learn to become good citizens?

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